

The last issue of this Magazine published an article by Dr. M. Agius-Vadalà on *Siege Maps of Malta*. I do not intend to review the article, but there are certain considerations which should not be allowed to pass unnoticed.

Dr. Agius-Vadalà is quite right in saying that sketches of the siege in progress were sent out from Malta and that the broadsheets circulated abroad to illustrate what was happening in Malta were based on those sketches. Indeed, the legends on two maps issued by Antonio Lafreri and on the map published by Battista Pittoni emphasised that the pictures faithfully reproduced drawings received from Malta (1).

Dr. Agius-Vadalà goes on to say that no less than 36 sketches seem to have been despatched abroad. To me this figure appears to be highly inflated. Even if we accept Dr. Agius-Vadalà's mere conjecture that these sketches invariably accompanied the despatches of Grand Master La Valette, the article in no way explains how the number of 36 arrived at. The text mentions twenty one messengers sent by La Valette throughout the siege. Are we entitled to assume that practically every messenger outwards was carrying to Europe two sketches of the siege on average?

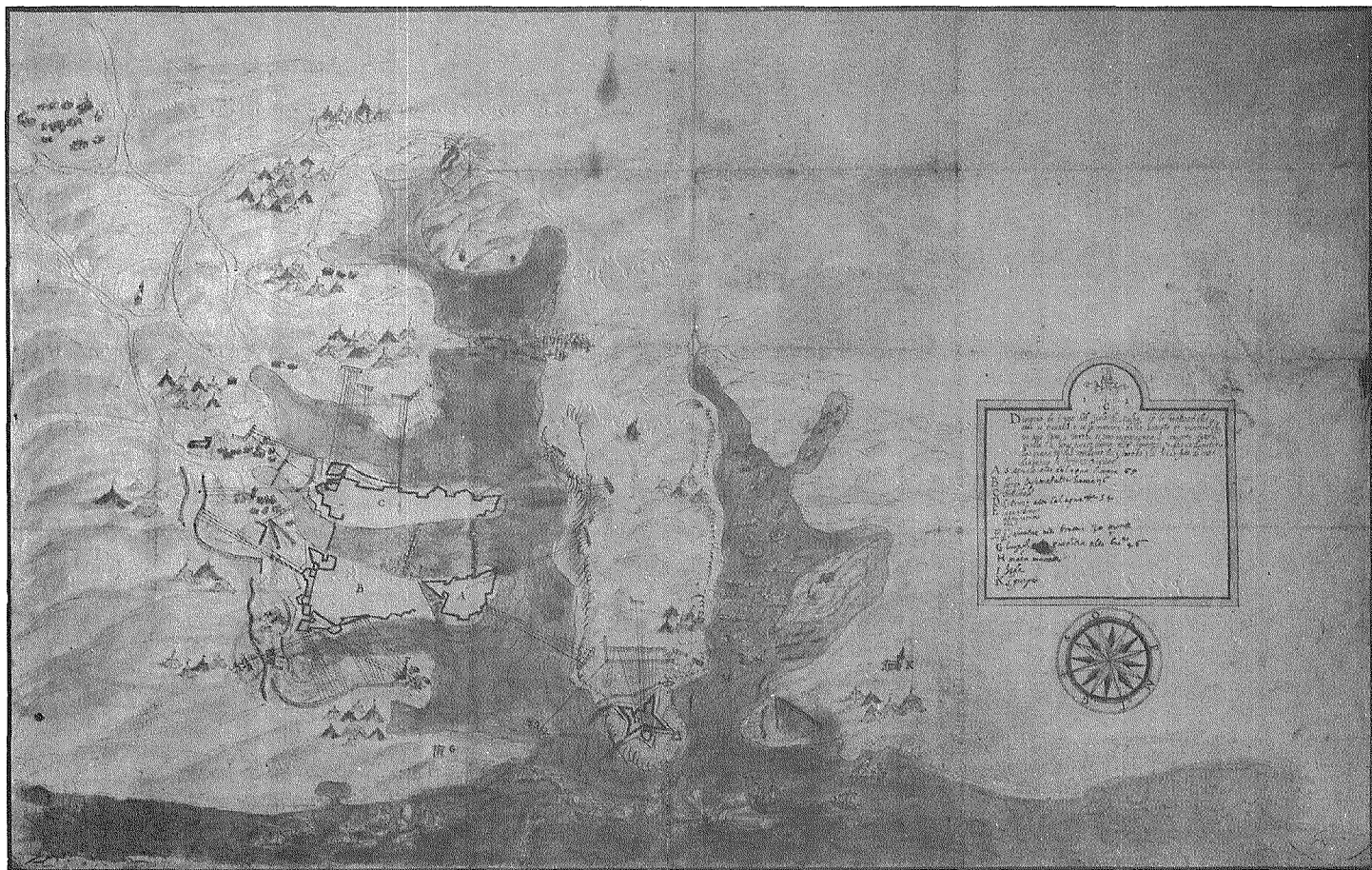
If one considers that a large number of picture-maps of the siege were published in Europe during the second half of 1565, one would expect that the original sketches did reach a certain number. Although it is likely that La Valette's despatches, rather than original sketches, served to produce at least some of the printed maps.

Dr. Agius Vadalà categorically states that the original sketches have not survived. Two manuscript sketches of the siege which were until recently in a private collection in Rome seem to carry the necessary credentials. Besides, experience teaches that, since the history of cartography acquired a new impetus some decades ago, new material is being discovered all the time.

Dr. Agius Vadalà writes that the 36 original sketches were copied and "pirated", so that the final number of maps published "may have reached a much higher figure". Rather than a possibility, this is a matter of certainty. The final tally of maps published was indeed considerably higher than 36. In the course of my research, I have so far counted 55 maps (including variants) of the siege published in Italy during 1565, apart from another seven printed outside Italy. It is also possible that there are others that have yet to come to light (2).

After 1565, the production of siege maps of Malta went on for a period longer than what one would expect and they were practically all published in books. One could mention those published by Anton Francesco Cirmi (1567), Giovanni Viperano (1567), Paolo Forlani (1567) Francesco Balbi de Correggio (1568), Giulio Ballino (1569), Matteo Perez D'Aleccio (1582), Pierre Boisat de Lixieux (1629), Anton Francesco Lucini (1631). On the other hand, as the article by Dr. Agius Vadalà explains, the siege maps issued in 1565 were sold as separate sheets.

This was also the case of most other maps published before 1570 (3), whether of Malta or of other countries. At a certain point in time, probably around 1565, a "collection" of these separate sheets, representing the various countries of the world, was bound in a single volume, an atlas in embryo. From then on, these so-called "Lafreri atlases" or "IATO (Italian-assembled-to-order) atlases" came into being.



Manuscript coloured sketch of the siege with the title *Disegno dei porti del Isola di Malta* and key to place-names A to K. The sea is coloured blue, the Turkish batteries and trenches yellow, the Christian defences red.

Size: 435 × 587 mm. As a loose sheet, it was folded to c. 150 × 200 mm. Later, margins were added to bring it to the size of a volume containing a collection of maps.

Dr. Agius Vadalà writes that few of them have come down to us (4), that Antonio Lafreri “was the first to start binding collections of maps together”, and that after 1570 Lafreri started to make use of a special title page for these collections.

As long ago as 1927, the foremost Italian authority on the history of cartography, Roberto Almagià, wrote that it was about time to avoid dubbing these volumes of maps as “Lafreri-type collections”. He had by then examined thirty of these collections existing in Italy, besides others in libraries abroad, and he found that they belonged to at least three or four different types. For only one of those types could it be said with certainty that it was placed on the market in Rome by Antonio Lafreri. He added that, although the evidence available was not conclusive, he thought that Venetian publishers preceded Lafreri in assembling these collections (5). By 1948, he was convinced of this fact (6).

Another renowned authority, Dr. David Woodward, wrote in 1979: “Evidence is mounting that the Venetian activity in map publishing predated and was stronger than its Roman counterpart, making the generic term “Lafreri atlas” misleading and obsolete except where referring specifically to the atlases emanating from Lafreri’s shop” (7).

In regard to the title page, although it has been associated by various writers with Lafreri, it is still uncertain whether he ever made use of it. According to the authoritative pen of Marcel Destombes, the title-page was engraved by Claudio Duchetti, in 1577 (8). This was the year of Lafreri’s death! The second state of this title-page bears the name of Pietro de Nobili (Petri de Nobilibus formis) as an addition to the plate, and it was printed circa 1588 – 1592 (9).

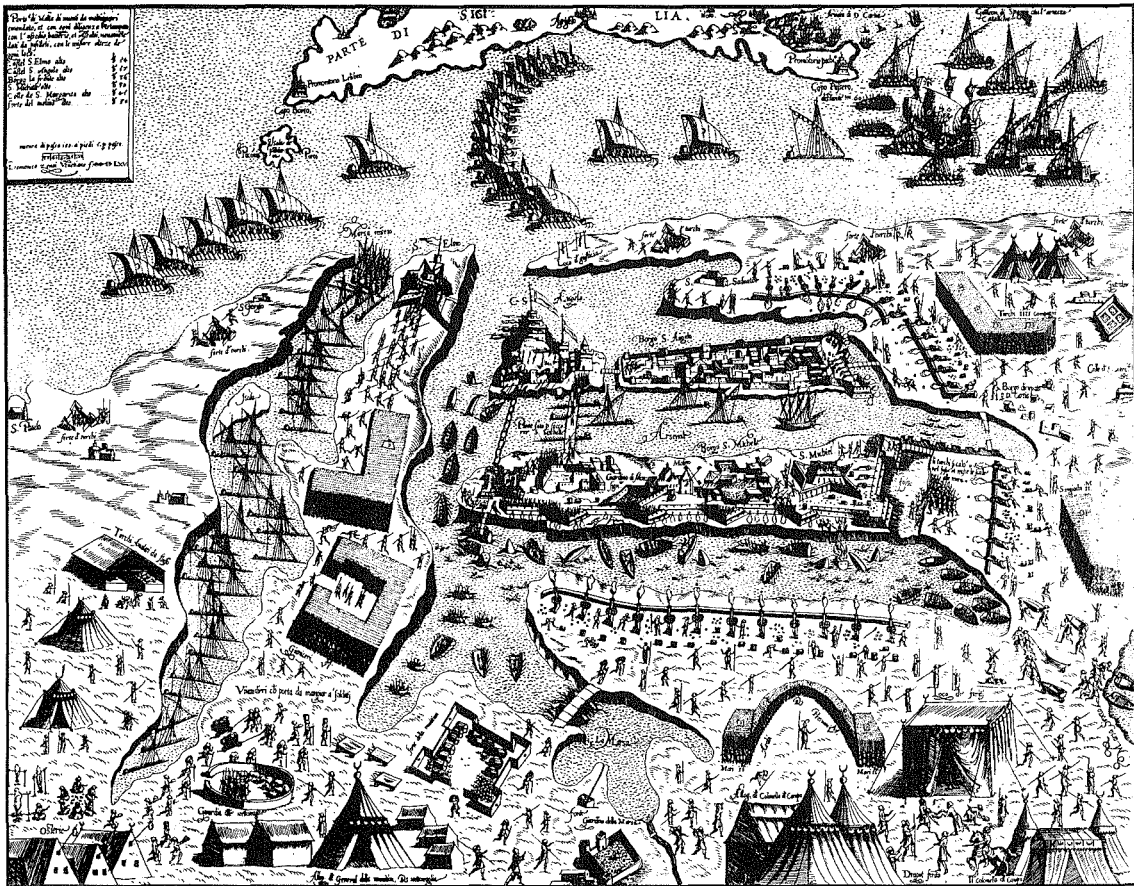
A few other remarks, I feel, have to be made.

1. The statement that the publishers of the siege maps in Italy seem to have been three in number cannot be accepted. Dr. Agius-Vadalà mentioned Lafreri in Rome, Zenoi and Nelli in Venice. Apart from the fact that it appears that Zenoi *published* only one siege map of Malta (10), there were several other printers/publishers whose name should not be ignored. A number of siege maps carry the imprint of Nicolas Beatrizet in Rome, Giovanni Francesco Camocio, Donato Bertelli and Luca Bertelli in Venice.

2. The map initialled “T. B.” is wrongly attributed to Zenoi. The calligraphy is completely different and the imprint “Rome” proves that it was not published in Venice, where Zenoi lived and worked. Although it is very similar to the series of maps published in Venice with the title: *Verissimo disegno del Porto di Malta con le sue fortetze, misure et assedio d’jnfideli. . .* engraved by Zenoi and published by Donato Bertelli, a comparison of the two maps would seem to indicate that Zenoi copied “T. B.” and not the other way round.

3. It is alleged in the article that it was Grand Master La Valette in person who “entrusted” the production of the siege maps to the engravers and publishing firms in Rome and Venice for the purpose of enlisting support, military and financial, from the Courts in Europe. Without any supporting evidence, this conjecture cannot be relied upon. Long before the siege of Malta, broadsheets illustrating contemporary military events were published regularly both in Rome and Venice.

4. Contrary to what was stated in the article, the two main firms who flourished in Venice at the period of the siege were not Zenoi and Nelli. At that time, Zenoi was mainly active as an engraver not as a publisher, whilst Nelli’s



Il Porto di Malta di nuouo da molti erori emendato, et con ogni diligenza ristampato.
 Siege map engraved in Venice by Domenico Zenoi and published in 1565.
 Size: 330 × 430 mm.

(Private collection)

editorial business could not compare with that run by the Bertellis, Camocio, Forlani and Zaltieri (11).

5. Dr. Agius-Vadalà wrote that, of the thirteen Zenoi maps, Tooley registered only three, namely, nos. 358, 385 and 387. He must have missed nos. 367 and 372. In giving the dates of the series of Nelli maps, he omitted the 5th and 12th August 1565.

One final point. Some of the maps used by Dr. Agius-Vadalà to illustrate his article had been traced by me but no acknowledgement was given.

References

- (1) *Ritratto dallo istesso disegno mandato da Malta. . . / In Roma per Antonio Lafreri nel anno 1565.* (Tooley 383); *Vltimo disegno delli forti di Malta uenuto nuouamente/. . . . torbolenti tempi, che non lassano fare a quelli che/sonno in Malta (quali hanno mandato il disegno) le cose con/quella Comodità che se ricerca. . . / Ant. Lafrerij Romae formis 1565 de mese Augusti. T 384 ; Malta/A letori/. . ho uoluto da-/rre ala stampa il uero disegno qual il giorno doppo/lasalto fu portato in cicilia. . . / da me batt.a pittoni uicentino dato ala stampa In uenecia co(n) p(ri)uilegio.* See also Camocio's map here illustrated.
- (2) In 1939, in his article in *Imago Mundi* referred to by Dr. Agius-Vadalà, Mr. R. V. Tooley listed only 15 (perhaps 16) maps of the siege published in Italy in 1565 that were to be found in the collections he had studied. Since then, several others have been traced, some purely by accident. To quote one instance, the map by André Thevet published by Dr. Agius-Vadalà to illustrate his article was completely unknown until a few years ago. It was lying at the Bibliothèque Nationale, but it did not figure in the catalogue. I came to know about it through the kindness of Marcel Destombes (a French expert on old maps) when we met at an International Congress on the History of Cartography.
- (3) On 20 May 1570 Abraham Ortelius published in the Netherlands the first modern atlas, a systematic and comprehensive collection of maps of uniform size.
- (4) In 1889, A. E. Nordenskiöld (*Facsimile-atlas to the early history of cartography*) wrote that these atlases were of the greatest rarity in cartographical literature (p. 188). This no longer holds good today. It is probable that there are about seventy still in existence (Tooley, R.V., "Lafreri" atlases: in *The Map Collector*, no. 14 (March 1981) p. 26).
- (5) Almagià, R., *Intorno ad una raccolta di carte cinquecentesche di proprietà del Lloyd Triestino* (*L'Universo*, Vol. VIII (Marzo 1927) p. 265, 289).
- (6) Almagià, R., *Monumenta Cartographica Vaticana*, Vol. II (1948) p. 119.
- (7) Woodward, D., *La geografia moderna: the work of the sixteenth-century Italian cartographers*: in *Mapline*, special no. 4 (May 1979) p. 6. An analysis of one of these collections made by the writer lends strength to this opinion (Ganado, A., *Description of an early Venetian sixteenth-century collection of maps at the Casanatense Library in Rome*: in *Imago Mundi* Vol. 34 (1982) pp. 26 – 47).
- (8) Destombes, M., *Les cartes de Lafréri et assimilées (1532 – 1586) du Département des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*: in *Nouvelle de l'Estampe* (1970), p. 235. Mimeographed.
- (9) Beans, G.H., *The so-called Lafreri title-page in a late state*: in *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 7 (1950) p. 92.
- (10) Zenoi's maps of the siege mostly carry the imprint "f" (fecit) or "exci(dit)", both used to indicate the engraver, not the publisher. On one only, the words *con il mio priuilegio* prove him to be the publisher as well as the engraver.
- (11) Almagià, R., *Monumenta Cartographica Vaticana*, Vol. II (1948) p. 117. It was only after 1565 that Zenoi seems to have become one of the main publishers in Venice.