Religion and Ethnic Identity in the Maltese Australian Community

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The Roman Catholic religion - its beliefs, practices, institutions, and localized adaptations or manifestations thereof - has long characterized Maltese culture, as moulded by historical experiences. In their long and geographically spread out emigration movements to the Mediterranean littoral and the Americas, Europe, Australia and Africa, Maltese have carried their religious beliefs and practices with them, and as a rule they have clung steadfastly to them with a tenacity that has surprised other Europeans who were more accustomed to anticlericalism, irreligion and secularization.

Writing about Maltese settlement in nineteenth century Algeria, where many of the French *colons* were altogether indifferent to religion of any kind, Donato remarked on the Maltese religious practices there which, perceived as rather 'fanatical' by other Europeans, served to distinguish them from the native Muslim Arabs.[1] Carmel Sammut, in his study of Maltese settlement in Tunisia, reinforces this by noting Maltese perceptions of non-Catholic Europeans, and of the Muslim Arabs ('ras marbuta', blockhead, a reference to the turban; 'laham bla melh', flesh without salt, i.e. unbaptized).[2] In 1955 an Italian Jesuit father, perhaps conscious of the intense feeling roused by opposition to Papal temporal power in Italy, described Malta as a 'fief' of the Lord: the whole population participated actively in 'a pageant of total cult' (*un cerimoniale di culto totale*).[3]

Although Malta has had bouts of anticlericalism in this century, culminating in attempts at forced secularization in the 1980s, the vast majority of Maltese continued to celebrate religion, ritualistically and socially. In spite of changes in various aspects of disposition, attitude or behaviour, until the mid-1980s it was estimated that 75% of Maltese in the Maltese Islands were church-goers[4] - a percentage higher than that of most, if not all, other European countries. Soundings in Australia today reveal that well over 50% of Maltese settlers, on a modest estimate, are devout Catholics and do their level best to raise their children in the faith.[5] In other words, the percentage of Maltese Catholic believers, although now lower than in Malta, would be at least twice as high as the national Catholic average in Australia.[6] However, analyses of the 1981 Census returns show that around 90% of the 58,000 Maltese there described themselves as Christian. The figures were: for N.S.W. 93.9%; Victoria 92.2%;

S.A. 90.6%; Queensland 89.5%; W.A. 89.2%; A.C.T. 87.1%. Thus less than 10% may be said to be non-Christian, probably lapsed Catholics for the most part as only 19 associated themselves with Judaism, only 22 with Islam.[7] Participant observation and interviews with migrant chaplains show that Maltese, whatever their social class, tend to participate actively in parish organizations.[8] In the mid-seventies, the advent of multiculturalism also led to an awakening of religious practices in the popular culture - most notably the *festa* of the patron saint of the town or village of origin. As we shall see, several of these *festa* started to be ceremoniously and not so ceremoniously commemorated on the various feast days, especially in Melbourne, Sydney and to a lesser extent Adelaide, where the largest concentration of Maltese are to be found.

What I propose to do in this chapter is, first, to trace briefly how and why Catholicism has come to play such an important part in Maltese life; secondly, to delve into some aspects of religion's role in the migrant experience; and thirdly, to make specific reference to some noteworthy religion-linked popular practices in various Australian States, past and present, especially Victoria and New South Wales. This should make clear to what extent and in what ways Maltese Catholicism became and continues to be an integral, indeed a dominant feature of Maltese identity.

Church and religion in Maltese history

Already in prehistoric times Malta was regarded as 'the sacred isle of the Mediterranean': the large number of neolithic temples built there are 'the earliest known free-standing roofed stone buildings anywhere in the world'.[9] With the advent of Christianity through the shipwreck of St. Paul, to which reference is made in the Acts of the Apostles, the Islanders gradually became and remained Catholic. Although pressure would have been exerted in favour of Islamisation during the Arab occupation from the 9th to the 11th centuries, and religious practices would have been influenced by that, Christians were *dhimmi*, people of a book (*ahl-al-kitab*) to the Muslims. So although treated as second-class citizens they were not necessarily persecuted.[10]

From Norman times onwards, Latin Christianity became an overriding feature of life in Malta, and this attachment to European Christendom was strengthened by the Holy Roman Emperor's cession of the Maltese Islands to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and Rhodes, since known as the Knights of Malta, following the

expulsion of the Order from Rhodes by the Ottoman Empire. The Great Siege of 1565 in which the Order, greatly aided by the Maltese defenders, repelled the Ottoman forces, (and rebuffed the Turkish advance onto Western Europe and the Western Mediterranean) became legendary and has continued to be so to the present day.[11] Throughout the period of the Order's rule, from 1530 to 1798, Malta was run by a religious order, of which the Grand Master was temporal ruler, but the spiritual head was the Pope. There was also the 'Holy' Inquisition.[12] This period was important in Maltese social history because it laid the foundations for an intense monolithic religiosity - a theocracy comparable in some respects to Islam, and a situation which hardly permitted the Reformation to make any headway. With the implementation of the Council of Trent's reforms, after the battles with the Turks, there were some improvements in the education of the clergy. Gradually the number of towns and villages grew as did indeed the number of churches and chapels.[13] During the 16th - 18th centuries, a number of religious feasts assumed a popular quality and became in time synonymous with Maltese culture. Foremost among these is the feast of Our Lady of Victories, known as *Il-Vitorja*, celebrated on the 8th September; and *L-Imnarja* (originally Luminaria), celebrated on the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul (29 June).[14]

The former *festa*, *Il-Vitorja*, commemorates the Christian victory over the Turks, it also coincided with the lifting of the siege of Malta during the Second World War. It represents the victories of Our Lady to the same extent as the victories of the Maltese people over their enemies in past times. The functions normally associated with *Il-Vitorja* are not only of a religious kind; there also are outward manifestations, such as the boat-races known as *ir-Regatta*, in Valletta's Grand Harbour, which also date back to the Knights. The latter *festa*, *L-Imnarja*, was a time when man and women from all walks of life went to the Buskett Gardens in Rabat, Malta, and spent the night in the open air, cooking and stewing rabbits (*il-fenkata*): socializing, folk singing (*ghana*), and later taking part in agricultural fêtes and competitions; it was also a great time for horse and donkey races both in Malta and in Gozo.[15]

After Napoleon expelled the Knights from Malta (on his way to capture Egypt in 1798), the Maltese, impelled by religious fervour and leadership, took up arms against the French. They forced the better-armed, better-trained French to shut themselves inside the fortified city of Valletta. Two years later they surrendered to the British.[16] As in Italy, Spain and elsewhere, national sentiment was

aroused by the irreverent and immoral excesses committed by Bonapartist troops - burning the titles of nobility and looting the churches - so that Church and religion featured centrally at this crucial time in the development of a patriotic consensus.

Throughout the British period from 1800 to 1964, the Catholic Church on the whole enjoyed a privileged place. The British took care not to repeat the mistakes of their French predecessors: Bishops were successively knighted, and Protestant proselytization kept to a minimum. A British captain who played a central part in ensuring the transfer of Malta from French to British sovereignty, warned London:

> The Maltese are bigots in religion, and it is necessary to treat their prejudices with great indulgence. When betrayed and deserted by the Order, they submitted to the French, and would not have revolted, if their churches had not been plundered, and if their religious prejudices had been respected. They are much influenced by their priests, on whom it is highly necessary to keep a watchful eye.[17]

Other than in remote Quebec, noted Harrison Smith,

> the British had not - perhaps never would - encounter a Church medieval, a Church militant, and a Church that had lived under a theocracy long after the era of the national state had modified the feudalism of Europe.[18]

In Malta Roman Catholicism retained its classical function as the most remarkable and perfect example of what Sorre described thus:

> unité dogmatique, unité d'obédience et de discipline, organisation hiérarchique rigoureuse suspendue à l'autorité du Pape infallible, obligations rituelles définies à partir des rites d'initiation, participation aux mêmes charismes, éthique et, pour couroner le tout, eschatologie communes.[19]

In 1902 the British colonial secretary Chamberlain was exasperated by the impossibility of securing legitimate marriage outside of the Catholic Church in Malta. Sorre notes:

> So anxious have we been to make every possible concession to the sentiments, the prejudices, and above all to the religious

> beliefs of the people, that we have allowed institutions to remain which have not their parallel, I believe, in any other Catholic country in the world. As far as I know, there is no other country in the world, in which the institution of civil marriage has not been established...[20]

In the words of Professor Andrew Vella, the Maltese historian and formerly chairman of the History Department at the royal University of Malta, the Church and the State "more perhaps than in any other country, were merely different aspects of a single society. Although today it is very much debated whether such a state of things is the ideal its existence in our Island is a plain matter of historical fact".[21] Writing on more recent times, Vella says:

> All writers are agreed that Maltese acceptance of British domination turned very largely, or even mainly, on British willingness to guarantee the integrity of Maltese religion... not merely in matters of religion as such, but in the whole range of attitudes to society.[22]

Unlike in Italy or Spain, any anticlericalism remained largely within the bounds of basic doctrinal tenets - openly professed atheism, whether communist or humanist, was taboo.[23]

In spite of deep-rooted natural associations, as expressed in the nationalism of '*patria et religio*', the Maltese Church with some exceptions had no cause to become as militant a nationalistic force as in Ireland or Poland.[24] Notwithstanding internal political clashes in the domain of civil versus ecclesiastical power, in the 1930s and the 1960s, the Catholic heritage and morality continued to influence nationality and national character.[25] In her history of a local church community in New South Wales, Tromp quoted a seasoned nineteenth century traveller thus: "The love of country, so strong in a Maltese, is owing in great measure to religious zeal. Nowhere else does he see the rites of his Church officiated so really and so earnestly".[26] It was during the British period that the parochial structures further developed at the same time that the population increased almost threefold from about 100,000 to about 300,000. With a total land area of 122 square miles the Maltese islands became one of the most densely populated spots on earth. At the same time emigration all over the Mediterranean region and in parts of Southern Europe flourished, as life became more crowded and resources more scarce.[27] The local feast or feasts, and the local brass band (*il-*

banda) or bands, assumed much significance in the life of all ordinary folk, especially at the level of village culture.[28] They also provided social and political clout to community leaders. Parochial piques or rivalries became politicized and spread on to the national political scene covertly or overtly.[29] In addition, bipartisan party politics originated shortly after the spate of band clubs and festa celebrations from around 1870 onwards.[30]

Apart from the liturgical, sacramental and devotional or confessional aspects of religious practice - daily attendance at Mass and Communion were common - these were a cultural norm in the Maltese Islands, out-door or external festivities and spectacles deriving from or associated with religious feasts or ceremonies became characteristic.[31] As happened elsewhere where Latin Christendom dominated, life was largely organized around the religious calendar: *il-Karnival* (carnival) preceded Lent (*ir-Randan*);[32] various penitential Good Friday processions (*il-purcissjoni tal-Gimgha l-Kbira*), and the accompanying visits to seven churches while reciting the Rosary (*il-vizti tas-Seba' Knejjes*) preceded Easter Sunday (*l-Ghid*). In some areas they were celebrated by the triumphal carrying at a trot of the statue of the Risen Lord (*L-Irxoxt*), and so on.[33] Some of the Maltese religious terms bore an uncanny resemblance to Arabic Muslim ones, from which linguistically they derived - the Maltese word for the Christian God, for example, is 'Alla'.[34] However, the theology and symbols were Christian. The intensity of religious practice could be said to be fundamentalist, and behaviouristically perhaps more comparable to non-European religions today. Until quite recently, and before Vatican Council II, the religious calendar influenced what you ate - *perlini* or *kwarezimal*, fish or meat - and how you dressed, in colour and in degree or length of observance of, for example, mourning (*luttu*) when you dress in black (*bil-vistu*), or in the case of men wear a black tie or arm band for days, weeks or months. Although such customs persist in varying degrees, the coming of independence in 1964 and subsequent legislation after 1971 had as much to do with change as had the Second Vatican Council.

In the heydays of emigration after World War II up to the mid-sixties, the Maltese migrant found society outside of the Catholic fold to be alien and sinful. But in the country of origin, unknown to the migrant, mores changed drastically within the short space of twenty years.[35] This happened initially, in the 1950s, through the coming of television, the growth in tourism, industrialization and the rise in the number of factory jobs for women in the 1960s; and in the

1970s, with the liberalization of film censorship, the introduction of civil marriage. The greatest assault on traditional lifestyles was probably in the area of sexual morality, with which the Maltese Church has always been most rigid. Although straight divorce and abortion are still illegal, oral birth control methods became possible in the seventies.[36] Whereas in the early sixties bikinis were prohibited, by the mid-eighties topless bathing was fairly common and nude bathing tacitly permitted - largely as a consequence of mass tourism.

Government attempts to take control of Catholic schools in the 1980s were steadfastly resisted by the people, in spite of all kinds of threats and abuses of power.[37] The family continues to be very much a core value in Maltese culture, although not now as much as before.[38] The family is arguably the most highly prized value in the general religious disposition of a Maltese: based on mutual respect and the love of children. In a situation where divorce was not only morally wrong but legally proscribed, the family permitted cohesion, stability and security in facing up to life's challenges, in Malta as well as overseas; it gave status and meaning in the extended family network, in the home town or village and in society at large. Parents would promote these values as supreme as they raised their children: cousins grew up together, frequently meeting and playing. Parents gave dowry (*dota*) to children, who in turn cared for their parents, especially in their old age. Although face-to-face contact caused social pressures and could nurture instincts or hostility, the small island society permitted easy inter-personal relations: there was always someone close by to talk to (*tghid kelma*) in the village square where neighbours or work mates met for a pint of wine or a game of cards; or the seaside promenade or country lane where one would go for a walk (*passiggata*) in a group. Anonymity and solitude, distances and separations were - emigrants excepted - largely unknown. And the Church, especially the *festa*, was the epitome of this communality of belonging and sharing: the patron saint of the town or village was a solace: the *festa* was as much a celebration of the village as it was of the saint. Births, baptisms, first holy communions, confirmations, accidents, illnesses, deaths, marriages and funerals were all great social occasions when people got together to laugh or cry or gossip in each other's homes or publicly.

What then became of the Maltese migrant in the Australian continent? What became of his closely-knit, family oriented lifestyle with its insular, socio-religious parochial foundations?

Church and religion in migration and settlement

According to Vatican statistics, 827 of the world's monks and priests in 1984 were Maltese - some 0.25% of the total.[39] In 1986, Victoria had 27 Maltese ecclesiastics, excluding nuns: this constituted the highest number of Catholic priests by ethnic origin in the State, higher now than even Irish ecclesiastics.[40] For an understanding of the significance of these ratings in real terms, one has to keep in mind the size and population of the Maltese Islands. The percentages are totally disproportionate to the population size of the country of origin, as indeed are the numbers of Maltese settlers in Australia and elsewhere in the world.

No wonder then that in every migration movement, with every substantial batch of emigrants leaving Maltese shores, we find an accompanying ecclesiastic. This pioneer would administer not only to the spiritual needs of his flock but assist in whatever way he could to meet their needs. As a rule, the priest would be highly educated and able to speak Italian, French or English, in addition to the all-important Maltese.[41] He was *ipso facto* a community leader: interpreter and translator, confessor and counsellor and intermediary in important transactions. It was a priest, Mons. Guzeppi De Piro (1877-1933) who set up in 1910 the first Maltese missionary movement specifically intended to assist migrants: *Is-Socjetà Missjunarja ta' San Pawl* (Missionary Society of St. Paul).[42] Half a century later it was another socially aware priest, Mons. Philip Calleja, who started the Malta Emigrants Commission, now headquartered at *Dar L-Emigrant* in Valletta.[43] Still earlier, it was an ecclesiastic, the Franciscan father Ambrose Cassar (1849-1927), who accompanied the first organized group of Maltese labourers for the Far North Queensland can fields in 1883:[44] Fr. Cassar was described in the Australian Federal Parliament one hundred years later as 'a legend in Queensland'.[45] Maltese ecclesiastics have come out with shiploads of Maltese to Australia ever since, especially from 1948 onwards.

This has meant that the role of the Church, and of religion, in the life of Maltese in the La Trobe Valley of Victoria in the early 1960s which reflects that the pattern of Malta was firmly rooted also there. In Yallourn North, for example, ethnic associations evolved around the Church, even if informally through identification with the person of a priest. In the words of one interviewer, quoted by Jerzy Zubrzycki (1964, pp. 148-149):

> The important social institution is the Roman Catholic Church, of which all are members. Of 35 people, 26 go each week, 6 once a month, 2 on special occasions and one never. A Maltese priest preaches in Maltese weekly in the local church, but the people miss the feasts, ceremonies and choral services they are used to at home. Although so many go to church, none of them belongs to any church club or society and only one has ever belonged to such a group in Australia.
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> Only 7 of the Maltese interviewed have ever belonged to any clubs in Australia - two of them to Maltese clubs in Melbourne, and another two are the only active members from the group in any clubs. This may be partly due to the lack of organizations in Yallourn North and the feeling that once in a club you are involved in too much work. None has taken any interest in meetings about the proposed swimming pool, or the Progress Association, and they seem to have no interest in their Trade Unions.

This suggests that the Maltese group functions as an association set up for a definite purpose at the weekly church services and occasional festivals to celebrate feast days of Maltese patron saints, observed Zubrzycki. The association has no executive committee, no formal meetings, and its only officer is the Maltese chaplain who acts as a representative of the community on other bodies (for example, the Good Neighbour Council), and maintains regular frequent contacts with all Maltese families in the district. In the words of the interviewer:

> Father Carruana has a great deal of social welfare work to do. He spends much of his time explaining social services, helping to fill in forms, interpreting for doctors and police, and trying to interpret the Australian way of life in an acceptable form to the Maltese. He has made a detailed study of their backgrounds because he finds these responsible for the many jealousies and differences between them and so knows how to approach each individual. He finds he is doing much that should be the province of a social worker, but it is essential to be able to speak the language and to have lived in Malta to understand the background.[46]

This also meant that various social activities were initiated by or around the parish: for example, the George Cross soccer club, of

Melbourne, in the nineteen forties.[47] Today the modern, spacious Maltese community centres in both Blacktown, in Sydney's western suburbs (the La Valette Social Centre), and in Parkville, an inner suburb of Melbourne (the *Centru Malti*), have a resident chaplain. In the latter case the Centre was built on land owned by the Missionary Society of St. Paul. Both centres have adjacent Maltese chapels - the one in Blacktown being larger than that in Parkville - where Mass is said regularly in Maltese, and the sacraments administered as necessary. In the Melbourne metropolitan area alone there were in 1986 at least eleven churches where Mass was said in Maltese at regular intervals, usually weekly on Sundays or Saturday evenings. Apart from St. Paul's Chapel in Parkville, these were in Kealba (St. Paul's Church), West Sunshine (St. Paul's Church), St. Albans (Sacred Heart), East Reservoir (St. Joseph the Worker), North Fawkner (St. Matthew's), Hadfield (St. Thomas More), North Sunshine (St. Bernadette's), Springvale (St. Joseph's), Noble Park (St. Anthony) and West Melbourne (St. Mary).[48] In New South Wales, too, Mass is said in Maltese in various places: in at least one chapel (that belonging to the Missionary Society of St. Paul in Stanley St., East Sydney) daily.[49] In Adelaide, however, where the numbers are less and for other reasons, there has been some resentment among the faithful because even the ceremonies commemorating *Il-Vitorja*, the Maltese national feast in Australia, were not carried out in Maltese by the Maltese chaplaincy in Lockleys.[50] One would-be parishioner complained that "a chaplain to care solely for the Maltese community was never appointed; feasts were celebrated by the Maltese fathers in English; Mass is always said in English, programmes are printed in English... Because of this the Maltese community are gradually losing their identity, their culture..."[51] Telephone interviews which the writer conducted in Brisbane in 1986 indicated that the community did not feel it was well serviced by a Maltese ecclesiastical representation; there was disappointment as to the level and extent of parish activity in the Brisbane area. Further north, in the Mackay district, the Maltese presence is still felt, and long have one or two priests been assigned there. In Western Australia, and in Queensland, the Maltese language programmes on radio may serve as the only effective link-up mechanism among the community at the state level. It is not clear what percentage of the community belong to the Maltese social clubs that do exist there.

These states were the first to receive Maltese arrivals, and can boast of pioneer priests: Fr. Ambrose Cassar in the case of

Queensland, and Fr. Raphael Pace, from 1913 to 1953, in Western Australia.[52] However, the Malta-born population in both states is smaller than in the other ones; both states, too, especially Western Australia, have the problem of enormous distances and a sparsely distributed population. Maltese do subscribe to one or more of the five regular Maltese language publications, particularly the three published in Sydney, two weekly and one monthly, which seek an inter-state readership. Two of these, *The Maltese Herald*, and *The Malta Cross*, have correspondents in Brisbane and in Perth as well as in the other state capitals.

Maltese in widespread and remote areas heard about the pastoral visit to Australia of the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Mercieca, in September 1986, and flocked to greet him. An eyewitness in Mackay, Ricarda Farrugia, recounted to this writer how up to 4,000 well-wishers, some of whom had travelled great distances, packed a large hall in Mackay to honour the Archbishop. Having been around Australia, she reckoned the most impressive Maltese presence she had witnessed was in fact in Mackay, Far North Queensland: Mackay is one of the very earliest settlement centres of Maltese, where many original settlers had large families, scattered in remote areas. In Brisbane too, St. Stephen's Cathedral was "packed with Maltese, some of whom had travelled for over 100 kilometres".[53] The same happened in Perth, where a huge crowd packed the Bassendean parish church, where Mass is said monthly by the chaplain to the Maltese community. An overjoyed resident, Mr. Godfrey Bonavia, wrote to *The Sunday Times* in Valletta that Perth's Maltese felt that "compared to the Eastern State Capitals like Sydney and Melbourne" they had "very little to offer", and yet there was a great turn-out. They were "a small but loyal community in Perth":

> Apart from enjoying their presence among us, we felt very close to Malta and our families who are always in our minds.[54]

Before turning to the more popular aspects of Maltese religious practice, note should be taken of the involvement of Maltese in other religious or charitable works: various religious orders have long been active in Australia; some of them with a strong Maltese participation. Social and humanitarian activities have by no means been limited to strictly religious, denominational or even 'ethnic' quarters. They span education, nursing, elderly care, youth work,

counselling, home visiting. In both N.S.W. and Victoria major old age home projects run by Maltese nuns were set on rails in 1986. The foundation stone of St. Dominic's Village, run by the Dominican sisters under the direction of Mother Erminia Gauci, was laid by the Malta-born N.S.W. Minister of Youth and Community Services, John Aquilnia, formerly the Mayor of Blacktown, in Blacktown.[55] A similar home, also run by Dominican sisters under the direction of Mother Terezita Bianco, was opened in Keilor.[56] Also in 1986 the Valletta-based M.S.S.P. general Superior James Bonello visited Australia in connection with the building of the Society's Seminary in Wantirna, Victoria.[57] There are a number of Catholic schools established and run, in whole or in part, by Maltese nuns. A good example in the education field is the St. Francis of Assisi primary school in Warrawong, N.S.W.[58] The first Maltese sisters to establish themselves in Australia were the Franciscans. They arrived in Mackay, Queensland, in June 1954, a year after the then Archbishop of Malta, Sir Michael Gonzi, had toured Australia and made such a recommendation. A Queensland paper reported the event as follows:

> His Lordship the Bishop accompanied them to Mackay and there formally welcomed them to the Diocese and entrusted to them the noble work for which they had come - to conduct the newly established St. Vincent's Home for the Aged... The Sisters received a unique welcome from the Catholics of Mackay, and particularly from the hundreds of Maltese people living in the district. So enthusiastic was everyone that these missionary Sisters must have felt at home immediately... An efficient, enthusiastic Committee of Maltese laymen was responsible for the extraordinary welcome to the Sisters. One hundred cars conveyed people to the airport to meet the plane bringing the Sisters...[59]

In his own welcoming address the Bishop of Rockhampton (the Diocese of which Mackay formed part) had this to say about the Maltese and their religious attachments as migrant settlers in that district since the 1920s:

> They were poor then and with the racial prejudice which was so common among Australians until recent times, they were not particularly welcomed. But they soon won the esteem of every fair-minded Australian and no one can now deny that they have contributed in no small way to the prosperity of the

whole district. They looked for no special favours, but by their own toil and sweat they cleared the bush and tilled the land and by so doing earned the prosperity which is now theirs. We admire them, because through their years of struggle they observed the natural law and gave to Australia, in their numerous children, our most precious asset, who will be our strength and perhaps our salvation in the years to come. While doing this they kept intact their ancient religion. Their greatest boast is that they have preserved unbroken their allegiance to Christ in Malta for nineteen centuries in spite of invasions, occupations and persecution. That spirit which they manifested in the heroic defence of their island, during the last war, and which won for them the everlasting gratitude of the British people, was the spirit emerging from their tenacious faith... But now they have their own priest...[60]

In so distant, so different a land, the cry of home ran deep among the thousands of unskilled Maltese-speaking Catholics: 'il-Maltin ta' l-Awstralja'. Although the Australian church was always much interested in their plight, or at any rate in their religious observance,[61] they on their part could not readily or wholly identify with it.[62] Australian Catholicism was not Maltese-like, and even less so after Vatican Council II. Certain Maltese found the Australian church lacking colour, dry, unemotional, removed, pragmatic, clinical. Their adherence to it was a moral obligation, but at least a rather functional one for some. Even now one hears comments about Australian lack of respect for the *Madonna* - what used to be a Maltese Catholic accusation of Protestant proselytizers - or disdain for the veneration of patron saints in the Maltese style, and the central role allocated traditionally to the Blessed Virgin. A Maltese Catholic from South Australia expressed his feelings thus:

The Australians are indeed good Catholics, we mix easy and get together very well. But perhaps there is a great difference between us. Our love, our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of our Lord Jesus. The Australians refer to the Blessed Virgin as Mary, simply as Mary nothing else. On the other hand we look at the Blessed Virgin, as the Mother of God and our Mother. We look at Her as our mediator, we always ask Her for favours, not because we do not love our Lord and Saviour, we love Him so much that we dare not ask Him all the time, but knowing that His Mother the Blessed

> Virgin Mary is so merciful, we ask Her knowing full well that the Blessed Virgin Mary always helps those who seek Her. To show Her how much we love Her we celebrate with great pomp her feast. The Australians laugh at us. Why?[63]

The average Maltese migrant drew strength from religion: the faith, the liturgy and the cycle, but not less the togetherness of at least continuing to partake of the same sacraments, reciting the same or similar prayers, attending the same or similar ceremonies, if possible. One can visualize the recitation of the litany in broken Latin on some remote farmstead in northern Queensland, and almost hear the contemplation of the mysteries of the rosary in dialectical rural Maltese retaining its authentic idiom. The devotion to patrons and protectors was retained, especially St. Paul. Maltese proverbs and superstitions would be invoked, no doubt. In the eye of a storm, one would ask for the protection of another saint: *Santa Barbara, la deni u lanqas hsara*; or of yet another, Sant'Antnin, if you needed to recover something that had been lost. Saints were indispensable intermediaries in heaven as on earth: *minghajr quddisin ma titlax is-sema* is the Maltese proverb. (You cannot go to heaven without the saints). Maltese religion then was not simply going to church: the Maltese psyche sprouted from its roots and the sinews of the Maltese mental and emotional frame were contained within it. "Social reality", wrote the French sociologist Dumont in his analysis of ideologies, "presents itself as a spiritual configuration of 'collective conscience', as a mental universe in which individuals participate and by means of which they are defined".[64]

Maltese religiosity was not theological; it was not enlightened, not informed or too consciously or articulately expressed. Much of it was by rote: it was inbred, part of Malteseness. It dawned like the morning and set like the sun at dusk. Its component elements - social and cultural, doctrinal and devotional - faded into each other like the seasons. Inquisitiveness and rationality were uncultivated - to inquire is to sin. But on the other hand, faith, routine and ritual gave continuity and meaning beyond space and time. One can thus speak of a Maltese religion to mean those social functions and outlooks on life that have long influenced and characterized the inhabitants' life-style. In her book on *The Future of Religion*, Bliss wrote:

> The affirmatives and negatives of a religion affect temperament and outlook, predisposing men to attitudes of fatalism or to

> assertiveness as well as to specific actions and taboos: its organizational patterns may be indistinguishable from society itself, as the caste system has been for centuries part and parcel of Hinduism and the Christian parish was the local social and administrative unit of western Europe. The rhythm imposed on life by religious festivals, be they weekly Sabbaths or Sundays, or seasonal events, is visible in every culture the gap may be narrowed from the other side also: *popular needs press upon high religion and bring about modifications of dogma, moral standards and ritual practices.*[65]

Circumstances in Australia were markedly different to what they had been in Malta, historically and socially... however much first generation Maltese huddled together groping for the traditional supports and, in that process, often developing a rather fossilized patriotic nostalgia. You could no longer go by the church bell ringing the *Pater Noster* (sunrise) or the *Ave Maria* (sunset); in Australia there was no village square, no baroque church at the centre of it; the *kappillan* of Malta was not to be easily found. In these silent distances, there was no spectacle, no verve and display: nobody to carry shoulder-high; no *banda* playing its boisterous *marci ferrieha* (or its slow *marc funebri* for that matter); no silver foil and confetti from every balcony and roof-top; no fireworks, petards, gas-lights; no varieties of *qubbajt* as the nougat sellers proclaimed their wares, sharpening their knives, from brightly-lit stands; no passers-by to wave at as they showed off their new clothes; no new oil painting, crystal chandelier or silver candelabra to inaugurate; no grand family reunions with ever so many little cousins. Indeed, until the 'ethnic revival' of the early nineteen seventies, the only feast generally celebrated, in church, was *Il-Vitorja* on eight September each year. The Maltese *festa* proper - or as good an imitation of it as feasible - had not come to Australia.

Popular expressions of the Maltese religious culture in Australia

Maltese language radio broadcasting in Australia started well before Al Grasby's time. The reason? Religion. At the suggestion of a Carmelitan, Fr. Licari, funds were raised for a fifteen minute slot on the Sydney-based radio station 2SM in 1954.[66] The programme, broadcast on Sunday mornings, would give information regarding church services: the saying of Mass, the hearing of confessions, and

church events of various kinds. True to form, however, the religious broadcasting also served as a vital means of communication for the Maltese community: messages to and from the Maltese Islands, get-togethers, undelivered letters, changed addresses, lost souls.

The start of regular Maltese language radio transmissions in 1975 gave a much-needed boost to social communications, permitting organizational talent which previously seemed non-existent. People who had been almost afraid to speak Maltese in public, lest they be abused or discriminated against, began to catch up with their own identity, their memories, and gradually sought to give expression to old customs and traditions.[67] In Australia the now fashionable Maltese *festa*, in its present form and character, dates from the nineteen seventies. Band committees were formed, bandsmen and eventually younger apprentices joined, *festa* committees were formed, to plan the various complicated stages and sets.

Previously, the main feast celebrated as a 'national' one was, as mentioned earlier, *Il-Vitorja*, also known as *Il-Bambina* (a reference to the statue of Maria Bambina, Our Lady of Victories). As far as is known, Maltese rallied to this feast from the late 1940s onwards, if not earlier. In Melbourne the initiative was taken by the M.S.S.P., two of whose priests Fr. W. Grech and Fr. P.P. Borda had come out in 1948.[68] In New South Wales it was at the initiative of Fr. Robert Cassar, a Carmelitan, that the feast started in 1952 to be more formally celebrated - the factotum being Fr. Michael Camilleri, the recently-arrived first chaplain to the Maltese migrant community in that state.[69] In the sixties, statues of the patron saint, designed in the Maltese style, were brought over and joyously welcomed into the respective churches. The Sydney statue of 'Il-Bambina' was blessed by Cardinal Gilroy at St. Mary's Cathedral in September 1963. "Year in year out, for 33 years", wrote the present chaplain Fr. Paul Baron in 1985, "the religious feast which we call 'Tal-Vitorja' always took place: each year clergy and people turn out united in large numbers to remember and give thanks for past historic events in our country of birth, Malta..."[70] Photographs taken at the time of the statue's inauguration, on the steps of St. Mary's Cathedral, expressed the profound enthusiasm and unity of the Maltese community.

When the Maltese community built a church in Greystanes, Western Sydney, they called it 'Our Lady Queen of Victories'. Later, it was called 'Our Lady Queen of Peace', a name taken also by

the area's *banda*; and from 1965 *Il-Vitorja* started to be celebrated on a grand scale.[71]

In Victoria, the venue for this celebration has since 1950 been St. Mary's Church in West Melbourne; a church which has been very much patronized by the Maltese community in Victoria for baptisms, weddings and funerals.[72] The internal ceremonies (*il-festa ta' gewwa*) consist of a concelebrated Mass which includes the special homily (*il-panigierku*) for the occasion. This is an all-Maltese occasion: the children's choir in the 1985 and 1986 ceremonies I attended interpreted movingly various pieces: well-known Maltese religious hymns such as that adopted by the universal church *Nadurawk ja Hobz tas-Sema* (*T'Adoriam Ostia Divina*); the modern friendship song composed and sung by Fr. David and his M.S.S.P. group *Tini Jdejk* (Extend your Hand to me); Gounod's *Ave Maria.* There are confessions in Maltese, and Holy Communion, for the thousands present; processions with the statue carried shoulder-high, accompanied by two or three Maltese Victorian bands; parades in the streets in the vicinity of the church (*il-festa ta' barra*). During the procession in 1986, and the recitation of the rosary, I noticed several youngsters peer unbelievingly at the scene through the windows of a local pub, beer cans in hand. There was a reunion in an open space at the back of the church, where benediction was imparted and Maltese food, mainly *pastizzi*, and drinks (*Kinnie*), could be purchased. In St. Mary's Church, as in St. Mary's Cathedral, this feast always attracts a few thousand devotees.

It is worth noting that Il-Vitorja has remained in Australia as the national Maltese feast. In Malta this feast, originally proclaimed a national one by the nationalist party in 1882, gave way to Independence Day in 1964 (21st September), and subsequently to Republic Day. Most Maltese came to Australia before the reality of independence and its aftermath had seeped in, and remained committed to their previous time-tested festivities.[73]

On the whole any competition among the *festa* organizing committees appears to have a unifying effect both at the state and interstate level, as brass bands and busloads of *festa* enthusiasts patronize each other's activities regularly, especially in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

The advent of multiculturalism increased the number of feasts and also changed their aspect, as one group after another set up their home town or home village *festa* . In Melbourne alone we find these feasts were celebrated in 1986: The feast of the Annunciation (*Il-Lunzjata*), in March, in Maidstone (Our Lady of Perpetual Succour

parish); that of St. George Martyr (*San Gorg Martri*), in April, in St. Albans (Sacred Heart); St. John the Baptist (*San Gwann il-Battista*), in June, also in St. Albans (Holy Eucharist); St. Joseph (*San Guzepp*), in May, in East Reservoir (St. Joseph the Worker), in Springvale (St. Joseph's), and in Morwell East (St. Vincent de Paul). A major *festa*, in popular terms, is that of St. Peter and St. Paul (*L-Imnarja*), on 29 June, celebrated religiously in North Sunshine (St. Bernadette's). Other feasts celebrated in the traditional way are St. Lawrence Martyr (San Lawrenz Martri), in August, in Glenroy (Corpus Christi); that of St. Cajetan (*San Gejtanu*, revered in the suburb of Hamrun), in August, in Ascot Vale (St. Mary's); St. Helena (*Santa Liena*, revered in the town of Birkirkara), in North Melbourne (St. Michael's); and the feast of the Assumption on 15 August, in Deer Park (St. Peter's church), and also in St. Albans (Sacred Heart).[74] Most if not all of these feasts, and others besides, are now celebrated also in New South Wales, and to a smaller extent, in the Adelaide area, in South Australia. In Queensland and Western Australia only the 'national' feasts are commemorated, usually religiously, although accompanying social occasions, such as dinner dances; they draw a few hundred people together and raise a cheer. In these states however there is no *banda*: and one cannot have a *festa* without a *banda*. By contrast, there are some half-a-dozen organized Maltese brass bands, trained mainly on *marci*, in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. A *banda* would always contain at the very least thirty players, including a pride of young recruits.

Even so, the Maltese Australian *festa* is in some respects unreal: the environment - social, climatic, architectural - is not quite there; nor indeed are the numbers, partly because of the distances, and partly because many Maltese by force of circumstances, have distanced themselves from parochial religious practices. There is uprooting - mobility even within Australia through changing jobs or houses; the identification of the *festa* or the church with the town or village, in the original sense, is thus no longer possible. Resources are limited, although much fund raising still does take place. On the whole these *festa* serve to re-create some of the spirit, but not too much. Balls or dinner dances, for example, are a local variation: in Malta the central attractions are the family at home entertaining, the street band marches, the church functions and, afterwards, visits to every club and bar in town, meeting friends and offering to pay for drinks... When even rival party notables might visit one another's clubs. Cynics would say the Maltese Australian *festa* is more of a

business activity. In fact, the *festa* is the one day in the year a devout parishioner would look forward to, not unlike ANZAC day for a war veteran. Individuals who would otherwise be lost in anonymity recapture some of the feeling of a village notable by spending the year preparing for the *festa*. Local artisans increasingly provide the craftsmanship required: Reno Baldacchino, of St. Albans, sculptured the statue (*il-vara*) of Santa Marija Assunta, for example;[75] Leli Costa, a carpenter and furniture-maker from North Sunshine, has manufactured pedestals for at least five such statues;[76] Laurence Azzopardi constructed the niche and other accessories for the *festa* of San Lawrenz in Glenroy.[77] There is some work for tailors who prepare the costumes worn by statue bearers (*ilbiesi tal-fratellanza*) or a banner (*bandalora*), while the bands are kept busy, choirs have become fashionable, foremost among these *Il-kor ta'San Gejtanu*. But, clearly, there is often more that is profane than there is that is religious.

The two best examples of this are probably *L-Imnarja* and *San Girgor* (St. Gregory). In Victoria in 1986 the former was held at the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds, with horse-racing, folk-singing and a song festival, and with various Maltese foods.[78] Some 6,000 paid the gate money to attend.[79] The latter, held annually at Port Arlington, is the best attended feast of all, and includes various games and races, including the greasy pole competition (*l-arblu ta'Mejju*, also known as *il-gostra*). Whereas in Malta it is held in the fishing village of Marsaxlokk, in Victoria it is held in as close a replica of it - a faint one, to be sure - that is Port Arlington in Port Phillip Bay, on the Bellarine peninsula. In 1986, over 18,000 people participated in it.[80] On both occasions holy Mass is said, because it is after all the saint's feast, not merely a horse race or a football game. But the religious occasion is a pretext for socializing and merry-making *à la Maltais*. In Adelaide, where the *festa* of Santa Katarina is popular as so many people there hail from Zejtun, the celebrations have comprised Maltese folk-dancing and poetry recitals.[81] Occasionally it is the place of origin rather than the patron saint's feast that is celebrated. This is so in the *Lejla Furjaniza*, which is organized by the Reskeon Maltese Association at the Broadmeadows Town Hall.

Although attendance figures appear impressive in a distant migrant setting, it is believed that only a minority of the Maltese community are into the *festa* celebrations. Some have either stopped practising their faith altogether, or grown apart from the Maltese elements associated with certain practices - indeed a few of those

involved in *festa* organization are said not to be particularly religious. A good number of Maltese who emigrated in the early sixties would have been influenced by the fairly rampant anticlericalism among hard-core MLP supporters at that time: the clash over secularization policy between the Malta Labour Party led by Dominic Mintoff and the Catholic church led by Archbishop Gonzi was at its height.[82] To vote for Mintoff's party was made a mortal sin. As a result, many MLP supporters suffered from a crisis of conscience and of loyalties - some stopped going to church.

By and large, religion continues to be a central value to the Maltese Catholic settler in Australia, and the single most noteworthy element in the Maltese lifestyle would be its family-centric base, which in turn is closely associated with its religio-centric *weltanschauung*.

If we accept B.A. Santamaria's three broad categories of Catholics in Australia - the Marxists, the humanists, and the Christian democrats - we would unhesitatingly conclude that the bulk of the Maltese would fit into the third category. Drawing upon Christian democratic theorists like Ozanam, Windthorst, Ketteler and the papal encyclicals, Santamaria somewhat idealistically defined this model thus:

> It places emphasis on the person - equipped with a spiritual soul - as the foundation of a doctrine of human rights. Its emphasis gravitates overwhelmingly around the family, as the ultimate dispensary of social services. It insists that the family, not the government, is the shield of the individual... It insists on individual property, as against concentrated corporate ownership. It favours the land, the village, the family farm, the cooperatives... it is thoroughly decentralist, founded on the doctrine of subsidiary function, the foe of capitalists monopoly and of communist totalitarianism. Since every community must possess cohesion, it believes in patriotism... that religion serves not only its primary supernatural purpose, but as the cement of society, furnishing the only satisfactory basis for that sense of mutual obligation without which communities disintegrate.[83]

While in general the Maltese Catholic type in Australia - as a moral person - would tend towards all these things, there would be a lack of comprehension, of ability to articulate or philosophize in like terms, due to the generally low level of religious education.

Their faith was 'blind' rather than 'enlightened', their religion 'messianic' rather than 'inspired', 'priestly' rather than 'biblical', 'parochial' rather than 'universal'. The strict, rather fundamentalist but lay Society for the Propagation of Christian Doctrine, known as M.U.S.E.U.M. ('Tal-Muzew'), set up by Dun Gorg Preca, has been active in Australia since the early 1950s: now tending to use English as a medium it prepares children for the sacraments through instruction in dogmas of the faith and engages in other church-related works, generally upholding Maltese religious traditions and values.

Of late, there have been some Maltese converts to other religions or sects, in Malta as in Australia, the most important of whom are the Jehovah Witnesses. Some problem arose at the 3EA station Maltese language programmes in 1986 because the group expected publicity, to which some of the 'mainstream' listeners objected. However, fortunately, the dispute was resolved in the nonconformists' favour: it is not impossible or illegal for anyone of Maltese descent *not to be Catholic*, and even less so, one hopes, *not to be a bigot*. Part of the reason why the percentage of church-goers in Australia appears to be substantially less than in Malta - though still very high by Australian standards - is that here the social pressure to conform would be less, if not absent, after one has left the family circle. But on the other hand, for that same reason, it is probable that religious practice in Australia among Maltese is, on the whole, better instructed and certainly more sincere. This is especially true among those second and third generation Maltese Australian who do continue in the faith, if not partaking so much of its more popular 'cultural' manifestations. In view of the comparatively low inter-generational Maltese language retention,[84] at least so far, it is not illusory to suggest that in Maltese settlements overseas religion may survive the test of cultural admixture better than the language itself.

NOTES

1 Donato, M. (1985) L'Emigration des Maltais en Algérie au XIXème Siècle, Africa Nostra, Montpellier, pp. 82-82, 108-111. 'Le sens moral n'est past développeé chez eux; mais aussi, il n'est pas étouffé sans retour comme chez la plupart des autres colons venue des grandes villes d'Europe... Ces Maltais si profondément catholiques et pratiquant un culte quasi fanatique vont se distinguer au milieu des autres européens'.

2 Sammut, C. 'La Minorité de Tunisie: Ethnie Arab ou Europoeenne?' (Proceedings of the First Congress on Mediterranean Studies of Arabo-Berber Influence, held at the Royal University of Malta, published in Algiers, 1973). Maltese in Tunisia regarded laical French settlers who married civilly or were divorced as 'des individues dégénérés... I; était pratiquement impossible de trouver en Tunisie un Maltais qui n'était en même temps Catholique'.

3 Baragli, E. 'Malta, Fuedo di Dio', in Civiltà Cattolica, Rome, 1955, Quaderno 2526, III, pp. 579-593.

4 See J. Felice Pace (ed.), (1985) Il Knisja Maltija 20 Sena Wara l-Koncilju, Institut Kattoliku, Floriana.

5 Author's interviews with Fr. Tarcisio Micallef and Fr. Noel Bianco, of the Missionary Movement of St. Paul (M.S.S.P.), Parkville, Victoria, 8 December, 1986.

6 See Collins, P. (1986) Mixed Blessings, Melbourne; Moll, J.J. (1985) The Faith of Australians, Sydney.

7 Profile '81: 1981 Census Data on Persons born in Malta, Department of Immigration & Ethnic Affairs, Canberra, n.d., p. 16. In 1981 Libya's Colonel Gaddafi financed the building of a mosque in Malta, but this is frequented by locally resident Libyan students, there being hardly a single Maltese in Malta practising Islam. See 'Islamic Mosque Reopens', The Democrat, Valletta, 27 October 1985, p. 11.

8 For example, Fr. Bianco recalled a survey, 'Daybreak', featured in The Advocate during 1980, where one could easily notice a good sprinkling of Maltese surnames in Parish committees and other groups from the eastern as well as from the western suburbs of Melbourne.

9 Renfrew, C. (1973) Before Civilization, London, p. 147. Before 2,000 B.C., J.D. Evans (Malta, London, 1959, p. 158) found no evidence of defensive works: 'no more peacable society seems ever to have existed'; but by 1450 B.C.; in the Borg in-Nadur phase of the bronze age, the inhabitants had fortified villages on hilltops. See Trump, D. (1981) The Prehistory of the Mediterranean, London; and also Moscati, S. (1973) The World of the Phoenicians, London, esp. pp. 237-43.

10 See A.T. Luttrell (ed.) (1975) Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta Before the Knights, London; Wettinger, G. (1985) The Jews of Malta in the Late Middle Ages, Valletta.

11 On the Order's history see Engel, C.E. (1957) L'Ordre do Malte en la Mediterranee, Monaco; Schermerhorn, E. (1929) Malta of the Knights, London; on the Great Siege, see Bradford, E. (1961) The Great Siege, London; Balbi di Correggio, F. (1960) The Last of the Crusaders, London.

12 On this see Vella, A.P. (1964) The Tribunal of the Inquisition in Malta, Valletta; on the Knights of Malta in the 18th century up to the French takeover, Cavaliero, R. (1960) The Last of the Crusaders, London.

13 See Gullaimier, A. (1972) Bliet u Rhula Maltin, Valletta.

14 Infra, p. 22-6. A fascinating major study of the various folkloristic aspects of this *festa* is Denise Vernay (ed.) (1983) L-Imnarja: Fête des Lumieres á Malte, Paris, which also contains an introduction by Joseph Cassar - Pullicino (pp. 5-29).

15 Although known now as 'Tal-Vitorja' these boat races originally took place on a different feast (Santa Marija tal-Portu Salvu) also celebrated in Senglea (*L-Isla*) since the sixteenth century. Joseph Serracino recently published a three-volume history of these races, L-Istorja Tat-Tigrija tal-Vitorja; ample reference to them, and to the feast itself, is made in Mgr. Alexander Bonnici's two-volume history of Senglea, Valletta, 1981, 1986. *L-Imnarja* was such an integral part of the culture that, as a sign of wedlock, the groom would be obliged to take the bride to the feast. Infra, pp. 26-7.

16 See the articles by Denaro V., "The French in Malta", in Scientia, Valletta, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 1-4, 1963; and Testa, C., Maz-Zewg Nahat tas-Swar, Valletta, 1979-1982, 3 vols.

17 Private Letters from Sir Alexander Ball to Granville Penn, Malta 1801-5, B. Mus. Add. MS 37268, quoted from Henry Frendo, Language of a Colony: A Study of the Maltese Language Question during British Colonialism, 1800-1919. M.A. Thesis, Royal University of Malta, Valletta, 1973, f. 251, unpublished.

18 Smith, H. (1953) "Ecclesia et Imperium", Britain in Malta, Valletta, vol. 1, p. 73.

19 Sorre, M. (1968) Recontres de la Geographie et de la Sociologie, Paris, p. 159.

20 Malta Govenment Gazette, Valletta, no. 4441, 8 February 1902, quoted after Henry Frendo, Language of a Colony, op. cit., f. 265.

21 Vella, A.P., The Tribunal of the Inquisition in Malta, op. cit., p. 8.

22 Vella, A.P. (1969) The University of Malta: A Bicentenary Memorial, Valletta, pp. 69-71.

23 As late as 1971 the Church hierarchy strongly resisted and resented the rehabilitation of a non-conforming nationalist who had been excommunicated in 1911 then exiled by the British in 1914 and not repatriated after the end of World War I. See Frendo, H. (1971) Lejn Tnissil ta' Nazzjon: It-Twemmin Soccjo-Politiku ta' Manwel Dimech, Valletta; (1972) Birth Pangs of a Nation: Manwel Dmech's Malta, 1860-1921, Valletta; and the author's pamphlet Story of a Book, Valletta, 1972.

24 See Frendo, H. (1979) Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience, Valletta, esp. sh. 3, pp. 61-95.

25 See Koster, A. (1981) Prelates and Politicians in Malta, Vijfhuizen, The Netherlands; Vassallo, M. (1979) From Lordship to Stewardship: Religion and Social Change in Malta, The Hague.

26 Tromp, P. (1979) Faith of our Fathers living still: A Catholic History of Prospect-Blacktown-Blacktown South 1788-1979, Blacktown.

27 See Price, C. (1954) Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration, Melbourne.

28 See Boissevain, J. (1969) Hal Farrug: A Village in Malta, New York; Henriet, M., "L'Organisation Sociale Villageoise à Gozo", in Journal of Maltese Studies, Valletta, 1973, no. IX, pp. 72-95.

29 See Boissevain, J. (1965) Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta, London. See also Busuttil, E.V. (1894) Holiday Customs in Malta, Valletta; Mifsud Bonnici, R. (1954) Il Grajja tal-Muzika f'Malta u Ghawdex, Valletta; (1956-7) Grajja ta'Baned, Valletta, 2 Vols.

30 See Frendo, H., Party Politics in Fortress Colony, op. cit., e.g. pp. 123-125, and passim.

31 'Spécificité religieuse qui les fait apparaître originaux ces hommes et ces femmes qui "les jours de fête trouvent toujours le temps d'aller à la messe; on les voit affluer à la Sainte-Table avec une piété digne des premiers chrétiens. Dans leurs maisons, dans leur étables, dans leurs boutiques, ils ont des images de madonne avec des lampes nuit et jour allumées". Cooment les

colons les considéraient-ils ces Maltais qui "pou attirer les bénédictions du ciel sur leur récoltes, ont soin de faire la part du Bon Dieu et des pauvres: le produit tout entier de tel ou tel champ est, par avance, consacré à des oeuvres pies".' M. Donato, op. cit., p. 172.

32 In the early 1970s the Socialist régime shifted Carnival to May, thus somewhat lessening its attraction. See "Il-Karnival fl-Imghoddi", In-Nazzjon Taghna, Valletta, 6 May 1986, and "Il-Prinjolata", ibid.

33 Very elaborate and generally still very well patronised rituals are involved in Malta, though not so much in Australia with the exception of *il-presepju* (the crib), and the highly popular midnight mass on Christmas Eve involving the boy's sermon delivered in Maltese (*il-priedka tat-tifel*). See reports of the Good Friday processions in e.g. Qormi and in Rabat; Way of the Cross ceremonies; Last Supper re-enactments; various cassettes (*Marci funebri*) now published annually by band clubs; passion plays, etc., ibid., e.g. 20,22,27,31 March 1986, passim. See also Joe Cordina's study on the "The Presepju", The Democrat, Valletta, 27 Dec. 1986, and G. Cassar Pullicino, La Settimana Santa a Malta, Bari, 1956.

34 See the works of G. Aquilina, esp. Papers in Maltese Linguistics, Valletta, 1961; G. Cassar Pullicino, *Il-Folklor Malti*, Valletta, 1960, Il-Bennejja tal-Folklor Malti, Valletta, 1964; E. Serracino-Inglott, Il-Miklem Malti, Valletta, 1975-1987, 9 vols.

35 See Mario Vassallo, "Religious Symbolism in a Changing Malta", in M. Vassallo (ed.), Contributions to Mediterranean Studies, Valletta, 1977, pp. 232-252, and by the same author, "Religious Values Among University Students", in Journal of Educational Affairs, Valletta, 1977, vol. 3, pp. 71-74.

36 See Robin G. Milne, "Family Planning in Malta", in Population Studies, vol. 27, no. 2, July 1973, pp. 373-386. The Cana Movement, a Catholic family welfare association, was still advocating the rhythm method.

37 See Maurizio Dente, "L'attacco socialisticl all Chiesa e alla società di Malta", in Cristianità, Piacenza, Anno XII, no. 114, October 1984, pp. 5-8; and in "Malta's Unholy War", The Australian, 18 October 1984, by P. Godwin of London's Sunday Times.

38 See e.g. "Caritas' Study on the Family", "Marriage in Society", The Sunday Times of Malta, 27 October 1985; "Family Crisis", ibid., 24 November 1985.

39 The Malta Cross (henceforth MC), Sydney, 28 August 1986, p. 3, quoted the figures.

40 Interview with Fr. Tarcisio Macallef, M.S.S.P., referred to above.

41 One Malta-born ecclesiastic, Fr. Robert Cassar, based in Sydney from 1948, could preach and hear confessions in six languages, including Spanish, Portugese and Russian, besides Maltese. Mark Caruana interview with Fr. Michael Camilleri, Greystanes, N.S.W., June 1983.

42 Alexander Bonnici wrote a two-volume biography of him, (Valletta, 1982-5).

43 See Henry Frendo, "Maltese Migration from the Maltese Islands and Northern Africa after 1945", in James Jupp (ed.), *An* Encyclopoedia of the Australian People, Australian National University, Canberra, 1988.

44 Cassar, P. (1978) Fr. Ambrose Cassar, A Pioneer Priest, Halifax, Queensland.

45 The Hon. Alan Cadman, speaking in a "Grievance Debate", House of Representatives, Canberra, 10 Nov. 1983, Hansard, col. 2645.

46 Zubrzycki, J. (1964) Settlers of the La Trobe Valley: A Sociological Study of Immigrants in the brown coal industry in Australia, Canberra, pp. 148-149.

47 Henry Frendo, "Tigieg Hodor folk Bajd Blù" (interviews with the presidents of the George Cross and the Green Gully soccer clubs, and with the mother of jockey Darren Gauci, a George Cross supporter), in the Maltese Herald (henceforth MH), Sydney, 9 July 1985, p. 17.

48 List provided by Fr. Tarcisio Micallef.

49 Interviews with Fr. Micallef and Fr. Noel Binaco, referred to above.

50 Band marches and even a grand fireworks display however were put on for *Il-Vitorja*. See the programme: "Solemn Feast of Our Lady of Victories, Patroness of the Maltese Community", 1986, p. 5.

51 Mr. F.X. Falzon, J.P., in a letter to this writer post-marked Adelaide, 20 October 1986.

52 Fr. Pace went to W.A. at the invitation of Mgr. Clune, Bishop of Perth, in 1913. A highly cultured man with doctorates in philosophy and theology, he worked for some 40 years among Catholics and looked after the small Maltese community. He received Sir Lancelot Goody, who later became Archbishop of Perth, into the church. See the M.S.S.P.'s Report of the Pastoral Needs and Care of Maltese Migrants, Parkville, December 1984, p. 59.

53 See "Archbishop in Adelaide", The Sunday Times, Valletta, 21 September 1986.

54 G. Bonavia, "Archbishop in Perth", ibid., 19 October 1986.

55 MC, 22 May 1986.

56 Ibid., 9 October 1986

57 Ibid., 24 April 1986, 22 May 1986.

58 G. Bartolo, "25 Sena ta' Taghlim Kontinwu", MH, 23 July 1985.

59 The Review, Rockhampton, July 1954, p. 4.

60 The welcome address on behalf of the Maltese community was delivered by Mr. George Formosa, while Fr. R. Vella responded on behalf of the Sisters. Ibid., p. 11.

61 The first Catholic bishops of Sydney and of Melbourne, John Polding and James Goold, both visited Malta more than once. See Henry Frendo, "Maltese Migration from the Maltese Islands and Northern Africa after 1945", op. cit.

62 Interview with Fr. Bianco, op. cit.

63 Extract from a letter by Mr. F.X. Falzon to this writer, op. cit., reproduced her tale quale.

64 F. Dumont, "Notes sur l'analyse des idéologies", in Recherches sociographiques, 1964, vol. 4, quoted after G. Rocher, "L'Organisation Sociale", vol. 2, in Introduction à la sociologie générale (Ltée, 1968), p. 12.

65 Bliss, K., (1969) The Future of Religion, London, p. 3.

66 Mark Caruana interview with Fr. Michael Camilleri, ex-migrant chaplain in N.S.W., op. cit., Transcript, ff. 13-20.

67 As British subjects, Maltese were expected to speak English and they themselves were often ashamed to admit they did not. See the papers presented from Victoria, N.S.W., W.A., S.A., Queensland and the A.C.T. by participants at the national welfare seminar that set up a Maltese Federal Council, held at the Centru Malti, Parkville, in January 1986, and a report on it, by

this writer, "Maltese Australians Debate 'Self Identity' Crisis" (mimeographed).

68 Fr. J. Ciantar, S.D.B., was working in Melbourne since 1938, but it was in 1949 that Archbishop Mannix appointed Fr. Grech as chaplain to the Maltese settlers. Report on the Patoral Needs, op. cit., p. 66.

69 Mark Caruana interview with Fr. Michael Camilleri, op. cit.

70 Paul Baron, "Il-Festa Maltija tal-Vitorja: Dawn l-ahhar 33 Sena f'Sydney", MH, 27 August 1985, p. 15.

71 See the special supplement "Il-Vitorja - L-20 Anniversarju tal-Festa go Greystanes, MH, 1 October 1985.

72 Report on the Pastoral Needs, op. cit., p. 67. Under the direction of Fr. Ciantar, Il-Vitorja was previously celebrated at St. Augustine's Church in Bourke Street.

73 On this point see Henry Frendo, "Maltese Settlement in English-Speaking Countries: The Australian Case", The Democrat, Valletta, 13 December 1986 - 3 January 1987, reproduced in The Malta Cross, Sydney, 29 January - 19 February 1987 (4 parts).

74 Interview with Fr. Tarcisio Micallef, op. cit.

75 "Santa Marija Assunta f'Melbourne", MH, 13 August 1985, p. 15

76 Sargent, F., "Il-Pedestall tal-Vara ta' Santa Liena", ibid., 27 August 1985, p. 13.

77 Azzopardi, J.E., "Ix-Xita thassar il-Purcissjoni", ibid., 3 September 1985, p. 4. In Malta, these *festa* occur during the summer but as the original dates have been usually retained here the weather sometimes spoils outdoor activities, as in this case.

78 "I had only planned to stay for the Mass", said the Governor of Victoria, Dr. McCaughey, who hails from Ireland, "but after seeing all this, I will stay to the end, as it reminded me of my childhood." MC, 10 July 1986, p. 7.

79 Organized by the Australian Nadur Association - Nadur being a village in Gozo - 1986 marked the *festa's* silver jubilee in Victoria. MC, 10 July 1986, p. 8; MH, 16 July 1985, p. 14. For a good illustration of the street procession with the statue of St. Peter and St. Paul in Sunshine, see The Voice of Malta (henceforth VOM), Melbourne, 15 July 1985, p. 8.

80 See J. Farrugia, "Ix-Xalata ta' San Girgor giet biex Tibqa", MH, 11 February 1986, p. 9. See also Frans Zahra, "Is-60 Sena tal-Purcissjoni ta' San Girgor, 1926-1986", In-Nazzjon Taghna,

Valletta, 2 April 1986, p. 5. The "xalata" (a large-scale picnic by the seaside) is held on the morrow of the *festa*, but this practice has not been followed in Australia. The closest to a Mass *xalata* (the verb "xalar" meaning to make merry) is San Girgor's *festa* outing at Port Arlington; *festa* and *xalata* are combined on the same day. On this occasion, Mass was said by a Maltese priest, while choir singing was provided by the Maltese Pastoral Committee of Lalor.

81 See R. Grima, "Festa ta' Santa Katarina f'Adelaide", VOM, 15 July 1985, p. 11; "Il-Festa ta' Santa Katarina fis-South Australia", MH, 3 December 1985, p. 9.

82 Interviews with Fr. Micallef and Fr. Bianco referred to above.

83 B.A. Santamaria, "Catholics at the crossroads", The Australian, 30 December 1986, p. 8.

84 See M. Clyne, Multilingual Australia (Melbourne, 1982), Community Languages (Melbourne, 1981), quoted in Henry Frendo, "X'Futur Ghandha l-Kultura Maltija fl-Awstralja?", MH, 3 parts, 10-24 September 1985.

expulsion of the Order from Rhodes by the Ottoman Empire. The Great Siege of 1565 in which the Order, greatly aided by the Maltese defenders, repelled the Ottoman forces, (and rebuffed the Turkish advance onto Western Europe and the Western Mediterranean) became legendary and has continued to be so to the present day.[11] Throughout the period of the Order's rule, from 1530 to 1798, Malta was run by a religious order, of which the Grand Master was temporal ruler, but the spiritual head was the Pope. There was also the 'Holy' Inquisition.[12] This period was important in Maltese social history because it laid the foundations for an intense monolithic religiosity - a theocracy comparable in some respects to Islam, and a situation which hardly permitted the Reformation to make any headway. With the implementation of the Council of Trent's reforms, after the battles with the Turks, there were some improvements in the education of the clergy. Gradually the number of towns and villages grew as did indeed the number of churches and chapels.[13] During the 16th - 18th centuries, a number of religious feasts assumed a popular quality and became in time synonymous with Maltese culture. Foremost among these is the feast of Our Lady of Victories, known as *Il-Vitorja*, celebrated on the 8th September; and *L-Imnarja* (originally Luminaria), celebrated on the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul (29 June).[14]

The former *festa*, *Il-Vitorja*, commemorates the Christian victory over the Turks, it also coincided with the lifting of the siege of Malta during the Second World War. It represents the victories of Our Lady to the same extent as the victories of the Maltese people over their enemies in past times. The functions normally associated with *Il-Vitorja* are not only of a religious kind; there also are outward manifestations, such as the boat-races known as *ir-Regatta*, in Valletta's Grand Harbour, which also date back to the Knights. The latter *festa*, *L-Imnarja*, was a time when man and women from all walks of life went to the Buskett Gardens in Rabat, Malta, and spent the night in the open air, cooking and stewing rabbits (*il-fenkata*): socializing, folk singing (*ghana*), and later taking part in agricultural fêtes and competitions; it was also a great time for horse and donkey races both in Malta and in Gozo.[15]

After Napoleon expelled the Knights from Malta (on his way to capture Egypt in 1798), the Maltese, impelled by religious fervour and leadership, took up arms against the French. They forced the better-armed, better-trained French to shut themselves inside the fortified city of Valletta. Two years later they surrendered to the British.[16] As in Italy, Spain and elsewhere, national sentiment was