

# ALBERTO PULLICINO: HIS ARTISTIC COMMISSIONS, LIFE, AND TIMES IN EIGHTEENTH - CENTURY MALTA

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In the last five years, nine large oil painted views of the Grand Harbour cities of Malta by Alberto Pullicino have appeared on the art markets in Paris and London. At first attributed to the Neapolitan school of view painters like Van Vitelli, and then to the influence of C.J. Vernet of France, Pullicino seemed to me very likely to be Maltese and possibly an older member of the same family to which Giorgio Pullicino was subsequently to belong, the latter being both a painter of Maltese views and an architect. The first four paintings had come from the Marquis de Norois - Turgot in 1983 and had hung in his Chateau de Manneville a Lantheuil, near Caen, since they were brought there by his ancestor, Le Chevalier Turgot.<sup>(1)</sup> The second group of five paintings was sold at Sotheby's in 1986 but their provenance has not been disclosed.<sup>(2)</sup>

All the paintings are about the same size, *circa* 60 x 130 cms, but they are from separate sets. Two of the second set are virtually identical to some of the first set although the other three are quite different. This suggests that both may be incomplete parts of even larger sets of views. A brief description of each painting will indicate their topographical importance but it should be emphasized that the set painted for Turgot demonstrates an appreciation of composition and the principles of perspective as well as a considerable facility in the medium of oil paint. Whatever the viewpoint and subject, these paintings are accurate landscape views not relatively stylised bird's eye plans like most of the earlier depictions of Malta, such as those hanging in Valletta at the entrance to the Fine Arts museum and in the Chamber of Commerce (but with the notable exception of William Schellincks<sup>(3)</sup>), nor the more amateur drawings that became common by the early nineteenth century.

*Set one.* One of these is inscribed on the back of its canvas 'Veue de lentre, du Grand Port de Malte peinte d'apres nature en Aout 1749 par Alberto Pullicino pour Le Chevalier Turgot'. (plate 1)

A. View of both Grand harbour and Marsamxett entries and showing Fort Ricasoli, Fort St Angelo, Fort St Elmo, Fort Manoel (built 1723-36) and Dragut Point from an elevated position out to sea. Entering the harbour is the fleet of the Order, including four sailing ships of the line and three galleys, and on the left a ship flying a pale blue flag. In the right foreground is a small ship of the Royal Navy, flying the white

1. Valls, R. (1986) 26.
2. Chaucer Fine Arts (1987) Nos. 28-32.
3. De Rothschild (1983) and Schellinckx, W. (1983)

ensign, perhaps a dispatch vessel. Two of the Order's ships appear to be firing salutes as they pass each other. (plates 2 and 3)

B. View from sea level of the entrance to the Grand Harbour with two sailing ships of the order beating for cover in a storm, and showing Fort Ricasoli and Fort St Elmo. I am informed that the Fourth Rate, 60-64 gun, ship depicted on the left has its rigging fitted in a way only introduced in 1746, which is consistent with the 1749 date on the back of the picture.<sup>(4)</sup> (plates 4 and 5)

C. View across the fortifications of the three cities to Valletta from a high point on the Cottonera lines, showing the Marguerita lines, Senglea, Floriana, Vittoriosa and Villa Bichi with the defences above Kalkara. The Order's sailing ships of the line may be seen beyond Fort St Elmo. One ship salutes as it approaches the Grand Harbour entrance. (plate 6) The degree of detail is well illustrated by the depiction of the south-eastern defences of Vittoriosa and the buildings of Valletta from St. Barbara bastion to the Hospital of the Order. (plate 7)

D. View from Fort Manoel looking across Marsamxett to Valletta which is depicted in great detail from Fort St Elmo to Sa Maison beyond Floriana. In addition to small fishing boats and sailing ships of the Order is a Saique,<sup>(5)</sup> the usual cargo ship of the Turkish Levant and North Africa, also flying the flag of the Order. A few soldiers man the foreground fortifications. (plates 8 and 9)

(These paintings now grace a Sultan's yacht).

*Set Two.* (Numbered according to Chaucer Fine Arts Catalogue 1987.)

28. Similar to 1.D. above but with the sailing ship flying a blue flag and towing a dinghy placed further to the right and a stylised, almost corrugated, depiction of the sea. The latter suggests that it is a studio version and not from nature as the first set is claimed to be. (plate 10)

29. View of Marsamxett from Valletta showing St Andrew's Bastion, Fort Manoel and Dragut Point. A galley fires a salute and is followed by a smaller form of galley. (plate 11)

30. View of Valletta from St Angelo showing the Grand Harbour shore from Pinto Wharf below Floriana to Fort St Elmo. In the foreground are men hauling in nets or a line. Four galleys and two sailing ships are depicted as well as a lot of small craft off and alongside the barrier. (plate 12)

31. View of some of the Order's ships of the line beating towards the entrance of the Grand Harbour in a storm - identical to 1.B. (plate 13)

4. Personal communication from Sr. Pippo Mercato.

5. Personal communication from Mr Joseph Muscat and Muscat (1987) No. 48.

32. View of the three cities from Valletta, actually viewed from the St. Barbara bastion but with the foreground depicted at sea level below it. It shows the Grand Harbour entrance, Fort Ricasoli, Villa Bichi, Fort St Angelo and Senglea. Three of the Order's ships of the line and one galley are depicted as well as several smaller craft and canopied ferry boats. (plate 14)

*Alberto Pullicino 1719 - ?*

Although the people to whom I showed the first set of photographs in 1984 had never come across Alberto Pullicino, Dominic Cutajar expressed immediate interest and has since published the results of his searches, which I am reproducing in a slightly amended form with some additions.<sup>(6)</sup> Much depends on the assumption that Philiberto is Alberto Pullicino, because no evidence has yet been found to confirm this and the one name is not a diminutive of the other, although Bertu would be.

Philiberto (Alberto?) Pullicino was baptised in the Dominican parish church of Porto Salvo, Valletta, on 6 February 1719. His younger brother was the father of Giorgio Pullicino, the architect and view painter during the first half century of British rule in Malta. Giorgio was baptised in the other parish church of St. Paul in Valletta and Cutajar states that his parental family lived near Fort St Elmo. Giorgio's father married Giovanna Mifsud on 24 July 1747 at Porto Salvo but Cutajar records him as the son of Clara, perhaps a subsequent marriage. Both Philiberto and Pietro-Paolo were sons of their father's second marriage in 1711 to Angela Cantone. So far nothing more has been discovered about Alberto Pullicino's own life.

*The Chevaliers Turgot and Favray.*

Fortunately much more is known about Pullicino's patron Stephano Francesco (Etienne François) Turgot de Brucourt. He was born on 16 June 1721 and on 21 July the following year, Pope Innocent XIII acceded to his noble parents' request for a dispensation<sup>(7)</sup> permitting their son's admission to the Order which was registered on 6 September 1722. They were required to present proofs of nobility and pay a *passagium* within two years, which the Order fixed at 1000 Gold Scudi.<sup>(8)</sup> At the age of twenty five, their son was to go in person to the main convent, i.e. Malta, take the noviciate and give his profession in person. His seniority in the Order was however to date from this early admission. Turgot's father was *Prevot des Marchands de Paris* and a royal councillor.

Turgot certainly presented himself in Malta as required but a sequence of Papal dispensations subsequently registered by the Order in its *Liber Bullarum* postponed his profession and vows by five years and for another three in 1749 'for certain private reasons' because he could not see such a profession could be taken in the near

6. Cutajar, D. (1986) from whom much of the genealogy is derived, but also N.L.M., A.D. 21 and A.D. 22.

7. N.L.M., A.O.M. 526, f.175. I am grateful to Fr. Francis Azzopardi for helping me with the translations from Latin and its many abbreviations.

8. *Ibid.*, f.4.

future'.<sup>(9)</sup> He was exempted from doing the noviciate and empowered to ask any member of the Order outside Malta to give him the habit and receive his profession as if it was according to the regulations of the Order.

In the same year, 1749, Pope Benedict XIV issued an even more extensive dispensation permitting Louis François de Bourbon, Prince de Conti and a Prince of the Blood, to assume the office of Grand Prior of France, although the Pope accepted that he did not wear the habit, did not intend to make his profession, take the Caravan (*Corso*), or take up residence in the convent for one or two years and was not a member of the Order.<sup>(10)</sup> A vacancy had occurred through the death of Fra. Philippe d'Orleans. On 16 April the Order granted him the office and its income which would revert to the common treasury after the prince's death.<sup>(11)</sup> Such was the power of the Kings of France. Even the fleet used French designs and the Order's fleet appears to have been brought up to date during the War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-48. 1749 was therefore the first year of peace between England and France for nearly a decade which might explain the significance of the Royal Naval vessel in one of the Pullicino views which depicts most of the Order's battle fleet.

During the later 1740s both Turgot and his friend, the artist Antoine de Favray who had arrived in Malta in 1744 after the completion of his pupillage at the French Academy in Rome, were closely involved with the Lott and Cohen families for two of whose children each stood as Godfather. Lott and Cohen were respectively physician and tavern keeper near the relatively open prison of the slaves and in 1749 Joseph Cohen disclosed the slave's plot against the Order which was decisively nipped in the bud. Turgot himself stood as godfather to one of the chief conspirators whom he converted to Christianity on the eve of his execution by order of the Grand Master. On his return to Malta Favray was to write to give Turgot news of 'La Lotterie' and in particular of 'La Signora Giovanna', by then married as the Marchioness Cedronio, who had shed tears when the chevalier's name was mentioned after he left the island.<sup>(12)</sup> Cutajar recounts that Giovanna Lott's mother outmanouvred this marriage with Cedronio in 1761<sup>(13)</sup> but it seems to have been established by the time Favray returned to Malta. Perhaps these were among the 'very personal reasons' that discouraged Turgot from making his profession of vows to the Order in 1749.

Engel records that Turgot achieved renown in the exploits of his caravans, or *corsos*, and when he returned to France in 1761, after Canada and many of the French West Indies had been lost in the next war with Great Britain, he proposed a scheme for colonising Guiana under which the Order would settle a thousand people under his

9. A.O.M. 553, f.7<sup>v</sup> and f8; f.228<sup>v</sup> and f.229.

10. Ibid., f.157. Ryan, D. (1930), 59 gives the date as 1742 but the date in this archive is clear enough. The Prince held the office until his death in 1776. He was the last Prior to live in Mansard's great palace at the Parisian Temple where his salon listened to the young Mozart play the harpsichord at tea-time. (Ryan, D. P.59 with facing illustration).

11. A.O.M. 553, f.1<sup>v</sup>.

12. Boppe, A. (1911), 90-91.

13. Cutajar, D. (1982), 38. The account of the slaves' plot mentioning Turgot's role is in Boisgelin, L.de (1804), Vol. ii, 250.

governorship and sponsorship of the King of France. Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca (1741-73) rejected the proposal in 1763 as beyond the capacity of the Order but the French government backed the venture after the Treaty of Paris had ended the Seven Years War. Disease wiped out the colony and Turgot spent a year in Cayenne, sick, before returning in 1765 to the privacy of his library and botanical science.<sup>(14)</sup> From 1774-6 his younger brother became Controller-General of France, after the accession of Louis XVI, but the Chevalier did not re-enter public life and died in 1789 just before the French Revolution.

Throughout their years apart, Favray kept up a correspondence with Turgot and had an equally eventful expedition before retiring in 1771 to Malta, where he died on 9 February 1798.<sup>(15)</sup> In 1762 the Christian slaves on the Turkish Capitana revolted and brought the ship into Malta.<sup>(16)</sup> The Turkish outcry threatened the privileged position of France in the eastern Mediterranean. The French government intervened, bought the galley from the Order and provided a naval escort to return it to Istanbul. Although the Knights were excluded from this diplomatic exchange, Favray was allowed to take passage in the escorting frigate and spent the following nine years painting landscape and diplomatic presentations at the Sublime Porte as well as the *genre* scenes for which he has become renowned. Favray undertook commissions for the French ambassadors, M. de Vergennes and his successor, the Chevalier de Saint-Priest with whom he had made a caravan (*Corso*).<sup>(17)</sup> 1762 was also the year in which Favray was elected to the French Academy in Paris. Mariette records Favray in Marseilles in 1771 en route for Malta.<sup>(18)</sup> His eight surviving letters to the Chevalier Turgot begin in 1768. When he returned to Malta he offered to paint a view of Constantinople for him and their correspondence includes some discussion of the actual composition of the painting. Boppe records the difference between this painting of 1774 and its model of 1763, painted for Vergennes, but in his catalogue of Favray's paintings he seems to attribute that of 1774 to 1763, presumably in error. This picture was also sold at the Hotel Drouot in Paris in 1983 with the Maltese views by Alberto Pullicino, which Boppe had seen at the château and reported in 1911 but mistakenly attributed to Favray.<sup>(20)</sup>

*The significance of Alberto Pullicino's views of Malta.*

Reference has already been made to the technical skill demonstrated in Pullicino's views, especially in the original set for Turgot. Alberto was about the same age as his patron but over a decade younger than Favray (1706-98). He lived quite near the Lott Family. Could he have been a pupil of Favray as Francesco Zahra (1710-53), his older contemporary, may have been? Pullicino's views of Malta were sufficiently like

14. Engel (1972a), 150-151.

15. A.O.M. 939, f.263<sup>V</sup> and f.264.

16. Mariette in Rosenberg (1970), 98; Boppe, A. (1911), 57-59, 61-64; Bernardy, A.A. (1936-7), 61.

17. Boppe, A., 85.

18. In Rosenberg (1970), 98.

19. Boppe, A., 70-74.

20. *Ibid.*, 99.

21. Montanaro, E. (1986), 11-12.

Favray's later view of Constantinople for Boppe to have thought that Favray had painted them all. They date not only from a significant year in Turgot's time in Malta but also from the formative period of his friendship with Favray who was himself admitted to the Order two years later as *Servant d'Armes*.<sup>(22)</sup>

That Pullicino's views were highly regarded is evidenced not only by the set of copies that was sold in London in 1986, but also by the fact that they were published as a set of etchings. With the help of Dr. Albert Ganado, who knew the prints but had not seen the paintings, it has been possible to confirm that a set of etchings were published in Florence by Giacomo Moro, the incidental details in which correspond almost exactly to Pullicino's distribution of ships, figures and other activities in the foregrounds of his paintings. Six of these engravings, which are over-painted in water colour or gouche, may be seen on the long first floor landing of the Palazzo Falzon in Mdina and I have listed them according to their order in the Gollcher Foundation catalogue where they are incorrectly attributed to the early nineteenth century.<sup>(23)</sup> They also carry their own engraved numbers which are not always decipherable. These follow the Gollcher numbers in brackets. All measure 44 x 72 cm. Three of these over-painted prints are also in the collection of the Museum of the Venerable Order of St John in Clerkenwell.<sup>(24)</sup>

*Set three* (Numbers in brackets indicate the number etched on this set).

G.F. 67 (2) *Veduta del porto di Marsamucetto e del Forte Maanelle presa del Bastione S. Andrea* (Similar to 2.29 above but with a less accurate depiction of the interior of the bastion and fewer figures shown on it).

G.F. 68 (1) *Veduta della Città Valletta dalla parte de Terra*. (Not yet seen in a painting, this view is taken from high ground near Blat l-Bajda looking down the road, past a villa, that leads to the Porte des Bombes. To the left and right are Marsamucetto and the Grand Harbour.) Reproduced by Dyer as No.4 in the set, this print corresponds to a painting formerly in the British Government Picture Collection where she records it was attributed to Van Vitelli. (plate 15)

G.F. 69 (4) *Veduta dell' ingresso nel porto Grande* (similar to 1.B. and 2.31).

G.F. 70 (?) *Veduta della Città Valletta, dalla parte del Porto di Marsamucetto*. (Similar to 1.D and 2.28 but with civilians rather than soldiers shown in Fort Manoel.) Also listed by Dyer without a number. The print actually follows 2.28 which depicts the ship on the left well inside Fort St. Elmo, a possible clue to the source of the prints.

22. Boppe, A., 60 and various lists of members of the *Langue de France*.

23. Cauchi, J.A. (1973) Nos. 67-72.

24. Dyer, S. (1984), 26-27. Some of the actual numbers on these prints do not coincide with those in the Gollcher Foundation and Dr. Ganado has seen another set, with different numbers 'in Firenze presso Gius Bardi in Via Maggio', so it seems to have been a much reprinted series.

25. N.L.M., *Miscellanea* 303:51 and personal communication from Dr A. Ganado.

G.F. 71 (5) *Veduta del Castello Ricasoli e S. Angelo della Senglea*. (Similar to 2,32 but with less shipping and fewer men on the barriera. The ship on the right of the painting is placed in the middle of the entrance to Dockyard Creek. The title is a corrupt text because the view includes Senglea but is taken from the St. Barbara Bastion.) Listed by Dyer as No. 5 in the set.

G.F. 72 (6) *Veduta della Città Valletta presa dal Palazzo Bichi*. (Similar to 2.30 but without the ship on the left and fewer craft off the barriera.)

From these etchings it is apparent that Alberto Pullicino painted more than seven views of Malta. The highest decipherable number is 6 etchings but if all the views in the three separate sets are added the total is 8. The draughtsmanship of the etchings is not as high as the paintings from which they are derived and they have often been simplified, probably to suit their different shape and much smaller size. But their details are so close as to indicate that their source is Pullicino's set of paintings.

Fortunately the miscellaneous papers in the archives of the Order include a document that clinches the argument for this attribution in a rather circuitous way.<sup>(25)</sup> This is a French prospectus by A.F.G de Palmeus seeking subscriptions to eight '*Vues de la ville capitale de Malte*'. This document is dated 1753 and the engravings by J. Lattré were to be dedicated to '*S.A.S.M. Le Prince de Conti, Prince du Sang, Grand Prieur de France*' who, as already recounted, had been appointed, following a papal dispensation, in 1749, the year in which Pullicino painted his views for Turgot who is referred to in the prospectus as '*M. le Chevalier xxx*'. The views are exactly those one would expect from the concordance already made. They comprise:

*Set four* (my translation from the French original)

1. View of the capital of Malta from the entrance to her two principal harbours, seen across two leagues from North-east to South-east, so that the eye may pick out the different areas or towns that constitute the entire conurbation (to use a modern term).
2. View of the city of Valletta on the Grand Harbour side, taken from Castel St. Angelo.
3. View of the same city on the Marsamxett side, taken from Fort Manoel.
4. View of the same city from the countryside, or from in front of Floriana, taken from La Madonna del Tocha. (as in plate 15)
5. View of the left of the Maltese Grand Harbour, taken from Valletta, in which one can see all the places and harbours that constitute the area between Fort Ricasoli and the heights of Corradino.
6. View of Birgu, the island of Senglea, and the Sta. Marguerita fortifications from the countryside, taken from the Cottonera Gate that leads to the Salvador.

7. View of Fort Manoel, or the left of Marsamxett Harbour, from Dragut Point to the countryside on the North-west, taken from the Auberge of Germany in Valletta.

8. View of Malta at the entrance to her two harbours, approaching from the East, with a strong wind from the North-east, and the sea breaking against the fortifications.

These views were advertised to complement the plans of Valletta, Chambray in Gozo, and a general map of the Maltese archipelago. Dr Ganado showed me examples of these engravings which were produced by De Palmaeus and J. Lattré in 1751-2. But the eight views were a considerable undertaking so that subscriptions were sought to finance their production. Perhaps insufficient funds were raised by these means and the project was still born. Perhaps the project was transferred to Giacomo Moro and Giuseppe Badi in Florence, who may have been cheaper but were less artistically competent engravers than Lattré. Or perhaps the Italian project was a separate one associated with Pullicino's copies of his original paintings for Turgot. None of the six known Moro engravings have numbers that coincide with the De Palmaeus prospectus. All three sets of the etchings that I have seen have been heavily over-painted to look like original watercolours and were catalogued as such by Cauchi. One may presume that they were produced after 1753 and probably by 1760. Turgot's own paintings would have been shipped to France when he left Malta in 1761 if not before but the other set may have remained in Malta much longer. Its provenance has not been published.

Fortunately there are several clues as to the answer. De Palmaeus explicitly refers to his prospected engravings as taken from the Chevalier's original paintings. But they are dedicated to the Grand Prior of France, Prince de Conti. At least one of Moro's etchings, Gollcher 70, appears to be taken from the second set of paintings (Chaucer 28). This set of five paintings came to Sotheby's from an undisclosed owner in Ireland, evidence confirmed by the Dublin address stamped on the frames and two sets of hanging notes pencilled on them in English. But I have recently been shown photographs of two more paintings of Malta recently bought in France<sup>(26)</sup>, a view from Villa Bichi of Valletta that must have come from Turgot's set (Private Collection A) and a view from the Cotoner lines across the three cities to Valletta which presumably came from the second set (Private Collection B). If the latter originated in France before being split up, it may well have been painted for the Grand Prior himself, after Turgot's original set. Moro's etchings appear to follow the set that I suggest belonged to the Grand Prior, to whom those prospected by De Palmaeus were to be dedicated. Cutajar attributes another view of these cities to Pullicino<sup>(27)</sup>, and this corresponds to the Moro etching, (Gollcher 70), but not the relevant painting (Chaucer 32) in the second set of Pullicino's paintings. So the etchings may be based on both sets or some intermediate source, which could be De Palmaeus' engravings if the plates were ever produced. Assuming that the painting of Valletta and the Floriana fortifications taken from the Madonna del Tocha, formerly in the British Government Picture Collection<sup>(28)</sup>, is the eighth missing view by Pullicino, the whole

26. Personal communication with photographs of the two paintings.

27. Cutajar, D., 6

28. Dyer, S., 26.



set is accounted for in one version and only two of the sixteen remain to be identified in unknown places. (but see footnote 39)

Alberto Pullicino had therefore painted a comprehensive set of views of the Maltese harbour region for one of the most enterprising of the young French knights, who was a personal friend of the most proficient French artist in Malta during the second half of the eighteenth century. These views were sufficiently highly regarded to be proposed for publication alongside a prestigious series of French plans of Malta, that had been produced by de Palmaeus. The latter was engineer, designer and geographer to the Prince of Conti who had been appointed Grand Prior of Farnce in the same year as Pullicino painted his views for Turgot and they were to be dedicated to him. No mention was however made of Pullicino in either de Palmaeus' prospectus or Moro's etchings. Favray, a member of the Academie de France, would not have been so ignored but Pullicino remained unknown until his name was disclosed on the back of one of Turgot's pictures in 1983.

#### *The subsequent career of Alberto Pullicino*

However that is not quite accurate. Pullicino's proficiency as a view-painter was only disclosed in 1983 because of Boppe's mistaken attribution of his paintings to Favray in 1911. But in 1955 Sir Hannibal Scicluna provided an account of Pullicino's decorative work in the vestry of the Conventual Church of St. John in Valletta.<sup>(29)</sup> This was executed in 1758 after the artist had already provided drawings of the Order's reliquaries in 1753.

These commissions give an indication of the sort of artist that Pullicino was and the variety of work that he was expected to carry out—all of it to a high standard. On 3 October 1753 the Principal Register of the *Conservatorio* authorized the payment of 160 Scudi to him 'Sue fatiche in disegnare le relique antiche edaltro della Maggiore Chiesa Conventuale di S. Giovanni'.<sup>(30)</sup> I assumed that this referred to designs for reliquaries in which to place the ancient relics in the Order's possession. However the *Inventory of Gold and Silver plate of the Order*, now in the Cathedral Museum in Mdina is dated 1756.<sup>(31)</sup> Pullicino's payment was a single one and there is no reference to materials or other terms. Does the contract in fact mean what it states; 'his labours in drawing (or depicting) the ancient relics and other things of the Conventual Church of St. John', i.e. in making the reproductions of the relics and reliquaries that constitute the inventory itself? There is good reason for believing that this may be the case. The full text is given in Appendix I below.

The Treasury decree issued on 16 February 1758 includes very precise contractual terms and conditions for both the decoration of the ceiling and the wooden cupboards of the new vestry that adjoins the main sacristy of St. John's.<sup>(32)</sup> The full text is given

29. Scicluna, Sir H. (1955), 209-211 and plan after 33.

30. A.O.M. 682, f.596 which was brought to my attention by Dr. Ganado.

31. Cathedral Museum, ACM, Misc 150.

32. A.O.M. 652, f.232. I am grateful to Canon John Azzopardi for checking my translation from the Italian text and its abbreviations.

in Appendix II. There were essentially two design conditions. The ceiling was to be painted in gouache, i.e. a water and whiting-based distemper, according to the design submitted on a sheet of paper by the painter and approved by the *Grand Commendatore*. The vestment cupboards, or *armoires*, were to be grained and marbled according to a precise specification in oils which followed a little specimen panel that the artist had submitted for the approval of the *Camera del Tesoro*.

The vestry was damaged in the Second World War by the blast of the bomb that destroyed one of the adjacent sacristies. This destroyed the decoration of the ceiling but not the chief furnishings of the vestry which remain a credit to Pullicino's decorative craft. This vestry was not merely a robing room but the depository of the magnificent sets of liturgical vestments that each Grand Master was required to present after his election to the office. The *armoires* still perform their function although some of the finest vestments including those donated by Grand Master Pino, are on display in the museum on the opposite side of the cathedral. Never one for modesty, Grand Master Pinto likened himself to King Solomon in giving a wider and more elegant appearance to this hall by means of gilt paintings.<sup>(33)</sup> With the exception of the gold, Pullicino had to provide all his own materials in the contract price of 300 copper scudi, not the best currency as Cutajar has indicated.<sup>(34)</sup> The Treasury would provide the gold for the armorial cartouches etc.

As I have not yet found any photographs of the vestry before the war, I rely on Scicluna's brief but clear description of Pullicino's paintings. 'The beautifully decorated architrave of this ceiling was surrounded by paintings depicting the treasures of the Church before it was looted by Bonaparte'.<sup>(35)</sup> This presumably refers either to a frieze or the coving of the ceiling. The subjects of the paintings were the objects that one finds in the Inventory to which I have already referred. It appears that Alberto Pullicino's work for the inventory was put to good use in the vestry decoration that made the hall so grand that it was 'often used for meetings of the Church Council of the Order'.<sup>(36)</sup> Indeed these commissions for the Order are obviously related. Pullicino was regarded as both the master of a multipurpose artistic workshop and as a painter with particular skills in depicting objects realistically, just as he had rendered accurate views of Malta 'painted from nature' for Turgot.

*Questions arising from this interim assessment of Alberto Pullicino's work.*

Several matters arise from this account which are worth more detailed investigation.

Because neither of the two sets of paintings is complete (8) it is likely that a few of Pullicino's views of Malta may be in public or private collections without attribution. Cutajar refers to the Musée de la Marine in Paris which is a likely resting place for other paintings from the French collection.<sup>(37)</sup> But most of the remaining paintings

33. See the text surrounding the cornice of the cupboards that Scicluna (p.210) gives in full.

34. Cutajar, D. (1986), 6.

35. Scicluna, Sir H., 211.

36. Ibid., 210.

37. Cutajar. D. (1986).

from both sets have now been accounted for. (but see footnote 39)

Even if the engravings dedicated to the Prince of Conti were never published in France, and this should perhaps not be assumed, there could be two more views engraved by Giacomo Moro to complete the set, but no more than six have been recorded. Was any prospectus published for this which could explain what happened, who commissioned the etchings and when?

If Pullicino did execute the drawings of the reliquaries in the Orders's Inventory, as he depicted them in the new vestry of St John's, it is not unlikely that he received other commissions from the Order. He may also have received commissions from private individuals or other religious bodies.

Alberto Pullicino's biography outside these three or four commissions currently relies, for the little that is known at all, on identification with Philiberto, baptised at Porto Salvo in 1719. Most of Cutajar's and my investigations have so far produced more about Alberto's presumed relatives than himself. Given Cutajar's work on the ties between Turgot, Favray, and the Lott and Cohen families, one seeks documentation of the sort that would link Pullicino with this circle and particularly with Favray.

Did Pullicino paint *genre* scenes or portraits? We have no idea. He obviously ran the comprehensive workshop of painter/craftsman and was as adept in decorative design, graining and marbling, as he was in view-painting and perspective. It seems unlikely that he would have worked in the manner of Favray or Zahra on compositions devoted to the human figure but his technical skill in using oil paint and in depicting perspective views would have required some training as well as masterly experience. Unfortunately Favray's recorded views were painted much later than Pullicino's and one cannot therefore assume Favray acted as his tutor, although one hesitates to suggest that the opposite could be the case. Although Favray came to Malta straight from the French Academy in Rome, he was already nearly forty years old. However he may have been technically a relative novice when he went to Rome in 1738.<sup>(38)</sup> The staffage of Pullicino's views are very like Favray's *genre* interiors.

38. Gash, J. (1982), 24.

39. At the point of going to press four further items have been confirmed.

(1) Pullicino's ceiling painting for the vestry of St. John's does not seem to have survived because it is not rolled up with others rescued from the Second World War in the Valletta Museum of Fine Arts.

(2) Two watercolours from which the prints by G. Moro were taken have been seen at a Parisian art dealer's in 1987, (F. GIRAND). They may have come from the Guernsey collection of Governor Le Marchand and his wife.

(3) Four oil-painted views, formerly in the Sant-Fournier collection in Malta, can be confirmed as part of a third set of views by Alberto Pullicino, which have probably never left the island. Although essentially similar to the set for Turgot, these paintings include all the obvious differences to be found in the two water colours and the six prints by Moro. The view of Floriana's defences from Hamrun includes a little scene of the artist himself displaying the accuracy of his complete picture to a soberly dressed knight or nobleman who is verifying this claim with the aid of a small telescope.

(4) A picture of the three cities from Valletta, probably originally from the Turgot set, was sold in Paris on 9 December 1981 by Nouveau Drovot with other Maltese items from a 19th century collection. The view illustrated in Cutajar (1986) is from the corresponding Moro print rather than a lost painting.

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- NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA *Archive 939: Bilancio degli spogli 1791-1798* 'S', f. 263<sup>v</sup> and f.264 'Il servente d'armi Com<sup>t</sup>. Fr. Antonio Favray morto in Cov<sup>o</sup>.li 9 Feb. 1798'. (MS)
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## Appendix I

A.O.M. *Archive 682: Libro Maestro della Conservatoria 1750-1753* f.596

### *Expenditure October 1753*

To Alberto Pullicino one hundred and sixty scudi which was given to him on account for his labours in drawing the ancient relics and other items of the main conventual church of St. John.

By authority: 3rd of above

719

160

## Appendix II

A.O.M. *Archive 652: Registri della camera del Tesoro: Decrees of the Veneranda Camera from 28 May to 17 June 1760* f. 232<sup>v</sup>.

Decree of the Treasury on account of work done in the Sacristy of S. John by Alberto Pullicino: painter.

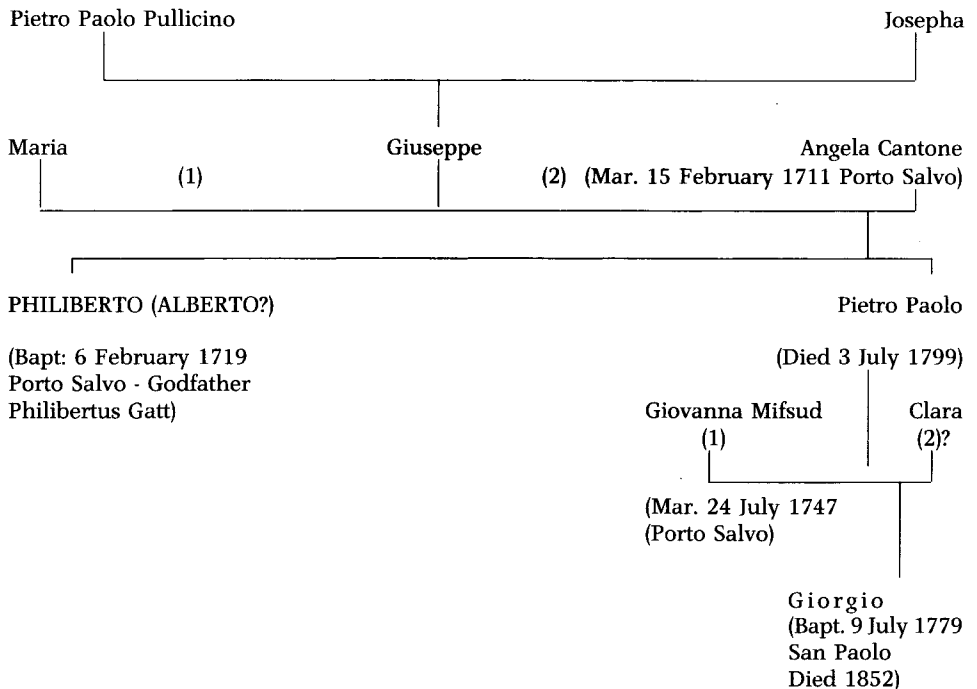
Decree of the *Veneranda Camera* for the work of painting to be carried out by his own hand and done by the painter Alberto Pullicino in the new vestry (*Sacrestia de Paramenti*) of the main conventual church of St. John issued on 16 February 1758 (1759 new style).

The painter Alberto Pullicino is bound to this *Veneranda Camera* to execute the painting of the new vestry of our main conventual church of St. John according to the following terms and conditions:

1. He must paint the ceiling of the said sacristy in gouache (distemper - a *guazzo*) according to the design of the said painter inscribed on a sheet of *Carta reale* and approved by us and sealed at both ends with the seal of the venerable *Grand Commendatore*.
2. He must paint the whole exterior of the *armoires* (cupboards), with their frames and ornaments, in oils to imitate walnut on the basic structure of the said cupboards and their reliefs as in olive wood according to his own sample demonstrated on a small panel and approved by us.

3. He must treat the interior of the said cupboards similarly in oils in a clear pearl colour.
4. He must paint the jambs and ornaments of the doors to resemble coloured marble with great elegance and varnish them.
5. The said painter, Alberto Pullicino, must provide oils, pigments, whiting, and everything that will be needed for the execution and completion of the said paintings, except the gold, which he will need for the armorial cartouches, that will be supplied to him by us.
6. The said painter lays himself under an obligation to carry out the said work exactly and in a masterly fashion according to all the above mentioned terms and conditions for the price of three hundred copper scudi.
7. Finally he must carry it all out under the direction and instructions of those responsible (*venerandi prodomi*) for the place and after he will have shown and obtained the certificate of the said officials for having diligently and perfectly executed the said work and with having fulfilled all the aforementioned terms and conditions, the agreed sum of three hundred copper scudi will be paid to him, and not otherwise.

Figure 1 Genealogy of the Pullicinos (amended from that published in Cutajar (1986)).



*Figure 2 Concordance of the four sets of paintings, etchings and prospectus*

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
De Turgot	Sotheby's	G. Moro	de Palmeus
R. Valls	Chaucer F.A.	Gollcher F.	Lattré
Catalogue	Catalogue	Catalogue	Prospectus
A.	?		1
B.	31	GF. 69 (G.M.4)	8
C.	Private coll. B		6
D.	28	GF. 70 (G.M.?)	3
?	29	GF. 67 (G.M.2)	7
Private Coll. A.	30	GF. 72 (G.M.5)	2
Sold in Paris by Drouot, 1981.	32	GF. 71 (G.M.6)	5
one formerly in Govt. Picture collection (Dyer, 1984)		GF. 68 (G.M.1)	4



Plate 1. Inscription on the back of one of Turgot's set of paintings.



Plate 2. The capital of Malta from the entrance to her two harbours. (Valls A)



Plate 3. Detail of plate 2 showing a galley and ship of the line of the Order and a Royal Naval (despatch?) vessel. (Valls A)





Plate 4. The entrance to Malta's Grand Harbour with ships seeking the haven in a storm. (Valls B.)



Plate 5. Detail of plate 4 with Forth Ricasoli and a Fourth Rate ship of the line flying the colours of the Order. (Valls B)



Plate 6. Valletta seen across Senglea and Birgu with the Marguerita lines from the Cottonera Gate leading to the Salvador. (Valls C)

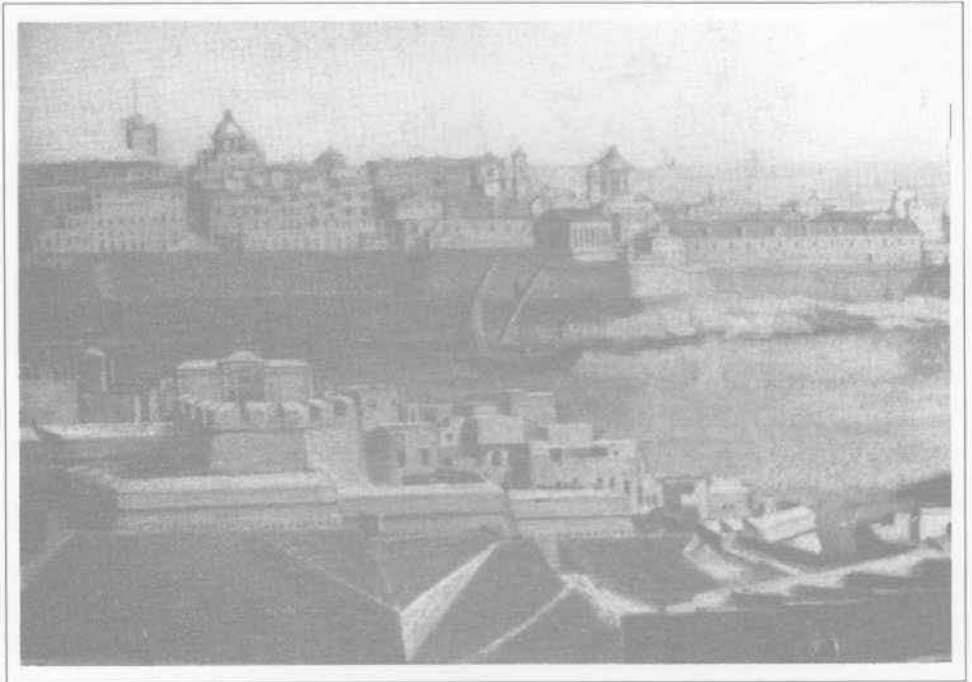


Plate 7. Detail of Plate 7 showing the south-eastern defences of Vittoriosa and Valletta from St. Barbara's bastion to the Hospital of the Order. (Valls. C)



Plate 8. Detail of Plate 9 showing the Marsamxett defences of Valletta and Floriana, sentries in Fort Manoel and a sailing ship of the Order with a saïque, the latter possibly a captured prize. (Valls. D)

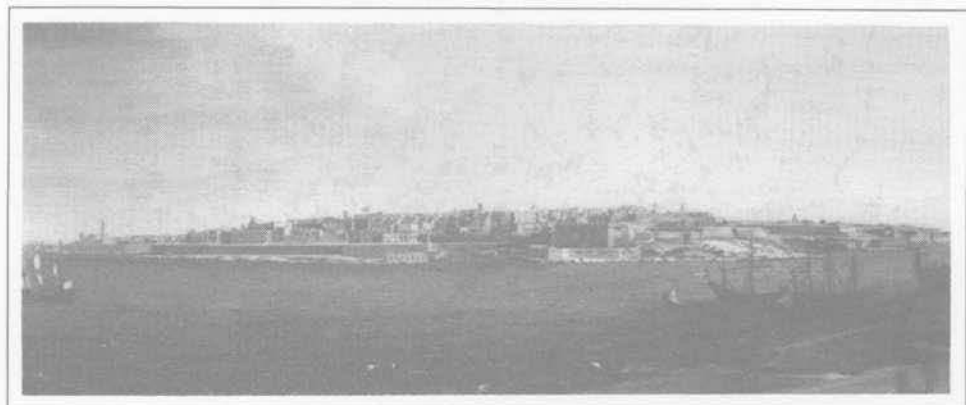


Plate 9. Valletta from Marsamxett looking over Fort Manoel. (Valls. D)

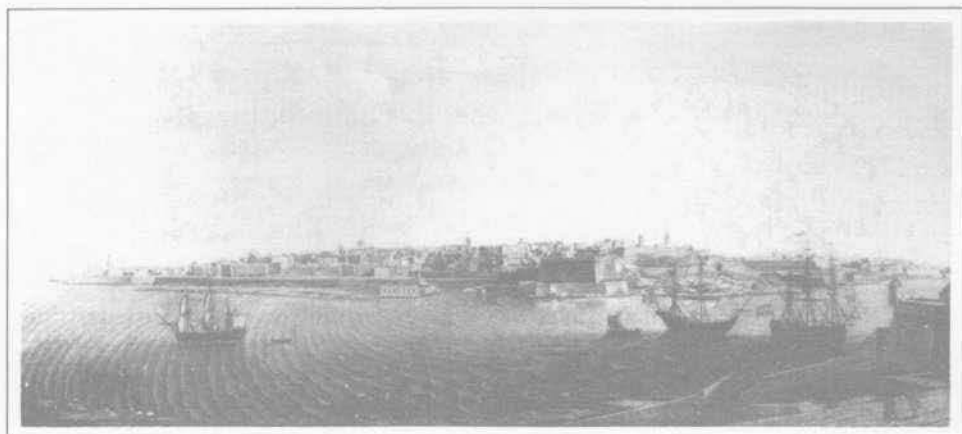


Plate 10. Valletta from Marsamxett looking over Fort Manoel. Chaucer 28 Note the different position of the craft and the stylised painting of the water compared with Plate 9.

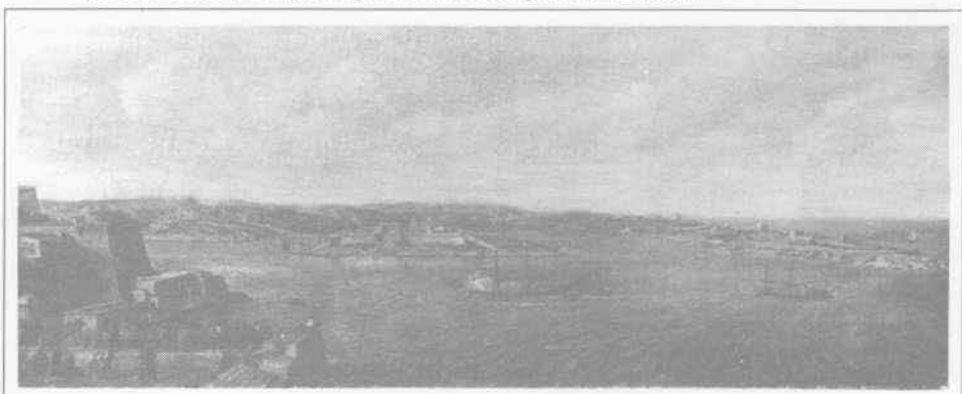


Plate 11. Marsamxett with Fort Manoel and Dragut Point, across St. Andrew's bastion from the Auberge of Germany in Valletta. (Chaucer 29)



Plate 12. Valletta from Castel St. Angelo with the galleys of the Order and small craft alongside the barriera. (Chaucer 30)

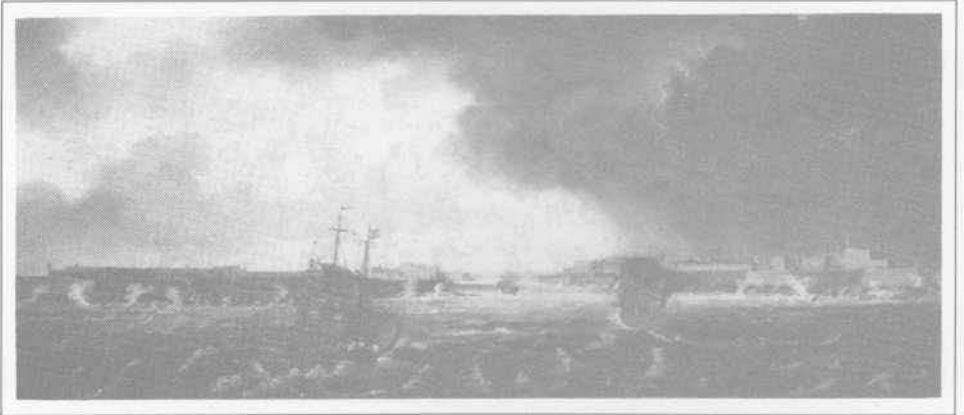


Plate 13. Almost identical to Valls B (Chaucer 31).

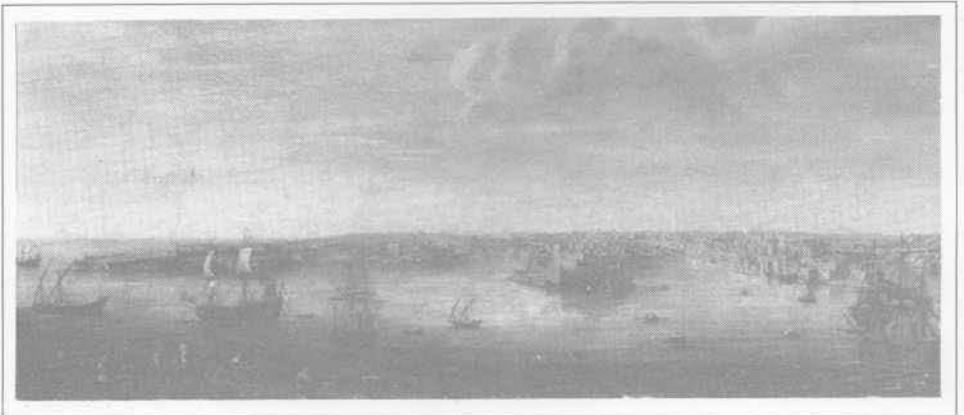


Plate 14. The Maltese Grand Harbour from Fort Ricasoli to the heights of Corradino (Chaucer 32).

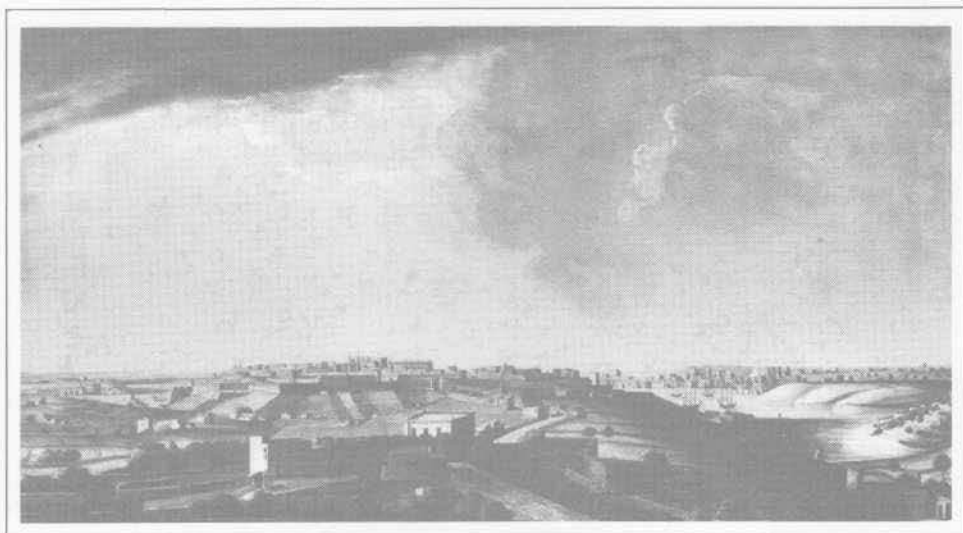


Plate 15. Etching of the landward defences of Floriana from la Madonna del Tocha by Giacomo Moro. (Dyer No 13 B, also Gollcher 68) (LDOSJ:998).