The rise and fall of megalithism in Malta

Aufstieg und Niedergang der Megalithik in Malta

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There is now an extensive literature on various aspects of Maltese megalithic constructions, but practically no attempt has been made to give a diachronic analysis of the phenomenon. One of the purposes of this paper is to look at the problem and to focus on the anthropological aspect, in particular to identify the forces (social and religious) that brought the phenomenon about, and those that could have provoked its collapse. The origins seem to be autochthonous, although there is considerable resistance from some quarters to admit the absence of influence from abroad. The typological evolution appears to be explainable in merely local terms. Greater difficulty is encountered in establishing the causes of the end of the phenomenon. Its place in the central and western Mediterranean context is discussed. A progress report on ongoing research projects is given at the end of the paper. Significant new evidence on funerary rituals and physical anthropology, as well as environmental conditions, is expected from the current excavation programme at a cemetery site in Gozo (Malone et al. 1993). The potential applications of spatial and functional analysis to the temple constructions are also discussed.
**Introduction**

At the very centre of the Mediterranean, 100 km south of Sicily, 300 km north of the Libyan coast and 1500 km distant from both Gibraltar and Alexandria, there lies a group of small but strategically well placed islands. The two larger islands of the group, Malta and Gozo, preserve remarkable megalithic monuments.

My contribution to this volume is concerned with those spectacular and complex constructions which mark so distinctly the landscape (barely 300 km²) of the two major islands. According to calibrated radiocarbon dating these megaliths were erected in the period between roughly 4000 and 2500 BC. The much smaller and less significant “dolmens” and “menhirs”, which are later in date, are not taken into consideration.

The monumentality and the unitary architectural design of these complex constructions, as well as the often gargantuan dimensions of their constituent building blocks have always been a source of wonderment and have provoked multifarious explanations of the phenomenon, sometimes quite fanciful ones, such as their being the product of a race of giants (Abela 1647) or of the inhabitants of the mythical Atlantis (Grognet 1854).

**Temples**

Scholars and students of antiquity have always been struck by the religious aura that emanates from these remarkable remains, in some cases surviving to a height of 5-6m; so one is not surprised that they have been constantly recognized as religious buildings. As early as the 16th century Jean Quintin, the French chaplain of the Order of the Knights of St John, which had just set up quarters in Malta in 1530, identified two groups of such ruins as the surviving remains of ancient sanctuaries, albeit Classical ones, namely, those of Juno and Herakles mentioned in Cicero and Ptolemy (Quintin 1536). Between the 17th and the 19th century the Maltese megalithic remains were repeatedly associated with the Phoenicians (bibliography in Leighton 1989), until, at the very beginning of the present century, the German scholar Albert Mayr recognized and affirmed their prehistoric identity (Mayr 1901). But temples they were always held to be. So far as I can remember, it is only Giovanni Lilliu, the doyen of Sardinian archaeology who has, on various occasions, proposed their identification with princely palaces (Lilliu 1968; 1970).

The very monumentality of these buildings implies the availability of a sizeable human labour force, most probably motivated by a strong religious ideology, although this would certainly not have been sufficient unless it was supported by a social cohesion and leadership commensurate with the size of the task undertaken. On the other hand, the consistent absence of contemporaneous human skeletal remains inside or close to these structures excludes a funerary purpose. The furnishings found in them, in particular the frequent altars and the sculptural relief decoration, belong more plausibly to a religious context than to a domestic one. Animal sacrifice is strongly suggested by the discovery of a flint knife together with goat horns inside the plugged hole of the elaborate, tabernacle-like altar at Tarxien when the Tarxien temples were excavated in 1915-18 (Zammit 1930: 14-15). Behind the same altar more animal bones were found when it was removed and replaced by a copy (Evans 1971: 122). It does not appear that human sacrifice was involved. Finally, the presence of several anthropomorphic representations of a size that would exclude a purely secular purpose, especially the colossal statue at Tarxien, seems to confirm the sacrality of the buildings.

On the other hand, the occurrence of certain items of equipment, mostly connected with cereal grinding (such as querns, mortars and pestles) and weaving (spindle whorls), suggests some other, even if secondary, purpose, perhaps that of a redistribution centre, as part of a complex gift exchange system involving the surrender of surplus produce and its redistribution through the intermediary of the deity, or its priesthood (Bonanno 1986: 22-24).

**Origins**

For many years the Maltese megalithic phenomenon, given its geographical context, appeared to be explainable only as a result of cultural stimuli
from outside, possibly even of movements of specialized priestly sects carrying and disseminating the idea of megalithic technology associated with a Mother Goddess worship (MacKie 1977: 146-54). One effort was made to reverse the whole process and make of the Maltese islands the fount from which sprang forth not only the other megalithic manifestations but also the rest of Mediterranean civilizations (Ugolini 1934: 275-278).

a) Relation with the eastern Mediterranean
The Maltese cultural achievement was only considered possible as a result of inspiration from the technologically and culturally more advanced civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean through the intermediary of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece (Childe 1950: 346-7; Evans 1971: 223-224; Bernabò Brea 1976-7: 21-22). The temples could not, as a result, be dated prior to the second millennium BC (Evans 1959: 164-7). Over the last thirty years, however, the creation and implementation of scientific and, therefore, more reliable and objective dating techniques have permitted a complete revision of the chronological sequence and the pattern of cultural movement in the prehistoric Mediterranean. Already in the mid-sixties, basing himself on a set of radiocarbon dates produced from his excavation of Skorba, David Trump could place the Maltese temples between the late fourth and the mid-third millennium BC (Trump 1966: 48-9). Subsequently, in the early seventies with the application of tree-ring calibration, they assumed a position of absolute chronological precedence over all the other megalithic manifestations in the Mediterranean area (Renfrew 1972). Some of them have even been claimed to be the oldest free-standing stone structures in the world (Renfrew 1973: 161). As a result of this, a new explanation for the origin of the phenomenon had to be sought.

b) Relation with the western Mediterranean
One of the features of Maltese megalithism that is hard to explain is the total absence in nearby Sicily of any monumental architecture (and related art) closely resembling the Maltese structures (Tusa 1991); this, in spite of documented trading contacts between the two islands at the same time (Bonanno 1986: 37-40). It is hard to understand how the larger island (where the necessary physical environment, in particular identical building stone, was obtainable) could have remained uninfluenced by the grandiose spectacle of these constructions on the neighboring archipelago whose people depended to a large extent on its lithic resources. The same absence is noted in the small islands of Lipari and Pantelleria, from which a regular supply of obsidian is evident in Malta for the whole temple age (Cann & Renfrew 1964).

Further afield, Sardinia did, at one stage, appear to present close parallels that seemed to justify cultural, if not physical, contact. On several occasions Giovanni Lilliu dwelled on the similarities between technical and iconographical features of certain architectural monuments of the Ozieri culture of the largest Mediterranean island and those of the Maltese temples (Lilliu 1968; 1970). Similarities in the iconography of the anthropomorphic representations were identified by Enrico Atzeni (1978), while some analogies were noted by Warwick Bray in some pottery forms and decorations of the two separate cultures (Bray 1963: 173-4), though these have been played down by David Trump on grounds of a deeper and wider diversity in the rest of the respective material cultures (Trump 1977: 608). It was these resemblances that in 1986 stimulated me to try to explain the equally mysterious demise of the Maltese temple culture by suggesting a settlement in Sardinia of a group of people from that Maltese culture after being forced to leave the islands by adverse environmental and climatic disasters (Bonanno 1986: 40-41). Eventually that hypothesis had to be abandoned in view of the revision of the chronology of Sardinian prehistory which has also pushed back substantially the age of the Ozieri culture, making it even older than the Tarxien phase by which it had been supposed to be inspired (Dettori Campus 1989).
On the opposite side of the Mediterranean, north Africa has remained too much a terra incognita. No parallels for Maltese megalithism have ever been found, possibly not even sought, in that region. I may be wrong, but I am under the impression that the megaliths there are limited to dolmen structures, which would be connectable with the Bronze Age Maltese structures, if at all, and not with the temples.

An objective and dispassionate comparison of the architecture and structural characteristics of the Maltese temples with those of the megalithic structures of the western Mediterranean brings out many more discrepancies than similarities. Whenever strong similarities do occur, such as in the technical features in the elevation of the Talayots in the Balearic islands (Rosselló-Bordoy 1979: 121-132), the discrepancies in the respective chronologies — half a millennium separates the end of the Maltese temple period from the beginning of the Talayotic one (Waldren 1982: 336-337) — neutralize the possibility of a direct connection.

Practically all the megalithic constructions on the Atlantic sea board, although in part contemporaneous with the Maltese ones, are of a funerary nature, whereas the Maltese ones are predominantly for worship purposes — though use of megaliths is also made in underground funerary contexts. All in all, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Maltese megalithic constructions could not be connected with the Atlantic megalithic phenomenon even if a single source of diffusion were to be identified for it (Daniel 1983).

Finally, the role of a Holy Island, postulated for the Maltese archipelago in prehistoric times (Zammit 1930: 122-123), very much like that of Delos in Classical antiquity, has never been convincingly proved, mostly because no one has ever gathered enough archaeological material of proven foreign origin deposited as votive offerings inside these constructions (Evans 1959: 158).

In view of the above, very few students of Maltese prehistory today refuse to accept an explanation of the phenomenon in terms of an independent, local evolution as proposed originally by David Trump (1966: 51), and reaffirmed more emphatically and in much greater detail by Colin Renfrew (1973: 147-166). The latter proposed a ranked social organization based on chiefdoms, which made possible great feats of public — or, rather, religious — building by means of a co-ordinated communal effort. The phenomenon of the temples would thus appear to have taken place in isolation, without any intervention from outside the islands.

**Evolution**

If there is one important element which is missing in Renfrew’s, otherwise very convincing, theory of a chiefdom social structure, it is the diachronic dimension: the evolution of the social organization from a simple, egalitarian Neolithic community to one sophisticated enough to make possible the rallying and organization of the necessary manual labour force to construct such feats of grand architecture as the Maltese temples. The present writer has tried to introduce this dimension, albeit in a very tentative fashion, in an article published in Malta in a collection of archaeological and historical essays (Bonanno 1986). It is an area of investigation that promises rewarding results, especially if it takes into consideration the significant and important data being provided by current research in the field.

The evolution of the temple itself, as an architectural concept, has been quite satisfactorily explained in terms of a continuous and coherent development from the small and simple to the more complex and monumental, with the employment of increasingly larger and more carefully dressed stone blocks (Evans 1959: 84-126). The ground plan of the standard temple unit has been plausibly derived from the lobed shape of the underground, rock-cut collective tombs. Then it assumed immediately a symmetrical layout along an axis that from the external entrance, placed at the centre of a concave facade, led through semicircular chambers on either side into a similar chamber, later reduced to a shallow niche, at the inner end of the building. The whole structure was rendered even more stable by a solid outer wall embracing one or more of such temple units.

Among the mysteries that surround this period of Maltese archaeology is that concerning
the virtual absence of settlement sites of the same age. In contrast with the conspicuous and frequent temple sites — some thirty of them, several comprising two, three, or even four units — domestic architecture is practically undocumented. Naturally, one had every reason to ask: But who were the temple builders, and where did they live? It was at Skorba in the early 60s that Trump managed to reveal for the first time the remains of a roughly rectangular hut, built of mud-brick, and reliably dated to the earliest of temple building phases, the Ggantija phase. It seems, however, that both this hut and another contemporary one were destroyed to make place for a temple (Trump 1966: 15-16). At long last, in 1987, another settlement site was identified and explored, this time at Ghajnsielem in Gozo. It consisted, regrettably, only of sections of two huts, each preserving several torba floor layers. Finally, the excavators could speak of “a house for the temple builders” (Malone et al. 1988). In many ways the Ghajnsielem discovery confirmed what we had been supposing all the time, namely that the temple builders lived in clusters of huts built of extremely perishable materials, mud-brick and possibly thatch, in stark contrast with the durable and imposing stone of their religious buildings.

Collapse
The breakdown of the social structure might well have been one of the causes of the apparently sudden collapse of this extraordinary culture (Bonanno et al. 1990). Other causes could have been a natural calamity, pestilence or the total depletion of the islands’ natural resources through overexploitation. I would incline towards the latter explanation. There appears to be absolutely no contact between the outgoing temple culture and the Bronze Age culture that replaces it after 2500 BC: there is no sign of continuity from one into the other; there is equally no evidence of an aggressive takeover by the more belligerent newcomers. Nor has anybody identified sufficient evidence for a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, or a major volcanic eruption near enough to affect the islands substantially (Trump 1977).

That leaves us with the possibility of the depletion of the natural resources, which in the case of the Maltese islands could only be of an agricultural nature. Ironically enough, the temple culture reached its point of major development, architecturally and artistically, right towards the end of its existence. There are few signs, if any, of a decline; only, perhaps, a tendency towards retrenchment of the religious ruling caste evidenced by more and more spaces in the temples being closed off to the rest of the population (Trump 1990). The very proliferation of temples, on the other hand, must have exerted a strain not only on the human resources, but also on the natural ones, on which they depended. The hypothesis of the abandonment of the islands by its population as a result of a compounded series of adverse natural and anthropogenic disasters could only be confirmed either by internal evidence or by the identification of consistent close similarities in architecture, in pottery design and decoration in some other parts of the Mediterranean roughly contemporaneous with the disappearance of the Temple culture from Malta.

PROGRESS REPORTS: ONGOING RESEARCH PROGRAMMES
Orientation
The possibility of orientation of the temples with various celestial bodies is being investigated, not only peripherally by amateur archaeologists or astronomers, but also by bona fide physicists and astrophysicists. The most serious investigation of the orientation of the different temples undertaken so far is that by Agius and Ventura (1980). The two scientists found that the temples were oriented fairly closely on either side of due south, between 125° and 204°. Only the southern unit at Mnajdra fell outside that range, on the bearing 92.7° which coincided exactly with the direction of the rising sun at the equinoxes. Until additional favourable evidence was forthcoming, they concluded, this could only be attributed to chance. This study has been followed up by a very recent one by a team including one of the
original writers (Fodera Serio et al. 1992); adopting the minimal approach, that is, taking into consideration only unequivocal axes of symmetry, the team arrived at the conclusion that the “concentration of axes cannot have come about by chance, though the motive that directed the builders may have been nothing more than avoidance of a northerly wind or the enjoyment of the sun in the south”. They suggest very tentatively, however, that the temples could possibly have been intended to face the Pleiades and some of the brighter stars across the southern sky.

**Megalithic Metrics**

In the wake of Alexander Thom’s claims for the existence of a megalithic “yard” measuring 829.4 mm. (see Rottländer, this volume), a minor attempt was made to devise a hypothetical megalithic yard (Formosa 1975) in use by the temple builders, but I do not believe it was based on sufficiently scientific criteria. It certainly has not been followed up.

**Architecture and Conservation**

Another research project that is being undertaken jointly between Maltese and foreign institutions is one concerned mainly with the conservation aspects of the temples, conducted by a team from the Dipartimento di Storia dell’Architettura e di Restauro delle Strutture Architettoniche of the University of Florence, the Istituto di Mineralogia e Petrografia of the University of Urbino and the Museums Department of Malta. In the process, this research project tackled a number of problems of a purely architectural and structural nature and some of the results have already been published (Cassar et al. 1989). One such problem is that of the type of roofing the temples might have had during their life span (Tampone et al. 1987). I have summarized the status quaestionis of the latter in a short article (Bonanno 1988).

Another question broached in that article is that of transportation of building stone from the quarry to the building site. In the aftermath of the debunking of the seemingly erroneous notion that the blue stones of Stonehenge had to be transported over a distance of about 240 km (Thorpe & Williams-Thorpe 1991), it has been observed that stone blocks belonging to various megalithic monuments had to be transported over medium-range distances, sometimes in excess of 5 km (Patton 1992). This finds confirmation in the Maltese examples. Whereas, for example, the complex of Hagar Qim is built entirely of Globigerina limestone and stands on an outcrop of the same, its neighbor Mnajdra, only 1 km down the hill, stands on Lower Coralline limestone and is built predominantly of that material; but most of the better finished internal features are of the softer Globigerina limestone which had to be fetched at least a kilometre away. The same applies to the Ggantija temples which were erected on Upper Coralline limestone and have internal blocks of considerable size that had to be quarried at least 2 km away and transported uphill to the temple site itself. In general, the Maltese temples manifest a very sensible and economical use of building materials readily available on the spot; but for special features, which required softer, more malleable stone, their builders spared no effort in procuring it from some distance away.

**Brochtorff Circle**

The most ambitious programme under way at present is certainly that concerning the excavation of an underground funerary complex originally bounded by a circle of upright megaliths, the Xaghra Circle.

The Xaghra Circle is situated on the outskirts of the village of Xaghra in Gozo. It lies approximately 400 m to the west of the much better known Ggantija Temples. It is currently better known as the ‘Brochtorff Circle’ because it figures in two of a series of watercolours painted by Charles de Brochtorff while the Ggantija Temples were being ‘excavated’ in the early 1820s (Brochtorff 1849). One of these watercolours shows the circular area bounded by megaliths opened up by a huge gaping hole inside which stand trilithic stone structures typical of the Maltese temple architecture, while a man is seen coming out from inside a cave carrying a human skull in his left hand.
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Excavations have been undertaken regularly on the site every summer since 1987 by a joint exploration mission involving the Museums Department of Malta and the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge and Malta, with very rewarding results.

The Circle has been found to be an exclusively funerary area, with a series of natural caves and human-made rock-cut features, surrounded at some stage by a circle of upright megaliths with a monumental entrance facing the Ggantija Temples to the east (Bonanno et al. 1990: 193-195; Malone et al. 1993). The roofs of most of the natural caves have collapsed over the years, some of them in antiquity. However, a couple of rock-cut tombs served by a common access shaft show that the site was being used for collective burial since the Zebbug phase (4000-3800 BC), the first phase of the Temple Period (4000-2500 BC) (Malone et al. 1995). One of the tombs produced a stylized head which is almost identical to the 'statue-menhir' found originally in the Zebbug tombs. There are also a number of 'bone pits' containing deposits of human bones, many covered with red ochre, belonging to the last phase of the Temple Period, namely Tarxien (3000-2500 BC). The enormous quantity of human bones that have already been, and are in the process of being, unearthed will no doubt permit a comprehensive analysis of the physical characteristics of the population, while the unexpected discovery of unusual anthropomorphic statuary is likely to provoke a rethinking of traditionally accepted interpretations (Bonanno 1992).

An interesting feature of the whole site, moreover, is that the funerary area was also made use of by the Tarxien Cemetery people of the following period (2500-1500 BC), thus providing an important parallel to a similar re-utilization of the Tarxien Temples by the same Bronze Age inhabitants of Malta. The major difference is that, whereas at Tarxien a ruined temple structure was turned into a cremation cemetery, at the Xaghra Circle we are still not in a position to determine what the collective inhumation cemetery of the Temple Period was turned into. The scientific analysis of the layer itself is still pending and, until it is made available, judgment on the significance of this layer must be suspended.

Spatial and Functional Analysis: Access Theory

A recent article contained a diagrammatic illustration of access patterns of a select number of megalithic temples and underground collective tombs (Bonanno et al. 1990: Fig. 5). A revised version of the diagram reproduced here (Fig. 11) limits itself to temple constructions above ground, omitting the underground cemeteries even though they contain features that suggest convincingly that these too had similar access controls and, probably, related rites of worship. An effort has been made to present access patterns of temples that are more or less representative of the various stages of the evolution of their ground plan. Hagar Qim is illustrated for its aberrant layout. Very simplified plans of the corresponding buildings are reproduced on the right side of each access pattern for comparison.

This is not the place to go over the tenets and workings of spatial and functional analysis which has been applied in several archaeological studies over the last two decades. Summaries of the techniques are readily available in the archaeological literature (e.g. Foster 1989; Mytum 1989). Among these techniques the one which appears to be best suited for a more objective assessment of the functions and purposes of different spaces within the Maltese temples is that devised by Hillier and Hanson (1984; see also Foster 1989). This is so because the layout of the Maltese megalithic buildings appears to satisfy without the least difficulty two of Hillier and Hanson's principal premises, namely: i) that 'spatial organization in society is a function of differentiation' (1984: 142-3), and ii) that there is a correlation between the degree of order applied to the use of space in buildings and the degree and nature of social organization in the cultures that produced them (1984: 235).

The notion that the Maltese temple society grew increasingly differentiated over the centuries has been based solely on certain structural features in the temples themselves, which indicated restricted or privileged access. Hillier and Hanson's access theory provides an excellent instrument to test and elaborate this argument.
Fig. 11
Diagrammatic patterns of access, accompanied by simplified plans, for the temples of Ta' Hagar G (Ggantija and Safliei faces), Skorba (Ggantija and Tarxien faces), Mnajdra, Hagar Qim and Tarxien. The scale measures 10 m. Drawings by Nicholas Vella.
The purpose of this section of the present paper is only to explore a few of the many potential applications of this technique—and some refinements thereon—to the Maltese megalithic temples.

Movement through any building of some complexity could hardly ever be entirely open or uncontrollable. A provision for limited access, possibly of a temporal nature, to the temple buildings themselves is observed practically throughout all the stages of the evolution of the temple constructions; this is suggested by the system of shutting and bolting the very entrance to the temple, consisting in a series of holes, for rope hinges and bolting bars, in the upright blocks flanking the inside of the main entrance. This locking system clearly indicates that some users (the ‘insiders’) locked themselves in and locked others (the ‘outsiders’) out, at least at certain times.

Once inside the building the user did not seem to have been confronted by any physical features that inhibited access to the three lobed spaces of the early trefoil plan temples, such as the eastern one at Mnajdra. In the west temple at Skorba, however, access to the lobed space at the back was at a later stage restricted by the addition of a cross-wall with a door in the centre. This seems to be the first instance of internal controlled access. In the later, more elaborate buildings, then, access to progressively more extensive spaces became reserved for a restricted proportion of the population by means of inhibiting structural features, like substantially raised floors and decorated

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Fig. 1
Map of the Mediterranean by Giorgio Grognet (1854) incorporating Malta with the mythical Atlantis.
blocking stones. From the diagrams it is also clear that access within the buildings became increasingly more organized and consequently more differentiated.

The central temple unit of the Tarxien complex, consisting of six semicircular apses disposed symmetrically along a central longitudinal axis, represents the final and most evolved temple plan. Besides the stone slab decorated with a spiral *oculi* motif carved in relief, which bars, at least symbolically, access to the inner four chambers, this temple contains typical locking facilities like the one described above not only at the main entrance, but also on the inside of each of the inner trilithic passageways. In all of these, the security is controlled from the inside.

The classification of spaces (controlled, guarded, interrupted, reserved or privileged) and their position within the spatial distribution of the building may also throw light on the real purpose of the so-called 'oracular rooms'. In the majority of cases, such as at Hagar Qim and Tarxien, these consist of very narrow spaces between the inner wall of an apse and the outer enclosing wall of the temple, with direct physical access through an undefined gap in the outer wall and connected with the apse by means of a small hole, often placed in extremely uncomfortable position, for the transmission of oral messages. An alternative interpretation, in view of the above anomalies, could be that of a simple repository, possibly for votive offerings. But this could only be corroborated by circumstantial evidence, such as finds of remains of such offerings.

I am quite convinced that a comprehensive study of the spatial organization of this series of unique buildings, applying this access technique and taking into account the distribution of the artifacts within the different parts of the buildings and their contextual evidence, in particular in those temples where scientific excavation was conducted, like the Tarxien and Skorba ones, will be extremely useful. It will take us a long way to resolving the big question of the identity of these mysterious structures, namely, whether we are right in concluding that they are simply and solely temples, or whether they had some other, more mundane, function as well, as I have already had the opportunity to suggest (Bonanno 1986: 22-24, 26).

A diachronic application of the same method could lead to a better and more factually documented understanding of the process by which the temple culture of the Maltese islands evolved from an apparently egalitarian society to a substantially more organized and stratified one.
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Fig. 2
A row of animals carved in relief, possibly sacrificial victims. Tarxien Temples.

Fig. 3
Altar with plugged hole. A flint knife and goats' horns were found inside it. Tarxien Temples.

Fig. 4
Copy of the lower half of a colossal statue. Tarxien Temples.
Fig. 5
'Communal quern'. Kordin Temples.

Fig. 6
Raised floor and stone block decorated with spirals barring access to a section of the middle temple at Tarxien.
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Fig. 7
Watercolour by Charles de Brochtorff (1829) showing excavations in progress inside the Xaghra Circle.

Fig. 8
Aerial view of the Mnajdra group of temples, each with a separate entrance.
Fig. 9
One of the inner door jambs with bar holes at Ggantija.

Fig. 10
Raised floor and stone block decorated with spirals inhibiting access to the inner section of the southern temple at Tarxien.