

FOREWORD

The teacher has a tendency, in my view a legitimate one, to consider his former students and their achievements as an extension of himself. With their kind permission, I would like to consider the achievements of my former students who have forged a successful career for themselves, whether in my own speciality or in another field, as an extension of my own. I get a sense of pride not only from my own publications but also from those of my former students. From their contributions we teachers get a similar sense of parenthood as we get, *mutatis mutandis*, from the offspring of our children.

It is in this frame of mind that, when I was asked by George Azzopardi to write a foreword for this work, I could not but accept. I have no doubt that this short monograph is the result of his close daily contact with the archaeological heritage of his island over the last decade or so. Before his engagement as Assistant Curator in the Museums Department, Gozo had a negative record of scores of years, if not centuries, of accidental archaeological discoveries which remained undocumented, with the archaeological goods from them ending up in private hands instead of the national collections. A case in point, that of the tomb found at *Il-Haġġarija*, is mentioned in the following text. Since his appointment Gozo has had its own professional personnel to control more closely such accidental discoveries. George Azzopardi has himself been able to intervene to document what was about to be covered for posterity at least on two occasions, one of which, the two tombs in the courtyard of the Gozo Seminary, he writes about in this monograph.

In this monograph he has brought together all the documentation we have about the burial places around the ancient town of *Gaulos* and through it he has reconstructed the distribution of the ancient necropolis. Whereas a necropolis normally consists of a collection of tombs thickly grouped together (a sort of cemetery) in one area, the recorded tombs of *Gaulos* show a tendency of being widely dispersed, except for the clusters in Vajringa Street and in St Francis Square where they occurred in close settings. This publication has also the merit of publishing for the first time previously unpublished documents, such as the plans of the two tombs discovered on the site of the Gozo Seminary gymnasium.

George Azzopardi has revived our memory of the existence of certain types of ancient burial, such as those with terracotta tiles (some with gabled, or double-pitched, cover) which were recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries (by Agius de Soldanis and Caruana) but which do not seem to have been encountered any more since the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, no such tombs have been recorded in the *Museum Annual Reports*.

References to some inscriptions have provided the author with the opportunity to present to the public his research work on those same inscriptions. These are appended to the main text.

There are a number of points on which the author and myself do not see eye-to-eye; but after discussing them we have both decided to agree to disagree. Since a foreword to a work might be interpreted as a tacit endorsement of the contents of that work, however, I thought of expressing, with the author's permission, this divergence of opinion. I would like to highlight only the three most important of such points.

George Azzopardi firmly believes that the inscription reproduced in Appendix II is dedicated to two different persons, . . . Cestius Gallus and Varenianus Lutatius Natalis Aemilianus and he gives his reasons in a forthcoming publication. I am, however, equally firmly convinced that it is dedicated to one person carrying all the seven names, even if the latter number of names appears somewhat exaggerated. The most obvious reasons for me are the absence of the conjunction 'and' (*et* or *-que*) and that the words '*patrono municipii*' and '*amico optimo et karissimo*', separated as they are by the name of the dedicator, refer to one and the same person. At the stage in time in which the inscription was engraved it was not excluded for an official to be known by so many names.

The marble statuette of a child reportedly found in a tomb at *Il-Haġġarija* in 1960 and at present kept in a private collection in Gozo is taken by the author, albeit with some reservation, to date to antiquity, even though I called his attention to the absence of anything in it that might suggest classical antiquity.

Finally, I am not persuaded by the arguments brought forward in favour of an early Christian presence in the otherwise pagan necropolis. It is based on an unsubstantiated hint by Canon Agius de Soldanis and a sequence of too many 'ifs' and presuppositions which place the conclusion on extremely shaky ground, even though it is presented by the writer as just a 'possibility'. My fear is that such conclusions may be taken up by other writers and quoted as established facts. It takes the axiom 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' too far. Although we may assume that Christians were buried along with pagans in Gozo before the 4th century, in the same way as they were in other parts of the Roman world, including Rome, it is to be stated that so far no evidence for such a presence has been found.

In spite of the above reservations, George Azzopardi is to be congratulated for this contribution to archaeological literature and for his assiduous work in promoting an awareness of the rich archaeological heritage of Gozo.

Anthony Bonanno

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