

# Palaces and Lodgings of the Knights of St John at Malta

(Stephen Degiorgio – 2010)

Valletta, the capital of Malta,<sup>1</sup> is a city entirely conceived, developed and inhabited as a conventual headquarters by the Hospitaller Knights of St John from 1571<sup>2</sup> to 1798.<sup>3</sup> Being founded in the wake of the memorable victory attained over Moslem besieging forces,<sup>4</sup> the new city was outlined after defensive and urban plans laid out by Francesco Lapparelli (1521-1570; a military engineer in the employ of Pope Pius V), thus emerging as the 'fulcrum' of the Order's operational existence, the seat of their 'Convent', ruling their island-home as well as administering their immense wealth of property and estates scattered all over Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The city follows an ordinate plan of geometric symmetry whereby all streets neatly intersect at right-angles, and where in a matter of time sumptuous churches, palaces and houses belonging to affluent knights were built, knights who shaped the history of the island linking it to Europe's prestigious noble families. The fortified city, with its powerful walls, bastions, towers and deep ditches, encapsulated a microcosm of architectural inspirations: from the rigid austerity of Mannerism to the ornate exuberance of Baroque, from the intricate floridity of Rococo to the restrained sobriety of Neo-Classicism. And moreover, Valletta essentially portrayed a city of tastes and traditions from Europe, artistic currents drawn by the knights' own patronage, introducing works of art of international provenance. The knights with their European connections opened the doors for an influx of architects, artists and craftsmen to sojourn, and at times permanently settle on the island. It was also the knights who through their financial resourcefulness rendered possible a remarkable patrimony for themselves as well as for the island, their adoptive home. The city of Valletta is their monument to posterity.

Among the buildings which remind us of their glorious past we find the Magisterial Palace and the *Auberges* for residence, the Holy Infirmary (the hospital), the Church of St John, the *Castellania* (the tribunal), and various private palaces belonging to the knights: an historic-artistic imprint in the rich legacy of the island.

The Magisterial Palace, the seat of power as well as residence of the Grand Masters,<sup>6</sup> was among the first palaces built in the centre of the city. Its simple, quadrangular plan on two floors appears forcibly austere from the exterior but tastefully dignified from within. The State Rooms, or main halls of the palace, include the 'Small Council Hall' with its splendid collection of Gobelin tapestries portraying exotic flora and fauna from the continents; The 'Grand Council Hall' highlighting scenes from the great Turkish siege of 1565, the work of Matteo Perez d'Aleccio; The Ambassadors' Room with the regal portraits of the French kings Louis XV and XVI, and Catherine the Great of Russia; The Pages' Room furnished with exquisite Maltese bureaux; The old chapel of the palace adorned with frescoes depicting life episodes of St John the Baptist, by Filippo Paladini; And, the extensive 'palace armoury'. The 'Small Council Hall', for the convention of the 'Venerable Council', was the hall where the seven *Piliers* or *Conventual Bailiffs*,<sup>7</sup> the Bishop, the *Prior of the Church*,<sup>8</sup> and all the knights 'Grand Cross'<sup>9</sup> resident in the 'Convent', presided by the Grand Master,<sup>10</sup> assembled to govern the country as all the affairs concerning the interests of the Order both in Malta and overseas. The 'Grand Council Hall', was, in ordinary function, the 'Throne Hall' – venue

for the Grand Masters' audiences – which also periodically lent itself for the convention of Chapter-Generals.<sup>11</sup> These Chapters were convened in the presence of the 'Small Council', the Provincial Bailiffs,<sup>12</sup> and those knights 'Grand Cross' resident overseas. Only a Chapter-General was empowered to promulgate, ratify or abrogate any of the laws and statutes governing the Order. Such an assembly exercised executive powers. Another significant quarter of the palace is the armoury housing one of the most impressive collections in the world, exhibiting suits of armour, weapons, firearms, trophies of war and other military artefacts belonging to the knights that have accumulated over the centuries.

The *Auberges* were likewise among the first buildings to rise in Valletta, although most of them partially or completely re-structured in later times. These were the official residences pertaining to each 'tongue' or nation constituting the Order. Their palatial status might as well qualify them as 'glorified' barracks where all knights in residence were assigned with a customary conventual 'stipend' or table allowance. Those *confrères* not in possession of a *Commandery* or *Priory*, from where assigned pensions and revenues would be drawn, lodged in communal fraternity, nonetheless, catered with silver plate and a lavishly resourceful kitchen. Each one of the seven *Auberges* (the English being absent) was governed by a chief styled as the conventual *Pilier*. Thus, in order of rank and right of precedence we find Provence in the first place, followed by Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, England (suppressed),<sup>13</sup> Germany, and Castile united with Portugal. All the *Auberges* were governed by in-house councils headed and presided by their respective *Pilier*. Apart from running its internal administration the council discussed matters related to the admission of prospective knights, the verification of noble pedigrees, appointments and promotions, the assignment of pensions, revenues,<sup>14</sup> *chevissements*,<sup>15</sup> ameliorations,<sup>16</sup> mortuaries,<sup>17</sup> service on the 'caravans',<sup>18</sup> subject, however, to any overruling by the Ordinary (Venerable) Council. Moreover, each *Pilier*, in standing to his nation, not only presided over his proper *Auberge* but concurrently carried an administrative title-rank within the hierarchy governing the Order in the Convent. Hence, the *Pilier* of the *Langue* of Provence was the Grand Commander,<sup>19</sup> for Auvergne the Grand Marshal,<sup>20</sup> for France the Grand Hospitaller,<sup>21</sup> for Italy the Admiral,<sup>22</sup> for Aragon the Conservator or Drapier,<sup>23</sup> for England the Turcopilier,<sup>24</sup> for Germany the Grand Bailiff,<sup>25</sup> for Castile and Portugal the Grand Chancellor.<sup>26</sup>

The mainstay of the Order's activity in the Convent was undoubtedly the hospital – we must recall their origins in the Holy Land, centred on the founding hospices for the care and refuge of exhausted and sick pilgrims – and the consequent designation of Knights Hospitaller by way of career and vocation amalgamated to their militancy as defenders of the Faith. In fact, each knight at the Convent was duty-bound to compulsory hospital service at least once a week.<sup>27</sup> Their hospital in Valletta, an extensive building formerly known as the Holy Infirmary, boasts one of the largest halls in Europe. It was built in 1575 and enlarged to its present dimensions in the mid-17th century. It was furnished with no less than 500 beds with ample room space to admit a further 2,000 places in the event of emergency. For the common maintenance of hygiene all patients were served with silver plate. The administration of the hospital was entirely delegated to the Grand Hospitaller, being the *Pilier* of the *Langue* of France.

The Conventual Church of the knights, dedicated to their patron St John the Baptist, surely represents the peak of their artistic treasures preserved under one roof. It was built between 1573 and 1577, following the prevalent influence of the age, the Mannerist style. And like all of the knights' buildings appearing in the 16th century it is shorn of any intensive decorative

significance. It bears a plain façade with a pronounced linear segmentation and bounded by two massive bell-towers. But if the exterior lends itself somewhat to our indifference, the interior, entirely transformed in the second half of the 17th century, rewards the visitor with a saturated high Baroque opulence. The description of the interior would require a separate chapter, and consequently, here are mentioned only a few of its outstanding artists: Caravaggio,<sup>28</sup> Mattia Preti,<sup>29</sup> Alessandro Algardi<sup>30</sup> and Ciro Ferri.<sup>31</sup> The Church of St John did not fall within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Malta but under the authority of the Prior of the Church, rated among the highest ranking dignitaries after the Grand Master. He was vested with full ecclesiastical governance over all the churches belonging to the Order, including their clergy.

The Castellania Palace, the tribunal,<sup>32</sup> is an attractive architectural showpiece of authority completed in 1760. It is a well-proportioned, elegant building whose central focal point has been entirely rendered in marble. It is dominated by a massive portal encased within pilasters supporting a projecting balcony. Perched atop an overhead pediment are two female figures in classical garb, representing Justice and Truth. Two angels, flanking a niche meant to receive the missing bust of Grand Master Manuel Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773), crown the apex in honour of the sovereign. Ironically, the hand of destiny reserved for Mastro Gian, the Sicilian sculptor who completed the carvings over the Castellania's façade,<sup>33</sup> was black as coal, as following criminal proceedings on charges for murder,<sup>34</sup> he was condemned to capital punishment.<sup>35</sup> Presiding over the tribunal was the *Castellano*, a knight who held office for a term of two years; and three judges (Appeal, Criminal, and Civil).<sup>36</sup> The new tribunal was meant for the exercise of justice over the common people, whereas knights were first tried in the Convent, and if found guilty of any heinous crime, were solemnly deprived of the Order's habit and consigned to secular jurisdiction for the proper course of justice. The *Gran Visconte* (commissioner of police) and his *sbirri* (policemen) enforced rulings from the courthouse.

We now turn to a number of private palaces belonging to individual knights, mostly members who achieved career status and prosperity, who either for personal comfort or ostentatious prestige preferred to live apart, within or beyond the walls of Valletta. *L'Hostel de Verdelin*, in the centre of the city, is one of such palaces – a structure of noble proportions consisting of three separate premises unified in almost perfect symmetry.<sup>37</sup> It was built around 1650 at the expense of *Frà Jean-Jacques de Verdelin*<sup>38</sup> from the plans of Francesco Buonamici (1596-1677), a proficient Italian architect who moved to Malta in the employ of the Order. Buonamici is significantly accredited for having introduced Baroque architecture into Malta.<sup>39</sup> The richly ornate façade of the palace, in its manifest Baroque exuberance, is considered to be amongst the first architectural works of its kind on the island – a stylistic expression that shall markedly reaffirm itself in its widest articulated sense later in the 18th century.<sup>40</sup> De Verdelin enjoyed a highly successful career in the Convent, occupying the posts (*inter alia*) of Commander of the Artillery (1637, re-affirmed in 1639),<sup>41</sup> Auditor of Accounts (1651, re-affirmed in 1679),<sup>42</sup> and Grand Commander (1666).<sup>43</sup> He was the nephew of Grand Master Hughes Loubenx de Verdalle (1582-1595). He died in Malta in 1678.<sup>44</sup>

Amongst the famous Italian noble families we find the House of Spinola, from the Liguria region. Many of its scions have been admitted into the Order of St John as novices at the Convent in Malta. The most notable member of the Spinola knights who left his family's 'mark' on the island's history is undoubtedly *Frà Paolo Raffaele Spinola* from Roccaforte (Liguria). His palace in Valletta still stands in Republic Street, the main artery of the city.<sup>45</sup> It

passed into his ownership in 1660 and extended to family namesakes until 1780.<sup>46</sup> But Paolo Raffaele Spinola is particularly renowned for having built one of the most sumptuous palaces on the island, still bearing his name – the Palazzo Spinola at St Julian's.<sup>47</sup> The locality, bordering the interior part of a creek, has also been immortalised with his name – Spinola Bay.<sup>48</sup> Spinola had not only founded his palace in 1688, but also defrayed the expense for the little church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception,<sup>49</sup> still standing by the main roadway.<sup>50</sup> His life was studded with prestigious appointments: Secretary to the Common Treasury (1657),<sup>51</sup> Procurator for the same (1670),<sup>52</sup> Auditor of Accounts for the *Langue* of Italy (1662),<sup>53</sup> and Councillor for the same (1663).<sup>54</sup> He was invested with the 'Grand Cross' (1668),<sup>55</sup> Bailiff of Cremona (1669),<sup>56</sup> Admiral (1672),<sup>57</sup> General of the Galleys (1673),<sup>58</sup> Grand Prior of Lombardy (1667),<sup>59</sup> and Prud'homme for the Church of St John (1680).<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Spinola, exploiting the facility of a printing enterprise founded by his brother Napoleon at Borgo Novo (1673), defrayed the expense for the publication of the revised and expanded edition of the statutes, ordinances, ceremonies and privileges of the Order,<sup>61</sup> in 1676.<sup>62</sup> He died outside of Malta.

As Claire Eliane Engel aptly remarked: 'Every year the Dolomites, one of the most fascinating of playgrounds for climbers and skiers, attract thousands of visitors: yet how many of them know the origin of the name for the mountains which have the strange shapes of fortified Romanesque cathedrals?'<sup>63</sup> Déodat de Gratet de Dolomieu, born in 1750, was admitted as a minor in the branch of Auvergne. During his novitiate at Malta he participated in a 'caravan'<sup>64</sup> where he got embroiled in a fatal duel with a companion. He killed his adversary, was tried, deprived of his habit and imprisoned for life. As often happens, influential people, diplomacy, and recommendations were brought to bear upon the sentence, and before long Dolomieu was again a free man after spending a mere nine months in jail, formally being re-admitted into the Order.<sup>65</sup> He returned to his country and following his studies in Metz, France, he returned to Malta. He 'bought a house with a small garden in the very centre of Valletta, a house which was pompously called a palace',<sup>66</sup> but more reliable sources ascribe his residence to less attractive surroundings. It forms part of a building well detached from the city-centre, within a discreet, stepped side-street. The edifice, of scarce architectural appeal, appears to have undergone drastic changes, posing doubts to proper identification.<sup>67</sup> There is no record of Dolomieu having been elected Grand Marshal (*Pilier* of the *Langue* of Auvergne in the Convent), as most writers would suggest. He was appointed Lieutenant of the Grand Marshal on 23 May 1783, and resigned on 4 August of the same year.<sup>68</sup> He had been elected Councillor for the *Auberge* of Auvergne (1780-1781),<sup>69</sup> and re-elected again (in 1791), but his temperament seems to have had the best of him and he resigned a month later.<sup>70</sup> During his travels and sojourns in Malta Dolomieu amassed a rich collection of rocks and minerals, a collection which had been repatriated under the insistence of the French following their loss of Malta to the British in 1800.<sup>71</sup> The eminent geologist and mineralogist died the following year at Chateauneuf, on his return from one of his usual outings to the mountains. His scholarly works have been acknowledged by scientific circles worldwide.<sup>72</sup> It was Dolomieu who first examined the limestone rocks from that region of the Alps, which after his death, around 1876, were given his name *ad memoriam*.

Among the most visited palaces on the itinerary of visitors to Malta is the Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta. The palace was initially built around 1570, and entirely rebuilt at the expense of the Common Treasury of the Order in 1763, for the benefit of the *Bailiff* Ramon de Sousa

y Silva.<sup>73</sup> On account of the limitations of the street, the imposing aspect of the palace is somewhat diminished by the constriction of space. What immediately strikes the eye on entering the interior of the palace, beyond the hall or vestibule, is the outstanding stairway leading to the upper floor. The ascent, illuminated by the large window of the courtyard, branches to either side of the landing and advances in reverse, reconnecting at the upper floor. The complex symmetry of the stairway, adorned with elegant Rococo motifs, is considered among the finest on the island. The museum opened its doors in 1974 and displays the major artistic works found in the State collection.<sup>74</sup> Who were the illustrious people hosted in this palace before its conversion into a museum? Following the death of de Sousa in 1782, the palace was divided into several apartments and let to a number of knights until, in 1785, the entire premises was reconverted into a private residence to accommodate *Bailiff* Pierre-André Suffren de Saint-Tropez.<sup>75</sup> This intrepid mariner was Captain-General of the galleys of Malta (1780),<sup>76</sup> invested with the 'Grand Cross' (1781),<sup>77</sup> and appointed Vice-Admiral in the navy of the King of France. His successful, daring exploits at sea enhanced his reputation and was later regarded as a national hero, making him the most famous person in the history of the French navy. The palace at Valletta remained in his possession until his death in France in 1788, after which it passed to his brother Paul-Julien, also a member of the Order. In 1795 the palace was made available to *Frà* Antonio Miari, later secretary to the last Grand Master at Malta, Ferdinand von Hompesch (1797-1798),<sup>78</sup> From 1821 to 1961 the palace fittingly lent itself as the official residence for the Commander-in-Chief of Britain's Mediterranean fleet stationed at Malta.

At Attard, a village some distance away from Valletta, we find the residence of San Anton, built by Grand Master Antoine de Paule (1623-1636) to distance himself from the city. The original palace, later extended, offers extremely modest pretensions from outside, and would seem to imply that it was meant more for a functional purpose rather than the amenities of luxury. At the time, the site enjoyed an enviously salubrious setting within undeveloped country, impregnated with scents of wild herbal effusions mixed with the aroma of citrus fruits, pines, and seasonal flowers, a blended combination that the cycle of nature dissipated from the surrounding gardens. During this period the palace enjoyed the practical purpose for short vacations, away from the city's stifling heat and enervating turmoil of yells and smells rising from the teeming market-place situated in the city centre. The summer residence of San Anton presented an ideal detachment from the city and afforded the gratification of sane tranquillity, away from indiscreet eyes. It appeared that the Grand Master had excited the attention of the Inquisitor Fabio Chigi<sup>79</sup> (the future Pope Alexander VII), as attested from correspondence despatched to the Holy See at Rome: 'That character Flaminia [Valenti], who aspires admission in the cloister for Repentants, is the same [person] who was repeatedly admitted at the time of the deceased Grand Master, with whom she prostituted'.<sup>80</sup> Tradition asserts that Valenti lived in a house abutting to the garden-grounds of the Grand Master, and that slipping past a covert doorway within the common boundary wall, would reach out to her patron.<sup>81</sup>

During the two years of French occupation (1798-1800), when Napoleon's army was forced to retreat within the fortifications of Valletta and its surroundings, San Anton palace became the operational base of the Anglo-Maltese forces. In the course of hostilities the palace also hosted the commander of the British forces Sir Alexander Ball, later appointed first British civil commissioner representing the British monarchy. The palace also hosted Admiral Horatio Nelson on various occasions. From 1828 onwards the palace became the second

official residence for all British governors until the attainment of Independence in 1964,<sup>82</sup> and successively, home to the presidents of the Republic of Malta.

Many other important knights, as the aforementioned Dolomieu, at some point of their career passed through Malta, and later engraved their name in the history of the world. Some are well-known, others less, with no relevant information related to their Maltese period. No shred of information regarding their sojourn on the island has been forthcoming. We may quote a few names: Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon, who following his services at Malta and elsewhere he set sail to the New World, reaching in 1555, a territory later designated as Brazil – it was Villegaignon who founded the settlement of Rio, and other colonies.<sup>83</sup> In the field of literature we find Pietro Bembo, writer and poet, and a prominent humanist of the 16th century, a familiar figure to Italian literary academics.<sup>84</sup> During the latter period of the 18th century Etienne-François Turgot made a name for himself in botanical studies, publishing papers of scientific relevance.<sup>85</sup> Within the confines of the arts we are fortunate to know a great deal more: we cannot fail to omit the controversial figure of Caravaggio (admitted into the Order through papal dispensation) and his turbulent sojourn in Malta (1607-1608), besides his minor counterparts, the Calabrese Mattia Preti (1661-1699), and the Parisian Antoine Favray (1743-1798).

This outline has attempted to gauge, in a rather circumscribed fashion, some architectural and artistic attainments patronised by the knights, their organisation, as well as briefly illustrate the relevant career of most of the subjects presented. One field of study we have refrained to evaluate is a department which can never be dissected from the knights' overall patrimony – their fortifications: they are the most prominent, massive, awesome constructions ever devised in world military architecture. When the knights formally landed at Malta on 26 October 1530 they found the island utterly defenceless – just an old, obsolete castle within the harbour region and the crumbling walls of an inland citadel, the post-Arab *madina*. Their two-and-a-half centuries in Malta transformed the harbours of Valletta into the most powerful military assemblage of defence of any known age, so much so that Napoleon himself, walking round the bastions, and visibly impressed, replied: 'What sublime fortifications!', to which his companion answered: 'It was fortunate we had good friends within or you never would have got possession of them.'<sup>86</sup>

The history of the Knights of the Order of St John was not only written with blood on the battlefields of the Holy Land, Rhodes and Malta, or in their violent exploits at sea, but also through their charitable dedication at the hospital, at the bedside of the sick and destitute. The oldest order of knighthood in the world still exists to this very day with headquarters now in Rome, on the Aventine Hill – the smallest sovereign state in the world, and still active today *pro fide et utilitate hominum*.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The new city, founded on 28 March 1566, was given the name of its founder, Grand Master Jean de Valette (1557-1568).

<sup>2</sup> The official transfer of the Convent from the old city of Vittoriosa to the new city of Valletta took place on 18 March 1571.

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<sup>3</sup> With Napoleon Bonaparte's capture of Malta on 12 June 1798, the rule of the Knights Hospitaller of the Order of St John came to an end.

<sup>4</sup> We refer to the memorable Turkish siege of 1565.

<sup>5</sup> The Order of St John had property estates scattered throughout all Europe from which it collected conspicuous capital derived from revenues, tithes, rents, and other sources of income.

<sup>6</sup> During the British period (1800-1964) the palace was the seat of His/Her Majesty's Governor's office, and subsequently, the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Malta.

<sup>7</sup> The *Piliers*, or Conventual Bailiffs, were the heads of the respective eight national branches or *Langues* constituting the Order at its headquarters, *i.e.*, resident at the Convent in Malta.

<sup>8</sup> The Prior of the Church, the highest ecclesiastical dignity within the organisation of the Knights Hospitaller, was comparable to that of the Bishop of Malta. He was the spiritual head of the entire Convent and exercised his ecclesiastical authority over all the churches of the Order, including the clergy attached to the same.

<sup>9</sup> The knights of the 'Grand Cross' were professed knights, the highest recognition conferred to the Orders' members. These knights enjoyed the privilege to attend on the Council, hold senior office, or aspire to contest an election to the magistracy.

<sup>10</sup> All knights of the 'Grand Cross' resident at the Convent (in Malta), together with the titular heads (the *Piliers*, being the Conventual Bailiffs) of the eight *Langues* constituting the Order, could assemble *in camera* to elect a new successor in the person of a Grand Master, occurring either on his death or the likelihood of mental infirmity. The Grand Masters, as European monarchies, enjoyed sovereign privileges and reigned *ad vitam*.

<sup>11</sup> Periods when a Chapter-General was convened varied in time and place. Normally it was held every three or five years, eventually being suspended between 1631 and 1776. Such assemblies required the participation of all Grand Priors, Provincial Bailiffs and knights of the 'Grand Cross' resident in Europe, urging them to convene at the Convent in Malta.

<sup>12</sup> The Provincial Bailiffs, also knights 'Grand Cross', were the counterparts of the Conventual Bailiffs at Malta. They were the chief heads of the *Langue* in their respective country, in office at a Grand Priory. Priors and Commanderies were grouped within the administrative 'umbrella' of a regional or provincial Grand Priory.

<sup>13</sup> Following Martin Luther's Reformation and the eventual institution of Protestantism in England through King Henry VIII, the English branch was completely suppressed by that monarch with the consequent confiscation of all properties and estates belonging to the Knights Hospitaller in England.

<sup>14</sup> Revenues derived from Commanderies and Priors were a source of income benefitting both the incumbent holder of such property estates as well as the Common Treasury of the Order.

<sup>15</sup> *Chevissements* referred to the first Commandery awarded to a member of the Order through rights of seniority.

<sup>16</sup> It was commonplace for knights and junior members of the Order to seek more profitable sources of income. Petitions for the substitution of one or more Commanderies in their possession, for others with greater financial returns, was usually discussed within respective Conventual *Langues* or in presence of the Venerable Council.

<sup>17</sup> Mortuaries were revenues, collected from one or more properties (Commanderies) assigned to a knight or other member of the Order, matured following the death of the incumbent beneficiary. The forfeited income occurring during a *sede vacante* situation was computed from the moment of vacancy up to the established conclusive limit of the 1st of May.

<sup>18</sup> Every member admitted into the Order was expected to participate in no less than four 'caravans' (sea-faring exploits) in the navy of the Order, failing which, no member could aspire to attain promotions or the assignment of pensions.

<sup>19</sup> The Grand Commander was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Provence. He was president of the Treasury, superintendent of the Order's magazines, the arsenal, arms and munitions.

<sup>20</sup> The Grand Marshal was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Auvergne. He was in command of the military forces and responsible for the safekeeping of the standard of the Order.

<sup>21</sup> The Grand Hospitaller was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of France. He was vested with the governance of the hospital.

<sup>22</sup> The Admiral was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Italy. He commanded the navy of the Order.

<sup>23</sup> The Grand Conservator or Drapier was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Aragon. He was responsible for the management but not the governance of the Treasury. He provided for the 'wardrobe' of the Convent and provisions in general.

<sup>24</sup> The Turcopilier was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of England. He was entrusted with the cavalry and the militia.

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<sup>25</sup> The Grand Bailiff was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Germany. He was responsible for the city of Mdina and the Citadel on the sister island of Gozo.

<sup>26</sup> The Grand Chancellor was the *Pilier* for the *Langue* of Castile and Portugal. He was vested with the custody of the chancellery, the acts, bulls, seals, and archives of the Order. His post may be likened to that of a modern Secretary of State.

<sup>27</sup> *Notizia della Sacra Infermeria, e della carica delli Commissarij delle Povere Inferme*, Rome, 1725, pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> His paintings of *St Jerome* and the *Beheading of St John the Baptist*.

<sup>29</sup> The entire frescoed vault of the church and most of the altarpieces.

<sup>30</sup> The bronze bust of Christ in the tympanum of the façade of the church.

<sup>31</sup> The exquisitely-wrought silver and gilt reliquary, receptor for the hand of St John the Baptist.

<sup>32</sup> Today the palace is occupied by the Ministry of Health.

<sup>33</sup> National Library of Malta (NLM): Library Manuscript Collection (LMC) 13, Ignatio Xaverio Mifsud, *Stromatum Melitensium*, vol. 27, 1765, p. 402.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404. He was executed by hanging on 15.12.1760.

<sup>36</sup> L. Héritte (ed.), René-Jacob de Tigné, *Essai sur l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean-de-Jerusalem et de son Gouvernement Civil et Militaire à Malte au Commencement du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle d'après des Documents Inédits de l'Epoque*, Paris, 1912, pp. 51-52.

<sup>37</sup> The most prominent, with an exceptionally spacious interior, is occupied by a social club.

<sup>38</sup> Victor F. Denaro, *The Houses of Valletta*, Malta, 1967, p. 71.

<sup>39</sup> Leonard Mahoney, *5000 Years of Architecture in Malta*, Malta, 1996, pp. 151-152, 175, 310.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>41</sup> National Library of Malta (NLM): Archives of the Order of Malta (AOM) 6430, *Cariche in Convento*, f. 90.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 4v, 5.

<sup>43</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, *Dignità della Religione*, f. 9v; Bartolomeo dal Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di S[an] Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta*, vol. II, Venice, 1715, p. 337.

<sup>44</sup> He died at the age of 83 on 20 April 1678, and was interred in the Conventual Church of St John.

<sup>45</sup> During past centuries the palace was subjected to severe structural alterations, and today, the major portion of what survives has been rehabilitated and transformed into a bank institution – the Lombard Bank (Malta).

<sup>46</sup> Victor F. Denaro, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 45.

<sup>47</sup> This building was damaged during the French occupation in 1798, and hence restored in 1826. Later, with its passage to state property, the palace was converted into a military hospital and subsequently adapted for multiple uses: housing purposes, a school, a museum of modern art, and let to the private sector. Having endured vandalisms and long periods of neglect the palace has ultimately been restored in 2007 and assigned by the government to an international institution, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

<sup>48</sup> Development in this area, originally frequented by fishermen, took a sharp turn when summer houses mushroomed in the mid-19th century. Half a century later, the urban transmutation of the sea-front was complete. From the '60s the inexorable march of 'progress' has transformed Spinola, or St Julian's, into a conglomerate of apartments, bars, restaurants and hotels, overwhelmed by the clamour of traffic and *promeneurs*.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Galea, *Art Twelidi – Dizzjunarju Storiku*, Malta, 1984, pp. 155-156: Originally, the church enjoyed a lay patronage from the Spinola family. With the steady settlement of a permanent community, in 1858, the church's status was elevated to that of a vice-parish, later being relieved by the construction of the new Church of St Julian's.

<sup>50</sup> Achille Ferris, *Memorie dell'Inclito Ordine Gerosolimitano esistenti nelle Isole di Malta*, Malta, 1881, p. 234.

<sup>51</sup> NLM: AOM 6430, *Cariche...*, f. 27; Bartolomeo dal Pozzo, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

<sup>52</sup> NLM: AOM 6430, *Cariche...*, f. 2v.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 13.

<sup>54</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, *Dignità...*, f. 161.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 128.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 117; Bartolomeo dal Pozzo, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

<sup>57</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, f. 16; Bartolomeo dal Pozzo, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

<sup>58</sup> NLM: AOM 6430, *Cariche...*, f. 132; Bartolomeo dal Pozzo, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>59</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, *Dignità...*, f. 41.



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- <sup>60</sup> NLM: AOM 6430, *Cariche...*, f. 46.
- <sup>61</sup> Ferdinand de Hellwald, *Bibliographie Méthodique de l'Ordre Souv[erain] de S[ain]t Jean de Jérusalem*, Rome, 1885, p. 218.
- <sup>62</sup> *Statvti della Sacra Religione di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano...*, Borgo Nuovo, 1676. This work was later reprinted at the same press in 1719.
- <sup>63</sup> Claire Eliane Engel, *Knights of Malta – A Gallery of Portraits*, London, 1963, p. 168.
- <sup>64</sup> The 'caravans' were sea-borne exploits, a career requisite that each knight had to perform. A minimum participation of four caravans (of variable length at sea – never beyond the six-month seasonal limit per mission) scouring the Mediterranean in search for enemy sails, not excluding hostile landings on enemy territory.
- <sup>65</sup> Claire Eliane Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170. No private palace or house in Valletta enjoyed the luxury of a garden, at most, they retained a modestly spacious yard.
- <sup>67</sup> Victor F. Denaro, *op. cit.*, p. 113: He identified house No. 9 in Scots Street – today, M. A. Vassalli Street; NLM: Treasury B 96, *Registro Beni del Tesoro e Fondazione Lascaris*, f. 322: The yearly rent paid out by Dolomieu was 130 *Scudi*.
- <sup>68</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, *Dignità...*, f. 135v.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 156.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> G. Darmanin Demajo, 'L'Albergia della Lingua d'Alvernia...', in *Archivio Storico di Malta*, anno II, vol. II, fasc. IV, Rome, 1931, pp. 205-206.
- <sup>72</sup> A compilation of his works was published by [...?] Marchese di Villarosa, *Notizie di alcuni Cavalieri del Sacro Ordine Gerosolimitano illustri per Lettere e per Belle Arti*, Naples, 1841, pp. 139-140.
- <sup>73</sup> Hannibal P. Scicluna, 'Notes on the Admiralty House, Valletta', in *Archivum Melitense*, vol. IX, no. 2, Malta, 1933, pp. 58, 59; Victor F. Denaro, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105.
- <sup>74</sup> The collection boasts several works by Italian Masters: Filippo Paladini, Leonello Spada, Guido Reni, Mattia Preti, Carlo Maratta – all works formerly in possession of the knights or transferred from the palaces of the Order.
- <sup>75</sup> Received into the Order as a minor in 1737.
- <sup>76</sup> NLM: AOM 6431, *Cariche in Convento*, f. 61.
- <sup>77</sup> NLM: AOM 2226, *Dignità...*, f. 132j.
- <sup>78</sup> Victor F. Denaro, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.
- <sup>79</sup> Fabio Chigi was the apostolic delegate (Inquisitor) in office at Malta from 1634 to 1639.
- <sup>80</sup> Vincent Borg, *Fabio Chigi Apostolic Delegate in Malta (1634-1639)*, Rome, 1967, p. 243: Letter from the Inquisitor Chigi to Cardinal Barberini dated 9.1.1637 (Vatican Library: *Fondo Chigi*, B.I.7, f. 302; *Barberini Latini*, 6681, f. 188). There is further correspondence.
- <sup>81</sup> Claude Gaffiero, 'Grand Master's Mistress', in *Fashion & Beauty*, Malta, 1982, p. 36.
- <sup>82</sup> Hannibal P. Scicluna, *op.cit.*, pp. 221, 223.
- <sup>83</sup> Robert L. Dauber, *A Knight of Malta in Brasil...*, Malta, 1995, p. 28.
- <sup>84</sup> [...?] Marchese di Villarosa, *Notizie di alcuni Cavalieri del Sacro Ordine Gerosolimitano illustri per Lettere e per Belle Arti*, Naples, 1841, pp. 29-33.
- <sup>85</sup> Étienne-François Turgot, *Mémoire Instructif sur la Manière de rassembler, de préparer, de conserver, et d'envoyer les diverses curiosités d'Histoire Naturelle*, Lyon, 1758.
- <sup>86</sup> Thomas MacGill, *A Handbook, or Guide, for Strangers Visiting Malta*, Malta, 1839, p. 9; Whitworth Porter, *A History of the Knights of Malta or the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem*, vol. II, London, 1858, p. 450: Porter's quotation of Bonaparte's comment: 'Well was it for us that we had friends within to open the gates for us' is at variance from MacGill's quotation.

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