

BOOK REVIEWS

J. TONNA and D. DE LUCCA, *Romano Carapeccchia*, Studies in Maltese Architecture, 1: Department of Architecture, University of Malta; 1975; pp. 41, illus; 50c.

With the nomination of Romano Carapeccchia to the post of Chief Architect and 'fontaniere' to the Order in 1706, Valletta became destined to undergo a major transformation less than a hundred-and-fifty years after its birth. With the city and its population secure behind an impregnable ring of fortified walls, the Grandmaster and his Council felt that the time had arrived to change the outward appearance of the sombre and fortress-like palaces and other public buildings in Valletta and elsewhere. Perellos' talent scouts in Rome had spotted young Carapeccchia, who although only thirty-eight years old, had already established himself as a talented architect of Baroque Rome with a number of highly-successful projects to his credit. From his studio in Rome, Carapeccchia had already showed his worth with designs for buildings in Malta, and his prestige and fame preceded his arrival here.

In this splendid monograph, Jo Tonna and Dennis De Lucca, working together in an uncommon teacher-student relationship, throw a completely new light on the history of Maltese architecture. This book has not, unfortunately, received the acclaim it deserves and passed almost unnoticed except in specialized

circles. The existence of an album of Carapeccchia's original designs at the Courtauld Institute discovered by Dr John Cauchi, has definitely established the authorship of most of Valletta's eighteenth century buildings and of other towns. It has also helped to draw the line of distinction between the designer and the executive architect, a practice still prevalent to-day.

The list of Carapeccchia's works is both startling and impressive. It is impressive because of his enormous output, and startling because it has changed most of our long-established, but mistaken, ideas about the true authorship of many of the most important facades, churches, gateways, porticos, etc of Valletta of the first half of the eighteenth century. By means of unimpeachable documentary evidence, this book has corrected many misconceptions, and can be safely considered to be one of the most important and original contributions to the study of Maltese architecture of recent years.

Michael Ellul

G. ZAMMIT MAEMPEL, *An Outline of Maltese Geology*, Malta, Progress Press, 1977, 44 pp., illus., £1.50.

T. H. Huxley once wrote that "the historical student knows that his first business should be to inquire into the validity of his evidence, and the nature of the record in which the evidence is contained, that he may be able to form a proper estimate of the correctness of the conclusions

which may be drawn from that evidence". In more than one way, the geologist is also a historian. He delves deep for evidence not in written records, but in that thin crustal veneer of our Earth which is accessible to man.

The vast body of evidence on geology is massed unlimitedly around us, but it takes a refined mind and a lot of scientific scholarship to sift the evidence, inquire into its validity, and assess correctly the conclusions provided by that evidence. Dr George Zammit Maempel, in this welcome addition to the rather sparse literature on Maltese geology, does exactly this. Most of the evidence he collected himself, and his familiar figure armed with camera and hammer and chisel is well known to quarry-owners and to frequenters of our geological sites.

The book acquires added interest by the pleasant way in which it is presented. It follows chapter by chapter the same sequence of the Geology Halls of the National Museum of Natural History of which Dr Zammit Maempel is Assistant Curator, and which he personally set up. The book is didactic without being pedantic, a no mean achievement when one considers the complexity of the subject. The first five chapters are devoted to local geology generally. The next chapters deal with the main rock-formations that make up the Maltese geological sequence. Of particular interest, and containing a considerable amount of original material, are the chapters dealing with the cor-

relation of the Maltese stratigraphy to that of other countries both far and near, the historical survey of local geological maps, and soils and their deposits.

The book is amply illustrated by photographs mostly taken by the author himself. Some of them throw new light on already known aspects of local geology, whilst others, especially those of fossils from the author's collection and published for the first time, are of special interest to the more specialized reader.

This is a book which no visitor to the National Museum of Natural History should go without, and which no real lover of the Malta landscape should miss. The value of its many original observations, and the validity of its conclusions, are guaranteed by the author's scientific preparation and his scholarly acumen.

Michael Ellul

J. QUENTIN HUGHES, "The Defence of Malta", *Quaderno dell'Istituto Dipartimentale di Architettura ed Urbanistica*, Università di Catania, No. 8, 1976, pp. 1-40.

In December 1974, a seminar on the Fortifications of Malta was organized by Professor Quentin Hughes at the University of Liverpool. This suggested the idea to the Faculty of Architecture and Town-planning of Catania University, who had attended the seminar, to dedicate one whole edition of their Journal to military architecture in Malta and nearby Sicily.

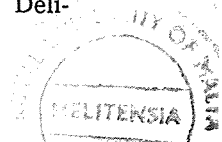
Quentin Hughes, with his custom-

ary thoroughness and conciseness, in this well-documented essay profusely illustrated with not less than fifty-three plans, designs, engravings and photographs, traces the history of Malta's defences from the time of the Knights to the years immediately preceding World War Two.

When the Order of St John came to Malta, the Knights were already experts in the art of fortification. The Krak des Chevaliers and Margat, their first strongholds, were advanced designs of military architecture of their time. No less developed were their fortifications in Acre, the Dodecanese and Rhodes. When they were offered Malta by Charles V, the Knights were at first reluctant to accept, mainly because the Island was practically undefended. But following outside pressure, they finally gave in, and in 1530 set up their headquarters here. Then began a hectic period of fort-building during which a number of military engineers, mostly Italian, were commissioned for advice. Nicolò de Flavani, Nicolò Belavante, Piccino, Antonio Ferramolino, the Spanish Pedro Pardo, Evangelista Menga, Antonio Quinsani, Bartolomeo Genga and Baldassare Lanci, followed one another in quick succession. Within a period of little more than thirty years, they strengthened the then still primitive Fort St Angelo, cut the wet ditch between the Fort and the Borgo, built Fort St Michael and the integrated defensive scheme of the Isola and the Borgo, and constructed Fort St Elmo on the outermost tip of the Sceberras promontory.

The siege of 1565 ended in victory for the Order, but it also revealed the inadequacy of the Island's defences, mainly because of the undefended high ground overlooking the principal forts. The fortified city of Valletta (1566), besides providing the Order with a new and proud abode, and Laparelli and Cassar with a personal triumph, was intended to deny a potential enemy the use of the strategic high ground which dominates the two main harbours and their landfronts. These were further strengthened in the following century by the Floriana Lines (1634), and by the two magnificent defensive systems protecting the Three Cities, the Firenzuola (1638) and the Cottonera Lines (1663). The ring was closed by the building of Forts Ricasoli (1670) and Manoel (1726), and, the last of them all, Fort Tigné in 1793.

As a true and dispassionate architectural historian, Hughes recognizes the important contribution to Maltese military architecture by the British after 1800. During their first fifty years or so in Malta, the British, overawed by the immensity of the fortifications and the huge manpower necessary to garrison them, gradually phased out of most of the coastal towers and forts away from the main harbours. The second half of the century, with the advent of powerful and long-range guns mounted on ships, witnessed a new pattern of defence, a string of detached forts all over the island. These included Sliema Point Battery, Forts St Rocco, St Leonardo, Pembroke, Tas-Silg, Deli-



mara, Rinella, Cambridge, Delle Grazie, Spinola, and Wolseley, and the impressive Victoria Lines with their Forts Maddalena, Musta and Bingemma. In our times, immediately before World War Two, the British built the concrete coastal towers, which though ugly and seemingly out of place architecturally, reflect nevertheless the military thinking of the day as much as the earlier fortifications of the Knights.

Michael Ellul

J. AZZOPARDI, *Archives of the Cathedral of Malta - Misc. 32 A: 1313-1529. The Study and Text of an Eighteenth-Century Index of Transcripts*, Malta, Veritas Press 1977, 98 pp. The Malta Study Center of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, St John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, U.S.A., No. 2.

Finalmente, un uomo giusto al posto giusto! Il posto giusto è il museo e archivio della Cattedrale, a Mdina. L'uomo giusto è il curatore e archivista di detto museo-archivio. E' l'autore di questa magnifica pubblicazione, e dell'altra, ancora più fondamentale, uscita in America, col titolo *Handlist of the Episcopal and Pro-Vicarial Archives at the Malta Cathedral Museum* (ved. recensione di A P Vella, *MH*, VI, 4, 462). Con questo lavoro, del 1975, l'autore aveva regalato alla comunità internazionale degli storici un inventario preciso ed esauriente di uno dei tre fondi dell'importante archivio di Mdina, quello della Curia vescovile maltese (gli

altri due fondi sono quello dell'Inquisizione e quello del Capitolo della Cattedrale), comprendente fra l'altro 464 volumi di *Acta Originalia* tra il 1400 e il 1830 (una diecina, pre-1530). Nella presente pubblicazione viene stampato l'indice di documenti di proprietà del Capitolo della Cattedrale, indice redatto dal Canonico Gian Battista Borg, archivista tra il 1758 e il 1772, che catalogò e trascrisse quei documenti. Qui vengono pubblicati, in ordine cronologico, i titoli dei documenti relativi al periodo 1313-1529. Ecco alcuni esempi: "21.1.1313 Concessione del feudo Tabria ad Attardo de la barba eccetto i due giardini possesi da Arnaldo de Solimella Castellano e giustiziaro di Malta. 10. VI.1316 Breve Pontificio che applica alcuni beni de Templari del Regno di Valenza alla Religione Gioannina... 10.1.1334 Bolle del vescovado di Malta a favore di Fr. Nicola Boneti de Minori, vacato per morte del Vescovo erri-go. ... 4.1.1350 Privilegio del giardino di Irbinet a favor di Chicco Gatto Castellano. Qual giardino lo teneva la Regia Corte per successione et estinzione della famiglia di Michele Bava. Qual privilegio fù di nuovo confermato al Giudice Lancea Gatto figlio d'esso Chicco a 14 Febbraio 1397..... 7. X. 1350 Privilegio del Rè Ludovico di Sicilia, nel quale l'Isole di Malta e Gozzo s'aggregano al Regio Demanio". Questo *Index Notitiarum* è preceduto da un saggio critico, ricco di utili e sicuri particolari sulla storia e sul valore del testo, come si addice ad un lavoro altamente scientifico, come quello in parola. Di molto

contribuisce all'indubbia importanza della presente pubblicazione ai fini della conoscenza della storia medioevale di Malta e Gozo, l'ottimo studio di Dr Luttrell su "The Earliest Documents Transcribed in the Cathedral Archives, Mdina: 1316-1372", studio condotto con mano sicura, frutto di ampie ricerche con frequenti collaborazioni con i testi dell'Archivio di Stato di Palermo: in questo studio Luttrell si rivela ottimo conoscitore dei nostri archivi, oltre che delle opere a stampa relative a Malta, ciò che già si sapeva. Bravo, dunque, il nostro Dun Gwann Azzopardi, che nell'arco di pochi anni ha fornito agli studiosi alcuni ottimi strumenti di ricerca. Gli archivisti si possono dividere, grosso modo, in tre classi: quelli che si limitano alla pura e semplice amministrazione e conservazione dei beni culturali a loro affidati; quelli che, approfittando della loro invidiabile situazione a contatto continuo con i documenti, si mettono a pubblicare, entrando quasi in concorrenza con gli storici di mestiere; e quelli, infine, che si fanno un dovere di aiutare e facilitare la ricerca altrui, di rendere accessibile e facile la compulsazione dei documenti d'archivio, anche per mezzo di pubblicazioni specifiche a tal uopo. Quest'ultima categoria di archivisti merita, mi pare, particolare encomio. Altro debito di riconoscenza nutriamo verso un gruppo di persone — JS Micallef, O L Kapsner OSB, J.G Plante, la Curia e il Capitolo Metropolitano di Malta — che hanno contribuito in varia misura a costituire, a Minnesota negli Stati Uniti, il Centro di Studi Maltesi, che

si è reso benemerito del progetto, in fase di realizzazione, di microfilmare i documenti dei fondi archivistici di Mdina, e di pubblicare, inoltre, opere come la *Handlist* e il presente *Index* (solo che quest'opera, a differenza della prima, è uscita a Malta, per i tipi della Veritas Press, la quale ha svolto egregiamente il suo compito). Quando, alcuni anni or sono, sorse l'idea di microfilmare l'archivio di Mdina (in duplice copia, restandone una all'archivio), non mancarono le perplessità, e non mancò neanche qualche voce di aperto dissenso. Ora risulta che già cominciano a pervenire da oltre Atlantico le richieste di informazioni e di pubblicazioni. La storia di Malta — questo microcosmo! — rischia di attirare l'attenzione degli studiosi: dopo essere rimasta per tanto tempo in ombra, rischia di diventare di dominio pubblico! Che bellezza! Auguriamo a Don Giovanni Azzopardi di continuare a lungo ad occupare il suo posto, lavorando in silenzio e con umiltà, con esemplare efficienza e intelligenza, come ha fatto finora.

G. Mangion

A. T. LUTTRELL (ed.), *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta Before the Knights*, The British School at Rome, London, 1975; pp. xiv, 232; 24 plates; £M11.50.

The scarcity of documentation has made the study of the islands' medieval history particularly intriguing and elusive and consequently Luttrell's fresh attempt at a clear definition of the state of the art is more than wel-

come, now that some forty years have passed since the previous more or less systematic effort. The volume consists of a collection of studies by three Maltese and five foreign scholars on various aspects of Malta's medieval past but, although the first article and the last one actually show two precise dates, 533 and 1570, which purport to pinpoint the range of events in focus, most of the studies in fact deal with the period 1200-1500. A high degree of specialization is reached in most of the articles so that the result may be compared to a fresco or mosaic with many missing patches (the economic, ethnographic and linguistic aspects) but, although comprehensiveness is unavoidably impossible, the picture is sufficiently ample and coherent to make out the central problem. This is without any doubt the question of the continuity of Christianity during the relatively brief but traumatic experience of Arab domination.

All the articles project, each from its own particular angle and in its own specialized way, a small set of constants: (i) the fundamental importance of two turning points in the islands' history, 870 and 1530; (ii) the most intimate links with Sicily throughout the period under review; and (iii) the fact that Christianity must be regarded as the *cynosure* in this field of research. It is to the credit of each contributor and especially of the editor that the approach is strictly scientific, the hypotheses which hopefully fill the gaps being always accompanied by cau-

tious reservations. Therefore each article does provide the most up to date view of the theme discussed, even in the case of two reprints, J. Ward Perkins's fundamental "Medieval and Early Renaissance Architecture in Malta" (1942) and J. Cassar Pullicino's revised "Norman Legends in Malta" (1945). The other articles are original contributions, typical of the latest approaches in their attention to detail, awareness of the importance of the chronological and geographical context and of the comparative technique, and thorough familiarity with the relevant bibliography. The way the manuscript documents and the printed texts are exploited, particularly in Brown and Bresc, shows the good points of a rigorously academic formation; in fact the only flaw I feel qualified to point out lies where Abulafia strayed into the literary field, ignoring Avalle's critical edition of Peire Vidal's poems (1960) consequently quoting a verse that had been corrected (cfr. my article in *Melita Historica* VII, 1, pp. 69-70). Although in each article limitations are admitted and directions for further inquiry are indicated, the average reader will certainly feel that we have a fairly complete view of such topics as "Henry Count of Malta", "The Secrezia and the Royal Patrimony in Malta: 1240-1450" and "The Lost Villages and Hamlets of Malta", for although the viewpoints are taken from very narrow angles, the degree of depth reached justifies the painstaking sifting of available documents (cfr. Wettinger's progress

on Blouet's work after a decade). As regards the missing evidence which hampers further progress most of the authors look hopefully up to archaeology. M. Cagianò de Azevedo and M. Buhagiar have made two complementary steps in the right direction and their articles are symptomatic of the new faith in a field which was previously reserved for prehistoric monuments. In both cases the findings concern solely places of worship.

This brings us back to the central problem. The lack of remains of civil buildings points to the logical conclusion that the islands were deemed of very little use to the successive rulers. This is a bit hard to appreciate with a mentality which has been pampered for 450 years about its strategic military value, but the fact is that before the Knights (and here one notes that the subtitle is truly appropriate) the situation was totally different. For the Knights and for the British, Malta has been truly a centre and this implies the need for Auberges, palaces, cathedrals, offices, a theatre, a university, hospitals, barracks and fortifications. Before that Malta must be seen in the context of other neutralized small islands like Elba, Corfù, Majorca or even larger ones like Sardegna, Corsica, Crete and Cyprus. As Brown concludes, the strategic and political role of Byzantine Malta was a limited one and as Redjala (1973) has pointed out, to Arab authors Malta was only "an obscure morcel split off from Sicily which didn't merit any particular attention" (my translation of Brown's

quotation in note 98 on p. 82). The Byzantines and the Arabs simply did not need grandiose edifices: for a few hundred soldiers and less than 10,000 farmers a handful of places of worship was all that was needed. This fact explains why the island cannot have a "history" for this period, not any more than similar communities scattered along the Mediterranean coasts.

And yet there are two intriguing questions which beg clarification: religion and the language. The first problem is invariably touched upon directly or indirectly in every article and the contributions tend to confirm Mayr's thesis (1896) asserting the extinction of the Christian faith in the islands during Arab rule. All the evidence, oral, written and archaeological, indicates a very violent takeover by the Arabs which must have caused an almost total substitution of the inhabitants. This may have been due to mass emigration to Sicily provoked by the increasingly frequent attacks before the actual invasion, and then by persecution and slavery. Consequently the newly established Muslim colony would have greatly outnumbered what remained of the original inhabitants. This would not rule out the probable hypothesis that the islands had been hellenized (like Sicily) during Byzantine rule (Brown, p. 78), because a drastic change of population would not allow a substratum to penetrate the new language. It also fits in with the fact that all the known churches were built since the first decades of Chris-

tian resettlement (Buhagiar, pp. 163-4). Therefore unless it can be proved that the 3rd, 4th and 5th century catacombs and rock cut churches were still in use until and throughout the Arab period, Mayr's thesis can't be refuted scientifically. The stratigraphy at Tas-Silġ (Roman, Byzantine, Muslim and Christian places of worship in a series of destructions and reconstructions) may well be symptomatic of the general situation (Cagiano de Azevedo p. 88).

A most striking fact is the contrast between the total lack of above-ground constructions dating back to the pre-Muslim period and the extraordinary flowering of churches or chapels in groups of 2, 3, 4, 6 or even 12!, constantly multiplying up to the incredible figure of 430 in 1575 (Buhagiar, pp. 171, 179). At this point one wonders whether the reconstruction of churches in two traditional spots, Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi, could have been a mere coincidence or a perfectly conscious act representing the victory of a long-standing and long-suffering tradition. If Mayr's views were correct would not this revival seem spectacular? Would not such an intense missionary campaign have created new popular saintly figures? The political renewal has been personified in Count Roger in local folklore (Cassar Pullicino, pp. 99-100) but the religious heroes have continued to be Saint Paul and Saint Publius.

The key to this dilemma may lie in the depths of the population problem. Brown points out that "one of

the most striking features of this period in the Central Mediterranean is the extent of the migration which took place" (p. 84) but Wettinger is of the opinion that "it would be a mistake to suppose that Malta underwent any extensive colonization from Sicily or other Christian parts of Europe" (p. 203). The question is very delicate indeed because apart from the Celano affair of 1224 (Luttrell, pp. 37, 40), in spite of the reported expulsion of Muslims and continuous devastations and kidnapping till 1500 (Wettinger, p. 191) the population of the islands did increase considerably. Further research into the population problem may prove fruitful, especially if it is carried out by Dr. Wettinger who is the best equipped scholar in this field. One should also delve deeper into such indicative fields as comparative ethnology and dialectology, especially folklore and the material aspects of popular culture (domestic architecture and furnishings, costumes, tools and utensils, arts and crafts) and the relative terminology, as well as gesture and intonation. If this points towards the same closely bound ties with Sicily and Southern Italy as the political and ecclesiastical aspects expounded in *Medieval Malta's* articles, then one will have to give very careful consideration to the hypothesis of a truly massive but gradual immigration.

The gradual movement of Muslims out of the island has been proved: it is now accepted that 1090 is not the date for the total and immediate expulsion of the Arabs by Count

Roger as crystallized in tradition. If the Arabs were forced out in 1224 the interval may be considered as a sufficiently long period to permit slow immigration from Sicily and the Italian South with very gradual latinization of the race and romanization of the language. As the majority continued to speak the Arabic dialect introduced with the invasion of 870 and imposed on the small number of natives who refused to move out (this would account for the lack of a pre-Arabic substratum because the Berber element must have already been incorporated in the language of the conquerors and colonists), each new wave of immigrants must have conformed to the way of communicating of the majority. In this manner the process that has led to the present state of race and language in Malta may be traced down to its beginning in Medieval times: each new generation would progressively consist of more Latin speakers of the Semitic tongue which was in this way becoming Maltese. In my attempt at a comparative study of Maltese and the dialect of Pantelleria (*Journal of Maltese Studies*, n. 11, 1977) I have concluded that although Pantelleria is much closer to the Arab coast than Malta, the fact that its dialect is predominantly Sicilian and not Semitic is due to the smallness of the island, its meagre population (8,500 now) and the higher rate of immigration in proportion to the older stock. This must be seen as the determinant factor because the farmers of Pantelleria have much lexical material in com-

mon with their Maltese counterparts which proves that the situation must have been identical once (Sicilian Arabic; cfr. B.S.J. Isserlin in *J.M.S.*, n. 11, 1977, pp. 19-25). Just as Malta could absorb the influx better, Sicily, being much larger in size and population was relatively easier to romanize since the Muslims had succeeded in Arabicizing the coastal towns especially Palermo and the area near the Tunisian promontory, but not the hinterland.

The theory of gradual immigration, mainly but not exclusively from Sicily, with generations of Latin stock grafted on the few thousands of Muslim converts who remained after 1240, would help explain such contradictory factors as the conservation of the Semitic morphology, placenames and the basic nucleus of everyday and "country" terms on the one hand, and the complete embracing of the Christian faith, the predominantly Romance character of Maltese semantics and the loss of the more characteristically Semitic sounds in Maltese phonology, which has in fact moved closer to that of the dialects of Southern Italy. A careful analysis of the chronology and stratigraphy of the lexicon with particular attention to the different registers may yield concrete proof of such a type of immigration. An example that readily comes to mind is the fishing and maritime sector the terminology of which is predominantly siculo-italian (Aquilina, *Nomi di pesci*....., 1969) and which is certainly related to the fact that fishing was not very im-

portant in the Middle Ages (Wettinger, p. 195). The specialized terminology of the traditional crafts (woodwork, masonry, shoemaking, sewing, etc.) is prevalently Romance especially in the details.

A. T. Luttrell certainly deserves our gratitude for putting together such a worthwhile collection of studies. Moreover his introductory chapter must be considered as the starting point for study on Malta in the Middle Ages (and non-specialists and students may like to know that it is available separately), for he has succeeded in updating the work of the *Archivio Storico di Malta* group of the thirties, to whom, particularly to Valentini, credit is duly given by Luttrell and most of the other contributors. "Approaches to Medieval Malta" is much more than an ordinary introduction to a collection of essays: it is a serious attempt to coordinate them, showing a remarkable skill at synthesising the conclusions of each and to present them in a carefully objective picture. Luttrell's care is evident in such minor details as the rigorously accurate cross-references that link the overall view of the introductory article with each deeper look at the single topics in the others. Moreover, in each article one finds references to the others whenever the topics overlap. This stratagem really keeps the whole together. As I have already noted the bibliography is impressive and it's a pity that it has not been grouped together if only in alphabetical order. This would have helped in any further research which

Luttrell advocates and has been instrumental in bringing about by the deep interest he has aroused in Medieval Malta as quite a number of works that have been published after the publication of this volume by Wettinger, Vella, Cassar Pullicino, V. Borg, Luttrell himself (*Hal Millieri*) and others amply show.

J. M. Brincat

GIACOMO FARRUGIA, *Ismeria*, a cura di Franco Lanza, Catania, Società di Storia Patria per la Sicilia Orientale, 1977, 123 pp.; 3500 lire.

It is safe to say that the Maltese public knows next to nothing about the cultural life of Malta in the seventeenth century — except, perhaps, that what literature there was almost invariably happened to be written in Italian. At best, Gian Francesco Abela's *Descrittione di Malta* of 1647 might be known. In the inter-war years of the present century and slightly before, scholars and others interested in the past Italian culture of our islands became interested in the poetry and prose written here during the long period of the Order's rule, and a couple of seventeenth century works were published. Cagliola's *Le Disavventure Marinaresche* was issued by Dr. Giovanni Curmi in *Malta Letteraria* in 1929 and separately as well. Prof. V. Laurenza, occupying the same chair of the University of Malta now held by Prof. F. Lanza, published a study and extracts of Enrico Magi's 'Dafne' and 'Rime' in *Archivum Melitense* some years before, proceeding

to a definitive study and publication of the *Dafne*, a pastorale, in *Archivio Storico di Malta* in 1932-33, and separately in 1936 by the *Regia Deputazione per la Storia di Malta*. R. Briffa wrote a study 'Due commedie di Carlo Magri' in *Athenaeum Melitense* in 1926, and Domenico Magri's Voyage to Mount Lebanon was published again in its original Italian version. All this was also accompanied with examples of eighteenth century writings and other documents, memoirs, etc., mainly of a historical character.

The plot of *Ismeria*, a work meant for the stage, is built round the legendary stubborn refusal of three knight captives of the sultan of Egypt during the siege of Ascalon in Palestine in the twelfth century to abandon their faith. Neither blandishments nor punishments had any effect on them. As a final ruse to break down their resistance, the sultan sent them *Ismeria*, his own daughter, to win them over to Islam by the use of all her wiles. Instead, however, she was herself much impressed by their fortitude; and the miraculous descent, borne down by angels, of a small statue of Our Lady into their midst finally clinched the matter. By divine assistance the whole four of them were able to escape out of Egypt, finding themselves in a trice wandering about out in the French countryside near to the town of Liesse, where they left the little statue. The church of *Il-Madonna ta' Liesse* was one of the most venerated churches of Valletta during the times of the Order,

and the devotees of Our Lady of Liesse were to be found in several other localities abroad.

The story had already been dealt with by chroniclers and antiquarian historians of the Order, and several accounts were also published abroad starting with one by Simone Calvarin in 1555. In a scholarly introduction, Prof. Lanza lists them all and shows in particular that stories of knightly prowess formed a major subject of the numerous poems and other literary works of the time. Other important subjects were those concerning the life of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Order, and those connected with the coming of St. Paul to Malta. He has up-dated the text slightly in consonance with the modern usage of Italian orthography, specifying all his changes in a preliminary note, but has left largely untouched the curious snatches of Neapolitan Italian uttered by the slave Cemmino and by the devils masquerading as slaves.

Though our seventeenth century writers mostly wrote in Italian, they were frequently surprisingly widely travelled men. Enrico Magi studied philosophy at Aix en Provence, where G. F. Bonamico also studied. The latter subsequently travelled to Paris, the Spanish Netherlands, the Low Countries and Germany. Attard de Vagnolis, the author of some of the earliest known Italian poetry from Malta, was ordained priest at Graz in Austria before becoming parish priest of Qormi. Giacomo Farrugia (ca. 1641-1716), after studying philo-

sophy and theology in Malta, went over to Naples to study law. G. F. Abela, the historian and Vice-Chancellor of the Order, had studied jurisprudence at the university of Bologna and travelled on diplomatic missions to France and Spain. Both Magri brothers spent long periods of their lives abroad. Salvatore Imbroli, prior and historian of the Order, and his nephew Carlo Micallef, who continued Imbroli's history, also studied abroad. They all belonged to a republic of letters much wider than our shores.

G. Wettinger

T. MARCON, *Augusta 1940-43. Cronache della piazzaforte*, Mendola Press, Augusta (Sicily), 1977, 208 pp. including bibliography and index; illus.

This is the story of the civilian population and the military stronghold of the Sicilian town of Augusta during the war years 1940-1943. In many ways the story of this Sicilian fortress is of special interest to Malta, as Augusta was the southernmost Italian naval port originally aimed to harass enemy shipping in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean. Though Augusta served to harbour a small number of destroyers, minelayers, torpedo boats, seaplanes and other small craft, the Italian naval force was withdrawn early in the war. This dejected both the civilian population as well as the defenders who had hardly any means of stopping sneaking British aerial and sea attacks, even though these were rare and hardly comparable to

the Italian and German attacks on Malta. Augusta was also the place from where the unsuccessful E-boat attack on Malta and the equally unsuccessful landing of Borg Pisani and Giuseppe Guglielmi originated.

With the retreat of the Afrika Korps along the African littoral, panic struck the city and the stronghold. The civilian population deserted the city and found shelter in the hinterland. Augusta had no landward defences and both German and Italian defenders either retreated or simply melted away, leaving only a skeleton force behind. The 8th Army landings in Sicily, including a landing in Augusta itself, were practically unopposed and the city was turned into a base for reinforcements, food and ammunition. A hastily collected reinforcement of German and Italian forces sent to the area from Southern Italy provided sporadic opposition to the advancing British army. More effective were the German and Italian raids (by sea as well as by air) on the city of Augusta itself and on the ships that were plying in and out of the harbour carrying men, armaments and supplies. But nothing could stop the British advance. The fame of the 8th Army advanced before it along the east coast of Sicily.

Signor Tullio Marcon has been able to narrate the history of this stronghold objectively by consulting a number of war histories and libraries including the Historical Office of the Italian Army, the Historical Office of the Italian Navy, the Historical Office of the Italian Air Force, the Naval

Historical Branch of the British Ministry of Defence, the British Public Records Office, the Historical Division of the United States Air Force and the Deutsche Dienststelle of the Federal Republic of Germany. Photographs have been supplied by the various Italian War Historical Offices, the Imperial War Museum (UK) and the Historical Office of the Royal Australian Air Force. The civilian side of the story was collected from the records of the municipality of Augusta, diaries and eye-witness accounts. This aspect of the history of Augusta, and the able manner in which it is blended with the history of the port, is the chief asset of the book and makes it a veritable history of the city of Augusta. I must say I enjoyed reading the book tremendously and I consider that it should be a valuable addition to anyone interested in the history of Malta during the same period as well.

J. Zammit Mangion

Across Cultures. Festschrift edition of *Journal of Maltese Studies*, No. 11, 1977, Malta University Press, 144 pp. 50c.

Questo numero speciale del *Journal of Maltese Studies* (fondato nel 1961) è un volume collettaneo di studi linguistici in onore del professor G. Aquilina, che l'anno scorso ha lasciato, per raggiunti limiti di età, la cattedra di Lingua e Letteratura Maltese presso la locale università, cattedra da lui ricoperta, con lodevole impegno bisogna dire, sin dal lontano 1937. Il volume è edito a cura di

Daniel Massa, con il titolo alquanto pomposo di *Attraverso le Culture*. Helmut Lüdtke contribuisce un saggio teorico intitolato "Epistemological Remarks on Language Change and Language Universals", destinato probabilmente a suscitare vivo interesse come già altri articoli del noto linguista tedesco, a partire dal citatissimo *Die strukturelle Entwicklung des romanischen Vokalismus*, del 1956. Vittore Pisani, uno dei più illustri studiosi di linguistica storica, scrive su "Etimologie di voci italiane inizianti per s-" e propone etimologie di *sbirciare*, *sbronzare*, *sbruffare*, *scampare*, *scaracchiare*, *scaraventare*, *scarpa*, *schiccherare*, *sgomentare* e *sgominare*, respingendo alcune etimologie proposte da Giacomo Devoto. Giovan Battista Pellegrini, altro illustre studioso italiano di linguistica storica e ormai specialista della *Romania Arabica*, tratta di "Santa Nefissa nella Letteratura Italiana del '500", illustrando da par suo l'identità di questa 'santa' o *sayyida* musulmana, per molto tempo creduta finzione immaginaria di scrittori italiani del Cinquecento. Giovanni Oman, noto arabista, scrive su "I termini arabi relativi alla sogliola nel Mediterraneo". B S J Isserlin, della università di Leeds, propone alcune rapide, ma interessantissime, osservazioni su "Sicilian Arabic and Maltese: Some Remarks on their Phonetic Interrelations", rilevando la dissimilarità, già in epoca medioevale, fra il maltese e l'arabo di Sicilia. Giuseppe Brincat, promettente italinista, nell'articolo "Malta e Pantelleria: Alla ricerca di un sostrato comu-

ne", appoggiandosi ai lavori di Tropea sul pantesco, mette in rilievo i punti di contatto, soprattutto a livello lessicale, fra il maltese e l'elemento arabo (magrebino) del pantesco. Mons. Carmelo Sant scrive su "Protestant Maltese Bible Translation 1870-1872", interessante continuazione di un bel lavoro pubblicato nel 1975 relativamente al periodo 1810-1850. Pier Cachia, docente di letteratura araba alla Columbia University di New York, tratta di "Mustafa Ibrahim 'Ajaj, a Giant of Egyptian Popular Literature". Ladislav Drozdik, dell'università di Bratislava, scrive su "Three Types of Inter-systemic Restatement in Arabic", e padre André Louis, profondo conoscitore della cultura araba moderna, tratta il tema "Famille et Vie Familiale à travers les Proverbes Tunisiens". Albert Borg, infine, presenta una breve nota intitolata "A Male-female Speech-habit Difference in Maltese Individuals: A Preliminary Comment", sul diverso uso dell'inglese e del maltese da parte dei due sessi. Il volume è ben stampato, ma gli errori del proto, purtroppo, abbondano.

G. Mangion

DAVID ABULAFIA, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd Series Volume IX, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. xvii - 310, 2 maps; £14.50.

The sources for Maltese history between 1090 and 1194 are indubitab-

ly scanty, yet it is now increasingly accepted that, despite Roger the Norman's raid in 1090, twelfth-century Malta remained predominantly Muslim in religion and culture; that Latin trade and the Roman church obtained a tenuous foothold only towards the end of the century; and that effective Christianization came later still. Malta was never "Norman", except in a distant and indirect political sense, and the turning point in the process of Latinization came, through a series of Genoese Counts of Malta, only after Norman rule in Sicily had collapsed. Such interpretations are advanced in various contributions, including D. Abulafia, "Henry, Count of Malta, and his Mediterranean Activities: 1203-1230," contained in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. A. Luttrell (London, 1975). One of Abulafia's sources has since been given an expanded dimension in J. Brincat, "Le Poesie 'Malesi' di Peire Vidal: 1204-5," *Melita Historica*, vii no. 1 (1976), which provides some extra information and emphasizes local prosperity and patronage during an uncharacteristic period in which Malta was ruled from Malta; incidentally, Brincat (p. 65) wrongly gives the Genoese Guglielmo Grasso, not "Grosso", as the son of Margarito of Brindisi. On the whole there are only limited chances that new texts will emerge, but excavation must eventually shed more light on Muslim Malta and its overseas contacts, while a study of the coins which is now in preparation may reinforce the Sicilian

connection emphasized by the twelfth-century geographer al-Idrisi. For the rest, the Mediterranean context is crucial, and economic developments in Sicily and further north, particularly in Genoa, are now considered in David Abulafia's important thesis. Still awaiting attention are the commercial relations between Sicily and Africa for which Abulafia indicates various untapped sources.

The newer interpretation seeks first to establish what can reasonably be ascertained about Malta itself, and then to interpret such data against the widest possible background. The older approach was to fit real or supposed facts concerning "Norman" Malta into a Sicilian pattern. Even if the latter procedure were methodologically acceptable, it would still involve the historian of Malta in a process of historiographical revision, for historians of Sicily now emphasize not Norman tolerance or Norman innovation, but the repressive aspects of Norman government, the conservative policies which often left Muslim populations for long largely undisturbed: cf. S. Tramontana, "Aspetti e problemi dell'insediamento normanno in Sicilia," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia Normanna* (Palermo, 1973), and for a more general treatment M. del Treppe, "Medioevo e Mezzogiorno: appunti per un bilancio storiografico, proposte per un'interpretazione" in *Istituzioni e società nella storia d'Italia: Forme di potere e struttura sociale in Italia nel Medioevo*, ed. G. Rossetti (Bologna, 1977).

This is not the place for any detailed critical analysis of Abulafia's researches or of their somewhat strained arrangement within a partly ideological thesis which confronts an agrarian Mezzogiorno with an industrialized North, as if twelfth-century Palermo was bound to become more "agricultural" than Genoa, Venice or Pisa. The author is evidently aware that the search for origins, however cautious, involves the dangers of reading history backwards. The city-states of Northern Italy certainly evolved attitudes and techniques which did not develop in the South, but that was a matter of geography and sea-power, of foreign colonialisms, of communal institutions, of capital investment and of other often highly intangible factors, rather than of industry as such; and the whole Mediterranean world, not just the Mezzogiorno, was eventually to be left behind. Furthermore, a complete treatment of these problems demands investigations of numerous other developments centering on the emergence of the *latifondo*: cf. H. Bresc, "Histoire et idéologie aux origines du 'problème méridional': à propos de quelques congrès," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Moyen Age — Temps Modernes*, Lxxxv (1973). This debate, in any case, has little direct bearing on the history of late-Muslim Malta, which calls for facts more than theories. Though most diligently mustered, Abulafia's sources are slender. Only the Genoese notarial contracts permit even a somewhat uncertain assessment of the real trad-

ing operations which lay behind the generalities of commercial treaties and biased chroniclers. For such reasons, Abulafia's broad hypotheses inevitably remain debatable, but his detailed considerations constitute an important contribution which must be fundamental to an understanding of Malta's Mediterranean position.

The Genoese associated their own maritime expansion with Norman conquests in Sicily and North Africa. Malta lay within this zone but its conquest in 1090 was not sustained, for the Normans were generally stronger on land than at sea and Genoese seapower had not yet been implicated on the Maltese islands, which were on the route to Tripoli rather than to Tunis. A Sicilian royal grant to Savona of 1127/8, which spoke of *totum mare quod est a Nu[mid]ia usque ad Tripolim et totum mare et totam terram que inter nos et eos sunt* (p. 65), perhaps reflected an extension of interests towards Tripoli and therefore towards Malta, which was again conquered by the Normans in 1127. Genoa's interests, furthered through a curious but effective blend of personal initiatives and public policies, were in the commerce and grain of Sicily itself and in its own Levantine trade-routes, as well as in North Africa. Genoese contacts with Sicily in 1127 coincided with Norman preparations for an African campaign and with the second Norman conquest of Malta. Genoa's major treaty with Sicily came in 1156, the year in which, coincidentally, a Norman Bishop of Malta, albeit a non-

resident one, is first reliably documented. In 1162, however, the Genoese switched to an alliance with the German emperors. Genoa's trade in Sicily continued despite this new entente, just as its commerce in Tunis outlasted the end of Sicilian control there in 1160, but when Norman rule in Sicily itself eventually crumbled in 1194, some Genoese profited, under German protection, from the ensuing power vacuum. They had long been infiltrating the whole Central Mediterranean market area and they soon established a base on the southern fringe of the Sicilian kingdom at Malta, where a series of Genoese Counts began to bring the island permanently within the Christian, Latin sphere of influence.

Anthony Luttrell

S. M. HASLAM, P. D. SELL & P. A. WOLSELY, *A Flora of the Maltese Islands*, Malta University Press, 1977, pp. Lxxi-560, paper, 8vo. 70 plates with about 450 line drawings. Price: £M3.50.

This is the first complete flora of the Maltese Islands since J. Borg's *Descriptive Flora of the Maltese Islands* (1927), recently reprinted by O. Koeltz.

The opening chapters include information on geography, topography, climate, soils, vegetation and other physical aspects. A good proportion of the information given here is original. There is also a useful section on the history of the study of the Maltese flora, but although the information here is essentially accurate, it

leaves the reader with the impression that hardly any work was done in this field in the period between the two floras.

The flora includes descriptions of about 1,130 species (of which some 160 are commonly cultivated plants). Apart from the author's own observations, the records have been based mostly on the work of Grech-Delicata (1853); Sommier & Caruana-Gatto (1915); Borg (1927); G. Lanfranco (1955, 1969) and Kramer & Westra (1972). The way in which the writers quote the records is inconsistent since they fail to acknowledge a number of records given by the above and other authors. Thus they fail to quote Sommier & Caruana-Gatto for 200 records, G. Lanfranco for about 70, Kramer & Westra for 14. Only about a dozen of Borg's records have been overlooked but the authors seem to ignore completely the existence of his *Third Supplement...* (1935) with the result that some half-dozen newly recorded species are left out of the flora.

The authors also ignore the existence of a number of important papers published in *The Maltese Naturalist*. Considering that the most recent insertion in their Bibliography is dated 1975 it works out that 9 of the relevant papers appearing between 1970 and 1974 have been disregarded. It is evident that the authors had access to this periodical since they cite two papers from it. This resulted in the omission from the flora of more than 40 species and in the failure to correct old records in the light of new

information (e.g. *Centaurea pullata* and *Gaudiniopsis macra* which should be replaced).

The status given to the plants included in the flora also shows a number of inconsistencies. Thus a number of cultivars and hybrids of *Narcissus* which very occasionally escape from cultivation are given a full treatment. Conversely such important taxa as *Enarthrocarpus pterocarpus*, *Polygonum equisetiforme* and *Nicotiana longiflora* are relegated to a brief mention. Various doubtful records appearing in the old floras have been included here without comment while many validly recorded and confirmed species in the recent papers of Kramer & Westra, E. Lanfranco and Silverwood (all cited in the Bibliography) have been left out of the flora completely and arbitrarily. Among victims of such treatment are *Polygonum patulum*, *Chenopodium ficifolium*, *Ononis alopecuroides* (a frequent plant), *Cephalaria syriaca*, *Rumex obtusifolius* (common) and *Rumex sanguineus*.

Some of the genera receive a poor treatment. Thus only four out of at least eight species of *Rumex* and only five out of nine species of *Amaranthus* are recorded. *Andropogon distachyus* must have been omitted by oversight since this is common and well known. The authors also failed to take into consideration a number of recent revisions of genera such as those of Runemark, Pignatti and Steinberg for *Parapholis*, *Phagnalon* and *Adonis* respectively, all of which bear on the Maltese plants. They mis-

quote Sommier & Caruana-Gatto claiming that according to S. & C. G., *Cerastium brachypetalum* is more frequent than *C. glomeratum* whereas S. & C.G. actually claim the reverse.

On the credit side I should mention the inclusion of four new records: *Carex spicata*, *Origanum onites*, *Myriophyllum verticillatum* and *Paspalum dilatatum*. Some of the misidentifications appearing in the older floras have been put right. These include *Fraxinus angustifolia*, *Carex otrubae*, *Onopordum argolicum* and *Aster squamatus*, replacing *F. excelsior*, *C. vulpina*, *O. sibthorpiatum* and *A. subulatus* respectively. Other positive features include the incorporation of a very useful glossary and the very low price which brings this relatively vast work within everybody's reach.

The illustrations are generally very well executed and accurately display the character of the plants they portray. It is a pity that as a result of the quality of printing and reduction, some of the diagrams have lost clarity. It is also unfortunate that some of the diagrams represent plants other than those which they are meant to portray. Thus "*Galium aparine*" is *Rubia peregrina* (which features twice in the same plate); "*Vicia tetrasperma*" is *V. leucantha*; "*Frankenia levis*" is *F. pulverulenta*; "*Chenopodium album*" is *C. opulifolium*. The names of *Ferula communis* and *Foeniculum vulgare* have been switched (printer's error?).

The authors have given new Maltese and English names to some of the species. I do not personally agree

with inventing new vernacular names where they do not exist but if it has to be done, this should be the responsibility of a board of botanists and linguists and not decided arbitrarily. Some of the new names are impractical, e.g. *Widen il Gurdien Idellek* (*Cerastium glomeratum*); *Kittien tal-Imharbat* (*Linum strictum*) and *Xnejn inhaxlet* (sic) (*Trifolium campestre* & *scabrum*). Calling the Autumnal *Scilla autumnalis*: *Ghansal tax-Xitwa* (transl. "Winter Squill") is misleading. *Silla Qatranija* for *Psoralea bituminosa* is superfluous since this plant already enjoys at least two vernacular names. Some of the new English names are not much better, e.g. *Bloody Broomrape* (*Orobanche sanguinea*). It is strange then that some well-established Maltese names have been omitted, e.g. *Tuffieh is-Serp* (*Solanum luteum*) and *Ghallis* (*Notobasis syriaca*).

In spite of the numerous technical faults outlined, this book is still valuable when considered simply as an identification guide. The incorporation of keys and the diagrams, especially the details given of the legumes of the many *Medicago* species and the flowers of *Ophrys* would make this book much easier to use than Borg's *Flora*. I urge anybody interested in identifying Maltese plants to get the book. I cannot help mentioning that had the authors taken the trouble to consult people actively working on the Maltese flora, all the technical faults mentioned could very easily have been averted.

Edwin Lanfranco

VICTOR MALLIA-MILANES, "Some Aspects of Veneto-Maltese Trade Relations in the XVIIIth Century", *Studi Veneziani*, XVI, 1974, pp. 503-553. "Malta and Venice in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Consular Relations", *Studi Veneziani*, XVII-XVIII, 1975-76, pp. 265-320.

The questions discussed in "Some Aspects..." relate to Veneto-Maltese "interdependence in matters of trade and other related services" soon after the establishment of three intimately related institutions in the course of the eighteenth century — the Maltese consulate in Venice, the Venetian consulate in Malta and a Venetian Ministry in Malta in the person of Massimiliano Buzzaccarini Gonzaga. These include such aspects as Malta's trade potentiality as viewed by Buzzaccarini Gonzaga, attempts to conclude a bilateral trade agreement, the Order's principle of neutrality, Grandmaster Pinto's design for the setting up of Venetian factories in Malta, the delicate grain and timber trade, Venetian merchant shipping in Malta and Malta's strategic significance to Venice in the Republic's relations with Barbary Regencies. Together these questions constitute what Mallia-Milanes calls "a study of the gradual process of mutual exploitation of the good relations" prevailing between Venice and Malta.

In his second study ("Malta and Venice..."), the author examines the system behind Maltese consular establishments overseas and foreign consulates in Malta in "its eighteenth century stage of development in an

attempt to arrive at a comprehensive view of Veneto-Maltese consular relations". The paper is in two parts: "The Maltese Consulate in Venice" and "The Venetian Consulate in Malta". The former is a revised and enlarged version of a paper which the author had published in 1971 in *Melita Historica* (V, 4, pp. 321-337). "The Venetian Consulate in Malta" is a threefold comparative study of the Order's "unconventional practice and highly peculiar attitude" towards the foreign consul in Rhodes and in Malta, of the Venetian consulate in Malta in relation to other consulates on the Island, and of the vaguely termed *Venetian* consul in Malta before 1755 and the *truly* Venetian consul in Malta after that date. The theme is scientifically approached within the broad framework of central Mediterranean history in general and as an integral part of the Venetian Republic's "rehabilitation policy" in particular.

The two papers, both scrupulously documented, are an important contribution, indeed an essential one, not only to the commercial and economic history of Malta but also to key aspects of Venetian history and Venetian historiography.

Louis J. Scerri

ALEXANDER BONNICI, *Il-Matriċi Kolleġġjata ta' l-Assunta u l-Ewwel Parroċċi ta' Għawdex*, Gozo 1975, pp. 136.

This study is a sane, readable and thoroughly informative piece of work, marked by an academic objectivity

and a meticulous regard for strict documentary evidence, both local and foreign. In comparison, one can put all previous and contemporary publications on the subject, including Wettinger's *Il-Graġja Bikrija tal-Knisja Matriċi t'Għawdex 1435-1551*, on an undergraduate introductory reading list.

The book begins with two brief chapters. The first is on the early writers on the history of the church in Gozo, whom, with the exception of Ciantar, the author considers of no great historical value. The second attempts the dubious task of tracing the origins of the earliest church in Gozo.

Chapter III evaluates the Church of the Assumption's claim to precedence over all other parish churches in Gozo. The key document in question, i.e. the will of the Gozitan Nuncio de Episcopo, dated 12 October 1435 and preserved, according to Wettinger, in the Notarial Archives, Valetta (R. 399/7, f. 276v), is analysed critically in the process. It is the earliest document which refers to the Assumption as the Mother Church in Gozo. It implies also that by then it was normal usage to refer to that church by the name of *Matrice*. But since when still remains obscure; so, too, does our knowledge of whether this parish church was "the *Matrice* of Gozo" in the whole judicial sense of the term. No documentary evidence has so far been produced to prove that before 1678 — when Xewkija (and others later) was dismembered from the Assumption and given the

status of parish, cfr.ch.IX-X — any church or churches had ever sprung from her. This does not imply, says Bonnici, that the Assumption was not the oldest parish church, but simply that the other early parishes in Rabat (Gozo) had not been her offshoots.

The next chapter gives a detailed and precise definition — essential as a basic term of reference — of the Latin phrase *terra et insula* ("the city and island") with reference to Gozo. In chapters V, VI and VII the author casts "a cursory look at the four parish churches in Rabat" — *San Gorg, Savina, San Gakbu* and the *Assunta* — during the 16th and 17th centuries in the light of Duzina's Apostolic Visit of 1575 and Bishop Molina's of 1680. In a later chapter (XIII) and with an accelerated narrative pace, Bonnici passes a few concluding remarks on the Mother Church and "all the other parishes together at the dawn of the eighteenth century".

This monograph is a serious study in the history of the early church in Gozo. Its only limitation is that Gozitan society, within which the churches grew and gained in their relative importance and stature, has been (wilfully?) neglected. One looks forward to the publication of Wettinger's promised study in the social and economic aspects of Gozitan life during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Victor Mallia-Milanes

Heritage. An Encyclopedia of Maltese Culture and Civilization, Malta,

Interprint, 1977, nos. 1-6. Published by Midsea Books Ltd., Klabb Kotba Maltin (3A Strait Street, Valletta); 15c per issue.

Heritage is the latest in a series of bold ventures by the newly founded publishing house, which originally started as a book club aimed at providing the Maltese public with suitable reading material and gradually widened its scope and activities so as to cater for the publication of books on Malta in the English language. The success encountered so far by the *Klabb* has come as a happy surprise to most of us. Part of this success is due, I think, to the know-how and good taste of those who are responsible for the printing and production of most of the *Klabb's* publications. With the introduction of new establishments and sophisticated techniques over the last ten years, there has been considerable progress in the art of printing in Malta, (though, of course, costs have soared and it is no longer easy for one to be one's own publisher). *Heritage* is a case in point. I think it can be safely said that, typographically, it is the finest example of periodical literature published in Malta to date. Having said this, however, I must add that *Heritage* may well be labouring under a dilemma which presumably bedevils the whole activity of *Klabb Kotba Maltin*. It is not easy to strike a balance between what is 'popular' and what is 'scientific', between quantity and quality, between business and culture. I am afraid that the *Klabb*, in its praiseworthy effort to

reach a wider public, has published quite a few books which were not worth publishing because they were devoid of literary or 'scientific' value. Similarly, *Heritage*, to keep up the tempo of a monthly publication, might suffer from hurried decisions as regards selection of contributions and their authors, insufficient and uncritical proof-reading and other shortcomings. A more judicious and exacting editorial board could be the answer. An enterprise such as *Heritage* ought to depend on tutored minds. If standards are maintained, this review, which has already secured a very wide readership, can become a veritable cultural catalyst in this Island. If standards were to drop, then it would become — God forbid! — a monthly document of mediocrity and parochialism! To go back to the 'design' of the magazine. Much as I admire the documentary illustrations so aptly and lavishly included in the text, I must say I do not see the point of having so many hand-drawn illustrations whose main purpose seems to be a prop to the readers' imagination. Such illustrations are worth publishing only if they are highly original and artistic: otherwise adult readers are not to be treated like schoolchildren! The true-to-life depiction of 'Archbishop Caruana disguised as a hawker selling bananas and oranges in Mexico City' on p. 26 of *Heritage* 2 lacks justification. Similarly, precious space could have been saved if the authors' biographical note on cover page 2 of each and every issue were omitted. It is not

really important to know that a certain contributor "was employed for sixteen years as clerk with the British Armed Forces and is now employed in a similar capacity by the Maltese Government", and that "for many years he was the secretary of the Societa (sic) Don Filippo Borgia of Birkirkara and in 1974 was elected President of the same Societa (sic)". If at all, these biographical notes (thank God no photos were included!) are to be kept to a bare minimum.

G. Mangion

The Armed Forces of Malta Journal, Malta, Lux Press, October 1977, No. 28, pp. 57-84, illus., 50c.

This journal — former titles: *The Royal Malta Artillery Journal*, 1969-1971; *The Malta Land Force Journal*, 1971-73 — is published twice a year, in April and October. It includes news items, letters and articles of interest to members of the Malta Armed Forces, whose official organ this is. Articles are almost invariably of a historical nature, though most of them are short, if interesting, contributions which lay no claim to scientific value inasmuch as they are not the result of research work. This notwithstanding, the journal is of undoubted interest to historians. The present issue introduces the first instalments of two historical works which can later be assembled into book form. These are: *Malta under the Cottoners (1660-1680)*, by Winston L. Zammit, and *Malta: Diary of a War (June 1940-August 1945)*, by Michael Galea. Both articles are

highly readable. The *Diary of a War* is collected mainly from contemporary local newspapers, I suppose. There seems to be, in this first instalment, a certain partiality for the pro-British *Malta Chronicle*, but it may be just a coincidence! *Malta under the Cottoners* presupposes a considerable amount of research, but its style is discursive (see for ex. the last paragraph of Chapter 3) and hardly compatible with a scientific approach. The editor and 'moving spirit' of the journal is Brig. A. Sammut-Tagliaferro, author of the *History of the Royal Malta Artillery*.

G. Mangion

Malta Library Association Yearbook 1975 & 1977; respectively, Veritas Press, 31 pp., 50c, and Union Press, 43 pp., 70c.

The first volume contains the fifth and sixth annual reports by the then chairmen J. Montalto and A. F. Sapienza, respectively. There is also a useful and updated directory of libraries in Malta, compiled by Lillian Sceberas. Here is the entry regarding the Royal Malta Library, now the Malta National Library: "36 Old Treasury Street, Valletta; 26585 [telephone no.]; 1555 [year when library was established]; P [Public, National Library]; 335,000 [stock in no. of volumes]; 0, 1, 2, 3, 33, 34... [areas of interest], Melitensia, Archive Collection, Rare books and binding; 1st October to 15th June Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays: 8.15 to 5.45 (¾ hour lunch break), Saturdays: 8.15 to 1.15, 16th June to 30th Sep-

tember: 8.15 to 1.15 (except Wednesdays); Vincent A. Depasquale B.A., LL.D. [librarian]". According to the same article the Malta University Library has 125,000 books, the Beltis-sebh Public Lending Library has 60,000, the MCAST Library 13,000, the College of Education Library (now at MCAST) has 16,000, the British Council Library 19,620, the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura* 2000, the USIS Library 800, the Gozo Public Library 61,000, the Victoria Boys' Secondary School Library 10,000.

The 1977 Yearbook carries the seventh and eight annual reports by the MLA chairman Paul Xuereb, and articles by Trevor Zahra on "Books for Children in Maltese" and Victor Fenech on "The production of children's books with special reference to Malta". These both make very interesting reading. Fenech's is particularly to the point.

"It is the first time in our history that a body of librarians with the minimum of resources has kept up the pressure for a better deal in bringing the book to the people". So writes the editor, Fr A. Sapienza, in the foreword to the latest issue of the journal. The 60-odd members of the Association have actually done quite a lot to enhance the prestige and efficiency of their profession. They have set up sub-committees, published papers and yearbooks, established contacts with Library associations overseas, promoted the award of scholarships in Librarianship, organised the National Book Week since 1975, held in-service courses for

teacher-librarians, created an *esprit de corps* among themselves. We all appreciate their effort, and hope to see more efficient libraries (the recent appointment of school librarians is a very welcome development) and better-stocked bookshops functioning in our midst. Even today there is no real substitute for the printed word as a tool for the dissemination of ideas. A survey of Maltese children's (and adults') reading habits, as suggested by Mr T. Zahra in the above-mentioned article, would be extremely useful.

G. Mangion

V. FENECH, *A Bibliography of Children's Literature in Malta*, Malta University Press 1976, 18 pp., cover design by J. Mallia. Published by the Malta Library Association, 35c.

A neat, handy, classified list of children's books, compiled by one who has had training and experience in this field. A welcome addition to our *Melitensia*. Entries in this compilation are split into six separate sections: Reading in stages, Narrative (Original), Narrative (Translations/Adaptations), Bible Stories, People and Places, Poetry. Textbooks, "unless story books", have been purposefully omitted. I don't really understand why. I expected to find Aldo Farini's *Fior del Mondo* and *Fiabe, tradizioni e leggende maltesi* duly included in the list. But then I found just one item — Anne Mangion's *Adventures from Other Lands*, Malta 1974 — which was not in Maltese. Trevor Zahra in *MLA Yearbook 1977* pays homage to Temi Zammit, Annibale

Preca, Xand Cortis, E.B. Vella, A.M. Galea as being those who have most contributed to establish Children's Literature in Maltese. Their names, with the exception of E. B. Vella, are not to be found in Fenech's list. Is it because their works were not actually written as children's literature, as Fenech seems to suggest on p. 3? What age is intended to be covered by the term 'children'? All items on the list belong to the 70s, with just a few dating back to the late 60s. But did the compiler deliberately fix a *terminus a quo*? It is a pity the compiler did not deem it fit to explain his methodology in the introduction. Otherwise the booklet is an eye-opener to those who are not aware of the great vitality that has characterised the compilation and production of Maltese literature (including textbooks like *Id-Denfil*) for children over the last ten years, thanks to the initiative of dedicated writers like Victor Fenech himself, J. J. Camilleri, Trevor Zahra, Pawlu Mifsud and publishers like Merlin Library and *Klabb Kotba Maltin*. It is to be hoped that there will be more books (and textbooks) for Maltese children, and with a Maltese setting, in English, Italian, French and eventually other languages. To love books, it is imperative that our children should find interesting books to read. Reading is so important for the development of one's ability to express oneself easily and clearly, orally and in writing, an ability on which much of one's success in life depends. The following quotation from Victor

Fenech's introduction finds me in complete agreement: "The Maltese are not exactly a reading nation, and it has been amply proved that parents who read produce children who read. Since the child is father of the man, we thus have a vicious circle which only a real and sustained programme of action can hope to overcome".

G. Mangion

A. F. SAPIENZA, *A Checklist of Maltese Periodicals and Newspapers in the National Library of Malta and the University of Malta Library*, Malta University Press, 1977, n.p.

Si tratta, come dice il titolo, di un catalogo di periodici e giornali esistenti nelle due maggiori biblioteche dell'Isola. L'autore è padre Sapienza, benemerito biblioteconomista nostrano. L'elenco comprende tutti i giornali — a parte quelli, presumibilmente pochi, inevitabilmente *échappé* al compilatore, e già prima ai bibliotecari — pubblicati a Malta, a partire dal *Journal de Malte* del 1798 fino a tutto il 1973. Vi sono inclusi ben 1222 titoli! Un numero incredibilmente alto di testate per una popolazione che, a metà del secolo scorso, raggiungeva sì e no le 130,000 unità. Ma fu, quello, il secolo delle nazionalità; delle rivoluzioni; dell'immigrazione politica, così forte e incisiva a Malta; del romanticismo, tendente ad avvicinare la cultura al popolo; di un imperialismo repressivo delle libertà politiche e costituzionali delle colonie; di ampia circolazione delle idee a causa delle migliorate vie di comunicazione marittima. Tutti questi elementi con-

tribuirono a far sorgere a Malta tanti e tanti giornali. Questo, della stampa periodica a Malta, è un argomento di indubbio interesse scientifico. Se è esatta la informazione ricevuta, è in corso di stampa un ampio lavoro sull'argomento da parte di Bianca Fiorentini, già benemerita, fra l'altro, per l'ottimo studio "Il giornalismo a Malta durante il Risorgimento Italiano", nel volume *Echi del Risorgimento a Malta* edito dalla "Dante" nel 1960. Sullo stesso argomento ha lavorato anche Dionisio Mintoff, autore di una tesi di laurea inedita, scritta nel 1971 e intitolata *Journalism in Malta*. Ed ora, questo catalogo per ordine alfabetico. Che il lavoro sia di grande utilità euristica è fuori dubbio. Che esso risponda a modesti intenti di limitata guida bibliografica, lo ammette candidamente l'autore nell'introduzione: "To determine the date of the last issue of several of these periodicals would have been a worthwhile exercise. Internal evidence is at times possible. But it would have involved the compilers in much more detailed study of the periodicals concerned than could be done in the time that was available". Alcuni titoli sono corredati di informazioni bibliografiche essenziali; altri, invece, fanno a meno anche di quelle. Nel caso dei giornali ottocenteschi, quelle brevissime informazioni sono prese di peso, quasi sempre, dal summenzionato studio di Bianca Fiorentini. In qualche caso, quei ragguagli, così scarni e rapidi, possono indurre il lettore in errore, in quanto si riferiscono ad una determinata fase della vita del gior-

nale anziché all'intero arco della sua esistenza. In altri rari casi, anche relativamente a giornali tuttora in corso di pubblicazione, l'informazione fornita non è esatta. Per fare qualche esempio: del *Ponte*, solo il primo n. fu pubblicato dal Gruppo Giovanile della "Dante"; e la pubblicazione di *Melita Historica* non è "irregular", ma annuale. Il valore della presente *Checklist* sta quasi unicamente nell'elenco dei titoli e nell'indicazione della reperibilità dei fascicoli nelle due biblioteche. A questo proposito è davvero inspiegabile come le due biblioteche non dispongano dell'intera collezione di riviste e giornali facilmente acquistabili, come per esempio le riviste tuttora vegete e vive, tipo *Melita Historica*. Si dice oggi che le biblioteche non devono star lì, inerti, come botteghe oscure, ad aspettare che vengano gli 'avventori', ma devono darsi da fare per attirare a sé i lettori e, se necessario, devono loro stesse andare incontro al popolo per costringerlo, quasi, a consumare il bene della cultura (ho visto, a Berna, attraenti e accessibili biblioteche a pian terreno, sparse per la città, frequentate da ragazzi, madri, operai intenti a leggere giornali e libri nei ritagli di tempo libero). Tanto meno possono pretendere, le nostre biblioteche, che vengano da sé libri e riviste!

G. Mangion

F. KRIER, *Le maltais au contact de l'italien: Etude phonologique, grammaticale et sémantique*, Hamburg, Helmut Buske Verlag, 1976, 150 pp.,

s.i.p.

Fernande Krier, lussemburghese, attualmente assistente di linguistica romanza all'università di Kiel, in Germania, aveva già pubblicato due studi sul maltese: "Analyse phonologique du maltais", *Phonetica*, 1975, pp. 103-129, e "Analyse syntaxique de la phrase nominale en maltais", *La Linguistique*, 1975, fasc. 2, pp. 93-116. Si tratta ora della pubblicazione della tesi di laurea elaborata sotto la guida di André Martinet, e dedicata agli influssi fonologici e morfosintattici dell'italiano sul maltese, con raffronti con l'italiano standard, il siciliano letterario, l'arabo classico e i dialetti tunisino (Kairouan) e libico (tripolitano). E' un argomento senz'altro interessante e originale, cui la Krier ha portato un contributo utilissimo, anche se certo suscettibile di approfondimento, come essa stessa riconosce. Non mancano inesattezze e 'cantonate' dovute forse ad una imperfetta conoscenza del maltese, nonché dell'italiano (a p. 95 sembra ignorare il costrutto /nel mezzo di/) e della dialettologia araba, triplice conoscenza necessaria per trattare la grammatica, soprattutto storica, del maltese. La Krier si basa soprattutto sui primi scritti di Aquilina (specie *The structure of Maltese*) e su un corpus di 868 vocaboli tolti da testi letterari e giornalistici, e s'appoggia a due informatori per la fonetica. A questo proposito, nuoce veramente l'abbaglio preso nella pronuncia maltese del nesso *eu*, che è reso sempre con *ou*, per cui si legge continuamente *loun*, *mizzou'gi:n*, *'l ouel*, *tassou*,

mout, *of'frou*, ecc., mentre solo in una ristretta zona portuale (Birgu-Kalkara) persiste tale pronuncia, unitamente all'altro idiotismo, ugualmente spiegato finora, rilevato però indirettamente dall'autrice, della manutenzione nella *q* maltese del suono della *qaf* dell'arabo classico. Si tratta per altro di una ricerca esclusivamente sincronica: "L'objectif essentiel est d'examiner à quel point une langue indo-européenne parvient à influencer une langue sémitique". E conclude che "les faits syntaxiques relevés prouvent nettement que le maltais, dont l'apparence est parfois très italienne, étant donné qu'un énoncé peut renfermer jusqu' à 30% de lexèmes italiens, n'en est pas moins un idiome arabe" (pp. 105-6). L'autrice insiste sul fatto che l'influsso italiano non abbia squilibrato il sistema morfosintattico del maltese, mentre ne avrebbe esteso e arricchito il lessico e la fonologia. In effetti tale squilibrio non appare perchè ormai il maltese ha una componente costitutiva romanza, dovuta al secolare, inevitabile interscambio tra lingua colta e lingua parlata. Non così pacifico e benefico appare l'influsso dell'inglese sul maltese: il 29 agosto scorso alla televisione maltese sentii parlare di /kemi:stri:a/ (al posto di /ki:mika/), ultima di una lunga serie di interferenze (non solo lessicali) dall'inglese che rischiano di scardinare il sistema della lingua, introducendo un particolarismo linguistico sfrenato; per cui aveva probabilmente ragione Humboldt a sostenere che la stabilità e ricchezza di una lingua richiedono

una massa sufficientemente ampia di parlanti.

G. Mangion

J. AQUILINA, *Maltese Linguistic Surveys*, Malta, Interprint, 1976, 216 pp. Published by the University of Malta. £M5.25.

E' una pubblicazione importante, da mettere in relazione alle due opere fondamentali di Aquilina, *The Structure of Maltese*, Malta 1973 e *Papers in Maltese Linguistics*, Malta 1970. La presente opera consiste di sedici saggi già pubblicati in Atti congressuali, riviste o miscellanee, e che vengono qui lievemente riveduti e aggiornati. Sono raggruppati in tre sezioni: linguistica, toponomastica e folklore. Ecco i titoli, con la data di presentazione o pubblicazione dei saggi stessi: *Linguistic Cross Currents in Maltese*, 1974; *A study in comparative Maltese and Arabic idioms*, 1971; *Maltese Christian words of Arabic origin*, 1972; *The Berber element in Maltese*, 1970; *Maltese Dialect Survey*, 1965; *Some dialect aspects of Maltese*, 1973; *Prepositional verbs in Maltese*, 1969; *L'arabo a Malta; La stratificazione del vocabolario marinarresco maltese*, 1966; *L'elemento lessicale italiano antico e moderno nel maltese*, 1974; *Maltese toponymic stratification*, 1966; *The hills of Malta and Gozo*, 1969; *Influenze arabe sulla toponomastica maltese*, 1961; *Comparative Maltese and Arabic Proverbs*, 1967; *Lexical material in Maltese folklore*, 1957; *A comparative study in lexical material relating to nicknames and surnames*, 1964. Nel saggio "Mal-

tese Dialect Survey" apparso dapprima in *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung*, Wiesbaden 1967-68, I, 19-30, Aquilina dà notizia di un'inchiesta dialettale da condursi a Malta (ora in fase avanzata di elaborazione) in collaborazione con un'équipe dell'università di Leeds, e discute inoltre la presenza a Malta e Gozo di un numero imprecisato di dialetti, e perfino di sotto-dialetti che si troverebbero sparsi nelle fattorie e capanne del contado. "The historic origin of these dialects must go back to the time when the islands were inhabited by family groups who moved from one village to another. Such an idea of perhaps originally nomadic migration can be based on the etymology of the Arabic verb... *raħal* [...]. The present Maltese dialects must be the residues of the different dialects spoken by the different migratory tribes or clans who settled down in different places at different times. These are the places which they called *irħula...*". Malta e Gozo — secondo Aquilina — pullulano di dialetti. E questi dialetti non sarebbero varietà parlate del codice lingua, cioè del maltese standard, come parlato dai maltesi oggi residenti nelle città, ma sistemi autonomi, geneticamente indipendenti seppur linguisticamente affini, sorti contemporaneamente in seguito al probabile insediamento nelle isole maltesi di diverse tribù migratorie possibilmente di origine nomadica: tanto si ricava, per esempio, dalla citazione sopra riportata. A parte il carattere ipotetico dei dati storici cui si fa riferimento, la condizione dialettologica

delle nostre isole come descritta da Aquilina, non mi convince. Pur accettando un'ampia definizione di 'dialetto' come uno strumento di comunicazione linguistica di ambito ed impiego demograficamente più ristretto che la 'lingua' (G. Berruto), mi pare che ci debba essere una consistente differenziazione perchè si possa parlare di dialetti, a maggior ragione se si intendono come autonomi nei confronti della lingua comune, come sono per esempio i dialetti italiani, ma non, secondo me, i 'dialetti' del maltese. La differenziazione tra le varietà parlate del maltese è marcata solo a livello fonologico, e ciò succede, mi pare, in distinti e distanti ambienti geografici e non certo tra un *razzett* e l'altro, come suggerisce Aquilina. A livello lessicale e semantico tale differenziazione è molto tenue, ed inesistente a livello morfosintattico. Per cui dubito che si possa, scientificamente, parlare di dialetto di Qala come diverso da quello di Xaghra, e di dialetto di Rabat (Malta) come diverso da quello di Birkirkara (p. 47). In Italia, dove la differenziazione e frammentazione dialettale è estremamente marcata, un milanese che parli meneghino non si farebbe capire a Bari, e un dialettologo piemontese non sarebbe compreso in Abruzzo. Non mi pare che sia analoga la situazione a Malta. Lo stesso Mikiel Anton Vassalli (1764-1829) chiamato in causa da Aquilina per avere per primo identificato cinque dialetti maltesi, distinguendoli su base geografica come dialetto delle città (che bisognava estirpare poichè rischiava di "rendersi il gergo il più

insano che mai si possa dare e peggiore della lingua Siciliana riguardo all'Italiana"), dialetto di Gozo e dialetti dei paesi bassi, dei paesi di mezzo e dei paesi alti, era spinto a tale concezione da esigenze preromantiche di nazionalismo linguistico, e del resto lui stesso ammetteva che tali dialetti "principalmente si distinguono dalla variazione della pronuncia". Giova ricordare che Malta e Gozo coprono un'area di appena 316 kmq.

G. Mangion

M. FSADNI, *Id-Dumnikani Maltin Fi Zmien il-Gwerra 1939-1945*, Progress Press 1977. Pp. 261; illus.

Fr. Mikiel Fsadni O.P. needs no introduction. He is one of the very few local scholars whose writings have made a really worthwhile contribution to Maltese studies. This book, the fourth in a series of important monographs on the history of the Dominican Order in Malta, is an interesting and often absorbing account of the activities of Dominican friars during the second World War. It is therefore different from his other publications which were chiefly concerned with late medieval and early modern history. It is also, on account of its subject matter, necessarily less academic and therefore more easily accessible to the general reader; and, because it is based principally on unwritten reminiscences, it dispenses with footnotes which feature so prominently in Fsadni's other books. This does not however detract from its value for it throws an important

light on the socio-religious aspects of the war years. To compensate for the absence of footnotes there is a detailed list of people interviewed and of manuscripts and other archive-material and books consulted; and the analytical index at the end facilitates its use by students and research workers.

Thanks primarily to Charles Boffa's book *The Second Great Siege, Malta 1940-43* (Malta, 1970) and the subsequent foundation of the hard working War Museum Association, the last decade has witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in the war and several books with a war-theme have been published or are in course of publication. The one under review is definitely one of the best. As Fr. Fsadni concedes in the introduction, the full story of the war in Malta has yet to be told. He has however contributed substantially towards this end by collecting experiences which would otherwise have been lost. There is much to recommend this approach. The war is still vividly remembered by thousands of people a great number of whom have interesting stories to tell and stimulating experiences to communicate. The work of recording them must start without delay or it may soon be too late. Already some of the people interviewed by Fr. Fsadni, such as Professor Seraphim Zarb, have passed away.

The book opens with a description of the Maltese Dominican Province in the immediate pre-war period. The community consisting of ninety-five

members including friars, lay brothers, students and simple novices, had three convents at Rabat, Valletta and Birgu, and a house at Sliema which was becoming increasingly important. Blissfully unaware of the dark clouds ahead, even though there were persistent rumours of an impending war, the Sliema Dominicans embarked in 1939 on an ambitious and costly building programme involving the modification and extensive enlargement of the beautiful church of Christ the Nazarene that had been entrusted to their care in 1909. The war did not deter them and in spite of the frequent air raids, rising costs, and increasing scarcity of necessary materials, they tenaciously carried on with the work bringing it to almost near completion in 1941 during one of the worse periods of the blitz. The church was subsequently hit several times and considerably damaged; it was the new technique of 'ferro-concrete' used successfully by Mr. Guzè Damato that probably saved the church from utter destruction. This fate befell the architecturally much more important church of the Virgin Annunciate at Birgu. On the eve of the outbreak of hostilities with Italy in June 1940 the Dominicans there were proudly preparing for the unveiling of Giovanni Battista Conti's dome paintings which were to crown the decoration of the church. Their sense of satisfaction was, however, short lived. The heavy blitz of 19th July turned the church and adjoining monastic building with its fine cloister into a heap of ruins. The attractive

bell tower escaped but was subsequently pulled down when the present church was built after the end of the war. Fr. Fsadni claims that it was structurally unsound and that its demolition was only undertaken on expert advice. It is indeed a pity it could not be saved. One of the book's most important chapters describes the artistic treasures lost at Birgu and other Dominican churches. The plates which illustrate it probably constitute the only surviving photographic record of these works of art.

The Dominicans experienced, on account of the situation of three of their houses in Malta's worst bombed areas the full brunt of the war. At Valletta where the crypt of their church sometimes served as an air-raid shelter for almost about a thousand people, they ministered to the needs of those who for various reasons could not join the exodus out of the city, some of whom led a nightmarish existence in the old railway tunnel and other rock-cut galleries such as *il-Mina s-Sewda* and the Yellow Garage. At Birgu during the first days of aerial bombardment people sought refuge in the Dominican cloister but they luckily soon found more secure shelters in the ditch round the fortifications where the friars together with the only two other priests Dun Pawl Galea and Dun Anton Caruana gave them all the assistance they could until their convent was razed to the ground in January 1941. They then opened a temporary house at Fleurs de Lys where they continued their pastoral

work in an almost military zone. The Sliema Dominicans did not abandon their flock and when on 26th December 1942 their house was completely destroyed they lived in a public shelter for several months until they could rent an alternative accommodation. At Rabat which became an important refugee centre, the Dominicans opened two wings of their large cloister which were divided into cubicles to give shelter to those who could not find other accommodation.

The Dominican Fathers continued meanwhile as far as possible to lead their cloistral life and attend to their choir and other duties. At the helm of the Order was the remarkable Irishman Fr. Nolan. An ascetic and a strict disciplinarian he was also a gifted leader who was instrumental in keeping the morale high during the long ordeal. He was above all an indefatigable worker who inspired his brother Dominicans to rise to the occasion. Some of them worked hard in District Committees and the A.R.P. while others gave brilliant service as military chaplains. Their vividly narrated experiences help capture the war atmosphere as few other books have succeeded in doing.

One hopes that Fr. Fsadni's work will provoke members of other religious orders to publish accounts of their war activities. This together with the collection of other experiences will help build for posterity a comprehensive picture of this momentous event in Maltese History.

Mario Buhagiar

MALTA HANDBOOK. A Department of Information Publication, Malta Government Printing Press, 1977, 240 pp., illus., 30c.

This handbook supplies essential, updated, official information on Malta, with concise descriptive articles (including statistics) on all Government Departments. This edition covers the 1977-78 period, and is well printed and illustrated (though of course there is ample room for improvement in this respect). It sells at the almost nominal price of 30c. Those who are interested in Malta and the Maltese should certainly obtain a copy of such a useful reference book. The contents are divided into the following main items: Malta and the Maltese; a brief historical outline; administration; social development; the economy; public services and communications; living in Malta; reference section; diary of events 1976. The cultural and historical items, though sound and balanced on the whole, would need revision in order to enhance their professional reliability. There are some odd, unsubstantiated, sweeping statements such as the following: "Towards the end of the ninth century the Arabs [...] affected the structure of Punic Maltese to a considerable degree. Up to the end of the Arab domination the structure of Maltese remained purely Semitic" (p. 13); "The legal system of Malta stems off from the doctrine of the separation of powers which was first clearly laid down in Malta by Sir Thomas Maitland in

1815, early during the British connection" (p. 41). G. Mangion

BOOKS AND ARTICLES
FOR REVIEW
ARE TO BE SENT TO
THE EDITOR.
THEY MUST DEAL WITH
SOME ASPECT OR OTHER
OF THE HISTORY OF
MALTA AND GOZO.
ALL SUCH PUBLICATIONS
RECEIVED — WITH RARE
EXCEPTIONS — WILL BE
THE OBJECT OF A
REVIEW OR SHORT NOTICE.
THE CHOICE OF
THE REVIEWER
IS THE RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE EDITOR.