

T.F.C. BLAGG, A. BONANNO, A.T. LUTTRELL: *Excavations at Hal Millieri, Malta; Malta University Press, 1990; pp. xi + 152; illustrated.*

THIS BOOK contains a report of the archaeological investigations carried out at the medieval Maltese *casale* of Hal Millieri. The excavation was made in 1977 on behalf of the National Museum of Malta and of the University of Malta; Francis Mallia, the former Director of Museums, was the overall director of the campaign, whereas T.F.C. Blagg and A. Bonanno supervised the work in the field.

The title-page of this book may give one the impression that T.F.C. Blagg, A. Bonanno and A.T. Luttrell are its sole authors. In reality they function as its principal authors and editors, for J.L. Pace, together with S.

A medieval Maltese village

Ramaswamy, G. Wettinger, P. Buhagiar together with A. Camilleri and S. Theuma, and M. Buhagiar, have all contributed something to its publication.

The figures, the plates and the print of this work are of a very good quality. Besides, there are virtually no misprints; I only detected two: *though* instead of *through* (paragraph 1, line 5, p. 26) and *Pace* instead of *Place* (note 2, line 3, p. 103).

The book is divided into four main parts. The *Introduction* (pp. ix-xi) is followed by the *Excavation Report* (pp. 1-99), at the end of which there are 43 plates; this report contains the information retrieved from the excavation of three medieval churches at Hal Millieri.

Then there is a *Historical and Architectural Postscript* (pp. 101-131) in which the results of the excavation are integrated with information drawn from historical documents, and which also contains an architectural study of the churches just mentioned as well as a study of the wall paintings found in them.

Finally, there are four *Appendices* (pp. 133-152): *Burials in Maltese Churches, 1419-1530/1540, Analysis of an Arch in the Annunciation Church, The Date of the Skeletal Remains at Zejtun, and Notes on San Pawl Milqi.*

Earlier church

The book is well-structured except for the final part; although the appendices contain information that is very interesting for a study of medieval Malta, only one (*Analysis of an Arch in the Annunciation Church*) of them should have appeared in a book that purports to be a report of the excavations carried out at Hal Millieri. This is all the more so when one considers that the authors of the other appendices do not integrate their views with the results of the Hal Millieri excavations.

The campaign of 1977 at Hal Millieri has produced very interesting results. Two contiguous medieval churches were investigated: the church of the Annunciation and the remains of the church of the Visitation, the southern wall of which was in fact the greater part of the northern wall of the former church, which was longer.

The church of the Annunciation can be dated to the 15th century on the basis of six coins which belong to the period 1402-1479 and which were found in a securely stratified context, namely in the make-up of the floor of this church. Excavation revealed that this church stood over an earlier one, which cannot be securely dated; however, it seems to stem from some time between the 13th and the late 15th century. The evidence shows that

this lower Annunciation had been 'deliberately dismantled' (p. 25).

The unearthing of the remains of the Visitation church showed that this building was structurally posterior to the later church of the Annunciation; however, the material remains found in the course of this excavation do not help us to date this church in a precise manner. In fact, 'the first certain evidence which we have for the existence of the Visitation church is the account of it in the Apostolic Delegate's visitation report of 1575' (p. 47).

Both the church of the Visitation and the upper Annunciation church had a semi-circular apse; however, there is only meagre evidence for the existence of an apse in the earlier Annunciation church and its shape cannot really be made out.

Medieval pottery

All three medieval churches had graves in them indicating that to some extent they acted as burial chapels; however, the Visitation church had only one grave which was made before the pavement was laid and which could therefore imply that it contained the body of the founder or patron of this church. The burials from these Hal Millieri churches have provided interesting evidence; thus, for example, signs of arthritis and of strong muscular ridges on the bones point towards a life of hard physical labour.

The work at Hal Millieri has also made a contribution to the study of medieval Maltese pottery found in a stratified context. The type of red and brown burnished pottery discussed in the report had already been known from a 17th century context; however, the work at Hal Millieri showed that this same pottery was already around before the end of the 15th century.

Although no structural re-

mains were found below the lower Annunciation church, it is interesting to note that there was some evidence to indicate that this area was occupied during the Roman or post-Roman period. None of the layers that were unearthed can be dated to earlier than the third century A.D.

However, some of the layers at Hal Millieri contained prehistoric Maltese pottery: 17 sherds of the Borg in-Nadur type were retrieved. The small amount of this type of pottery must have been carried in earth from elsewhere and therefore we cannot conclude that the site was actually occupied during the late Bronze Age; however, some activity did take place in the area during this period.

The foregoing paragraphs imply that the book under review constitutes a good report; in fact the work at Hal Millieri was done according to the principles of a stratigraphic excavation and the report is generally drawn up in a precise manner.

However, there are times when things are not that lucid. Thus, for example, layer BC (p. 32) is not shown in the section drawings, and not all the pottery listed in the title of figure 13 (p. 55) is actually represented in the illustration: both types of error are found more than once.

There are times when certain things are repeated unnecessarily; perhaps some more editorial work would have catered for this. Besides, the book lacks a bibliography, which would have in fact been very helpful to the reader.

I think that on the whole this book is a good contribution to the archaeological and historical study of Malta. It has achieved a number of first-time results in the field of Maltese medieval archaeology and it will serve both the scholar and the general reader because it is full of rich and interesting information.

Anthony J. Frendo

SUNDAY QUIZ

by Dilettante

- Which is the largest of the republics in Yugoslavia? And in which of the republics is the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade?
- What is the most sacred shrine of the Sikhs?
- Who was the composer of the opera *William* (or *Guillaume Tell*)?
- What are the trades of *vintner* and *cooper*?
- After the Great Siege of Malta, Grand Master La Valette was offered an honour by the Pope which he declined. What was the honour?
- What happened in Hyde Park, London (apart from rain) at the end of last month - on July 30 to be exact?
- What is the Christian name of Mrs. Marcos, widow of a former President? Of which country was he President?
- The word "country" in the English "country dance" is not directly connected with the open country but is a corruption of a French word. Can you have a guess at what it is?
- Can you match these ancient Greeks with their own, correct subject:
Homer.....*medicine*

Euclid.....*history*
Hippocrates.....*oratory*
Demosthenes.....*epic poetry*
Thucydides.....*mathematics*

10. In which country would you expect to see a *koala* or a *koala bear*?

11. Do you know the name of the old Bolshevik henchman of Stalin's who died last month aged 98? (He was one of the most efficient and most ruthless of Stalin's lieutenants).

12. What is the name ("O... S...") of the official mapping agency of Great Britain?

13. During the American Civil War there were two Presidents in America - a President of the United States and a President of the Confederate States. Can you name one or other of them - or both?

14. What is the term for the simple device - not calculator - which is used for performing calculations? (The type best known is the frame with parallel wires on which one slides beads).

(Answers on page 34)

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