

Ritratt mir-rapport annwali tal-mużewjiet għas-sena 1962 li juri bħala a, b, c, d, imsiebaħ li nstabu fil-katakombi paleokristjan, illum fi Triq iż-Żebbieh (M.A.R., 1962)



# Sejbiet Arkeoloġiċi f'Hal Kirkop mir-Rapporti Annwali tal-Mużewijiet

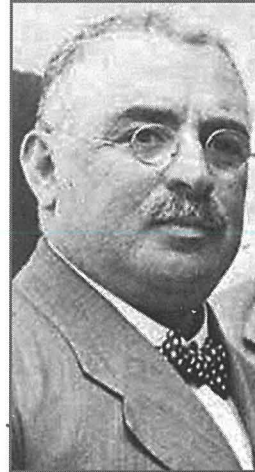
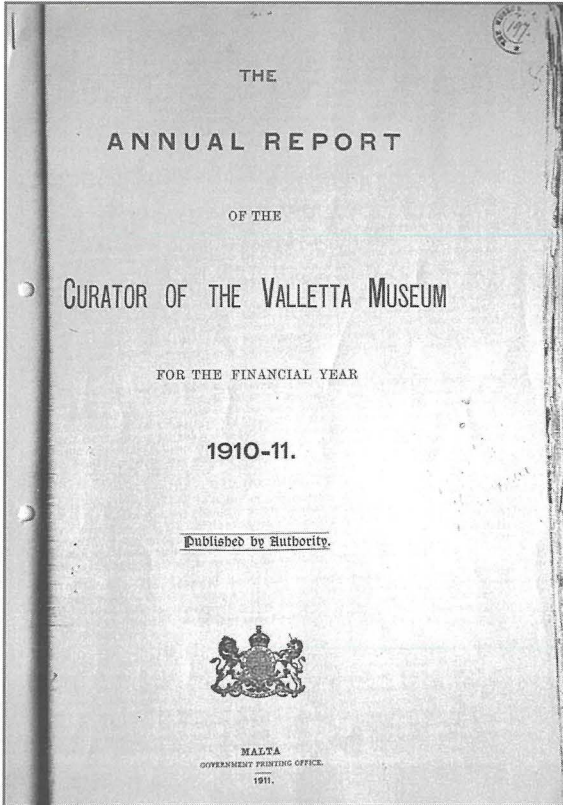
Kenneth Cassar  
M.A.

*Kif kellna l-okkażjoni naqraw f'diversi artikli li dehru f'din il-pubblikazzjoni matul is-snin, Hal Kirkop hu mogħni bi storja antika u mill-aktar interessanti li f'it jassoċjaw ma' raħal daqstant żgħir. Kulma jmur din qiegħda tiġi riveduta u studjata aktar fid-dettall fid-dawl ta' sejbiet arkeoloġiċi li saru reċentement u għadhom qegħdin jiġu studjati. Ma' dan l-aspett pożittiv u inkoraġġanti hemm naħa sfortunata ta' sejbiet li saru f'Hal Kirkop li minħabba indifferenza, traskuraġni jew żvilupp intilfu u ntesew. Dan kollu nistgħu biss ngħelbuh billi nitgħallmu napprezzaw dak li fadlilna. Kenneth Cassar ser jelenka s-sejbiet arkeoloġiċi li ġew pubblikati fir-rapporti annwali tal-mużewijiet.*

L-istorja ta' pajjizna hi mifnija b'numru ġmielu ta' okkażjonijiet mitlufa, ħafna drabi fdalijiet arkeoloġiċi li fil-passat kienu sekondarji għal iżvilupp tant li kienu jinqerdu kważi għalkollox, jew jintesew u jegħrqu fl-indifferenza ġenerali, jew sejbiet li jinżammu sigrieti u 'jinstabu' biss meta jkun tard wisq għaliex ikunu sfaw mittiefsa jew danneġjati. Fil-ħarġa ta' sena ilu tkellimna dwar il-Villa tad-Dawl, dar fil-kampanja, jew aħjar, villa Rumana attrezzata bit-tagħmir kollu għall-għasir taż-żejt taż-żebbuġ li xi darba kienet teżisti fl-inħawi magħrufa bħala Tad-Dawl fil-limiti ta' Hal Kirkop (int u sejjer għand tar-Robba) sakemm din ma nħatfix mill-iżvilupp tal-barrieri u l-mitjar tal-madwar. Nafu bl-eżistenza tagħha grazzi għal xi fdalijiet li nżammu ġewwa l-Mużew Nazzjonali tal-Arkeoloġija fil-Belt u għal rapport li sar minn Dr Antonio Annetto Caruana fl-1888 u li dwaru tkellimna fit-tul fl-artiklu tas-sena l-oħra. Għal din is-sena ħsibt li nestendi din ir-riċerka billi nara x'sejbiet arkeoloġiċi ġew pubblikati fuq il-*Museum Annual Reports* – rapporti annwali li jmorru lura għal aktar minn mitt sena li jelenkaw ix-xogħol li jkun sar mill-awtoritajiet pubbliċi tal-mużewijiet li f'Malta beda bil-*Valletta Museum*, għad-Dipartiment tal-Mużewijiet u issa *Heritage Malta*. Ibbażajt ruħi primarjament fuq referenzi li xi f'it jew wisq kienu diġà ġew ippubblikati.<sup>1</sup> Għaldaqstant ma neskludix li f'dawn il-volumi ta' rapporti annwali jeżistu sejbiet oħra rapportati li saru Hal Kirkop, biss dawn li ġejjin bla dubju huma l-aktar sejbiet importanti. Ħsibt li niġborhom u nipprezenta traskrizzjoni tagħhom bħala appendiċi għar-referenza tal-qarrej. Peress li l-arkeoloġija mhix strettament il-qasam tiegħi, għażilt li ma nipprovax ninterpreta dawn ir-rapporti, biss ħassejt li jkun importanti li niġborhom u nipprezenthom għaliex l-indifferenza, jew aħjar l-għażla li wiehed jinjora u ma japprezzax il-wirt storiku ta' raħalna hu l-ewwel pass li jwassal sabiex dawn jintilfu fl-abbandun u l-iżvilupp.

L-eqdem sejba dokumentata fil-*Museum Annual Reports* tmur lura għas-snin 1910-1911. F'paġna 9 insibu li fil-31 ta' Marzu 1911 ġie rappurtat qabar propju fl-għalqa tal-Misis fl-

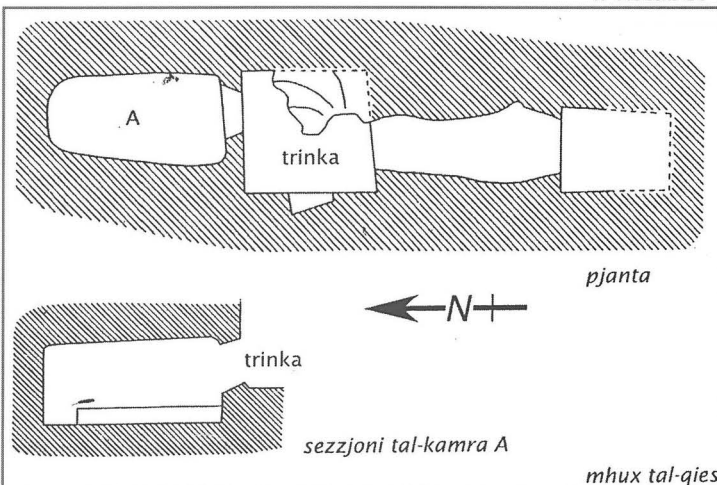
inhawi magħrufa bħala Ta' Huttat Gandolf propju fl-akwati Tad-Dawl. Il-Misis kien il-laqam ta' *Nardu Farrugia* li kellu diversi artijiet f'Tad-Dawl qabel ma' ħafna minnhom inħatfu mill-barrieri. Sir Temi Zammit, l-arkeologu li eżamina dan il-qabar jikteb li biswit din l-għalqa kien hemm barriera u li originarjament l-istess għalqa kienet miżgħuda f'diversi oqbra li ntlfu bit-tqattiegħ tal-ġebel.<sup>2</sup> Dan x'aktarx sar jafu min-nies tal-inħawi meta mar jeżamina l-qabar. Fil-bidu jissemma wkoll li f'dawn l-inħawi kien hemm kappella (iddedikata lill-Madonna tad-Dawl) li nbriet fi żmien il-Gran Mastru Pinto. Kien propju għalhekk li dawn l-inħawi baqgħu magħrufa bħala tad-Dawl. Sfortunatament din il-kappella m'għadhiex teżisti.



**Ir-Rapport Annwali tal-mużewijiet għas-sena finanzjarja 1910-11, kompilat minn Sir Temi Zammit li kien direttur tal-Mużew**

Zammit jagħti deskrizzjoni tal-qabar u jgħid li dan kien jikkonsisti minn trinka (*shaft*) kwadrata li twassal għal żewġt ikmamar tad-dfin (*chambers*). Dik tat-tramuntana kienet ta' għamla rettangolari, f'kantunieri ttundjati u saqaf ċatt, filwaqt li dik ta' nofsinhar kellha għamla aktar tawwalija u regolari u x'aktarx kienet twassal għal kamra oħra li nstabt imkissra u mimlija ġebel kbir.

Fit-trinka tissemma wkoll forma ta' niċċa li Zammit interpreta bħala l-bidu ta' kamra tad-dfin oħra li ma tlestix, jew inkella niċċa li fiha kienu jitfgħu urni bi fdalijiet kremati, biss minn dawn ma nstab xejn.

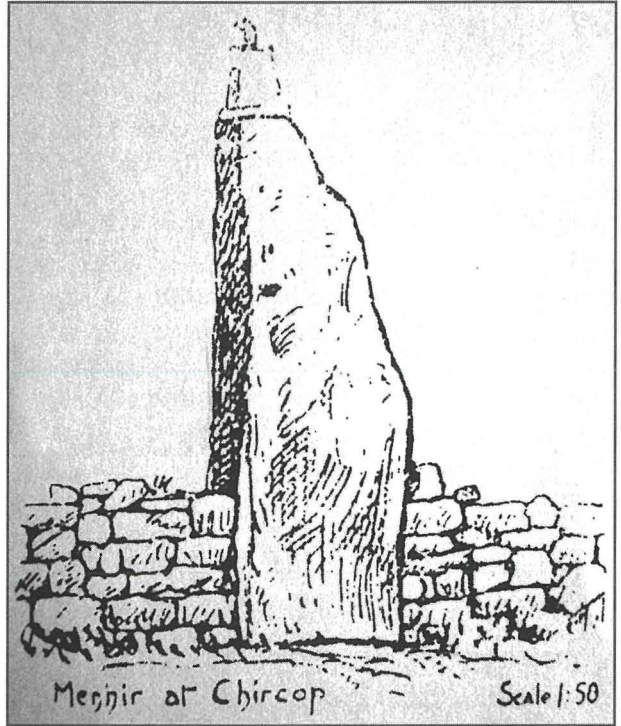


**Rikostruzzjoni tal-qabar ta' Huttat Gandolf minn Prof Nicholas C. Vella (H.C.R. Vella (ed), p.18)**



Għalkemm isemmi li l-arkitettura ta' dan il-qabar mhix xi waħda ta' relevanza partikolari, jsemmi li fihom instabu xi biċċiet ta' oġġetti tal-ħġieġ, bronż u fuħħar tat-tip Puniku li jiddataw dan il-qabar għat-tieni u t-tielet sekl qabel Kristu.<sup>3</sup>

Hal Kirkop jerga' jissemma fir-rapport għas-sena finanzjarja 1913-14. Din id-darba aktar milli għal sejba arkeoloġika, taħt it-titolu *Menhir at Hal Kirkop*, insibu dokumentazzjoni tal-menhir bil-qisien u b'illustrazzjoni li tidher fi studji oħra ta' Temi Zammit. Jissemma li l-menhir x'aktar intmess mill-parti ta' fuq biex jiġi *taper* u jispiċċa b'wiċċ ta' disa' ċentimetri kwadri li fuqu tpoġġa pedestal b'salib tal-ġebel li sal-1913 kien tkisser. Jissemma' li n-nies tal-lokal jirreferu għal din il-megalita neolitika bħala s-Salib u li s-salib kien sar sabiex jimmarka l-limiti parrokkjali ta' Hal Kirkop.<sup>4</sup>



*Menhir at Chircop, illustrazzjoni ta' Sir Temi Zammit fuq ir-rapport annwali tas-sena 1913-14 (M.A.R., 1913-14, p.3)*

Is-sejba li jmiss saret fl-1928 wara li sid ta' barriera ltaqa' ma' qabar ieħor hu u jqatta' l-ġebel fl-art li r-rapport isemmi li tissejjaħ ta' Brillu jew ir-Ramlja fit-triq li minn Hal Luqa twasslek għal Hal Kirkop. Bla dubju li qegħdin nitkellmu

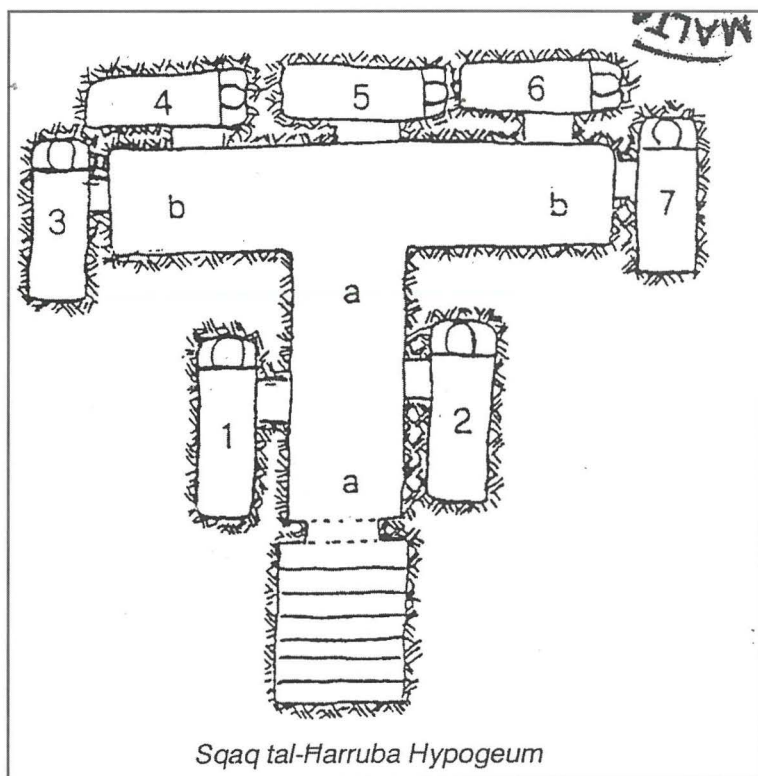
dwar iż-żona tar-Ramlja, x'aktarx x'imkien wara l-fabbrika tal-ST Microelectronics li nafu li hi imdewda b'attività ta' barriera matul diversi snin. X'aktarx li dan il-qabar li nstab waqt il-qtugħ ta' ġebel tal-barriera inqered mal-istess tqattieġ. Tiegħu m'għandna xejn, lanqas illustrazzjoni għajr din in-nota fuq ir-rapport annwali tal-mużewijiet tas-sena finanzjarja 1928-29. Nafu li dan il-qabar eżaminah u kejlju Sir Temi Zammit bl-għajnuna ta' Mr E. B. Vella Surmast tal-Iskola pubblika ta' Hal Tarxien fis-17 t'Awwissu 1928. Il-fatt li Zammit qiegħed jirrikorri għal għajnuna ta' għalliem hija minnha innifisha interessanti u tixhed żmien differenti. Il-qabar kont tinzel fih permezz ta' trinka rettangolari fonda erba' piedi u wiesgħa ħames piedi, b'erba' tarġiet fuq il-ġenb tiegħu. Il-kamra tad-dfn kellha għamla ta' nofs tond, niċċa żgħira għal mużbieħ u trinka fl-art li l-Professuri Anthony Bonanno u Nicholas Vella jaħsbu li setgħu kienu sabiex jiġbru l-ilma li jiskula 'l isfel u ma jhallux milli jgħerri l-fdalijiet midfuna.<sup>5</sup> Ta' min isemmi li meta ġie eżaminat instabu xi biċċiet ta' fuħħar ta' żmien Puniku flimkien ma' xi għadam ta' persuna żagħżuġha.<sup>6</sup>

Fis-sena 1943 għanda dokumentati żewġ sejbiet, waħda ta' katakombi żgħir fi Sqaq tal-Ħarruba li saret fil-25 ta' Marzu u oħra ta' qabar f'għalqa fl-inħawi magħrufa bħala tal-Imdiek li saret fid-19 t'April. Dak ta' Sqaq tal-Ħarruba kien katakombi żgħir, jiġifieri kumpless ta' oqbra kollettivi biżżejjed sabiex jakkomodaw membri ta' familja. Ha ismu mill-għalqa fejn kien jinsab, x'aktarx x'imkien fejn illum hemm il-kumpless sportiv tal-Kulleġġ San Benedittu

biswit trejqa li kienet tieħdok għal dik li llum hi Triq San Ġwann fil-parti fejn hemm il-Lidl.<sup>7</sup> X'aktarx li llum m'għadux jeżisti jew jinsab midfun. Instab waqt xogħlijiet li kienu qegħdin iwittu l-inħawi għal skopijiet militari. It-Tabib Joseph G. Baldacchino Direttur tal-Mużewijiet, li matul is-snin tal-Gwerra serva wkoll bħala Kuratur tal-Arkeologija, investiga l-katakombi u kiteb li dan instab vojt minn kull fdalijiet u mimli terrapin, xhieda ta' serq u tbaġġbis minn żmien preċedenti. Il-katakombi kont tinzel għalih permezz ta' trinka (*shaft*) fond tmien piedi (2.5m) bi tmien targiet li jwassluk għal fetħa rettangolari ta' ħames piedi bi tliet piedi u ħames pulzieri mqatta' pulit sabiex isservi ta' entratura għal katakombi. Din kienet twasslek għal kuritur ta' tmintax-il pied (6m) b'żewġ oqbra fi kmamar tad-dfin (*chambers*), wieħed fuq kull naħa. Fl-estremità ta' dan il-kuritur insibu kuritur itwal li jaqta' miegħu f'angolu rett biex il-katakombi għandu pjan għamla ta' T. Dan il-kuritur għandu l-istess għoli u wisar bħal ta' qablu biss hu twil sitta u għoxrin pied (8m) u fih insibu ħames oqbra oħra bħal dawk ta' qabel. B'hekk dan il-katakombi fih total ta' seba' oqbra kollha tat-tip *window graves* għaliex tidħol għalihom minn speċi ta' tieqa mqatta' fil-ħajt. Fit-tarf ta' kull wieħed minn dan is-seba' kmamar tad-dfin insibu *head rest* li kienet bħal imħadda maqtugħa fil-blat forma ta' nofs tond sabiex isservi ta' magħqad għar-ras.<sup>8</sup> Il-Professor Mario Buhagiar li kiteb dwar dan il-katakombi jgħid li għalkemm ma jeskludix il-possibilità li dawn l-oqbra kellhom rabta mal-ewwel Insara, ma nstab l-ebda ħjiel li jindika dan. Fin-nuqqas ta' sejbiet bħal fuħħar jew fdalijiet oħra li jgħinu jiddataw Buhagiar jikteb li dan il-kumpless t'oqbra jista' jmur lura bejn l-ewwel u s-sitt seklu wara Kristu.<sup>9</sup>

Il-qabar li instab b'kumbinazzjoni fid-19 t'April 1943 jidher u hu eqdem minn dan il-katakombi tas-Sqaq tal-Ħarruba u x'aktar hu simili għal oqbra Punici li semmejna li nstabu Ħal Kirkop fl-għalqa tal-Misis f'tad-Dawl, u f'tar-Ramlja. L-inħawi tal-Imdiek jissemmew fir-

rapport li jinsabu lejn il-punent ta' Ħal Kirkop, biss sa issa għadna ma nafux għalfejn qiegħed jirreferi, aħseb u ara kemm nafu fejn qiegħed il-qabar, dejjem jekk dan għadu jeżisti. Sfortunatament meta nstab kien diġà nfetaħ u tbattal mill-fdalijiet tant li nstab bil-kapitella li tagħlaq il-bokka mhux f'potha u l-qabar kien mimli ġebel u ħamrija. Dan il-qabar ukoll kellu trinka (*shaft*) rettangolari fond tmienn piedi, b'sitt targiet li jwassluk għal



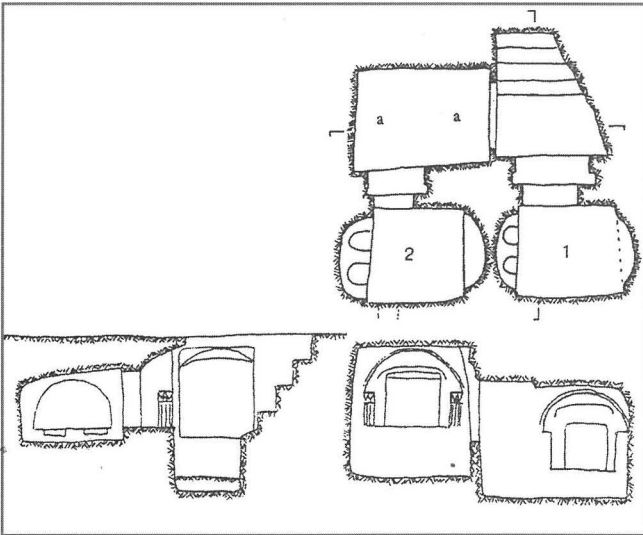
**Katakombi ta' Sqaq tal-Ħarruba li nstab fl-1943 (M. Buhagiar, 2001)**



entratura rettangolari maqtugħa tliet piedi u sitt pulzieri għoli, b'wisa' ta' żewġ piedi u ħames pulzieri. Din twasslek għall-kamra tad-dfin rettangolari li kien fiha tul ta' seba' piedi, b'ħames piedi wisa' u għoli ta' erba' piedi u sitt pulzieri. Kellha wkoll trinka fl-art matulha (x'aktarx sabiex tiġbor l-ilma) u niċċa żgħira mal-ħajt għal musbieħ. Kulma nstab f'dan il-qabar kienu fdalijiet ta' għadam uman u biċċiet żgħar tal-fuħħar tipiku ta' dak li ssib f'oqbra ta' dawn iż-żminijiet.<sup>10</sup>

Fl-1962 instab il-katakombi żgħir, illum fi Triq iż-Żebbiegħ, li għadu miżmum tajjeb taħt struttura protettiva li saret ftit ta' snin ilu. Ir-rapport tal-mużewijiet għas-sena 1962 jirrakonta kif dan il-katakombi instab waqt xogħlijiet ta' installazzjoni ta' *fence* madwar *ground* tal-*football* dak iż-żmien maġenb il-mensa tal-uffiċjali tal-R.A.F Station Safi, hekk kif huma u jħaffru għal wieħed mill-arbli tal-*fence* nifdu ġol katakombi. Dan ġie eżaminat minn Dr David Trump, li dak iż-żmien kien Kuratur tal-Arkeoloġija, li qabbad lill-Flight Lieutenant Jordan, l-uffiċjal inkarigat mill-edukazzjoni fl-R.A.F Station sabiex inadddu. Ir-rapport isemmi li dawn il-katakombi wkoll sfaw mittiefa meta fi żmien il-Gwerra, xi Koppin residenti fl-inħawi ħaffru *shelter* li kien faq' waħda miż-żewġ kmamar tad-dfin. L-aċċess għal dan il-katakombi hu permezz ta' trinka kważi trijangolari, b'erba' targiet li jwassluk f'kamra ta' dfin bi spazju għal żewġ katavri kif indikat biż-żewġ magħqad għal irjus imqatta' bħal imħadda f'forma ta' nofs tond. Fuq il-lemin tat-trinka b'erba' targiet hemm bħal *anti-camera* li twasslek għal kamra tad-dfin oħra identika għal żewġ persuni. Simili għal dawk ta' Sqaq tal-Ħarruba, il-kmamar tad-dfin huma ta' għamla ovali u kont tidhol għalihom permezz ta' fethiet qisom twieqi żgħar, waħda minnhom dekorata b'żewġ pilastri ornati. Fir-rapport dan kollu hu illustrat permezz ta' pjanti u *elevations* tal-katakombi. Għalkemm mittiefa instabu fdalijiet ta' ċerta importanza għall-istorja ta' Ғal Kirkop, fosthom kwantità ta' għadam uman u aktar sinifikanti ħafna biċċiet ta' msiebaħ ta' żmien Ruman tardiv. Dawn l-imsiebaħ magħmula minn fuħħar ħamrani b'żennuna twila u eleganti huma tat-tip *Hayes Type IIA*, u fuq uħud minnhom tidher ċara l-monogramma ta' Kristu, il-CHI-RHO, li hi sinonima mal-ewwel insara. Għaldaqstant dan jindika bl-aktar mod ċar li dan il-katakombi kien wieħed Kristjan, tal-Insara bikrin jew aħjar Paleokristjan biex nużaw it-terminu tekniku, databbli għal madwar il-ħames seklu wara Kristu.<sup>11</sup> Interessanti li r-rapport jipprezenta wkoll ritratt ta' wħud minn dawn l-imsiebaħ li nstabu. Ta' min jirrimarka li fi żmien qasir ta' tletin sena dan il-katakombi kien kompletament intesa, mirdum bl-imbarazz u terrapien modern. Kien biss fl-1993, waqt ix-xogħlijiet fuq il-*Home Ownership Scheme II* (dak li popolarment magħruf bħala Kirkop II) li dawn il-katakombi nstabu mill-ġdid u ġew x'aktarx rappurtata bħala sejba ġdida. Ir-rapport annwali tas-sena 1993 jindika li wara li ġie eżaminat il-katakombi ġie konkluż li dan kien l-istess wieħed li kien dokumentat fl-1962 u li kienu ser jittieħdu passi sabiex ma jintradmux bl-iżvilupp. Dan kollu jsaħħaħ l-argument li semmejna fil-bidu li n-nuqqas ta' interess u l-abbandun huma l-ewwel pass għat-telfa ta' dan fdalijiet storiċi. Tletin sena kienu biżżejjed sabiex dawn il-fdalijiet jintesew.

X'tifsira għandhom dawn is-sejbiet fl-istorja ta' Ғal Kirkop? Dawn l-oqbra ma jistgħux jiġu studjati waħedhom fuq bażi individwali imma għandhom jiġu kkunsidrati fid-dawl ta' fdalijiet oħra li nstabu f'Ғal Kirkop u l-madwar. Ta' min isemmi li l-oqbra li nstabu fi Sqaq tal-Ħarruba u dak li illum jinsab fi Triq iż-Żebbiegħ kienu jiffurmaw parti minn zona estensiva ta' oqbra li uħud minnhom, instabu biss sena ilu waqt xogħlijiet għal kostruzzjoni ta' skola sekondarja għal bniet biswit il-Kulleġġ San Benedittu, filwaqt li oħrajn nisimgħu li ntilfu waqt il-bini tar-residenzi fiż-żona magħrufa bħala *Housing Estate Kirkop Phase 2*. L-oqbra biswit il-kulleġġ, uħud minnhom mhux mittiefa, ġew dokumentati u fejn possibbli integrati fil-proġett tal-



**Katakombi li fl-1963 instab fl-R.A.F. Station, illum Triq iż-Żebbiegħ (M. Buhagiar, 2001)**

u għammiela u x'aktarx il-preżenza tal-ilma li tiffaċilita l-attività agrarja u l-ħajja tal-abitanti. Madankollu wieħed jaasal sabiex jikkonkludi li l-preżenza tas-sejbiet li semmejna flimkien ma' oħrajn, x'aktarx tal-istess żminijiet li ntilfu huma xhieda ċara li l-inħawi ta' Ғal Kirkop gawdew minn importanza għmielha fiż-żminijiet Puniċi, Biżantini u Paleokristjani. Dan jagħmel minn Ғal Kirkop raħal mogħni b'wirt storiku ferm akbar minn kemm wieħed jista' jimmaġina.

Bħala appendiċi ta' dan l-artiklu, qegħdin nipubblikaw *transcripts* ta' dawn ir-rapporti annwali tal-Mużewijiet għar-referenza ta' kulħadd.

**The Annual report of the Curator of the Valletta Museum for the Financial Year 1910-11, Malta Government printing office, 1911, p.9**

**Tombs at tad-Dawl**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March, the discovery of a tomb-cave was reported to the Curator. It was found to the south of the road leading to Mkabba beyond the cross road known as "Tad-dawl", where a small chapel was erected at the times of Grand Master Pinto.

iskola. Is-Soprintendenza tal-Wirt Kulturali, bl-għajjnuna ta' arkeologi ser ikunu qegħdin jaħdmu sabiex jistudjaw aktar dan is-sit interessanti li sa issa jindika art li għiet użata matul is-sekli kemm għad-dfin, f'epoki differenti. Ma' dawn wieħed ma jridx jinsa sejbiet oħra reċenti fl-inħawi tal-Karwija li jinkludu għaxar kmamar tad-dfin li nstabu waqt il-bini tal-*hanger* tal-*Medavia* ġewwa l-*Aviation Park*. Nittamaw li 'l quddiem ikollna l-opportunità li nwasslu aktar tagħrif dwar dawn is-sejbiet.

Dan in-numru mdaqqs ta' tant postijiet ta' dfin, jindika li Ғal Kirkop kienet art li toffri kundizzjonijiet tajbin li fihom diversi komunitajiet setgħu jimirħu matul is-snin. Għalkemm bl-eċċezzjoni tal-fdalijiet tal-Villa tad-Dawl, ftit instab bini domestiku ta' dan iż-żmien, dawn l-oqbra ma kinux ikunu iżolati u għaldaqstant jindikaw il-preżenza ta' komunità mdaqqs li kienet tidfen il-mejtin tagħha fil-qrib.<sup>12</sup> Dan min-naħa l-oħra jindika li Ғal Kirkop kien joffri riżorsi agrikoli tajbin, fosthom art tajba



The site overlooks a stone quarry, known as "il ghalka tal Misis" in the tenement called "Ta Guttaf Gandolf". The whole field, it was reported, was covered with tombs which had been destroyed when the neighbouring quarry was exploited. The one pointed out was cleared and found to be the forecourt of a set of rock-tombs which were rifled and filled with debris. Two funereal chambers opened one at each end of the forecourt. The one to the north was rectangular with rounded corners and a flat ceiling. That to the south was long and irregular and led to another one which was broken and full of large stones. On the western side of the forecourt, a niche was cut which was either the beginning of another tomb or a niche destined for cinerary urns. Such a niche is very common in this type of tombs, and, when found intact, it usually contains one or more cinerary urns with a few clay vessels. In this case the niche was quite empty. The excavations of the set of tombs led to no important discoveries. The architecture of the tombs had no peculiar features and the fragments of pottery found were of the ordinary Punic type. Fragments of glass and bronze objects were found by which the tombs could be dated to about the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

**The Annual report of the Curator of the Valletta Museum for the Financial Year 1913-14, Malta Government printing office, 1914, p.3**

**Menhir at Hal Kirkop**

A third menhir stands close to the village on the right of the road leading from Chircop to Zurrigo. It consists of a roughly cut soft building stone of such quality as may be found in the neighbourhood. It rests on solid rock on a level with the road and for a height of 0.915m. it forms part of the boundary wall of an adjoining field. Originally, its shape must have been that of a parallelepiped measuring 0.915m. wide 3.20m. high, and 0.455m. thick. As it now exists it has one of its sides clipped off so as to make it tapering at the upper end and to reduce its upper surface to 9 centimeters square. On this surface there is a small pedestal 0.455m. high on which a stone cross now broken was made to stand. This cross served at a time to denote the limit of the parish and the megalith is known up to this day as Is-salib "the cross"

**Malta Annual Report on the Working of the Museum Department during 1928-29, Malta Government Printing Office, 1929, pp.iv-v**  
**ġp.iv ̄ Later Antiquities**

The following rock-tombs met with during the period under consideration are here described in the order of date on which they were surveyed:-

**Rock-tomb at Hal Kirkop**

Whilst quarrying the land "Ta Brillu" or "Ir-Ramlia" to the left of the road that from Hal-Luka leads to Hal Kirkop, the owner came across a rifled tomb cut in the globigerina limestone.

Surveyed on the 17<sup>th</sup>. August 1928, with the help of Mr. E. B. Vella, Head Teacher of Tarxien Government School, the tomb proved to be of the Second period, that is, with a rectangular shaft, about 4 feet deep, and 5 feet wide. It has four steps cut along the ġp.v̄ Eastern side. The burial chamber is deeply concave, in the shape of a segment of a circle, with 2 feet entrance, widening to 5 feet before it reaches a deep trench cut parallel to the axis of the tomb. The chamber is 5½ feet long and 2½ feet wide beyond the entrance. A slightly raised ledge on its extreme right is the only peculiarity worth mentioning, but otherwise it is well cut and finalized. A tiny lamphole in the right wall of the chamber is to be found close to the ceiling.



A few broken bones of a young person were disinterred with the debris that filled the cavity, together with a few potsherds of late Punic type.

**Malta Annual Report on the Working of the Museum Department during 1946-47, This Report includes a general survey of the activities performed during 1939-46, Malta Government Printing Office, 1948, pp.v-vi**

**ġp.vñ Catacomb at Kirkop**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1943, a catacomb was discovered during levelling operations for military purposes in a field at "Sqaq tal-Ħarruba", in the limits of Kirkop. It had not escaped the fate of the majority of similar burial places; in fact, it was rifled a long time ago and subsequently filled with rubbish.

Access to the internment chambers is reached through a shaft in which a flight of seven steps leads down to the bottom. The shaft, at the upper part, is 8 feet; its long axis lies in a N. – S. direction. The steps, cut in the solid rock, extend throughout the whole width of the shaft, and measure 1 foot both in tread and in rise. The North half of the shaft is covered by a stone slab, measuring 4 feet 9 inches in length, 4 feet broad, and 1 foot in thickness. No traces were found of the other slab or slabs which presumably sealed the remaining half.

On the North wall of the shaft, a rectangular entrance 5 feet high, and 3 feet 5 inches wide, is neatly cut. This marks the beginning of a straight gallery which extends for a length of 18 feet, and runs in the same direction as the major horizontal axis of the shaft. Two burial chambers, symmetrically placed, are excavated in both the W. and E. walls of this gallery. The different chambers, together with their respective entrance, conform in every respect as regards their shape and dimensions. The entrance opening into the burial chamber is 3 feet high and 2 feet 6 inches wide; its sill is situated at a height of 1 foot from the level of the floor. The chamber is rectangular in shape, measuring 6 feet in length, 3 feet wide, and 4 feet high, with its long axis lying parallel to that of the gallery. At the N. extremity of the floor a head rest with a semicircular depression in the middle is hewn out of the rock.

ġp.viñ The N. extremity of this gallery opens into the middle of another gallery, 26 feet in length, which runs in a W. – E. direction. The height, width, and level of this second gallery are identical with the corresponding ones of the first passage. In its walls are excavated five burial chambers. Three of these are situated in the N. wall, and are equidistant from one another. Of the other two, one is placed at the W. end and the other at the E. end. These five tombs also agree in all respects with those met with in the first gallery, with the exception that the long axis of the three chambers in the N. wall lies in a W. – E. direction, and the head rest is placed at the E. end of the floor.

**Rock Tomb at Kirkop**

On 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1943, a rock tomb was accidentally discovered in a field, in the district known as "Tal-Imdiek" to the W. of Kirkop village. It had been opened and completely rifled a long time ago, and subsequently filled up with stones and red earth.

It consists of a shaft, with a flight of steps, and an internment chamber, excavated in the Globigerina Limestone. The shaft, having its long axis in a N.E. – S.W. direction, measures 9 feet in length, 4 feet wide, and 7 feet at its maximum depth. From the S.W. side a flight of

six steps, cut in the rock and extending along the whole breadth of the shaft, leads down to the bottom. On the N.E. a rectangular entrance, 3 feet 6 inches high and 2 feet 5 inches wide, opens into the burial chamber. The sealing slab measuring 4 feet in height, 3 feet wide and 8 inches in thickness, was found displaced. The chamber, 7 feet in length, 5 feet wide, and 4 feet 6 inches in height, also lies with its major axis in a N.E. – S.W. direction. A trench, 3 feet long, 6 inches wide and 6 inches deep, starting at about 1 foot from the entrance and running along the long axis, is cut in the floor. A lamp hole is placed in the middle of the N.W. side, at the height of about 3 feet 6 inches from the floor.

Only a few fragments of human bones and some small shards derived from the funerary pottery were found inside the burial chamber.

**Report on the working of the Museum Department for the year 1962, Malta, Printed by the Department of Information, 1962, p.6**

**Tombs**

*Kirkop.* When netting around a football field west of the Officers' Mess R.A.F. Station Safi, was being erected, the pit for one of the supporting poles penetrated the roof of a catacomb. It was examined by the Museum Department and cleared by Flight Lieut. Jordan, Education Officer at Safi. From a small entrance chamber with the flight of steps opened two burial chambers, each designed for two bodies. The tomb had been previously disturbed by way of an air raid shelter cut by villagers of Kirkop, shortly to the west, which had broken into the end of the inner chamber. Despite this, a quantity of decayed human bones and fragments of pottery were found. The latter consisted in sherds of late Roman lamps, several bearing the Chi-Rho monogram, as well as other undistinguished vessels. The catacomb is therefore specifically a Christian one, probably of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**Museum Annual Reports, Period covering 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1993 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1993, Malta, 1993, p.74**

**Re-location of catacomb at Kirkop (G.R. 4608, 7162)**

When a report that an archeological feature lay within the area designated for development in Home Ownership Scheme II, Kirkop, was investigated, it transpired that the feature in question was the catacomb recorded in the Museum Annual Report for 1961, which had been obliterated by modern debris and forgotten. Immediate steps were taken to prevent the catacombs from being built over.

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- <sup>1</sup> Ara; Anthony Bonanno u Nicholas Vella, 'Il-Wirt Arkeologiku ta' Hal Kirkop', in, H.C.R. Vella (ed.), *Hal Kirkop u l-Inħawi ta' Madwaru*, Vol. I, Stamperija tal-Universita, Msida, 2000; S. Fiorini, 'Hal Kirkop sal-1592', in, H.C.R. Vella (ed.), 2000
- <sup>2</sup> A. Bonanno u N. Vella, 2000, p.8
- <sup>3</sup> The Annual report of the Curator of the Valletta Museum for the Financial Year 1910-11, Malta Government printing office, 1911, p.9
- <sup>4</sup> The Annual report of the Curator of the Valletta Museum for the Financial Year 1913-14, Malta Government printing office, 1914, p.3
- <sup>5</sup> A. Bonanno u N. Vella, 2000, p.6
- <sup>6</sup> Malta Annual Report on the Working of the Museum Department during 1928-29, Malta Government Printing Office, 1929, pp.iv-v
- <sup>7</sup> Nirringrazzja lil Joseph Carbone ta' din l-informazzjoni.
- <sup>8</sup> Malta Annual Report on the Working of the Museum Department during 1946-47, This Report includes a



general survey of the activities performed during 1939-46, Malta Government Printing Office, 1948, pp.v-vi ; A. Bonanno u N. Vella, 2000, p.9

<sup>9</sup> Mario Buhagiar, *Late Roman and Byzantine catacombs and related burial places in the Maltese islands*, Oxford, B.A.R., 1986; Mario Buhagiar, 'Żewġ Oqbra fl-Inħawi ta' Ħal Kirkop', in, Lehen il-Parroċċa ta' Ħal Kirkop, April, Mejju, Ġunju 2001

<sup>10</sup> Malta Annual Report on the Working of the Museum Department during 1946-47, This Report includes a general survey of the activities performed during 1939-46, Malta Government Printing Office, 1948, p.vi ; A. Bonanno u N. Vella, 2000, p.6

<sup>11</sup> M. Buhagiar, 2001

<sup>12</sup> A. Bonanno u N. Vella, 2000, p.6

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