

ON A NEW GIGANTIC FOSSIL TORTOISE DISCOVERED  
AT COFRADINO

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N. TAGLIAFERRO

With reference to my letter which appeared in "The Daily Malta Chronicle" in November last, concerning the discovery of fossil animal bones in a rock-fissure at Corradino, it may interest some of your readers to learn that those bones have been removed to the Valletta Museum where they are being studied and, as far as is practicable, measured.

After a careful examination of the bones, a large number of which are broken in small fragments past recognition, I found that they belong mostly to two species of land-tortoises one of which, of enormous size, was styled Gigantic Maltese Tortoise, Testudo Robusta, by the late Mr. Leith Adams in a communication read before the Geological Society of London in 1877, and the other, of smaller dimensions, was dedicated by the same author to the late Admiral Spratt under the name of Testudo Spratti. One of the specimens found at Corradino is much bigger than the Gigantic species described and figured by Leith Adams in the 33rd Vol. of the quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London. From some of the measurements taken of the few bones which are not broken, it appears that their dimensions are nearly half as large again as the corresponding ones of the Testudo Robusta; and it may, therefore be questionable

whether later on, the Corradino Tortoise will have to be considered as forming a new species say Testudo robustissima.

The rich collection of fossil reptiles found in several Maltese caverns and rock-fissures some fifty years ago by Spratt and Leith Adams and classified by the latter, are to be found partly in the British Museum of Natural History at South Kensington, and partly in the Museum of the Geological Society in London. No representative of those reptiles, so interesting for their extraordinary size, existed in the Malta University Museum of Natural History until lately, when I deposited therein some bones of Tortoises, mostly in a fragmentary state, found by me a few years ago in two rock-fissures, one at Ta Xelka, near Zabbar, associated with bones of the Stag, and the other at Ta Seibe near Zurriek, associated with bones of the Maltese pigmy elephant, Elephas Melitensis.

It is a very remarkable fact, to which attention has already been called by Prof. Lydekker in his "Royal Natural History", that in Malta, whilst on one side fossil elephants and hippopotami are of more or less reduced dimensions, constituting what Prof. Pohlrig calls a pony race, on the other side we find an enormous swan, Cygnus Falconeri; a large dormouse, Myoxus Melitensis; and a gigantic

land tortoise, Testudo Robusta. The still larger tortoise just found at Corradino is a precious acquisition which will further enhance the importance of the fossil fauna of the Maltese Islands.