Riding the crest of the wave

An overview of the maritime history of Malta in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

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MARITIME HISTORY IS ABOUT THE INTERACTION between people and the sea. The direct physical contact with the sea of those involved in seafaring, fishing, merchant shipping, the navy[1] and so on, lies at the heart of this interaction, but there are many other aspects which touch an even wider public, especially in the Mediterranean. This has been particularly the case as regards the contemporary era, the chronological period which, *grosso modo,* is covered by this essay.

For centuries after the loss of Rome's hegemony over the *mare nostrum*, many of those living in the lands facing onto the Mediterranean tended to live with their back to the sea, indeed, often in fear of it and of those who came raiding across it. The last two hundred years or so, on the other hand, have seen a remarkable turnaround as people have rediscovered personal and, perhaps, more fundamental aspects of their relationship with the sea, such as walking along a beach or promenade, or living within sight or easy reach of the ocean. Many modern men and women are, in fact, fascinated with the maritime landscape and pursuits centring on it. Time increasingly available for leisure is dedicated to a wide range of activities associated with the sea such as swimming, diving, surfing, sailing, power boating and generally hanging out in marinas, lidos and such like. Sunbathing, which is a pursuit that can be practised in many places, is, nevertheless, often associated most closely with beaches. Being on, in, or by the sea has, in fact, become a veritable culture, but there is even more to it, because for the Maltese, and for many others living in close proximity to the Mediterranean, the sea is not only a leisure

resource to which they have access throughout a good part of the year, but also one of the most important sectors of the economy, especially as regards employment and foreign exchange earnings.

The purpose of this essay is to endeavour to describe the latter stages of Malta's metamorphosis from a primordially rural to an essentially maritime nation and its subsequent and very recent transformation from an economy based on the support infrastructure of naval warfare to one based on peaceful maritime pursuits. In particular, I shall centre on the consequences for the labour market that these changes have entailed.

The Use of the Resources of the Sea

Fishing and fishing communities are the subject of a separate paper in this publication. As a consequence, I propose in this section to limit myself to making a brief reference to another resource, other than fish, which is also derived from the sea and which for thousands of years may have been even more important as a tradable commodity – salt.

Figure 1. Salt pans at Xwejni – Gozo (Photo Malta Tourism Authority)

In these days of refrigeration and frozen and tinned foodstuffs, salt is mostly a condiment used to season food which many, in fact, try to avoid for health reasons, but until not so long ago salt was an extremely important item both for personal consumption and for trade, especially owing to its use in the preservation of food. In due course it also became an important source of state income.[2]

Salt production in Malta was already well established in Antiquity. Bezzina claims that the beautiful salt pans at Xwejni, in Gozo, date back to the Roman era.[3] In the Kingdom of Sicily, of which Malta had traditionally formed a part, the manufacture of salt had been a royal monopoly since Norman times and this monopoly devolved on the Order of St John when the latter received Malta as a fief.[4] According to Blouet, salt-making had, in fact, been practised in medieval Malta, especially at a large group of salt pans at the appropriately named Mellieħa Bay.[5] The toponym would seem to indicate that salt was being produced there even earlier. This site was not in use by the time the Knights arrived – probably as a consequence of Mellieħa's own abandonment.[6] The Order developed new salt pans at Salina Bay[7] which fell into disuse during the French interregnum but were

Figure 2. An aerial view of the 16th century salt pans at Salina Bay (Photo Google Earth)

subsequently put to good use once again during the early British period, when, according to Blouet, salt production was a very profitable line of business. That new salt pans were being brought into production in, for example, Sliema in 1807, indeed reflects a buoyant demand for salt in the early nineteenth century.[8] Miege even notes a healthy export trade of around 30,000 *salme* per annum in the period 1827-1831.[9] Three decades later, the trade must have slackened considerably because Dedomenico speaks of only 6,000 *salme* being produced every year, and we have found no trace of salt exports during the rest of the nineteenth century in the Blue Books of Statistics.[10] It is, nevertheless, also true that we have found no trace of any imports either, so production must have been at least sufficient for local needs. During the course of the twentieth century, salt production gradually lost its importance, but salt pans, either excavated or built in many parts of our rocky shoreline, have remained as part of our maritime heritage.

The Sea as a Means of Communication

Until fairly recently, the sea served as the only highway for the movement of people, goods and ideas to and from our little archipelago. This applied to settlers, raiders, invaders, traders, clerics, artists, emigrants, soldiers and others who came and went by sea. So did the food which had to be imported to feed the crowded island, and the cotton and other products which for many hundreds of years had to be exported or re-exported to pay for these and other imports. This movement has been particularly intense during the last couple of centuries.

This aspect of the modern conception of maritime history, namely of the sea as a means of communication, is probably the broadest of all. It encompasses seaborne trade, in our own days still responsible for the carriage of most goods; shipping in all its facets and ancillary institutions such as insurance, finance, shipping registers and so on; navigation; ports, islands, and their communities; and employment directly associated with the sea. It is a tall order, and this section will, of necessity, have to focus on certain aspects and not others.

Ports, Trade and other Port-related Activity

John Debono's excellent work on trade and port activity in Malta's Grand Harbour during the latter half of the eighteenth century has done much

to fill in the lacunae in our knowledge of harbour activity in the Early Modern period.[11] In his work, Debono looks at the port's shipbuilding and repair facilities, its fleet, seamen, tradesmen and financiers, as well as shipping movements. This picture is complemented by Carmel Cassar's very useful contribution on Malta's import trade in grain with Sicily, the growth of trade in general, and the important role of foreigners in the growth of the communities around the Grand Harbour.[12] In my own work, I have sought to show the islands' increasing dependence on a mercantile diaspora in Spain, France, Portugal, Sicily and elsewhere, both for the disposal of rural Malta's premier product, namely cotton, and as intermediaries in the sale of cloth and a whole range of other products originating elsewhere.[13] The French invasion and the subsequent blockade wreaked havoc on these traditional commercial and maritime networks but the arrival of the British opened up new opportunities. The historiography of British Malta has tended to be dominated by political and constitutional issues, but over the last few years some efforts have been made to look at other aspects.

The development of harbour facilities, mostly driven by the needs of the Royal Navy (RN), has been traced by Bonnici and Cassar in their lavishly illustrated work on Malta's Grand Harbour and its dockyard,[14] while the specific aspects of port and coastal fortifications and quarantine facilities have also received a measure of attention.[15] Special mention should definitely be made of Viktor Wickman's series of short, albeit very informative, articles entitled 'Valletta Shipping,' which appeared in *Civilization* in 1983-1985. Apart from an overview of Maltese shipping in the nineteenth century, and details of dramatic shipwrecks and storms at sea, Wickman also gives very interesting information about the *dramatis personae* involved in Malta's modest shipping effort in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the Tagliaferro, Gollcher, Dacoutros and Pace families. Socio-economic aspects, on the other hand, have received little or no attention in the literature that is available. For example, we know nothing at all about the thousands of anonymous sailors who served on Malta's merchant shipping, especially in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century.

The early decades of the British presence have been well served by the work of Desmond Gregory and Michela D'Angelo as regards trade and traders. [16] The latter focuses, in particular, on the British merchant community, but there is much that is also of general interest in her work. Both authors describe Malta's rise from the ashes to become a vibrant

Table 1 Principal Occupational Categories directly related to the Sea

Year	H.M. Dockyard	Royal Navy	Merchant Seamen	Boatmen, Fishermen, etc.	Boatmen	Fishermen	Coal Heavers & Porters	Coal Heavers	Porters	Boat Builders	Totals
1851	360(1)	-	1,361	2,421	-	-	2,561	-	-	450	6,793
1861	-	284	1,757	2,571	-	-	2,852	-	-	394	7,858
1871	-	255	2,227	2,883	-	-	2,605	-	-	355	8,325
1881	1,070(2)	461	1,657(3)	3,661	-	-	5,475	-	-	281	12,605
1891	3,000(4)	257	590(5)	-	1,934	1,099	-	2,079	1,203	255	10,417
1901	4,000(6)	584	819(7)	-	1,497	1,147	-	1,796	1,330	332	11,405
1911	5,181	409	570(8)	-	1,469	1,464	-	2,025	1,138	588	12,844
1921	6,000	562	823(9)	-	1,365	1,438	-	2,374	271	917	12,457
1931	6,500(10)	670	846(11)	-	1,365	1,299	-	1,171	104	832	11,733
1948	15,340(12)	1,736(13)	439	-	300	988	-	-	-	26	18,829
1957	12,572	1,430	742-1,157(14)	-	151	562	-	-	-	17	15,474
1964	3,370	790	-	-	-	680	-	-	-	-	-
2005	1,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: For H.M. Dockyards, refer to Table 4. For Royal Navy, refer to the UK Census for 1861-1881; Malta Census for 1891-1911 and 1931; UK National Archives Adm 1/8611/147 for 1921; Report on Dept. of Labour and Social Welfare 1939-1946, 464, for 1946 as 1948 proxy; Report on the Working of the Dept. Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare for the year 1957, cited in Pollaco 2003, 154 for 1957. The figures for the remaining categories are drawn from the censuses for the various years, except for the number of fishermen for 1964, taken from Pollacco 2003, 73.

Notes: (1) In 1853-1856 (2) In 1880 (3) Includes 269 firemen and stokers (4) In 1896 (5) Includes 50 stewards (6) In 1906 (7) Includes 184 stewards (7) Includes 184 stewards (8) Includes stevedores and 219 stewards (9) Includes stevedores and 300 stewards (10) In 1932 (11) Includes 466 stewards (12) In 1946(13) In 1946 (14) Includes firemen, trimmers and engine room hands. A 1956 declaration by the Minister for Industry and Commerce, on the other hand, gave a figure of 1,157 Maltese seamen earning their living on merchant ships (*The Times of Malta,* 23 July 1956).

commercial centre during the Continental Blockade. They also describe its subsequent decline with the coming of both peace and the plague in 1813. In my own work, on the other hand, I have described the depression in the island's trade during the subsequent quarter of a century and the gradual recovery after that. [17]

One very important consequence of the advent of British rule was the opening up of North Africa to Maltese trade and settlement. The former had existed for centuries, albeit in small quantities, but took off in a big way in the nineteenth century.[18] Human settlement, on the other hand, was a novel phenomenon which came to constitute an important safety valve for the crowded island.[19] Andrea L. Smith's recent study has called for a revision of the image of the Maltese in Tunisia, with particular reference to their ability to exploit their liminal status.[20] These often short-term migrations to the Maghreb were a foretaste of the far larger demographic movements to Australia, Canada and elsewhere that were to take place in the following century.

In addition to its North African entrepot trade, and the traditional trade in imports for the islands' own consumption from Italy, Malta also had an important role as an entrepot for grain from Black Sea ports which nurtured and sustained its mercantile marine in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. [21]

Sea-Related Employment

Table 1 shows the evolution of the principal occupational categories directly related to the sea since the middle of the nineteenth century, when the gathering of statistics started in earnest.[22] In overall terms, we can see that merchant seamen, boatmen, fishermen, coal heavers and porters were in the ascendancy for most of the nineteenth century

Figure 3. British vessel in one of H.M.'s dockyards in Grand Harbour (Photo Horatio Agius)

but gradually gave way to H.M. Dockyards employees and Royal Navy personnel during the latter part of the nineteenth century, but especially during the course of the twentieth century. At the dawn of the twentieth-first century, only a residual, albeit still socially and politically important, number of workers remained at the now civilian dockyards, with a few hundreds still engaged in fishing. It is, in fact, paradoxical that as the overall population has got closer to the sea, those who are directly dependent on it, at least in traditional areas of employment related to the sea, would appear to have been reduced to a purely testimonial role. Having said that, it is, nevertheless, also true that current statistical categories do not easily show up those presently involved in 'new' areas of employment, such as the Malta Freeport, the servicing of yachts, those engaged in diving schools and other water sports, and so on.

The changes in the distribution of sea-related labour reflected in the table would seem to indicate a shift in the centre of gravity of the island's

economy away from trade and towards the naval sector up till the very eve of independence.[23] Nevertheless, this process seems to have started much later in the nineteenth century than is often supposed, and it is not until after the First World War that the total numbers employed at the Dockyards and as RN ratings exceeded the sum total of other sea-related workers. Although this does not take into consideration the spill-over and multiplier effect of Dockyard and RN activity, it clearly requires for us to nuance somewhat the general perception of the British period as being wholly and solely a matter of military spending or the lack of it. The fact is that little research has been done on seamen, boatmen, fishermen, coal heavers and porters, dockyard employees and others involved in maritime-related employment, whether of a military or civilian nature. The following is an initial attempt at looking at what are traditionally perceived as the premier exemplars of this sector, namely seafarers. In this section we shall look at merchant seamen while in the section on power projection we shall look at those who served in the Royal Navy.

The Maltese as Sailors[24]

The Maltese have a long-established reputation as mariners. In the fifteenth century they had a merchant marine which not only attended to the islands' victualling needs but also acted as a carrier between different parts of southern Italy.[25] Maltese merchantmen probably doubled up as corsair vessels as well.

I have written elsewhere about the existence of a vigorous, albeit modest, merchant marine centring on Malta's Grand Harbour during the middling decades of the nineteenth century and have contrasted the latter years of prosperity, when the Chamber of Commerce even had its own Sea or Maritime Captains' section, with the fleet's reduction to an almost purely testimonial presence in the latter half of the nineteenth and the whole of the twentieth century.[26] There were as many as 2,227 merchant seamen in 1871, but we know very little about them.[27] But although the circumstances may not have been propitious for the conversion of Malta's shipping from sail to steam, it did not impede Maltese seafarers from retaining their age-old involvement in maritime labour, particularly via employment on the vessels of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA).[28]

Maltese seamen seem to have been employed on board of Royal Navy support vessels even prior to the setting up of the RFA. In 1902, a '… new crew of Maltese with European Officers, under the Merchant Shipping Act…' was engaged for H.M. Hospital Ship *Maine*.[29] The Admiralty

Figure 4. A British vessel steaming out of Grand Harbour

circular letter dated 3 August 1905 that could in some way be held to be the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's founding charter, and which introduced the acronym RFA, in fact, cites RFA *Maine* as an example of the new designation.[30] As a consequence, Adams and James may not be totally correct, at least as far as the Maltese are concerned, when they claim in their definitive work on the history of the RFA that the employment of Hong Kong Chinese, Maltese, and Seychelles ratings, through normal commercial channels with Board of Trade Agreements, dates from the inter-war period.[31]

In 1939, there was an overall total of fifty-eight RFA vessels, of which at least four, the oilers RFA *Boxol,* RFA *Brambleleaf* and RFA *Cherryleaf*, and the fleet supply ship RFA *Reliant,* were based at Malta.[32] There was no indication of the disposition of eight of the vessels listed but we know that of the latter at least one, the hospital ship RFA *Maine,* was also manned by Maltese. In May 1942, there were thirteen RFA ships based at Alexandria manned by either Lascar or Maltese crews.[33] Maltese crews manned six of the thirteen vessels.

Service with RFA vessels was considered a good source of employment for 'British Maltese' seamen, according to a 1938 report by Mr. Ercole Valenzia, secretary of the National Union of Seamen, Malta Branch, just before the outbreak of the Second World War.[34] He estimated that over 250 Maltese seamen were thus engaged. They were lean times for seafarers in general and in a report a year later, Valenzia indicated that

most employment was, in fact, with the RFA as there was little call from other types of vessels.[35]

Numbers must have increased considerably during the course of hostilities but seem to have decreased rapidly towards the end of the war and in the period immediately afterwards, with reports of Maltese seafarers unable to proceed overseas unless they had a guaranteed job to go to at a time when employment on a British ship required membership of the Merchant Navy Manning Pools.[36] There were about 300 Maltese men serving on seven RFA vessels in 1962 and around 360 to attend to the needs of eight RFA vessels in 1968, four years after Malta's independence from Great Britain.[37] Nevertheless, in the early 1960s there was already concern that unemployment amongst Maltese seafarers was getting higher as a consequence of increasing recourse to Chinese crews.[38] Table 2, which sets out the seamen engaged at Malta during the period 1960-1970, shows that in the 1960s the RFA accounted for an average of around 44% of total engagements.

Table 2: Merchant Seamen engaged in Malta 1960-1970

Year	Total Engaged - % in RFA in Brackets	Maltese Merchant Seamen Engaged
1960	1,571(61)	845
1961	1,868	1,051
1962	1,242	589
1963	1,379(46)	581
1964	1,455(36)	559
1965	1,435	741
1966	1,859	906
1967	1,794(32)	880
1968	1,351	1,015
1969	1,235(49)	873
1970	1,325(40)	836
1/1/71 to 4/8/72	-	1,009

Sources: *Reports on the Workings of Government Departments/Customs and Ports,* Malta.

The coming into force on 1 January 1973 of the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1970, brought about a significant reduction of the Shipping Master's duties, because this officer's sanction was no longer necessary for the engagement and discharge of seamen on ships registered in the UK.[39] We have not encountered statistics after 1973 but the closure of Suez and the gradual withdrawal of the RFA ships consequent on the Services' rundown brought to an end the RFA's association with the island. Nevertheless, the experience the Maltese had acquired on RFA vessels stood them in good stead as they turned instead to the private sector. In 1975, the BP Tanker Company Ltd. advertised in the local press for General Purpose Ratings for deck and engine room duties, claiming there were already over 100 Maltese working for the company.[40] In subsequent years, our seafaring tradition lingered on at Sea Malta but the last remaining mariners there lost their employment when that company went into liquidation in 2005.

The Displacement of the Mercantile Sector

It is, admittedly, difficult to establish whether it was imperial naval requirements which eventually displaced mercantile activity, or whether imperial needs simply plugged the holes left by the mercantile sector, as regards employment and other matters. There is no doubt that naval needs increasingly crowded out mercantile needs, but it is probably also true, as the Chamber of Commerce claimed, that the advent of steam navigation and telegraphy eventually brought about a loss in the value which the island's location at the centre of the Mediterranean had previously given it, despite the fact that the arrival of steam initially led to the Grand Harbour witnessing a number of decades of very hectic activity as a coaling centre.[41] In addition, the advent of French control over Algeria and Tunisia led to other Europeans establishing themselves in the Maghreb, with the result that both Malta and the Maltese lost their privileged positions, with new port facilities, such as those at Bizerte, constituting an additional threat.[42] It must also be recognized that ill-advised local government policies, such as the doubling of olive oil storage fees in 1871 which killed off of a brisk trade in Tunisian oil, did not really help.

In overall terms, therefore, it is probably true that naval inroads into mercantile waters and such like, did, indeed, have a negative effect on commerce but the benefits of this phenomenon probably outweighed the drawbacks, and served to palliate the adverse effects of a process,

namely the deterioration of Malta's entrepot role, which was taking place anyway.

The eclipsing of the mercantile sector was, as we have noted, a long drawn-out affair. We have already seen this reflected in the changes in the distribution of port labour but it is also confirmed in the development of the bunkering trade, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Number of Steamships calling at Malta, Tonnage and Coal Imported – 1836-1974

	Number of Steamships (Yearly Average)	Total Steamship Tonnage in 000s of Tons (Yearly Average)	Coal Imported in Tons (Yearly Average)
1836-1840	4	1.38	-
1841-1845	54	20	-
1840-1850	126	57	-
1851-1855	397	231	-
1856-1860	663	438	-
1861-1865	875	731	-
1866-1870	1,197	993	-
1871-1875	2,132	1,920	-
1876-1880	3,008	2,702	362,973
1881-1885	4,228	4,543	547,873
1886-1890	3,708	4,493	524,293
1891-1895	2,778	3,244	400,707
1896-1900	2,584	3,437	422,483
1901-1905	2,454	3,551	470,167
1906-1910	2,327	3,761	423,591
1911-1912	2,567	4,300	582,193
1913-1918	*1,739	2,748	-
1919-1922	1,083	2,366	104,380
1923-1927	1,929	3,521	244,014
1928-1932	1,699	3,600	-
1933-1937	1,883	4,310	-
1938-1942	-	-	-
1943-1946	*181	418	-
1947-1950	*1,527	1,635	-
1956-1960	*1,809	2,937	-
1961-1965	*2,177	4,611	-
1966-1970	*3,022	5,070	-
1971-1975	*3,179	4,654	-
1976-1980	*3,278	5,803	-
1981-1985	*2,917	6,211	-

* Total shipping, including sailing vessels.

Sources: Years 1836-1876, Mifsud 1973, 196-197; Years 1881-1895, Mifsud 1973, 240; Years 1877-1880 and 1896-1937, *Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports*; Years 1938-1961, *Commercial Courier*; Years 1962-1985, *Shipping and Aviation Statistics of the Maltese Islands.*

The high point of bunkering in the nineteenth century was 1885, when 618,796 tons of coal were imported. Imports subsequently retreated from this level, reflecting the onset of what was known in Great Britain (until the greater catastrophe of the 1930s) as the 'Great Depression,' a phenomenon which affected most industrial nations and lasted until the 1890s.[43] Imports climbed back to over half a million tons by 1900 (501,148 tons), as can be seen in Table 3. In fact, they remained at a high level to reach an all-time high of 718,626 tons in 1912-1913, just before the debacle of the First World War. The inter-war period was marked by the Great Depression and although the tonnage of shipping calling at Malta every year was not a great deal lower, with an average of around four and a half million tons in the five years prior to the Second World War, there were also technological developments, such as larger engines and the increased use of oil rather than coal as fuel, which caused the operating ranges of ships to lengthen considerably, and thus avoid having to call at Malta. These factors meant that the scope for labour-intensive coaling was increasingly limited. The end result was that the number of coal heavers halved between 1921 and 1931, the last year for which we have data for the number of coal heavers.

The military events of the Second World War are quite well-known.[44] Less known are the employment implications of the war. During hostilities, Maltese society was put on a war footing with one in six of all male wage-earners enlisted in the Malta Territorial Force and thousands more employed in the RN, the Royal Air Force and H.M. Dockyards, with the employment of hundreds of women in Government and Service Departments constituting a particularly interesting new development.[45]

In the years immediately after the war, reconstruction and the continued presence of H.M. Services, and the release of pent-up purchasing power accumulated during the war, temporarily put off re-adjustment. In the last year before the war, namely 1938, Malta imported £3,869,606 worth of goods. In the first year after Malta's siege was lifted, imports bounced back to £5,270,318 and went on to reach a staggering £14,390,732 in 1947.[46] In the short term, this translated into brisk activity in the harbour, but once the immediate post-war euphoria had subsided, there were some hard choices to be made.

Figure 5. Coal being loaded onto vessels at Marsa (Photo Geo Fürst, courtesy Wilfred Pirotta)

The post-war baby boom took the Maltese population to over 300,000 for the first time, with consequent pressures on the cramped islands' resources. The Maltese Government and people, in fact, turned towards emigration on a massive scale as a solution, with a record 11,447 people leaving the islands' shores in 1954, bound mostly for Australia.[47] Ships loaded with emigrants became a familiar sight in the Grand Harbour, but unlike the toing and froing to nearby North Africa in the nineteenth century, those leaving for the new 'Promised Land' only had a one-way ticket, in most cases a heavily subsidised one. For a people brought up in a society where everything and everyone is close at hand, far-away Australia was, for a long time, considered a land of no return, at least until the advent of cheap air transport shortened distances. In the peak period of 1945-1964, nearly 100,000 people migrated from a country which, as we saw above, had had a population of about 300,000 in 1945.[48] But despite this bloodletting, Malta still had to do a considerable amount of adjusting internally as well.

In 1946, thirty percent of all gainfully occupied people were employed by H.M. Services.[49] By 1979, when the Maltese Islands became a republic, this sector had disappeared completely, and much employment had been

created in manufacturing and services, especially tourism, although it must also be noted that many were absorbed by a considerably enlarged public sector.[50] In the process, the Grand Harbour lost its centrality as sea-centred economic activity of a different kind took root in new locations – yacht marinas, hotels and other tourist establishments, and so on, dispersed along the northeastern coast of Malta, and to a lesser extent in Gozo.

Entrepreneurs

The processes we described above affecting those in employment were evidently also paralleled by changes in the islands' entrepreneurial class. I have described elsewhere the ship owners and captains, financers, insurance underwriters and brokers who were instrumental in setting up the Malta Chamber of Commerce.[51] Eventually, these gave way to importers, and commission and insurance agents, and it is around these basic cores made up of small family-run companies that larger

Figure 6. The grand hall of the Chamber of Commerce, Valletta

multi-faceted holdings would subsequently be engaged in the running of hotels and the provision of services to the tourist sector in the post-independence period.

Other Aspects

At the beginning of this section we referred to this aspect of maritime history, namely communications, as being, probably, the broadest of all. We have looked, in broad sweeps, at the initial shift of our maritime economy from being a primarily mercantile entrepot one, to one reliant on bunkering. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, it went on to become essentially a naval station, a role it retained until the middle of the twentieth century, when it embarked on a conversion to peaceful pursuits.

The limited space available makes it impossible to make more than passing reference to other aspects. I have described elsewhere some of the developments in ancillary institutions such as banking, insurance,

Figure 7. Passengers waiting to board a smaller boat to make their way to the Gleneagles *– Mġarr, Gozo (Photo Geo Fürst, courtesy Wilfred Pirotta)*

the Chamber of Commerce and so on, as well as the nature of maritime mercantile connections with our neighbours.[52] One aspect of our islands' maritime history I would, nevertheless, like to devote some attention to is the matter of local transportation by sea, especially the link between Malta and Gozo.

Gozo, the smaller of the two major inhabited islands of the Maltese archipelago, has traditionally had a much more introspective and rural feel than the relatively cosmopolitan and much larger Malta, but the former has always found a ready market in the latter for its agricultural surpluses.

Transportation between the two islands must have existed since time immemorial but it is not until the thirteenth century that we actually have documentary evidence of its existence in the shape of a tax being levied on it.[53] Attard and Muscat have described the evolution of maritime connections between the two islands over the centuries, indicating the various 'ports', or perhaps one could more appropriately say landing places, which were involved.[54] Apart from the Grand Harbour, these included Mġarr, Marsalforn and Xlendi in Gozo, and Mellieħa and Marfa in Malta, although given the small size of the vessels apparently being used, it is probable that other inlets were used as well.

An 'official' daily ferry service, excluding Sundays, started in 1813, a few years after the British arrived.[55] Steamers are first recorded at Mġarr in the mid-1850s, but it was not until 1885 that a regular steam ferry, the legendary *Gleneagles*, started operating.[56] The service henceforth became regular and comfortable, greatly facilitating passenger traffic between the two islands. In the century that followed, other operators joined the *Gleneagles* and the service got better and better, especially with the improvement in harbour facilities on both sides of the Gozo Channel, at Mġarr, in Gozo, and Ċirkewwa, in Malta. In 1979, the service was nationalized, although some claimed that this was not necessarily beneficial to the end-users.[57]

Other forms of water transport at the local level centred on the harbours on either side of Valletta, in the shape of ferries and the famous *dgħajjes* (plural of *dgħajsa*). Though mostly associated with the carriage of passengers, the small, slim, sleek and low-in-the-water *dgħajsa*, was, in fact, a 'veritable harbour workhorse', as Bonnici and Cassar have called it.[58] In 1864, there were 1,134 licensed *dgħajjes* powered by boatmen, or *barklori*.

The harbour ferry service started operating between Sliema and Valletta, in Marsamxett, in 1882.[59] Cheaper and more frequent than the omnibus or the private boats plying the harbour, it was an instant success.

It was not introduced in Grand Harbour until 1906, fully twenty-four years after the Marsamxett one, probably owing to resistance from the powerful *dgħajsa* lobby.[60]

Epilogue

In the run up to independence, and in the years immediately after, a succession of Maltese administrations sought to encourage manufacturing and exports. In pursuit of these goals, it was felt that the island state required better harbour facilities and more secure shipping links. Sums were, as a consequence, set aside in successive five-year plans to modernize the harbour. In 1973, Sea Malta was formed with Maltese public and private capital and a twenty-five percent stake held by the Libyan General Maritime Transport Organization.[61]

Closer to our times, in 1991, a Maltese Maritime Authority was established to co-ordinate the running of the ports, merchant shipping, yachting and cruise-ship visits.[62] Not excessively demanding requirements for registration eventually led to a tremendous boom in ship registrations on the Malta register, and eventually, and perhaps inevitably, to some very serious and very high profile accidents on the high seas involving, in particular, oil tankers flying the Maltese flag.

Also worth mentioning is the presence in Malta of the International Maritime Organization's International Maritime Law Institute, based at the University of Malta. Established in the early 1990s, the Institute is dedicated to the training of specialists in maritime law and the development and dissemination of knowledge and expertise in the international legal regime of merchant shipping, and the related areas of maritime law and the general law of the sea.

The Sea as a Medium for the Projection of Power

In Malta's case this has really meant the use of the island as a base for the projection of power by others. It is the area which has received the most attention in the bibliography on Maltese maritime history. In fact, Maltese and other historians have written at length about the Order of St John's naval exploits, as well as about corsairing.[63] Both had waned considerably by the time we take up the story, although there was some resurgence in the latter sector, namely corsairing, before its final eclipse with the arrival of the British.

Figure 8. The Grand Harbour replete with a variety of vessels. (Photo Horatio Agius)

Bonnici and Cassar's *A Century of the Royal Navy at Malta* (1999) is still the best introduction to Malta's association with the RN, particularly because of its wonderful collection of early photographs, although I am still unsure as to the choice of title for their book. After all, the RN's association with Malta was already a fact in 1800 and continued until at least 1979, and this is closer to two centuries than one.

The RN's exploits in the Mediterranean have been well documented in Peter Elliott's *The Cross and the Ensign. A Naval History of Malta 1798-1979* (1980), to which reference was already made earlier. It is a succinct introduction and despite the regrettable absence of notation, the author has clearly made use of a considerable amount of primary documentation and gives a good, basic, albeit now somewhat dated, bibliography. Our primary concern in this essay is to look specifically at the direct Maltese participation in these naval endeavours.

A limited number of contributions have looked at the nature of employment, voluntary or otherwise, in the Order's navy, while there has also been some treatment of those involved in the private sector on board of corsairing vessels or the merchant marine during the same period.[64] The nature of sea-related employment during the British period, on the other hand, has received little or no attention. As a consequence, we know very little about the Maltese who served in RN vessels and shore establishments, apart from a number of very interesting and moving interviews in the local media with Maltese survivors of extreme wartime experiences such as the sinking of a ship and/or time spent in captivity

in prisoner-of-war camps.[65] We know even less about the mundane, often humdrum, life they led in the RN during the long years of peace. It is clearly a priority for oral historians to tap this source, given that those who served are getting fewer and fewer as the years go by.

I have shown elsewhere that in the eighteenth century at least, Malta's mercantile marine was almost wholly manned and commanded by the Maltese themselves, although the corsairing vessels had a more cosmopolitan crew.[66] This also seems to have been the case during the nineteenth century, when the number of vessels in the Maltese merchant marine reached an all-time high.[67]

A somewhat different scenario emerges, perhaps understandably, as regards service in the navies of the foreign powers which held these islands between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Senior positions on board the vessels of the Order were the prerogative of the Knights, although the Maltese did have access to middling specialist posts such as clerks, surgeons, helmsmen, pilots, bombardiers, and so on.[68] During the course of the eighteenth century, however, the Order's finances came under increasingly heavy pressure and this resulted in cutbacks in employment opportunities.[69] The Grand Master, until that time unwilling to allow Maltese mariners to be recruited by foreign navies, started to give permission to various foreign powers to sign up his subjects for service abroad. During the course of the eighteenth century we in fact encounter considerable evidence of Maltese sailors serving in foreign navies and merchant marines. The Maltese were held in particularly high

esteem in the Spanish Navy, which seems to have recruited hundreds if not thousands.[70] Their conditions of service and pay were equal to those received by Spaniards and they even had the possibility of going to the lucrative Americas.[71]

Other Maltese seafarers served on board Russian, Dutch, Papal, Venetian, English and French vessels.[72] In the final years of the eighteenth century, recruitment, in fact, seems to have turned into a free-for-all, and it is probable that Maltese sailors were to be found serving in the navies of all the leading contenders during the Napoleonic Wars.

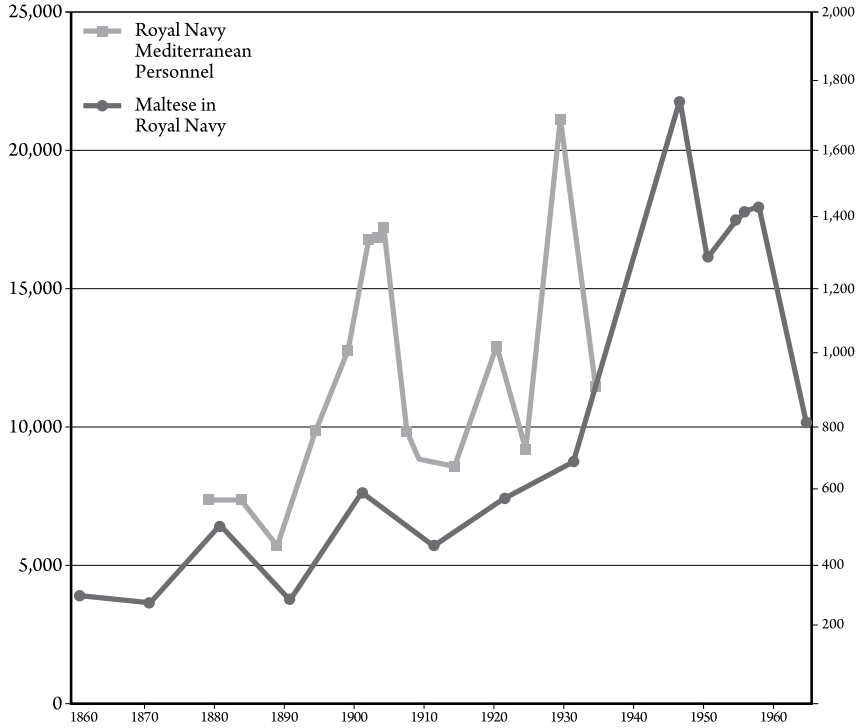
Maltese sailors in considerable numbers definitely served in both the French Navy and the French mercantile marine during the eighteenth century. There were 927 sailors, gunners and helmsmen in the former in 1780, while Le Goff claims that the Maltese were one of the most consistent groups amongst the many foreign sailors serving on merchant shipping operating out of Marseilles and formed around ten percent of all foreign sailors in the period 1769-1785.[73] It is also known that thousands of Maltese were recruited by Napoleon on his way to Egypt.[74]

The English RN was also desperately short of men in the Early Modern period, especially during wartime. Foreigners were taken into the service in considerable numbers, and although no overall figures are available, these could constitute around 15% and more of a ship's complement.[75] In 1793, Admiral Hood applied to the Grand Master for permission to recruit a thousand Maltese sailors, although in the end only about 440 were actually signed on.[76] There were at least twenty-five Maltese serving on board English ships at Trafalgar in 1805.[77] H.M.S. *Victory*, probably the best known warship in naval history, in fact, had a crew in which foreigners made up 14.63% of the ship's complement: these included six Maltese – two Royal Marine privates; Gaetano Altomaro and Domque Gentile, and four Ordinary Seamen; Josh Benjna, Emanuel Camelaire, Natbl Pirch and Jno Tart.[78] But a few years later, hostilities came to an end, with inevitable consequences for the strength of the armed forces on land and sea. From a peak of 142,098 men in 1810, the strength of the RN collapsed to a low of 21,141 in 1835.[79] The foreigners would probably have been the first to go. The long peace of 1815-1914, in fact, saw considerable changes in the Senior Service and it eventually came to constitute the most quintessentially 'English' branch of the armed forces, almost entirely manned by the British and Irish, unlike the Army, which relied heavily on non-European troops recruited in the various parts of the Empire. The Maltese were one of the exceptions as regards the RN.

Rule Britannia[80]

J. H. Parry has claimed that in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, Britain ruled the waves not so much because it had ships everywhere but because no one else had any ships anywhere.[81] As regards Maltese seamen serving in the RN, therefore, it is probable that their numbers were far outweighed by the numbers serving on board of Maltese-owned and captained merchant shipping during the latter's Golden Age.[82] Nevertheless, as the century evolved the numbers serving in the RN increased, at the same time that the size of Malta's own merchant fleet and the number of merchant seamen gradually diminished.[83] Graph 1 gives the total number of RN personnel in the Mediterranean (left-hand axis) and the number of Maltese serving in the RN (right-hand axis) over the century from 1861 to 1964.

Graph 1 Total Personnel and Maltese in the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean 1861-1964



Sources: UK Censuses for 1861-1881; Malta Censuses for 1891-1911 and 1931; UK National Archives Adm 1/8611/147 for 1921; Report on the Department of Labour and Social Welfare 1939-1946, 464, for 1946; Malta Year Books for 1950-1955, Reports on the Working of the Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare 1957 and 1964 cited in Pollaco 2003, 7 and 154, for 1957 and 1964.

The censuses for Malta and Gozo between 1891 and 1931 give detailed tables of the number of officers and men serving on board H.M. ships at Malta, divided into 'English' and Maltese. Based on these and Admiralty sources, it would seem that the Maltese may have constituted between 4.7% and 9.9% of total RN personnel in the Mediterranean in this epoch.[84] In the First and Second World Wars, total Maltese enlistment in the RN reached a figure of around 2,000 in both cases, although we are unable to say how many were on board ships and how many were ashore.[85]

The Maltese serving on board RN ships, particularly as stewards and cooks, were perceived by fellow Maltese as *la crème de la crème* of those lucky enough to be employed in the service of the Empire.[86] Wages were in the region of £15 a month at a time when a skilled boiler-maker at the Dockyards received £2-2s per week.[87] But cooks and stewards also seem to have had ways of tapping other sources of income as well. In his fascinating four volume autobiography, Herbert Ganado, the Maltese politician who was interned by the British during the Second World War for his Italianate leanings, speaks of the affection and respect which existed between British RN officers and their Maltese stewards.[88] He also emphasises that the relationship seems to have been materially beneficial to both parties and cites the case of one Maltese RN steward whose accounts he had to certify, who was owed sums which in some cases exceeded a hundred pounds, by over twenty British officers, when he had been serving on one of the big capital ships. By-the-by, it is worthwhile noting that Ganado, who was no Anglophile, claimed that in general the Maltese were happy with the British.[89]

The Maltese in the RN were employed on what were known as Non-Continuous Service contracts, unlike the British who had Continuous Service contracts and thus enjoyed more security. Long-service, disability and widows' pensions, on the other hand, would seem to have been similar to those of the British.[90] According to the 1921 Census there were 311 RN pensioners and 53 widows in receipt of a RN pension in Malta, in comparison to 119 Army pensioners and 14 widows in receipt of an Army pension. At a time when social welfare provisions were minimal or non-existent, the prospect of a pension must have constituted yet another incentive to join the RN, but there was a downside.

During most of the British presence in Malta, service in the Services was no more hazardous than any civilian job, and as we have already seen, in fact, offered considerable financial rewards, but in times of war, those who had signed up for the King's shilling were at the front line

of hostilities, and thus very much in harm's way. Stokers, firemen and trimmers, buried deep in the ships' entrails, were particularly at risk.[91] The RN lost around 30,000 men in the First World War, of whom half died fighting on land in the Royal Naval Division.[92] The remaining 15,000 or so who died at sea included at least 255 Maltese who are known to have been killed in that war serving with the RN, and who, as a consequence, constituted somewhat below two percent of all RN casualties at sea.[93] Taking into consideration the relatively small population of the island it is a very notable figure.

During the Second World War, total RN losses were much heavier at 50,000 dead, while the number of Maltese who lost their lives whilst serving in the RN was somewhat lower at 198, but these represented ten percent of the 2,000 Maltese who are known to have enlisted in the RN during that conflict. By way of contrast, the 50,000 British RN losses represented somewhat more than five percent of the 866,000 men and women in the RN in 1945. As a consequence, twice as many Maltese RN personnel perished in that conflict as a proportion of the total serving in that branch of the Service than was the case for Britons. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the fact that the number of civilian casualties in Malta during the Second World was far larger than the losses of men and women in uniform.

The contribution to the war effort by men and women from the far-flung corners of the British Empire, not just the Anzacs, Canadians and South Africans of European stock, but also Indians, West Indians, Africans and others is finally being recognized.[94] The fact is that, although considered good enough to shed their blood for the British Empire, colonial peoples in general and certain colonial peoples in particular, were often not perceived very positively by the British.

'Maltese, non-Europeans and men of colour… '

In 1817, George III enacted legislation relating to trade which declared 'That for the purposes of this Act, and for all purposes whatever, the Island of Malta and its Dependencies shall be deemed and taken to be in Europe.'[95] But the matter of Maltese 'European-ness' has always tended to be a moot point, at least during the British period. Speaking about the British Empire in general, Stoler has, in fact, argued that 'colonial control was predicated on identifying who was 'white' and who was 'native'…'[96]

Eugenics, the science of improving a population by controlled breeding, fell into disfavour after its doctrines had been perverted by the

Nazis, but decades before that had come to pass, around the turn of the century, it had achieved a certain political prominence in the Western world, with racial and sexual purity being held in particularly high regard by empire builders. This is very much reflected in the attitudes of the British entrusted with the administration of the Empire in general and of certain senior Admiralty officials towards the Maltese in particular, and 'coloured', in a manner of speaking, their perception of the latter's ability to serve in the Senior Service, the much-vaunted guardian of the Empire.

In a letter dated 20 July 1921, Rear Admiral J. D. Kelly remarked that the 'Maltese are **not** white men…' ('not' highlighted by Kelly).[97] He felt that although in peacetime they were steady, sober, docile and not lazy, they lacked 'guts' and initiative and, as a consequence, were unreliable in action and could definitely not be put in command of Englishmen.[98] In support of his assertions, he cited his own experience with Maltese stokers on board H.M.S. *Dublin*. While in action in the Dardanelles, he had had to force the stokers back to the stokeholds at the point of Royal Marine bayonets.

Kelly was not the only senior RN officer to recognize the 'peacetime' positive qualities of the Maltese. Malta-based Rear Admiral Barttelot, for example, declared that from his experience '…the educated Maltese is equal to the English boy in intelligence and in many ways he is quicker,'[99] while Admiral Fremantle declared that the Maltese seafaring man had a strong physique, was hardy and hard-working, and was endowed with powers of endurance.[100]

Kelly's 1921 remarks seem to have made a considerable impression and were still being cited in correspondence concerning the status of the Maltese in the RN in the late 1930s, just before the outbreak of war, despite Governor Bonham-Carter's assertion that the key to securing the loyalty of the Maltese was by ensuring 'the removal of any ground, however illusionary, of discrimination against the Maltese.'[101] In fact, the Admiralty did not relent about allowing the Maltese equal access to all branches of the Service, but one must, nevertheless, also note that the self-same Admiralty ensured that the Maltese in general, as well as men of colour who were resident in England and formed part of the regular forces of the Navy, were to be paid regular pensions, and not reduced ones as the UK Ministry of Pensions was proposing for non-Europeans entered locally for service in foreign stations.[102] In British, and specifically, in the RN's eyes the Maltese would, in fact, seem to

have occupied some sort of middle rung on some imaginary ladder of 'worth'; although not held to be quite the equal of the British they seem to have been perceived somewhat more favourably than the Chinese, Lascars and others recruited in foreign stations; but there were other factors setting the Maltese apart from those who would theoretically have been their equals, namely the rest of the men on the lower deck of RN vessels.

Independent of their aptitude, or otherwise, for combat duties, the Maltese typically messed separately from the rest of the ship's company.[103] Senior RN officers, in fact, claimed that when English and Maltese stewards or cooks had messed together, the arrangement had not survived beyond a short period.[104] In a small self-contained community like a ship '…comradeship began in a ship's messes…'[105] Another factor which set the Maltese apart from others was their special relationship with officers, whose stewards and cooks they often were.

In overall terms, therefore, the Maltese would seem to have constituted a tiny group of individuals whose Mediterranean 'cultural' characteristics, especially their Catholic faith and Semitic language, as well as eating and other habits, would have differed considerably from the English-speaking, mostly Protestant, Northern Europeans who constituted the overwhelming bulk of the crews on board of H.M. ships.

A Changed World

The world wars, but particularly the second one, were a watershed. The experience of shedding blood together in the struggle against a common enemy and the extraordinary efforts by the RN and the Merchant Navy to keep open Malta's lifelines seem to have bonded the British and the Maltese in a manner which is difficult to conceive of nowadays. After the war in fact, the RN eventually offered the Maltese both the opportunity to serve in Malta within the Malta Port Division with local conditions of service or to join the RN or Royal Marines in the UK under exactly the same conditions as other people recruited in the UK.[106] The first batch of young recruits joined up in 1952 and eventually proceeded to the UK for further training on H.M.S. *Ganges*. The Malta Port Division was finally disbanded in 1979, when the British forces took their leave.

The Sea and Technology

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry, and as Ghirlando has pointed out, ships are not only the largest machines ever built by man but also the perfect embodiment of the technological advances achieved by human endeavour.[107] There can be no doubt that what technology the small Maltese archipelago has had until fairly recently has centred on its dockyards.

The Royal Naval Dockyard

Facilities for the maintenance of ships existed in Malta prior to the arrival of the Order of St John in 1530, but it is after this date that more substantial advances were registered.[108] This is reflected in Muscat's many contributions on the subject of the Order's vessels and ship maintenance facilities, listed in Cortis and Gambin (2005). By the end of the Knight Hospitallers' stay, the amount of work in the Order's Arsenal seems, nevertheless, to have slackened considerably because on their arrival the British found enough skilled caulkers, shipwrights and smiths to repair and refit the ships involved in the landing of troops at Aboukir Bay (1801), but had to get carpenters and sailmakers from on board the British warships in the harbour to make up for the deficiency in the number of local skilled workers in these fields.[109]

With the advent of peace, the pattern that many have claimed would subsequently typify employment at the Dockyards during the British period was established very early on, with a twenty-five percent reduction in what had been the wartime establishment of 146, as well as a fifty percent reduction in the temporary workforce.[110] Indeed, at one stage, there was even the possibility of the entire yard being abandoned. It was not, and the construction by the RN of its first dry dock overseas and a two-storey foundry in the 1840s made Malta Great Britain's principal Mediterranean base, a condition it would retain for over a hundred years.[111]

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the opening decades of the twentieth century, the Royal Naval Dockyard at Malta grew until it reached its maximum spatial extension in 1909.[112] In 1914, it consisted of five dry docks and a host of ancillary workshops, mills, a bakery, ammunition and fuel storage depots, and other facilities.[113]

The implications in the field of employment for the small island of this naval repair and maintenance facility were enormous. Setting aside the

token construction of H.M.S. *Melita,*[114] and ill-fated attempts to turn to shipbuilding in the post-independence period, Malta's naval dockyards, and their civilian successors, have always had essentially a maintenance and repair role.[115] At its height in 1946, civilian and uniformed employment with H.M. Services accounted for 25,775 jobs, or around one third of the total number of able-bodied men in Malta.[116] Of these, 17,076, or about two thirds of those employed with the Services of the Imperial Government worked at the Dockyards (15,340) or were RN uniformed personnel (1,736).[117]

The level of employment at the Dockyards was not, necessarily, a steadily ascending curve. Men were taken on or laid off according to need but a look at Table 4 would seem to indicate an ever-increasing number, in absolute terms, over the longer term, at least until the advent of the Services' rundown in the 1950's.

Table 4 Employment at the Malta Dockyards, 1800-2005

1800(1)	130
Early 1804(2)	182
1814(1)	359
1853-1856(7)	360
1880(2)	1,070
1896(3)	3,000
1906(3)	4,000
1918(3)	13,000
1921(3)	6,000
1924(3)	8,500
1933(4)	7,519
1938(4)	9,458
1946(4)	15,340
1957(5)	12,572
1964(6)	3,370
2005(8)	1,700

Sources: (1) MacDougall, (2) Fenech, (3) Ellul Galea, (4) Report on Department of Labour and Social Welfare 1939-1946, (5) Ghirlando, (6) Pollacco, (7) Laferla p.228, (8) http://www.malatdrydocks.com.mt/introduction.php on 19/10/2005

The war years were clearly exceptional periods, but setting these aside, Dockyard employees represented a fairly stable and large proportion of the total workforce, even though other sectors involved with the sea and the Grand Harbour together outweighed the Dockyard's importance as regards employment until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, having said that, it must be recognised that the Dockyard's workforce was a pampered urban elite which many aspired to join. It was also the repository of the island's technological know-how.

The Dockyard School

The transmitter of technological knowledge at the Dockyards was the Dockyard School, established on 1 November 1858.[118] With an intake which at one stage may have reached 230 apprentices per year,[119] the Dockyard School accounted for nearly sixty percent of all apprenticeships in Malta as late as 1952.[120] The six-year apprenticeship was a tough one and many did not stay the course, but it was of an extremely high level. In the late 1940s, a scheme was introduced which enabled the best students to proceed to the UK to finish their apprenticeship and in many cases go on to do undergraduate studies.[121]

The Private Sector

Alongside and perhaps pre-dating the naval sector, Malta had long had private facilities for the building, repair and maintenance of vessels. During the period 1820-1855, an average of seven to eight ships per annum were launched from the shipyards in French Creek,[122] but by the latter half of the nineteenth century, the average number of ship launches had dropped to less than two per year.[123] This dramatic drop has been

Figure 9. A Gozo boat sailing into the Grand Harbour. (Photo Geo Fürst, courtesy Wilfred Pirotta)

ascribed mostly to the takeover of French Creek by the RN but it may also not have been unrelated to the fact that the Maltese mercantile marine was unable to effect the change from sail to steam.[124] Despite this, there was still considerable scope for the construction of the many small craft which plied the harbour, or were engaged in fishing.[125] Particularly interesting was the phenomenon of the 'Gozo boats' *or dgħajjes tal-latini* which continued in service between the two islands, mostly transporting merchandise, until the final decades of the twentieth century.[126] In contrast to shipbuilding, this tradition of small wooden craft construction continued until just a few years ago.[127]

The Commercial Docks

The marked inability of Malta's naval dockyard to successfully effect the transition to commercial viability in the private sector in the post-independence period has been one of the Maltese economy's long-standing sagas, but the convoluted history of these attempts need not detain us here.[128] Succinct accounts of both the 'Royal Naval Dockyard' and its successor, the 'Commercial Dockyard,' in Malta are available in Caruana (2001a and 2001b). Suffice it to say that the dockyards, the focal point of technology in the Maltese Islands all through the Early Modern and Contemporary period, have left behind a mixed legacy. On the one hand they created a centre of technological excellence which, in the normal course of events, is rarely available to island states the size of Malta. This may have inculcated an industrial tradition and work ethic which may have come in good stead when embarking on the industrialization of post-independence Malta. On the other hand, it is not clear that the skills nurtured for the specific needs of, first, the navy of the Order of St John, and more recently the RN, were easily transferable to other purposes. The legacy of the Dockyards may, indeed, have been even more problematic. Pampered by both the colonial administration and by post-independence governments, the sector has constituted a veritable blood letting of public funds used to shore up the enterprise, which may have been far more usefully utilized elsewhere: in 1995 public support amounted to more than a quarter of the national capital expenditure.[129] The shipyards were finally privatized in 2010, with the last remaining workers taking early retirement or seeking employment elsewhere, the new owners opting not to employ those workers still willing to stay on.

The Sea as a Space for Leisure

Swimming has been practised for a very, very long time. A fascinating *Arte TV* documentary recently produced by Ralf Brier and Claudia Kuhland has noted the presence of swimming in Iron Age cave paintings.[130] The ability to swim was widespread in Classical Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures but fell into disrepute with the advent of Christianity. This may not have been unconnected to the overwhelmingly negative perception of the sea in Judaic culture,[131] a perception that is reflected in the Maltese and Arabic languages.[132] Be that as it may, the Age of Enlightenment signalled the onset of increasing respectability for swimming in Western cultures, but it was a slow process. In Sydney, Australia, where swimming, surfing and the beach are integral parts of the community's lifestyle, sea bathing during daytime was only legalized in 1906.[133]

In Malta it is probable that swimming must have always been a temptation for those living in close proximity to the sea, notwithstanding the strictures of the Catholic Church. But we must not lose sight of the fact that at the beginning of our period, in 1797, over sixty percent of Malta's population still lived some distance away from the sea, so access was not so easy.[134] The Maltese were still, essentially, a rural people dependent on agricultural pursuits who, in addition, probably also felt that the coastal areas were not safe. Writing in 1927, E.B. Vella claimed that, like other communities close to the sea beyond the Grand Harbour, the fishing village of Marsaxlokk, presently Malta's premier fishing village, had been born during the nineteenth century.[135] But for those living within, or in close proximity to, the fortified settlements around the Grand Harbour, a dip in the sea must have always provided some relief from the summer heat. The legendary Tony Bajada, renowned for keeping open the lines of communication with the besieged fortress of St Elmo during the 1565 Siege, must have been a strong swimmer.[136] The reputation of the Maltese as strong swimmers seems, indeed, to have extended beyond the islands' shores. Documents have, in fact, been encountered testifying to Maltese divers working on the construction of fortifications in far-away Cadiz, on Spain's Atlantic coast, during the eighteenth century.[137] Many accounts note that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a lot of sailors did not bother to learn how to swim in the belief that drowning was a quicker death than lingering on for days hanging on to a piece of driftwood.[138] But at least some of the hundreds of men who worked in callings directly related to the sea, according to an eighteenth-century list of able-bodied

Figure 10. Bathers swimming off a rocky beach (Photo Geo Fürst, courtesy Wilfred Pirotta)

men in Cospicua and Senglea, as employees in the Order's navy, boatmen, fishermen, and so on, must have been able to swim.[139]

The advent of British rule brought a greater level of security to the Maltese Islands and this encouraged more and more people to move towards new towns sprouting on the coast. Sliema is a prime example of this phenomenon of nineteenth-century urban growth by the sea. As late as 1861, Sliema had a population of just 324, but by 1901 this had grown to 10,507, according to census figures. Pressure on areas where the better-off used to spend the summer on the axis between Valletta and Mdina/Rabat; improved transport facilities by omnibus and boats; and employment possibilities servicing the large contingent of troops stationed in St Andrews were probably the principal causes of this growth.[140] It was probably during the course of this massive population increase that seawater bathing pools were excavated adjacent to the sea in various points of Sliema such as Tigne, and between Sliema Point and St Julians Tower, although Zammit makes no mention of these pools in his account of nineteenth-century Sliema.[141] Grima refers to them but does not state when they were dug out.[142] He also points out the existence of similar pools in Birżebbuġa and Marsamxett. In 1838, Badger confirmed that swimming was, indeed, one of the forms of recreation of the Maltese.[143]

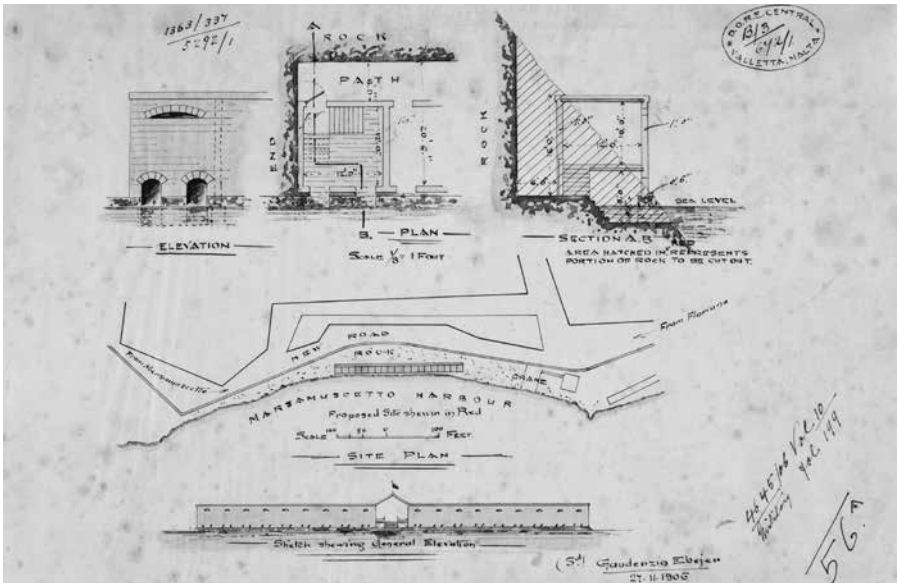


Figure 11. Plan showing the well-laid out bathing pools that were excavated in various coastal areas of Malta

Sliema also seems to have been the venue for the first water polo encounter in Malta to be mentioned in the press, a friendly encounter between the British Sliema Detachment Royal Engineers and Gnats Sliema Royal Engineers in 1910.[144] In due course, the Maltese took to the sport with some success, as Leaver demonstrates in his seven-part series *Civilization*. The Amateur Swimming Association, set up in 1925,[145] eventually became, in 2000, the Aquatic Sports Association, entrusted with the promotion of swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming in Malta.[146]

Messing about in Boats

Many sporting pursuits have emerged as stylized and regulated events from activities in other facets of life. In the Basque Country, for example, there are regular competitions deriving directly from the chores undertaken on farms such as lifting weights, logging, the pulling of weights by teams of bullocks, and so on. In a similar manner, in the Basque Country's many harbours and ports, teams made up mostly of professional fishermen, compete for coveted honours in annual rowing regattas.

In the same manner, it is probable that those who earned their livelihood on the busy waters of the Grand Harbour took the opportunity provided by local feasts to show off their manly prowess as rowers. The

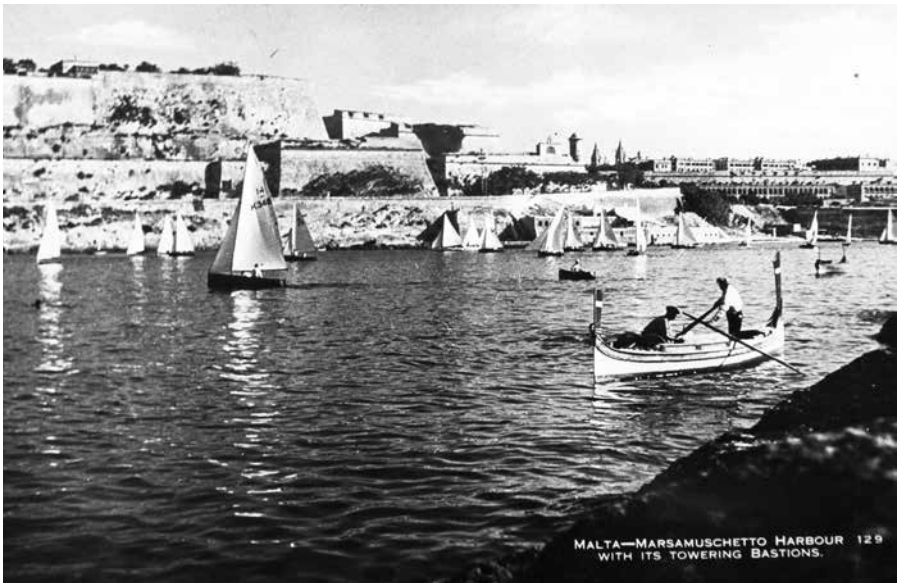


Figure 12. A sailing regatta in Marsamxett harbour (Photo Geo Fürst, courtesy Wilfred Pirotta)

annual 8 September boat races that commemorate the lifting of Malta's 1565 siege, in fact, only started in 1825.[147] Serraccino notes the existence of other boat races around the same time (Portu Santu, Liesse, Madonna tar-Ruzarja, San Lawrenz, and Santa Liberata) but gives no additional details.[148]

More formal 'yachting' was probably introduced by the British. Yachts, or 'vessels used as pleasure boats' as the *Falconer's Marine Dictionary* defined them in 1780,[149] had existed in Britain since at least the seventeenth century. A yacht club would seem to have already been in existence in Malta in 1835.[150] Institutional life after that seems to have had its ups and downs with clubs being established and ceasing to function at various points. The Malta Yacht Club came into existence in 1921, while a Motor Boat Club was set up in 1929.[151] The two amalgamated in 1930 under the former name with a view to providing '…a common meeting ground for the Maltese and English sections of the community…'[152] Other yacht clubs, such as the Garrison Sailing Club, the RAF Sailing Club and the RN Sailing Club were associated with the British military presence.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Malta became an international yachting centre of some renown, as we shall see later on, but with increasing wealth the ownership of pleasure craft became a common phenomenon amongst Maltese nationals as well, particularly as an item

of conspicuous consumption to add to the secondary residence in Gozo. But setting aside such fairly recent phenomena, boating, like swimming, is above all a very popular pursuit practised by many who take great pride in looking after their often tiny craft, doing a spot of fishing, and, perhaps most important of all, providing an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and talk about the one that got away.

Tourism

Visitors, welcome and unwelcome, have been coming to Malta's shores from time immemorial. The Maltese have made much, for example, of the hospitality reputedly offered to the Apostle Paul. Closer to our time, Cassar Pullicino has noted the '…appreciable volume of travel literature by English, Spanish, German, Italian, Belgian and other visitors to Malta between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries…'[153] and has looked at the increasing number of visitors, particularly British, during the first century of Britain's rule, and the hotels that were opened to attend to this flow, especially in Valletta and Sliema.[154]

William Makepeace Thackeray's mid-nineteenth century account of his cruises in the Mediterranean made cruising, a pursuit reputedly

Figure 13. The 8 September regatta held annually in the Grand Harbour (Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi)

invented by the legendary P & O shipping line, very fashionable.[155] Cruising, in fact, reached a peak just before the Second World War, in 1935, with the arrival in Malta of forty-eight ships carrying 18,779 passengers, a number of visitors that would not be surpassed until 1960 when 19,775 tourists visited Malta.[156]

The sixties were, in fact, to constitute the great take-off in the tourism sector with a tenfold increase in visitors by the end of the decade.[157] By the early 1990s the number of tourists visiting the islands had shot up to a staggering one million.[158] The number of visitors is not a wholly adequate reflection of the importance of tourism as a generator of employment and economic activity but it serves to give an order of magnitude. The benefits of such growth are clear to see, but an increasing number of people and NGOs see the phenomenon as a mixed blessing and question the sustainability of a process which has made of Malta 'a building site on heat,' as anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain has put it.[159]

Malta as a Yachting Centre

We spoke earlier about the emergence and development of yachting and power boating amongst Malta's own inhabitants but here as well, as with tourism, the islands' climate and other factors have led to the development of the islands as centres for foreign boat owners as well.

In her fascinating essay on 'Nineteenth-Century Cruising Yachtsmen in the Mediterranean', Janet Cusack describes the increase in the number and range of cruising yachts after the advent of peace in 1815.[160] Describing the phenomenon as a combination of conspicuous consumption on an international scale, an implementation of a patriotic duty, a war game, and an aid to exploration or hunting, Cusack, nevertheless, highlights simple pleasure as a prime motivator. It is clear from Cusack's account that large yachts were already being taken to Malta for major refits as early as the mid 1830s.[161]

In the early 1960s, there were over 35,000 yachts in search of berthing facilities, maintenance centres and related services in the Mediterranean, and the Maltese authorities decided to get in on the act with a project to accommodate over 5,000 yachts.[162] Since then, a number of marinas have been set up in various locations in Malta and Gozo but especially on either side of Valletta, partly to accommodate the increasing number of locally-owned craft.

The Sea as a Source of Inspiration in Culture and Ideology

Literature and Language

We have already referred earlier to the fascinating paper on the sea from a Semitic perspective in which Martin Zammit, using proverbs which he defined as, '… a cultural expression encapsulating popular wisdom and a reflection of peoples' characters and temperaments …',[163] comes to the conclusion that in Arabic and Maltese, the positive aspects of these are far outweighed by the negative connotations.[164] This seems to be particularly the case as regards earning a living. As Carmel Pulè has put it '… man has turned to the sea for a living when he has been unable to do so on land …'[165] This perception of the sea as a last resort is reflected in its marginal role in Maltese literature. In a 5 October 1996 lecture on *The Sea in Maltese Literature*, held at the Malta Maritime Museum, George Peresso claimed that there was little presence of the sea in Maltese literature in contrast to the situation which he believed prevailed in English literature.[166] It is, in fact, to the countryside and farmhouses, and the alleys, narrow streets and main squares of the villages that Maltese writers have tended to look for symbols and inspiration.[167] Having said that, it is, nevertheless, also possible that, as Philbrick claims is the case in Britain, 'certain activities and environments can be of enormous importance to a society and yet those activities and environments will not find widespread expression or reflection in its art.'[168] For Peck, for example, the sea has fundamentally shaped British life but readers of the majority of novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could remain quite unaware of this.[169]

But marginal does not mean absent and Charles Briffa's recent paper on *Social Behaviour in the Harbour Cities as Expressed in Malta's Literature*, offers a fascinating study of the sharply different worlds of rural communities and harbour towns offered by Anton Emanuel Caruana's *Inez Farrug* and Oliver Friggieri's *Jekk Jibnazza Niġi Lura.*[170]

Independently of what was happening in literature, the practical needs of the port communities dictated that suitable language become available to attend to the day-to-day needs of mariners, merchants and others whose livelihood depended on the sea. Work by Cremona (1964), and more recently Briffa (1989-90 and 1991), have shown both the earlier influence of Romance loan words in matters such as sail terminology, and the increasing Anglicization later on. One highly interesting example is the linguistic development of the term *Karrakka,* a type of vessel, which has been traced by Briffa.[171] Confronted with a completely new

phenomenon, Maltese took a new word on board. The sophisticated shipbuilding and/or repair facilities set up first by the Order, and subsequently by the British, must have resulted in the process being repeated a thousandfold.[172] It is nevertheless to an earlier, Semitic, period of our language, rather than the later Romance or English ones, that we owe more essential terms such as *baħri*, a mariner, *sajjied*, a fisherman, *mirkeb*, a ship, or *qoxra*, a craft, as well as most of the coastal and other toponyms of the Maltese archipelago such as *Marfa*, a mooring place; *Mġarr*, a wharf for loading and unloading merchandise; *Marsa*, a port for anchorage; and so on.[173]

The Visual Arts

In contrast to the paucity of literary references, there is clear vindication of Malta's maritime heritage in the remarkable visual representations of the sea and phenomena relating to the sea which have survived to this day.

Setting aside 'graffiti,' which are treated separately in this volume, and which date back thousands of years, we are lucky to have access to a not-inconsiderable wealth of secular and non-secular paintings relating mostly to the last three hundred years or so of Malta's maritime history. As Broeze has pointed out, paintings can be used for at least two major purposes in this context.[174] One is to obtain evidence from them as pictorial sources, as Joseph Muscat has done to such good effect to arrive at a typology of watercraft.[175] But paintings are also a reflection of the collective spirit or the individual ideology and purpose of whoever commissioned or executed the painting. The marine votive paintings to be found in the Maltese Islands also have the added benefit of almost invariably containing additional written information, normally in a cartouche, or in a caption underneath. Often the work of unknown amateur artists, these paintings do not fall within the traditional discourse, or are not endowed with the characteristics, of a period or school and often lack perspective and aesthetic quality.[176] But this, in no way, detracts from their utility and fascination. Local amateur artists would also seem to have predominated in folk art representations made of sea shells.[177]

Of a different nature and much more within the scope of 'art,' as traditionally conceived, are the pictures painted by established Maltese artists such as Giuseppe Cali, the Schranz dynasty and Nicola Camilleri (in a variety of spellings). Antonio Espinosa Rodriguez's excellent contribution on nineteenth-century ships' portraits at the Malta Maritime Museum is a fascinating overview of this genre for that

century.[178] Seascapes and sea-related themes are omnipresent in Depiro's *The International Dictionary of Artists who painted Malta* (2002). The aforementioned Nicola Camilleri, termed a 'pier head artist' by Depiro, made a living executing ship portrait commissions for the RN and others - note, by way of example, his *The Barque 'Tertius' leaving Malta* (1853).[179]

More recent exponents of marine art include John Martin Borg, with works such as *The Malta Maritime Museum* or *Beached*, but most Maltese artists, at one time or another, look towards the sea for inspiration.

Ideology

The three defining moments of Malta's identity during the last two millennia have hinged on the sea. The first involved the chance shipwreck of the Apostle Paul on his way to Rome. Whether St Paul was actually shipwrecked here and was responsible for the Christianisation of the Maltese archipelago, or not, is academic. What is certain is Catholicism's firm hold on the national psyche of the Maltese to this very day.

The second and third defining moments in Malta's history were even more firmly centred on the sea, for in both cases the island was besieged as a consequence of its condition as a naval base for an imperial power or its proxy; first in 1565, and again during the Second World War.

Setting aside the matter of religion, there is no doubt that no amount of historical revisionism can ever detract from the fact that it was geopolitical considerations that turned the Grand Harbour into the island's engine of growth, as regards its economy and population, via the massive inflow of foreign-source income. Insularity, history and a demographic critical mass subsequently gave the archipelago an *entré* into the community of nations denied to many islands far bigger in physical size and population.

As a consequence of the above, Maltese maritime historiography has understandably, and perhaps even justifiably, centred on the matter of the island's geopolitical situation and Valletta's Grand Harbour. What is less justifiable, especially in view of current sensibilities, is the overwhelming concentration on the 'blood and glory' aspects of this naval reality, with relatively little attention being paid to the other aspects of our maritime tradition, such as trade, which were not wholly dependent upon the naval presence. In this essay I have sought to provide some insights into hitherto little-known aspects of sea-related employment but much remains to be done. Chircop, who has noted some of the recent efforts to fill in some of the other lacunae, has also usefully highlighted other aspects, such as the role of women, fishing and coastal communities other than the Grand

Harbour, on which work will have to be done in order to arrive at a more inclusive maritime history.[180]

Recent contributions which provide a fresh approach to the non-military consequences of the naval presence or look at other aspects of a broad concept of maritime history are the essays by Mario Ellul (1998), Mark Anthony Falzon (2001), Carmel Borg *et al.* (2003), and Jeremy Boissevain (2004).

Ellul's essay centres on the evolution of the port labour aristocracy nurtured by the Imperial Government as one of its most important collaborative elites, while Falzon, picking up where Ellul leaves off, looks at how this pampered aristocracy successfully managed to re-convert itself into the vanguard of the urban proletariat in post-independence Malta.

Carmel Borg, Bernard Cauchi and Peter Mayo's paper, on the other hand, deals with the role of museums as sites of cultural politics. Focusing specifically on Malta's National Maritime Museum they pose important questions that need to be addressed if museum curators are to emancipate themselves from their artefacts, connect with relevant voices which have been overlooked and strengthen links with the surrounding communities.

Finally, Jeremy Boissevain's essay focuses on the urban development of the Maltese foreshore. Looking at three case studies he describes how local and foreign private interests have combined to appropriate and exploit Malta's formerly public foreshore and offshore resources via personal networks linking politicians and entrepreneurs, but he also sees hope for the future as a consequence of an increasingly assertive environmental movement on the island.

Using an interdisciplinary approach these writers are breaking new ground and in the process contesting, renewing and widening the scope of Maltese maritime history.

Notes

1 By the term 'navy' I here mean a nation's fleet of military vessels, as the term is defined in the Oxford Dictionary.

2 Refer Pira, Stefano (1997) *Storia del Commercio del Sale tra Mediterraneo e Atlantico.* Cagliari, especially the introduction by Michel Mollat du Jourdin.

3 Bezzina, Joseph (1995) The Roman Saltpans at Xwejni - Gozo. *The Malta Year Book 1995.* Malta, 452-453.

4 Blouet, Brian (1992) *The Story of Malta*. Malta: 114-115.

5 *Mellieħa* means 'salt pan' in Maltese, deriving from the Arabic.

6 Fiorini, Stanley (1993) Malta in 1530. *In* Mallia-Milanes, Victor (ed) *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798.* Malta: 123.

7 *Salina* also means 'salt pan' in Maltese, but this time it derives from the Romance wing of the language.

8 Zammit, Winston L. (2000) *Tas-Sliema fis-Seklu XIX*. Malta: 721.

9 Miege, M. (1841) *Histoire de Malte.* Bruxelles, Tome Second: 43.

10 Dedomenico, Michele (1857) *Manuale del Commerciante.* Malta: 46 and various Blue Books.

11 Debono, John (2000) *Trade and Port Activity in Malta 1750-1800.* Malta, passim.

12 Cassar, Carmel (2000) *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta.* Malta: 29-120, but also refer to Mercieca 2002.

13 Vassallo, Carmel (1997) *Corsairing to Commerce. Maltese Merchants in XVIII-Century Spain.* Malta, and Vassallo, Carmel (2005) Maltese Entrepreneurial Networks. *In* Ina Baghdiantz McCabe et al (eds) *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks. Four Centuries of History.*Oxford and New York.

14 Bonnici, Joseph and Cassar, Michael (1994) *The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard.* Malta.

15 Chircop, John (2004) Maltese Maritime: 94-97. Chircop's bibliographical review is an extremely useful introduction to the bibliography of Malta's maritime history in general.

16 D'Angelo, Michela (1990) *Mercanti Inglesi a Malta.* Milano, and Gregory, Desmond (1996) *Malta, Britain, and the European Powers, 1793-1815.* United States.

17 Vassallo, Carmel (1998) *The Malta Chamber of Commerce 1848-1979: An Outline History of Maltese Trade.* Malta: 31–67. Although centring on the Malta Chamber of Commerce, this work, nevertheless, seeks to weave a brief outline of the history of Maltese trade through the centuries into the main story.

18 Vassallo, Carmel (2001a) Trade between Malta and the Barbary Regencies in the Nineteenth Century with special reference to Tunisia. *In* Abdelhamid Fehri (ed) *L'Homme et la mer. Actes du colloque des 7-8-9 mai 1999 a Kerkennah.* Sfax, Tunisia, and Vassallo, Carmel (2004) The Maltese Entrepreneurial Networks in the Maghreb in the Early Modern and Contemporary Periods. *In* Abdelhamid Fehri (ed) *Les Iles Mediterraneennes. Relais de Civilisations.* Kerkenna, Tunisia.

19 Refer Fallot, E. (1896) *Malte et ses Rapports Economiques avec la Tunisie,* Tunis and Rossi, Ettore (1926) La Colonia Maltese in Tunisia. *Rassegna Italiana del Mediterraneo,* Gennaio 1926.

20 Smith, Andrea L. (2000) The Maltese in Tunisia before the Protectorate, 1850s-1870s. Towards a Revised Image. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies,* 10 (1&2). 'Liminal' here means occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold.

21 Vassallo, Carmel (2001b) The Maltese Merchant Fleet and the Black Sea Grain Trade in the Nineteenth Century. International Journal of Maritime History, 13(2), 19-36.

22 Only the principal categories are included here. Other occupations which were very directly connected with the sea included those of caulkers; divers; marine police officers; pilots; pulley, rope, and sail makers; ship brokers; ship chandlers; shipwrights and others.

23 British Malta is relatively well-endowed with statistical information, reflecting the Victorian penchant for the collection of data on all sort of subjects, but the interpretation of some of it is not unproblematic. The figures we have for the Merchant Navy are drawn from the Malta censuses for the various years, but it is difficult at times to determine who is being included. A table drawn up in paragraph 353 of the 1891 Census, to demonstrate the decline of Maltese Merchant Shipping, gives the following figures (the number of seamen in each year is shown in brackets): 1861 (1,169); 1871 (1,011); 1881 (905); and 1891 (427). These are about half the figures given in our table taken directly from the censuses. Close scrutiny of the figures for 1861, 1871 and 1881, in fact, reveals that the figures in the table reproduced in the 1891 census only referred to native mariners absent from Malta, and excluded native mariners on land. The criteria for inclusion in the census as merchant seamen would seem to have changed in 1891. As extended periods ashore between engagements and on leave are a characteristic of maritime labour it is possible that census figures for mariners for the period 1891-1931 considerably underestimate the extent of the seafaring phenomenon. The matter of the number of fishermen

is even more problematic. In a 6 September 1922 report on the working of his department, the Superintendent of Fisheries declared that estimates of the number of fishermen ranged from 1,148 (1921 Census), to 3,500 (Office of Fisheries), to 7,000 (Representatives of Fishermen on the Board of Fisheries). As the Superintendent of Fisheries points out the lower figure probably referred to those who lived exclusively by fishing but excluded those who resorted to fishing when they were unable to take up another occupation (Report of the Workings of Government Departments 1921-1922. Section U:1).

24 Refer to 'Sailing under the Red Duster: Maltese Merchant Seafarers in the Twentieth Century' in *The Mariners Mirror*, Vol. 94 No. 4, 2008, 445-59.

25 Bresc, Henri (1991) Sicile, Malte et Monde Musulman. *In* Fiorini, S. and Mallia-Milanes, V. *Malta. A Case Study in International Cross-Currents.* Malta, 57-61.

26 Vassallo, Carmel (2001b) The Maltese Merchant Fleet and the Black Sea Grain Trade in the Nineteenth Century. *International Journal of Maritime History,* 13(2): 19-36. It is important to keep in mind here that I am talking of a fleet based at and operating out of Malta, rather than the twentieth-century shipping register phenomenon.

27 Malta Census 1871.

28 The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) currently employs circa 2,500 civilian officers and men. Formally established a century ago in 1905, it is entrusted with providing front-line logistical support to Royal Navy vessels which its supplies with fuel, weapons and stores (http://www.royalnavalmuseum.org/exhibit_RFA.htm on 4/05/2005)

29 National Archives (UK) MT 23/148 'H.M. Hospital Ship *Maine.* Engagement of new Crew of Maltese with European Officers…'. The National Archives (UK), in fact hold agreements for the employment of new Maltese crews for every year from 1902 until 1911 when the *Maine* is referred to as RFA *Maine* for the first time.

30 Adams, Thomas A. and Smith, James R.(2005) *The Royal Fleet Auxiliary: A Century of Service*, London.

31 Ibid. 142. According to Adams and Smith, in 1979 there were some 700 Chinese manning nearly one third of the RFA fleet. The UK's Ministry of Defence (Navy) gradually reduced these numbers, adducing training and language difficulties, and in 1989 RFA *Sir Lancelot* paid off the last Chinese crew (Adams and Smith 2005: 142).

32 Ibid. 57.

33 National Archives (UK) ADM 1/15400 RFAs *Reliant* and *Bacchus,* Lascar Crews for, list dated 7 May, 1942.

34 *Times of Malta* 13 August, 1938.

35 *The Sunday Times of Malta* 16 July, 1939.

36 *Times of Malta* 4 September, 1945 and 23 June, 1946.

37 *Times of Malta* 12 January, 1962 and *Times of Malta* 4 July, 1968. As part of the independence package, Britain, nevertheless, retained military base facilities on the island until its final departure in 1979.

38 *Times of Malta* 6 November, 1964.

39 Ibid.

40 *Times of Malta* 8 July, 1975.

41 Vassallo, Carmel (1998) The Malta Chamber of Commerce 1848-1979: An Outline History of Maltese Trade. Malta.

42 Ibid., 64.

43 Cameron, Rondo (1997) *A Concise Economic History of the World.* New York/Oxford: 302.

44 Refer to Elliot 1994 (1980) for a very accessible account and good basic bibliography. Galea (1952) and Agius (1956), although dated, provide very detailed bibliographies of many facets of Malta and the Second World War. More recent works include D.A. Thomas's *Malta Convoys: The Strength at Sea* (2000) and R. Woodman's *Malta Convoys 1940-43* (2003). Most works on this topic tend to fall strictly within the hagiographic tradition, but there has recently been some reappraisal of Malta's role in the struggle for the Mediterranean, with some authors suggesting that the grievous losses incurred by the RN and the Merchant Marine in keeping the island supplied were not justified on strategic grounds and that it was more a matter of honour and

morale. Refer to Bailey (1993) for a discussion of this topic and, by-the-by, on the value **and** limitations of oral history.

45 *Report on Department of Labour and Social Welfare, June 1939 to December 1946*, Malta 1947, p.462. The nature of sexual relations between the Maltese and the British is yet another phenomenon that still awaits the attention of researchers.

46 Vassallo 1998: 99.

47 Attard, L.E. (1997) *The Safety Valve. A History of Maltese Emigration from 1946*. Malta, passim.

48 Pollaco, Chrsitopher (2003) *An outline of the Socio-Economic Development in Post-War Malta.* Malta: 259.

49 Pollacco 2003: 7.

50 Briguglio, Lino (1994) The Economy. In Frendo, Henry and Friggieri, Oliver (eds) Malta. Culture and Identity. Malta, 233-251; 239.

51 Vassallo 1998 passim.

52 Ibid., passim.

53 Bezzina, Joseph (1991) The Gozo-Malta Ferry Service. Il-Vapuri ta' Ghawdex. Malta: 11-12.

54 Attard in *Heritage*: 1696-1700 and Muscat 2002b in *Heritage*: 1768-1773.

55 Bezzina 1991: 25.

56 Ibid., 31-33.

57 Refer Somner, Graeme (1982) *Ferry Malta (Il-Vapuri ta Ghawdex)*. Kendal: 23-29.

58 Bonnici, Joseph and Cassar, Michael (1994) The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard. Malta: 352.

59 Zammit Ciantar, Joe (2000) *The Placenames of the Coast of Gozo.* Malta: 17.

60 Bonnici & Cassar 1994: 374-375.

61 Spiteri, Edward J. (1997) *An Island in Transition. The Economic Transformation of Malta from a British Crown Colony to an Independent Democratic Republic.* Malta: 228-230.

62 http://www.mma.gov.mt/ on 29/08/05.

63 Refer Blondy (2003) *Bibliographie du monde méditerranéen: Relations et échanges (1453-1835)* and Chircop (2004) for some of the most important works on these subjects.

64 Refer Chircop (2004). Refer, in particular, to Wettinger, Godfrey (1965) The Galley Convicts and *Buonavoglia* in Malta during the Rule of the Order. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts(Malta),* 3(2): 29-37; Vella, Andrew P. (1979) Storja ta'Malta. Volume 3, Malta, Vol 2: 291-299; and Grima, J.F. (2001) The Rowers on the Order's Galleys (1600-1650). *Melita Historica,* 12: 113-126. Of 1,112 men over fifteen years of age in an eighteenth-century roll call for Senglea, 172 worked on the Order's ships-of-the-line or galleys (NLM, AOM 1067 Ruolo degl' Uomini della Citta Senglea e Cospicua) In more populous Cospicua the corresponding number was 368 out of a total of 2,391 men over 15.

65 Refer to Lee, Eric C.B. (2000) *The Cruiser Experience,* United Kingdom: 195-200 on Leading Steward C. Paris, and *Malta at War* 130-139, on the sinking of H.M.S. *Glorious,* in which thirty-nine Maltese died, including my paternal grandfather Petty Officer Steward Carmel Vassallo.

66 Vassallo 1997: 74-80; Vassallo, Carmel (2001c) Maltese Corsairing or Christian Corsairing based in Malta? A Reassessment. In Román Piña Homs (ed) L'Ordre de Malta, el regne de Mallorca i la Mediterrania. Palma de Mallorca, 285-290; 285-290.

67 Vassallo 2001b: 19-36; Vassallo 1998: 176.

68 Vella 1979, Vol. 2: 292.

69 Grima, J.F. (2005) 'Economy measures in the Order's Navy 1793-1798' in Cortis T. and Gambin T. (eds) *De Triremibus: A festschrift in honour of Joseph Muscat*, Malta: 519-524

70 Vassallo, Carmel (1990) El reclutamiento de marineros malteses en la armada española durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII. *Revista Historica Naval,* 8/30.

71 Maltese mariners had had experience of the Americas at an even earlier date. In 1540, a Maltese captain by the name of Giovani da Zurbano, commanding his own ship, accompanied from the seaward side Pedro de Valdivia's overland exploration and colonization of Chile. (Refer Francesco D'Esposito's 'Presenza Italiana tra I "Conquistadores" ed I Primi Colonizzatori del Nuovo Mondo (1492-1560)' in *Presenza Italiana en Andalucia Siglos XIV-XVII*, Sevilla 1989: 498 & 511.) Zurbano's is only the first mention.

72 Ciappara, Frans (1988) *Marriage in Malta in the Late Eighteenth Century.* Malta: 92.
73 Le Goff, Timothy J.A. (1991) De la paix a la guerre: les origines des équipages de la marine de commerce en Méditerranée pendant les guerres de XVIIIe siècle. *In* Michel Vergé-Franceschi (ed) *Guerre et Commerce en Méditerranée IX-XXe siècles.* Paris: 290.
74 Scicluna, Hannibal P. (1921) Acts and Documents relating to the French Occupation of Malta in 1798-1800. *Archivum Melitense,* 10: 2.
75 Lewis, Michael (1960) *A Social History of the Royal Navy 1793-1815*. London: 129.
76 Vella Bonavita, Roger (1977) Britain and Malta 1787-1798. *Hyphen,* No.1, Autumn, Malta: 8.
77 http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/trafalgarancestors/ 22/11/2005.
78 http://www.hms-victory.com/ 30/06/2005.
79 Palmer, Sarah and Williams, David M. (1997) British Sailors, 1775-1870. *In* Paul C. van Royen, et al '*Those Emblems of Hell*'*? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870. Research in Maritime History Series No. 13.* St. John's, Canada: 98.
80 Refer to 'Servants of the Empire: The Maltese in the Royal Navy' in *Making Waves in the Mediterranean*, Special Double Issue of *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, Camel Vassallo and Ruthi Gertwagen (eds), Vol. 16, No. 1/2, 2006, 273-89.
81 Parry, J.H. ((1974) *Trade and Dominion: European Oversea Empires in the Eighteenth Century.* London: 443.
82 Refer Vassallo 2001b.
83 Research currently under way would, nevertheless, seem to indicate that Malta census figures for the number of merchant seamen may have excluded at least some of the Maltese seamen serving away from the islands.
84 In arriving at these estimates of the number of Maltese serving in the RN, we have not included those Maltese sailors who worked on board Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships.
85 First World War, refer The National Archives (UK) ADM 178/181, letter dated 23 April 1937, signed by Admiral Dudley Pound, and for the Second World War refer *Report on Department of Labour and Social Welfare*, Malta 1947, p.460. A 31 March 1979 article in *The Times*, by W.F. Bellizzi, which, according to the author, was based on information drawn from the "Naval Historical Library in London", actually cites a figure of 3,000 men serving afloat and ashore in the 1930s, but I have still to find official documentation to support this claim.
86 Ellul, Mario (1998) Maltese Imperial Mentalities: Subjecting the Maltese Mind to Imperial Rule. *Storja '98.* Malta: 103-105.
87 Ellul 1998: 102-104.
88 Ganado, Herbert (1977) *Rajt Malta Tinbidel.* Malta, Volume 1 (1900-1933) 3rd edition: 331.
89 Idem: 329. Some post-independence Maltese politicians and writers have sought to portray Malta as part of the wider post-Second World War anti-colonial struggle but even the most fervent supporter of "Malta's Quest for Independence" would be hard put to demonstrate that Malta and the Maltese were anything other than net beneficiaries of both the Hospitaller and British overlordship, at least as regards the field of the economy. It was, nearly always, a matter of securing a 'fair' recompense for being loyal and willing servants of the Crown. Put in another way, our anti-imperialism is a late development which is very much a result of post-independence political stances which required a hasty re-writing of history to fit new circumstances.
90 The National Archives (UK) PIN 15/699 'Maltese, non-Europeans and men of colour serving in RN or Royal Marines. Pensions and Gratuities to Widows and Dependents,' letter dated 30 June 1925.
91 Fenech, Dominic (1973) *A Social and Economic Review of Malta during the First World War.* Unpublished B.A. (Hons) History Dissertation, University of Malta: 158.
92 http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk
93 *Malta Government Gazette* 19 November 1938.
94 Ferguson, Niall (2004) *Empire. How Britain made the Modern World.* London, 2004: 330 & 347, and 'Colonies, Colonials and World War Two' on http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwtwo/colonies-colonials on 22/06/2005
95 *An Act to regulate the Trade to and from places within the limits of the Charter of the East India Company, and certain possessions of His Majesty in the Mediterranean, 20 June 1817.*

96 Stoler, cited in Bryder 1998: 808. For a feel of the attitude of British colonial administrators towards the 'natives' the reader could do a lot worse than read George Orwell's 1934 novel, his first, entitled *Burmese Days.*

97 The National Archives (UK) Adm 178/181.

98 Accusations of cowardice amongst non-whites, or as in this case, amongst those whose 'whiteness' was being questioned, were commonplace amongst Europeans. As Argyros has pointed out this was rooted in the disbelief amongst Europeans that other races could possess or demonstrate 'white' moral qualities such as courage and leadership (Argyros 2004: 13). In the case of the Maltese in the RN this was probably compounded by the fact that most were catering personnel. Sari Mäenpää claims that the men of the catering department were often regarded as too domesticated to be real seamen (Mäenpää 2000: 243)

99 The National Archives (UK) Adm 1/8611/147, letter dated 7 October 1921.

100 The National Archives (UK) Adm 178/181. 'Enlistment of Maltese in the Navy 1937-1939', letter from Admiral Sydney R. Fremantle, dated 28 April 1938.

101 The National Archives (UK) Adm 178/181, letter from Governor Charles Bonham-Carter dated 9 November 1937. The matter of attaining parity with British naval personnel in matters of pay and allowances went on to become an even more pressing and contentious issue after the war. In 1951, a still young Mr. Mintoff unsuccessfully moved for the setting up of a select committee to study the matter, setting out details of the differentials in the three Services which were particularly acute in the Royal Navy. In overall terms, pay, children's, and other allowances received in the latter Service by Maltese personnel worked out at around half those received by the British (*Times of Malta,* 13 January, 1951).

102 The National Archives (UK) PIN 15/698, letter from Admiralty dated 5 October 1917. A 6 September 1917 letter set out a list of some of the '…various types of Coloured men entered (in service)…' These included '…Kroo Boys, Seedies, Lascars, Chinese Servants, Malay Servants…'

103 The National Archives (UK) Adm 1/8611/147, letter from the Rear-Admiral Commanding, 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron, dated 19 September 1921.

104 Ibid.

105 McKee, Christopher (2002) *Sober Men and True. Sailor Lives in the Royal Navy 1900-1945.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: 73. Canteen messing, or messing segregated according to the different branches of a given ship, was the custom in the RN until the mid 1950s, when it was replaced by the self-service cafeteria type of catering which prevails nowadays.

106 Bonnici, Joseph and Cassar, Michael (1999) *A Century of the Royal Navy in Malta.* Malta: 182-183.

107 Ghirlando, Robert (1993) Birgu - The Birthplace of Malta's Technological Society. *In* Lino Bugeja et al*, Birgu. A Maltese Maritime City.* Malta: 537.

108 McManamon, John M. (2003) Maltese Seafaring in Medieval and Post-Medieval Times. *Mediterranean Historical Review,* 18(1), passim.

109 MacDougall, Philip (1990) The Formative Years: Malta Dockyard, 1800-1815. *The Mariner's Mirror,* 76(3): 202.

110 MacDougel 1990: 212.

111 Coad, Jonathan G. (1989) *The Royal Dockyards 1690-1850. Studies in Naval History No.1.* United Kingdom: 346.

112 Caruana, Joseph (2001a) The Royal Naval Dockyard. Proceedings of Seminar entitled *Dockyards at Malta,* organized by The Friends of the Maritime Museum on 11 November 2001. Malta: 9.

113 For a blow-by-blow account of development in and around the Grand Harbour and the Dockyard refer to the remarkable pictorial account by Bonnici & Cassar 1994.

114 Refer Bishop, Moira (1998) H.M.S. Melita - The only British Warship built in Malta. Melita Historica 12, 323-330.

115 Refer to Caruana, Joseph (2001b) The Commercial Dockyard, Malta. Proceedings of Seminar entitled *Dockyards at Malta,* organized by The Friends of the Maritime Museum on 11 November 2001. Malta for details.

116 *Report on Department of Labour and Social Welfare, June 1939-December 1946*, Malta 1947: 464.

117 Idem: 460.

118 Ellul Galea, Karmenu (1973) *L-Istorja tat-Tarzna.* Malta: 165. Refer Haas (1990), concerning

the important role of the Royal Dockyard Schools in technical education.

119 Caruana 2001a: 10.

120 Ghirlando 1993: 545.

121 Ibid., 544.

122 Muscat, Joseph (1993) Maltese Ship and Boat Building. *In* Anon. *The Evolution of wooden shipbuilding in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 18th and 19th Centuries.* Athens: 76.

123 Idem: 80-81.

124 Vassallo 2001b passim.

125 Muscat 1993 passim.

126 Muscat, Joseph (2002b) Maritime History of Malta. *Heritage,* 87, 1736-1739; 89, 1768-1773; 90, 1793-1796: 1793-1796.

127 Dougall, Angelo (1999) Manwel Aquilina (Ir-Ratal) - Bennej tad-Dgħajjes. *L-Imnara,* 6(2)(23): 50-51.

128 Falzon, Mark-Anthony (2001) Representing Danger at a Mediterranean Drydocks. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies,* 11(2): 351-357.

129 Falzon 2001: 357.

130 www.arte-tv.com/fr/semaine/244, CmPage=244,CmStyle=250,broadcastingNum=464.

131 Refer Gertwagen, Ruthy (2004) Maritime History in Israel. *In* Harlaftis, Gelina and Vassallo, Carmel *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History. Research in Maritime History Series No. 28.* St. John's, Canada.

132 Zammit, Martin R. (2001) The Depths of Darkness in a vast deep Ocean: the Sea from a Semitic Perspective. *In* Abdelhamid Fehri (ed) *L'Homme et la mer. Actes du colloque des 7-8-9 mai 1999 a Kerkennah.* Sfax, Tunisia.

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134 Brincat, Joseph (1991) Language and Demography in Malta: The Social Foundations of the Symbiosis between Semitic and Romance in Standard Maltese. In Fiorini, Stanley and Mallia-Milanes, V. Malta. A Case Study in International Cross Currents. Malta, 91-110: 99.

135 Vella, E.B. (1927) Storja taz-Żejtun u Marsaxlokk. Malta: 115.

136 Vella, Andrew P. Storja ta'Malta. Volume 3, Malta, p.195.

137 Archivo Municipal de Cadiz, Censos 1791.

138 Broeze 1998: 200.

139 National Library of Malta 1067, Ruolo degl'Uomini delle citta Senglea e Cospicua.

140 Mifsud, Paul V. (1979) Sliema: A Study in Urban Growth. *Hyphen,* 5, passim.

141 Zammit, Winston L. (2000) Tas-Sliema fis-Seklu XIX. Malta. passim.

142 Arthur Grima, 'Il-Banjijiet ta' L-Għawm', pp 76-77, in *L-Imnara*, No. 16, Vol. 4, No. 3, Malta, 1994 for 1992.

143 Badger, G.E. (1838) Description of Malta and Gozo. Malta.

144 Leaver, Arthur J. (?) History of Waterpolo. *Civilization,* Malta: 266.

145 Leaver 1983-1984: 289.

146 http://www.nocmalta.org/fad-swimming.htm 09/06/2005.

147 Serracino, Joseph (1988) *Tal-Vitorja u Tiġrijiet Oħra.* Malta: 1. Somewhat different dates are given by different authors. Muscat suggests 1822 (Muscat 1993: 84) while Bonnici and Cassar talk of the various regattas being grouped into a single event in 1824 (Bonnici and Cassar 1994: 358).

148 Another event which was habitual during such feasts at localities such as Marsaxlokk, Balluta, Spinola and Birzebbuga, was the *Ġostra*, or greasy pole, in which participants would try to reach a flag placed at the end of a pole protruding over water from a barge (Lanfranco 1983: 53).

149 Cited in Cusack, Janet (2000) Nineteenth-Century Cruising Yachtsmen in the Mediterranean. Journal of Mediterranean Studies, 10(1&2), 47-75: 47.

150 http://www.nocmalta.org/fad-sailing.htm 09/06/2005

151 http://wwwrmyc.org/club-history.htm 09/06/2005

152 Ibid.

153 Cassar Pullicino, J. (1981) Some 19th Century Hotels in Malta. *Melita Historica,* 8(2), passim.

154 Refer to Julian Zarb's *I-Istorja tat-Turizmu F'Malta u Ghawdex,* Malta 2004, for an excellent

account of the various facets of the development of tourism in Malta.

155 Bonnici and Cassar 1994: 450-455.

156 Vassallo 1998: 117.

157 Spiteri 1997 : 155.

158 Boissevain, Jeremy and Theuma, Nadia (2001) Un Espacio Discutido: Planificadores, Turistas, Promotores y Ecologistas en Malta. In Maria-Angels Roque (ed) Nueva antropologia de las sociedades mediterraneas. Barcelona, 291-201**:** 292.

159 Boissevain, Jeremy (2001) Contesting Maltese Landscapes. Journal of Mediterranean Studies, 11(2), 277-296: 281.

160 Cusack 2000: 47.

161 Cusack 2000: 65

162 Spiteri 1997: 101.

163 Zammit 2001: 228-229.

164 Ernle Bradford indeed goes as far as to suggest that 'Mediterranean man, generally speaking, throughout all the centuries, had only taken to the sea of necessity... (with) even the Greeks regarding seafaring as a necessary evil.' For the Romans, on the other hand, the sea was almost exclusively the sea of the bather or holiday maker safely ensconced on the shore (Earle 1971: 323 & 231)

165 Pulè, Carmel (2000) *Qxur, Biċċiet, u Opri tal-Baħar.* Malta: 9.

166 Everything is clearly relative, because, in actual fact, writers such as Philbrick claim that, at least as regards the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, maritime literature in Great Britain is a marginal affair. (Philbrick 1997: 275).

167 Friggieri, Oliver (2000) Environmental Elements in Maltese Literature. Nature as Metaphor. *The Malta Yearbook 2000,* Malta:480.

168 Thomas Philbrick, 'Romanticism and the Literature of the Sea', pp 275-291 in *Maritime History,* vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century and the Classic Age of Sail,* edited by John B. Hattendorf, Florida 1997.

169 Peck, John (2001) *Maritime Fiction. Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719-1917.* United Kingdom: 3.

170 Briffa, Charles (2005) Social Behaviour in the Harbour Cities as expressed in Maltese Literature. Unpublished Paper presented during the 8th Mediterranean Studies Association Congress held at Messina, Sicily, during 25-28 May 2005, on the theme *Urban Sociability in Mediterranean Harbour Cities*.

171 Briffa, Charles (1994) The Knights of Malta and their Contribution to Naval Technology. *The Malta Year Book 1994.* Malta.

172 Refer to Brincat, Joseph (1991) Language and Demography in Malta: The Social Foundations of the Symbiosis between Semitic and Romance in Standard Maltese. *In* Fiorini, Stanley and Mallia-Milanes, V. *Malta. A Case Study in International Cross Currents.* Malta, concerning the interplay between demography and language.

173 Refer Wettinger, Godfrey (2000) Place-names of the Maltese Islands ca. 1300-1800. Malta. passim and Zammit Ciantar, Joe (2000). passim.

174 Broeze 1998: 197-199.

175 Refer, just by way of example, his 'Description of Ships depicted in Maltese Marine Ex-Voto Paintings' in Prins 1989: 185-206.

176 Refer Cassar, Paul (1966) The Nautical Ex-Votos of the Maltese Islands. *Maltese Folklore Review,* 1(3), for an early study, and the exhaustive treatment by Prins (1989) and Muscat (2003), albeit from considerably different angles.

177 Dougall, Angelo (1994 for 1992) Seashells in Folk Art. L'Imnara, 4(16)(3), Malta, 59-61.

178 Espinosa-Rodriguez, Antonio (2005) Ninteenth-Century Ships' Portraits at the Malta Maritime Museum. *In* Cortis, Toni and Gambin, Timothy (2005) *De Triremibus. Festschrift in honour of Joseph Muscat.* Malta.

179 Refer Espinosa Rodriguez's 1993 article for an interesting account of Camilleri's eventful life.

180 Chircop 2004: 83.