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# RECENT DISCOVERIES

AT

## NOTABLE

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## A MEMOIR

BY

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Librarian of the Public Library, Malta.

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### AT NOTABILE.

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#### PART I.

##### *Descriptive.*

On the 3rd February 1881, while some workmen were engaged in digging holes for planting ornamental trees on the large esplanade of Sakkaja, without the walls of Notabile, midway between the Gate of the Greeks (Bieb-el-Gharrekin) of that old town and Ghariexhem in Rabato, some remains of old Roman mosaic were discovered.

Mr. E. L. Galizia, the Superintendent of Public Works, having brought this to the notice of His Excellency the Governor, was ordered to explore the place in order to ascertain whether it was worth while to clear away the rubbish covering it. On the 7th February I was instructed to visit the site of the discovery, and on the 8th I reported to Government that the remains uncovered so far were those of the pavement of two rooms having borders of Roman mosaic and the centre of "Opus Alexandrinum." Some parts of it are well preserved and with bright colours, and it would appear that the two rooms formed part of an early Roman house belonging to a family of note.

Upon a motion of the Hon. Dr. A. Naudi in the Council of Government, a Committee to explore and investigate these remains was appointed consisting of Major General the Hon. P. Feilding, C.B., the Hon. Dr. Naudi, the Rev. Dr. V. Vassallo, Mr. Galizia, and myself. The first meeting of this Committee was held on the Sakkaja esplanade, on the 22nd, the pavement in mosaic of a suite of four rooms and the foundations and traces of several walls having been exposed to view already. The Committee, on my proposal, were unanimously of opinion that the excavations should be continued, so that the extent of the ground-plan of the building might be uncovered, and thus its internal arrangement understood, the nature and object of its former occupation made out, and even the epoch of its construction and duration ascertained.

2. Although this place be without the walls of the present Notabile, which the Arabs after the year 870 reduced to its present limits, there is no doubt that at the time of the Romans it was the central spot of Melita, as the old capital was then called. The Greek settlers, in B. C. 700, had selected the plain of the most northern hill of the Benjemma range, surrounded on the north, east, and west, by the valley through which runs the Sakkaja ascent, to build their Acropolis. They limited the extent of it towards the south by a ditch, the vestiges of which are still seen near St. Francesco Convent and St. Paul's Grotto, where two of its principal gates existed, giving to it a circuit of about 2776 yards.

3. No excavation has, properly speaking, been required and the process of clearing was simply one of denudation. After the removal of the upper soil of rubbish were found interred several human skeletons, evidently of a recent epoch and probably of the French Corps of Masson who were the first victims of the rural insurrection in September 1798, as this spot was the scene of the first bloodshed that took place on that occasion. When the level of the old flooring was reached, other human skeletons were found, apparently from the yellow tinge and extreme friability of the bones, belonging to a much older period. These had been carefully buried in graves lined with stone, and covered with stone slabs sawn on both surfaces. They had apparently been buried in coffins and the first three, which were not so decayed as the rest, had been deposited conformably to a religious rite lying on the right side and looking towards the east. We know that the Romans watched their dead laid out in a couch in the Atrium, some Scholars say with their feet towards the door, and according to others lying on one side looking towards the entrance of the house; but nothing authorizes us to believe these relics to be Roman. On the contrary, two Cufic inscriptions found in two of the tombs, recording maxims of the Koran, prove that they are human remains of the Arabs.

4. Under the superintendence of Mr. Galizia every possible care was taken in clearing the remains of mosaic, and in collecting the few objects that were found.

The ground-plan of the building to which these mosaic pavements belonged, now that the place has been fairly cleared of its encumbrances, was surveyed by Mr. Galizia, who was guided by the foundations of some of the walls still preserved and the traces of others till visible, as shown in the annexed photographic

cut. It consists of four large rectangular rooms, a peristyle, and a portico. The four rooms are on one line facing the south, on which side apparently ran the line of the old street. On the side of these rooms towards Notabile is the peristyle, enclosing a compluvium 22' 4" by 21' 4"; and in the direction of the longer axis of the peristyle towards the east there is a porch with two columns. There exist regular openings between the rooms, and between the rooms and peristyle: some of these openings were apparently square, are furnished with one or two steps, and still show the holes at the corners to receive the hinges of the doors; and others, as would appear from the width of the openings and the rotundity of their jambs, had no doors hanging.

The traces of the exterior wall to which the porch belongs, on the side of the peristyle towards Notabile, follow precisely the same line and length of the wall on the other side in which the rooms are, showing that another wing of the old building extended over towards Notabile at least as much as towards Ghariexhem. Moreover, Mr. Galizia very properly observed that the position of the figures in a mosaic picture in the centre of the compluvium, representing two doves drinking from a bowl in a direction opposite to that of the porch, clearly points out to an extension of the building towards the west where its main entrance might have been, which is further confirmed by traces of walls existing in that direction.

5. The following is a list of the objects found —

1. *Mosaic pavements.*

A suite of five large floors, some of them measuring 30' 4" by 37' 10"; a large peristyle surrounded with sixteen columns, enclosing a large compluvium; traces of several other appurtenances unexplored, all paved with mosaic in the Pompeian style recording "i bei tempi dell'arte;" several remains of mosaic scattered about, having been displaced either by falling or settlement of the ground; and the mosaic pictures inserted in the pavements, show evidently the profusion of adornment with which the sumptuous building once existing on this site was decorated. The perimeter of three of the rooms, which were probably the most important, and of the peristyle, is adorned with single or double borders of Roman mosaic, called "Vermiculatum," formed of small pieces of white, red, and green marble of an ornamental character, having variegated meandering patterns on white grounds interspersed with masks of superior workmanship. These borders encircle a large band of mosaic in yellowish monochrome and a large central

rectangular ground of marble lozenges, red, white, black, and green, having regular form and size and well fitted together.

The other pavements and the compluvium are only bounded by a strip of monochrome mosaic, having the central portion paved with marble lozenges like the other floors.

In the proximity of the peristyle were found the remains of a coarser sort of floor made of shards of broken tiles and small pieces of marble compacted together, and well consolidated in a bed of mortar, the "Opus signinum" with which the less conspicuous parts were generally floored by the Romans.

No vestiges of *græcanica* or other sorts of pavements were found.

## II. Mosaic pictures.

Three mosaic pictures embedded in matrices of stone, and in no respect inferior to those of Pompej, have been found inserted in these pavements.

One measuring 1' 10" by 2', inlaid in hard lime, represents a young man with curly hair, bearing in one of his hands a bunch of grapes entwined with vine branches, and in the other apparently a pomegranate; a dove flying towards the grapes, and a duck on the left side of the picture. The left shoulder of the figure, which according to Father Garucci represents Autumn, is much damaged.

The second picture, inlaid on a marble slab measuring 2' by 2' 1", of highly superior workmanship to the preceding and in a better state of preservation, exhibits a standing nude male figure, whose feet and hands are tied with cords, a lion's skin and a club at his feet. A female figure on the right is engaged in binding the hands of the central figure; another female figure on the left having a pair of scissars in the right hand, and with the left holding by the beard the male figure which is in evident distress at being about to be deprived of it. The drapery is very elegant and its folds well arranged, with bright colours and various shades, and the whole composition exceedingly well grouped and executed with precision. It is most likely one of the episodes in the life of Hercules, namely, the sale of him by Mercurius to the Lydian Queen Omphale, when it was decreed that he should serve a mortal for three years, as an atonement for having killed Iphitus, son of the King of Æchalia.

A third picture represents two drinking doves sitting on the brim of a bowl, with the reflection of their heads in the water. This picture is in the centre of the compluvium, where the Romans used to place a fountain.

Another hard limestone slab of the same size as No. 1, and evidently the fellow to it, contained a fourth mosaic picture which has been quite destroyed.

### III. *Sculpture.*

The remains of three white Carrara marble statues were recovered from the rubbish. The one 4' 6"—high, rather a good work of Greek art, represents a male figure, covered with the Roman military cloak (*paludamentum*); without arms and head, but exhibiting a small cavity between the shoulders just where there is the articulation of the neck with the bust, where a provisional head with a neck might be fitted.

The second, 4' 9"—high, without bust, which must have been partially nude, as the folding of the upper portion of the apparel, adjusted on the waist and covering the body and one of the legs, is hanging downwards. Behind a sandstone pedestal, probably of one of these statues as they were found in the same room, some bones were found inserted in the wall under the plastering. Some other burnt bones were also found in the same room.

The third statue 5 ft.,—without head and arms, represents a female wearing much the same garment of the Ceres Julia Augusta, found at Gozo and preserved in the collection of the Public Library.

A white marble bust, of inferior workmanship, representing a female, its nose broken.

Several other remains of two colossal marble statues, namely some of the fingers, two hands, one leg dressed with a kind of stocking different from the Roman *cōthurnus*, and one foot; the feet and pedestals of three other minor statues; and a nice large Roman head apparently representing one of the Emperors.

Some architectural remnants, as shafts of sandstone Doric pillars, architraves, cornices, and other parts belonging to the crowning of the pediment, the entablature of the roofing, and the basement of the old building.

No remains of moulding or stucco and other ornaments, &c. were preserved.

### IV. *Inscriptions.*

Fragments of three Latin inscriptions on white marble slabs were found, two of them of no importance whatever bearing only one or two separate letters; a large fragment of the third one alludes to the municipal order of the Decurions by the letter *Decur.*

No remains of graffiti were found.

### V. Coins.

No medals were recovered, but only several plateal brass coins, mostly effaced, only four of them being legible and none belonging to the Emperors of the East. The four coins are:

A second brass of Gordian, A. D. 238-243. On the obverse: the head of the Emperor crowned with laurel, and the legend Imp. Cæs. M. Ant. Gordianus Afr. Aug., namely Imperator Cæsar M. Antonius Gordianus Africanus Augustus. On the reverse: apparently a female figure erect holding in the right hand the branch of a tree, and on the sides of the figure the letters S. C. (Senatus C.) very visible. Conf. J. Vaillant, V. I. page 152.

A third brass of Aurelian, A. D. 270-274. On the obverse: the head of the Emperor radiated, the body armed with lorica. On the reverse: the Emperor crowned with laurel and clad in the Imperial mantle, leaning with his left arm on a spear, and receiving a crown of laurel from the right hand of a figure of Victory. The legend round the two figures "Restitutor Orbis" very clear, and at the foot the cyphers XXI indicating the worth of the coin. Conf. Banduri's coins, V. I. page 382.

A third brass of Constantius, A. D. 337-360. On the obverse: the head of the Emperor bearing a crown adorned with pearls and gems, the bust covered with the Imperial mantle, very clear, and the legend D. N. Constantius P. F. Aug. On the reverse: the Emperor piercing a Knight fallen from his horse, with the legend "Fel temp Reparatio," and at the foot the cyphers SMKB (Sacra moneta Kartagine Secunda). Conf. Banduri's coins, *inter rariores*, V. II. page 382.

A third brass of Constantine Jun. A. D. 337. On the obverse: the head of the Emperor crowned and the legend "Constantinus Jun —", the next two words effaced. On the reverse: the gate of the camp (castrorum porta), and round the legend "Providentia" visible; and at the foot the letters R. T. and a crown in the middle. Conf. Banduri V. II. page 340.

### VI. Articles of Toilet, and Domestic Utensils, &c.

Several large bodkins (Acus comatoria) of ivory, some inches long, to retain the dressed back hair of women plaited on the occiput.

Some pieces of wind instruments (tibia) made of bone, showing clearly the finger stops.

No remains of Table or Cooking utensils, or implements of worship, were found, but only a large quantity of fragments of earthenware vessels &c.

6. We have no difficulty in referring these premises to the architectural class of Private Buildings, the domestic arrangement of which is detailed by Vitruvius, and was pretty generally the same, variable of course in size, number, distribution of rooms, and decorations, according to the social rank and means of the owner.

The private buildings of the Romans consisted of the front portion for the reception of clients, who resorted by day-break to their patrons either for advice, or support in civil matters, or pecuniary assistance, and other importunate visitors; which formed, says Pliny, the public part of the house. They were, principally, the vestibule, the prothyrum, the atrium, the alæ, and the tablinum. The penetralia, or the inner division was appropriated for the eating and sleeping apartments, that is to say the hearth of the family; and consisted of the peristyle, triclinium, bed chambers, &c. The relative situation of the two principal divisions was always fixed, but that of the parts composing each division, especially the interior department, was not so. For instance, very often the atrium and peristylum were placed on the same axis at right angles with the entrance, so as to afford one view of the nucleus and arrangement of the house, as it is in Pansa's, in the house of the Tragic Poet, and other houses at Pompej. But very often the peristylum was in one of the sides of the inner building, as in Sallust's house.

Now without presuming to determine the controversy as to the origin of this mode of distribution and domestic arrangement, whether Roman or Greek, although the Greeks differing from the former in some essential points of their customs intended their anterior court for the male portion and the posterior court with its premises for the female portion of the family, the character of the mosaic pavements discovered at Notabile leaves no doubt that they belonged to the ground-floor of a private building. But it should be clearly understood, that this technical denomination is not limited to mean the dwelling house of a private family. On the contrary it might have been, and very probably was, the official residence of a personage of note and distinction. In this conjecture we are confirmed by the ivory hair-pins, *plateal currency*, and great quantity of fragments of earthenware showing domestic usage.

Amongst the ruins of Pompej, on the street leading from the gate of Herculaneum to the forum, on a somewhat irregular area, there is the house of C. Sallustius described by Bechi, the ground-floor of which has a great resemblance to the one at Notabile.



The eminent author "Della Storia dell'Arte Cristiana ne'primi otto secoli della Chiesa," the Rev. Father Garrucci, to whom drawings of three mosaic pavements were sent, in his letter to me of the 24th April declares his opinion in the following terms.

"Esaminati gl'intonachi, i mattoni, i marmi, la lucerna, il frammento di tibia, il vetro opalizzato, i colori, e finalmente la distribuzione delle camere, il protiro, il vestibolo, il peristilio, i disegni dei mosaici, sono convinto che questa casa, evidentemente d'epoca romana, non si differisca in nulla dalle case pompeiane. Questo è quanto mi pare poter rispondere all'invito suo e della società. Delle rappresentanze trovate nei mosaici ho da dirle che sono di assai buon gusto: le colombe che bevono e si specchiano, il puttino che si tien cara l'uva e il granato simbolica imagine dell'autunno, la testa barbata e calva non hanno a degradarsi al confronto dei migliori mosaici pompeiani."

## PART II.

### *Historical.*

7. After the preceding detailed description, an attempt to conjecture the nature and object of the buildings anciently raised on this site, and the epoch of their construction and duration, will perhaps be found interesting.

The relics of these master-pieces of mosaic pavements, as they may well claim to be, considering the mosaic picture inlaid in them, and the fragments of statues representing Pagan subjects, belonged evidently to old Heathen Melita. Besides, the area enclosed by them, the flight of rooms and other appurtenances clearly traceable as forming part of these premises, show that they formed the ground-plan of an edifice of no ordinary dimensions, extending most probably to the neighbouring site of the wind-mill of Ghariexhem, where a few years ago large pieces of monochrome mosaic of the same description were discovered.

8. Moreover, these ruins have a close topographical connection with the important remains of two splendid marble buildings which adorned the old capital, a temple and a theatre sacred to Apollo, discovered in 1747 on the same plateau of Notabile and almost in the immediate neighbourhood. These ruins were discovered whilst digging the foundation of a private house in Strada Reale, opposite the Monastery of St. Benedetto and the old Municipality House. They consisted of several marble capitals of the Ionic order, marble cornices and ornaments,

large marble slabs and blocks of different dimensions; several bases for the support of statues and pillars; and a Latin inscription on one of the marble bases. The first two or three lines of this inscription, which was read by Cardinal Borgia, the learned Zaccaria, Count Ciantar, and Mons. Bres, giving the name of the individual in whose honour it was inscribed are wanting. It reads thus: "the first of all the Maltese of the Municipality erected the altar; he also consecrated the theatre of marble to Apollo; he also erected the four pillars in the vestibule, the parascenium (stage), and the podium (a projecting low basement); in all which work he spent 1792 sestertii (about £ 1285) by his own liberality. In acknowledgment thereof the Maltese by a general collection of money erected" (statue).

In 1868, another marmoreal inscription was found in the same locality opposite St. Benedetto, alluding to the order of the Decurions and to the erection and consecration of a statue. This inscription, which I think is inedited, is the property of the Rev. Dr. V. Vassallo, and reads thus: "Claudius Julius Patron of the Municipality erected and consecrated . . . . ? of marble with the statue and all its decorations, in fulfilment of his free promise, in which work he spent . . . . ?" — Evidently, this Claudius Julius is different from the liberal benefactor intitled "the First of the Maltese" in the other inscription; and the two inscriptions are of different dates, as the individual referred to in each of them was the Patron of the Municipality.

In 1710, very nearly on the same site, two entire marble pillars and a number of marble slabs of very large dimensions were discovered under the foundations of Casa Azzopardi, and it is known for certain that beneath the premises of Baroness Bonnici Galea several remains of the same description, and probably the statue of Apollo, are still hidden. The two pillars were sawn in two to make the pilasters of Casa Azzopardi: and out of the other marble slabs, the Altar tables of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and that of the Crucifix in the Cathedral and of St. Paul's in the Grotto, the thresholds of the Churches of the Holy Souls and of the Franciscans in Valletta, were made just as previously, about the year 1683, they had made the trophy of the Grand Master Caraffa of the marble remains of the temple of Proserpine discovered on the Emtarfa Hill in 1613, over the main entrance of the Auberge d'Italie.

9. Hence, the close proximity of the recently discovered buildings to two of the most magnificent edifices of the old Heathen Melita, exhibiting traces of the same grandeur and splendour

of construction ; the conspicuous position of the site itself on which these ruins are found, it being the centre and according to appearance the most aristocratic part of the old town, commanding the view of the whole Island, on the south and east, to the valley and dip leading to the great harbour where several remains still exist of that old race of sailors and merchants who first peopled the Island, and on the south and west, to the range of Benjemma Hills, to Wardia and plain of Benwarrat where at the time of St. Paul's shipwreck existed the farms of the Principal of the Maltese, and to Melleha and St. Paul's harbour inhabited at the same epoch by the same seafaring population ; the domestic arrangement and uncommon extent of these buildings of which certainly there could not be many such in a second or third rate town of rather small area, are all circumstances which make the conjecture highly probable that they were destined for the abode of the Representative of the Cæsars. In this building even the Senate of the place (*Ordo Decurionum*), to which the fragment of the Latin inscription found amongst the ruins alludes, and which existed in the Island during the time of the Roman Emperors, as will be hereafter proved, might have held their meetings.

10. We may now try to guess the epoch of the construction of these mosaic pavements. We know from Pliny (XXXVI) that *græcanica* and painted floors were first used by the Greeks until they substituted the mosaic floors called *lithostrota*. These pavements, made of divers coloured squares or dice, were first introduced amongst the Romans by Sylla between B. C. 88 and 78, and he had ordered the floor of the temple of Fortune at Præneste to be made of mosaic. We further know that J. Cæsar used to carry with him blocks of mosaic to Rome on his many tours. This is quite close to the beginning of the Christian Era. We further know that towards the last years of the Republic, the Romans naturalized the arts of Greece amongst themselves, and began to lavish their wealth on sumptuous and costly decorations of houses, and that even second rate towns imitating the capital had a profusion of mosaic in their dwellings. Hence, it would be scarcely possible to assign an epoch anterior to this to the construction of the mosaic pavements of Notabile, although it may be safely held that they are as early as those of the Romans.

The following quotation about the opulence of the natives is from Diodorus Siculus, who in B. C. 60 was travelling in Egypt, and probably had visited Malta in B. C. 43, before beginning his history on which he employed thirty years : " To

“ the south of Sicily are three islands each of them with towns  
 “ and harbours offering shelter to all ships cast thither by storms.  
 “ The first is Melita, 800 stadia from Syracuse, having many  
 “ convenient ports. The inhabitants abound in opulence, for  
 “ they have artificers for every kind of works; but they excel  
 “ most in their manufacture of linen which is beyond any thing  
 “ of the kind both in firmness of its texture, and its softness.  
 “ *Their houses are very beautiful (perpulchræ) and magnificently*  
 “ *ornamented* with pediments projecting forward and the most  
 “ exquisite stucco work. The inhabitants have become very  
 “ wealthy and increased in reputation and splendour.” The  
 quotation is from Book V, Ch. IV, and not Ch. III, as reported  
 by Abela, Ciantar, and Bres.

Cicero in his Orations against Verres dilates largely on the  
 flourishing industry of the island and the wealth of its citizens  
 in his time (B. C. 70), and one of the charges with which he  
 reproaches Verres Or. V. (pag. 415) is “ his cupidity in robbing  
 “ a Maltese gentleman of great nobility and wealth, of some fine  
 “ plate and specimens of chased work, and amongst them two  
 “ Thersillan goblets made by the hands of Mentor &c.” and of  
 “ his plundering from the temple of Juno an immense quantity  
 “ of ivory and many ornaments, among which some ivory  
 “ victories of ancient workmanship, wrought with exquisite skill.”  
 To the same effect might be quoted Valerius Max. and Clemens  
 Alex.

In confirmation of the statement of Diodorus about the  
 magnificence of Maltese houses towards that epoch and the  
 richness of their ornamentation, it must be mentioned that in  
 1729, in the inner creek of the Great Harbour under the Capuchin  
 Convent, the remains of an extensive mosaic pavement representing  
 fishes, dragons, serpents, &c. were found and described by Bali  
 Baron de Stadl. Others were found in different parts of the Island  
 in the time of Comm. Abela.

The pavements of the temple and theatre Apollo, which  
 were munificently repaired by the first of the Maltese in the  
 Christian Era, were also of mosaic, and fragments of it had been  
 preserved. “ Whilst digging the foundation of the Seminary a  
 “ great many fragments of mosaic work were discovered, but  
 “ thrown away as worthless amongst the rubbish of the cellars,  
 “ until Monsignor Sant had them excavated.” (See C. Vassallo,  
 Guide to the Museum). In September 1860 in the locality of  
 Bir-el-liun at Rabato of Notabile, while excavating for the  
 foundation of a wind-mill, the remains of an extensive mosaic  
 pavement were cleared out, samples of which are preserved in the

Library. In 1867, in another locality of the same town opposite to Emtarfa, many fragments of Roman mosaic of various dimensions were recovered by the Rev. F. Vassallo. But in fact such remains are to be found in abundance all round the neighbourhood of Notabile, so that very properly the late Librarian Dr. C. Vassallo styled that old town an inexhaustible deposit of mosaic and antiquity.

We may therefore consider Melita as one of the old Roman Cities, in the height of its prosperity just towards the last years of the Roman Republic and close after the beginning of Imperial Rome, and take a legitimate interest in uncovering its buried mosaic pavements and disinterring the splendid marble ruins of its public buildings belonging to that epoch.

11. It might be objected that the Romans had adopted from the Greeks, according to Pliny, the art of paving with mosaic. Previous to the Roman occupation there was a Greek settlement in Malta, and even during the epoch of the Romans many of the wealthy citizens, (as is amply proved by Greek sepulchral inscriptions), were Greeks descended from the early settlers. Thus, the mosaic pavements of Notabile might have been constructed during the Greek period, as nearly all objects of sculpture found in the Island are the product of Greek art. However, it is a fact that the objects of sculpture alluded to are of inferior workmanship, and will not stand comparison with the excellent mosaic pavements described.

Moreover, during the 200 years duration of the earliest Greek settlement, by which the town was built at the remote date B. C. 700-480, there are no evidences of prosperity in these islands; and the Greeks themselves had to bear the hard yoke of the Carthaginians for a period of 264 years up to the Roman conquest in B. C. 216.

12. Let us enquire now how long might the preservation of these princely buildings have lasted. This enquiry involves a subject about which the Maltese are, justly, very sensitive, and requires the preface of a short digression of local history.

The evidence of Livy (Lib. XXI, Cap. 51) states very clearly, that the Romans led by the Consul T. Sempronius Gracchus in the beginning of the second Punic war, A. U. C. 535, B. C. 216, expelled the Carthaginians from Malta capturing the garrison of about 2000 men commanded by Hamilcar, son of Gisco, as prisoners of war.

The privileges granted to the native community, who had sided with the Romans, were those of a *Civitas fœderata*, implying

self-government, the right of sending Ambassadors to the Republic to plead their own cause, and of coining their own money. Cicero bears full testimony to this in the IV and V Or. against Verres, in which the Maltese are styled Confederates and Allies of the Romans. The designation of *Civitas fœderata* was simply meant to determine the position of such cities with respect to the laws and general regulations of a province subject to Rome, without implying the enjoyment of the high privileges of Municipality, which the Romans conferred on some communities. The quotation of Cicero brings us very close to the Christian Era.

Many Maltese brass coins of this epoch still exist of two types; one bearing on the obverse, as usual, the head of Juno crowned with a diadem and the inscription *Melitaion*, and on the reverse a curule chair and the legend *C. Arruntanus Balb. Propr.*; and the second, the crowned head of Juno with a diadem on the obverse, and on the reverse the tripod of Apollo and the inscription *Melitas*. The administration of government of these islands, when one of the coins was issued, was therefore that of a Roman Proprætor, who very probably ruled also over Sicily, which since B. C. 57 was one of the eight Prætorian provinces. This was the case, at least, in the time of Verres (Cic. in Verrem V).

Although the same provinces were sometimes Consular and sometimes Prætorian, as decreed according to circumstances by the Roman Senate, there are no records of any Proconsular administration in Malta. But it is, moreover, nearly settled amongst Scholars, that the denominations of Proconsul and Proprætor of a province mean really Officers who had held, previously to their appointment in the province, Consular or Prætorian office in Rome, and not a Consular or Prætorian Agent as is seemingly implied by the Latin preposition.

After the year B. C. 27, a new arrangement of the provinces was made by Octavius Augustus of *Provinciæ Senatoriæ*, under the direct control of the Senate and governed indiscriminately by Proconsuls; and of *Provinciæ Imperatoriæ*, under the sole control of the Emperor, serving as a depot of troops commanded by a Legatus Cæsaris, and governed by a Procurator Cæsaris who in smaller provinces, or in portions of the larger provinces as was Malta, acted also as Legatus Cæsaris. The Procurators of the Imperial provinces were chosen mostly from the freedmen of Octavius, (Svetonius in Octavium, and Dion. Cassius LII, 23). With respect to Malta this is proved by a Latin inscription found on the Emtarfa hill in 1613, stating "that Crestion freedman of Augustus, Procurator of the Islands of Malta and Gozo, repaired the pillars together with the roofing and walls of the temple of

“ the Goddess Proserpine which were ready to tumble down on account of their antiquity. He likewise gilded the ball.” Up then to the Augustan epoch Malta was certainly not raised to the rank of a Municipality, of which after the Latin war (Livy IX, 45-45) there were two classes, *i.e.* the less favoured, or *sine suffragio*, enjoying the privilege of free intermarriage and trade with Rome; and the most favoured, or *cum suffragio*, being, besides, enrolled in a Roman tribe with the right of voting in the popular assemblies when residing in Rome.

13. Monsignor Bres, in his *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. V, Cap. II, is of opinion that the high privileges of Municipal institutions, which this community enjoyed during the Roman period, were granted by the Emperor Claudius. He grounds his opinion on a statement which he ascribes to Svetonius in Claudium, namely that “ that Emperor had granted Municipal institutions to several towns, through the immense presents given to Messalina his Queen, and to Pallas, Narcissus, Callistus, Polybius, and Felix, his freedmen.” This is near to A. D. 53, not far from the date of the shipwreck of St. Paul in St. Paul’s bay in the winter of A. D. 58. In fact all the inscriptions found in these islands, of a date posterior to the epoch of that Emperor, without any exception mention the existence of Municipal communities in the two Islands.

14. It is a general belief that after seeing St. Paul unhurt by the bite of the viper which fastened upon his hand (Act. XXIII), and other miracles performed during his three months’ stay together with St. Luke and St. Trophymus in Malta from the 10th February A. D. 58, the native population *en masse* embraced the Christian faith, abandoning the worship of Hercules, Proserpine, Juno, and Apollo, overthrowing their Pagan temples and theatres, breaking their idols, converting the palace of the Princeps Insulæ himself, who had received the Apostle in his villa at the Uardia and afterwards at Notabile, where the Apostle cured the father of Publius of fever and bloody flux, into a Church which is the present Cathedral. (Abela, Lib. II, Not. VII).

Now the substance of the narrative conveyed by this old belief is true, but it should be cleared of some circumstances thoroughly inconsistent with facts. Count Ciantar, quoting from Dion. Cassius and Xiphilinus, narrates “ that the Roman Emperor M. Aurelius, encircled with his army by the Quadi in a most critical position in the passes of the Bohemian mountains, had “ a Christian legion *ex Melitensibus militibus* in his ranks,

“ through whose supplications to their God he acknowledged the victory obtained over his foes. And this was the motive for issuing decrees abolishing the persecutions against Christians.” So far the quotation. This fact with its circumstances was narrated by the Emperor himself in his letters to the Senate, which were read by Tertullian and Eusebius in the 3rd century, and it is still represented in one of the bass-reliefs on the Antonine pillar. As Plutarch and Polybius state that a Roman legion since the accession of Augustus, not including the cavalry, was 6200 men strong, the quotation of Count Ciantar attesting that a legion of 6200 Maltese Christian soldiers was levied on the population of this Island by Marcus Aurelius in A. D. 174, would fairly prove that the bulk of the population had embraced Christianity previously to that epoch. However, this quotation is not from Dion but from his epitomist the old monk Xiphilinus, and I have consulted both the old Hanoverian edition in which the quotation is “*ex militibus Melitenis*,” and the old Hamburg edition in which it is “*legionem unam ex Melitene*.” Scholars nearly agree in considering Melitene, from which this legion was levied, to be in the Prefecture of Cappadocia.

15. But the early and apostolic establishment of Christianity in Malta, besides the internal evidence of the narrative of St. Luke in Ch. XXVIII of the Acts of the Apostles, is grounded on the firm and invariable local tradition, “and the only means to see truly a country, says Chateaubriand, is to see it with all its traditions and memories.” Moreover, it stands on ample and uncontested historical evidence. Neither was there any question about the visit of the Apostle to this Island before the one moved in the 10th century by the Greek Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, nor can there be any question at present. The old Roman Martyrology, as old as the apostolic times, published by Roswedus, under the date of the 21st January mentions the solemnity of St. Publius ordained Bishop of Malta by St. Paul. The same evidence about St. Publius as first Bishop of Malta, transferred to the Episcopal Chair of Athens after the martyrdom of St. Dionysius, and under the same date, is found in the two old Martyrologies published by the Venerable Bede in the 8th century, and by Adon, and others. Panvinius, Grutherus in *corpus inscriptionum*, and Gualtherus in *tab. ex Orthographia Aldi Manutii*, report two old Christian marmoreal inscriptions in Latin: the one erected by Dicanilia and Cælia on the tomb of a Christian in Malta, who was, respectively, the husband of the one and the father of the other; and the second



“to the everlasting sleep and security of the Maltese Lady Ælia Flavia aged 30 years, 3 months, and 10 days, erected by T. Fl. Hymnus her husband with whom she lived 13 years, and T. P. Marcellus, and Pitianus, and Flavia, and Ampelle her children, being the Consuls of Rome M. Gavius Orfitus and L. Arrius Pudens.” This Consular date is A. U. C. 918, A. D. 165. Several other Christian inscriptions of the same epoch were found in these islands, and may yet be found. St. John Chrysostom in the 4th century (Hom. 51, Tom. IX, ed. Paris, of 1731) says that “the adoption of the Christian faith by the natives of Malta since the visit of St. Paul was a notorious fact.” In the year 451, Acacius Bishop of Malta took part in the Œcumenical Council of Calcedonia celebrated by Pope Leo the Great; as likewise did Constantine Bishop of Malta in the V Roman Council held by Pope St. Symmachus in 501. In the time of St. Gregory the Great, in the 6th century, Trajan and Lucilius were successively Bishops of Malta, the last of whom was deposed by the Pope on account of his wealth accumulated by unlawful means, and the Clergy of the Island were ordered to proceed at once to elect his successor according to the apostolic constitution (Ep. LXII, Lib. VII; Ep. XVIII, Lib. XIII). Arator Diaconus, in 550, describes the coming and stay of St. Paul in the Island of Malta.

This is further proved by the very ancient cemeteries of St. Paul, St. Agatha, St. Venera, St. Cataldo, l'Abbatia, and several others within and without the limits of old Melita, in some of which the Christian monogram engraved on the tombs is still apparent. They are provided with the cemeterial Basilicas and places for the altar, and other arrangements in accordance with the Christian cemeteries of subterranean Rome. That of St. Agatha still exhibits the signs of dedication according to the old rite of the Roman Church previous to Pope St. Sylvester. It has been hastily asserted by some historians and other writers, that the only use of the catacombs, excavated by the early Greek settlers, made by the Maltese Christians was during the 220 years of the Arab invasion of the Island. Now although it be true that the catacombs, which may be said to be of purely Christian origin as is well proved by F. Marchi, were occasionally resorted to by the Christians during that period, it is authentically recorded that the natives lived in peace with the Arab invaders of their islands, who allowed them free practice of their religion. Moreover, the native population at that time was very sparse compared with the number and extent of the catacombs.

16. However, the circumstance of the early Maltese Christians being compelled to assemble in these subterranean places in order to celebrate their august mysteries, and religious ceremonies, evidently shews that the population had not embraced the faith *en masse*, and that the supposed conversion of the palace of Publius into a Church, at least as early as the time of St. Publius himself, is thoroughly groundless. On the contrary, the process of conversion to the Christian faith must have been as elsewhere slow though progressive, and as elsewhere, on account of Roman intolerance, characterized by the same privacy and seclusion to crypts and grottos as are still seen at Melleha, at St. Paul's, St. Agatha's, and Madonna's grottos of Notabile, &c., the only public worship allowed for a considerable time afterwards being the Pagan Roman. Indeed, Ptolomy, about A. D. 196, asserts that the Island of Malta was still highly renowned for the two sacred temples of Hercules and Juno.

17. We have seen how nearly the date of the shipwreck of St. Paul corresponds with the period of the reign of the Emperor Claudius, by whom, according to Monsignor Bres, privileges of Municipality may have been conferred upon these Islands. But Monsignor Bres endeavours to sustain his opinion by the authority of Svetonius in Claudium, and strange to say his quotation from the Chronieler of the XII Cæsars is altogether incorrect. Here is the statement of Svetonius in Claudium (XXV, XXVIII, XXIX) "Claudius deprived several peoples of their liberties . . . Entirely governed by his freedmen and his wives, he distributed offices or the command of armies, pardoned or punished, according as it suited their interest."— During the whole reign of Claudius not one single instance is recorded of a town being endowed with Municipal institutions, either by him or by his seven successors up to 95 A. D. Neither do we gather from the Annals of Tacitus that these institutions were granted by any of the Julian, or Flavian lines of Emperors.

At all events, the interesting series of Latin inscriptions found in the two islands does not warrant us to refer the introduction of Municipal institutions to other epoch than that of the Antonines, or at most of Hadrian A. D. 120. In confirmation of this I quote the following remarkable passage from Dion Cassius, Lib. LXIX, § 5, old Hamburg edition, referring to Hadrian. "He (the Emperor Hadrian) aided most magnificently the confederate as well as the subject cities. None of the Emperors had visited personally so many of them as he did, and nearly all of them he aided with money and victualling provision,

“and on many of them he liberally bestowed honours.” Spartianus adds that “up to Hadrian the administration of the State since the time of Octavius suffered no change. The great liberality of this Prince was extended to all the great towns, which he visited in his two seven years voyages, accepting on some occasions even honorary titles from local Municipalities.”

The inscriptions already referred to very clearly mention Municipal institutions as existing in the time of the Emperors posterior to Hadrian; the Municipal Orders of the Patrons, Decurions, and Plebs; the rank of the Municipality to which the Maltese were raised by being ascribed to the Quirine tribe, becoming *Cives Romani Optimo Jure*; the honours conferred on some of the Maltese; and the coexistence of the religious institution of the *Seviri Augustales* and the Dignity of *Flamen Augustalis* all in accord with the new political state of things.

Some of these inscriptions, authenticating the most important period of local history, when found were inlaid in the corners of St. George's Church at Gozo, the most filthy part of the market, and others in the wall near the entrance of the Castello, Gozo, and in various open sites at Malta, exposed to atmospheric denudation: “*Quod non fecerunt Barbari, fecerunt . . . !*”

18. Here is the series of these inscriptions, besides the one of Emtarfa of 1613, and the two of Notabile of 1747 and 1868, already reported in pages 11 and 15.

## I. (LATIN — GOZO).

Epoch of Hadrian and Antonine, — A. D. 117-160.

*“To Vallius Quirinus Postumus, Patron of the Municipality; one of the four quinquennial Judicial Magistrates (Jure Dicundo) of the Order of the Decurions of Hadrian Perpetuus. Enrolled amongst the 400 by the Divine Antoninus Pius, having honourably discharged all the public functions of his town? The same has gratuitously served as an Ambassador to the Emperor Hadrian, and the most magnificent Order of? The people of Gozo by general contribution on account of his many merits, dedicated.”*

## II. (LATIN — GOZO).

Same epoch.

"To *M. Vallius*, son of *Cajus* of the *Quirine Tribe*, honoured with a public horse (knighthood) by the *Divine Antoninus Augustus Pius*, the People of *Gozo* by contribution erected the Statue, for his merits and in comfort (*sollacium*) of *C. Vallius Postumus* (the one mentioned in the preceding inscription) Patron of the Municipality, his father."

## III. (LATIN — GOZO).

Epoch of *M. Aurelius* and *Septimius Severus*. — A. D. 169-210.

"To the Emperors *M. Aurelius*, *Antoninus Pius Augustus*, *Septimius Severus Pertinax Augustus*, the *Arabian*, the *Adiabenic*, the *Parthian*, *Pontifex Maximus*, by the Order of the *Decurions*."

## IV. (LATIN — GOZO).

Same epoch.

"To the *Lady Julia Augusta*, mother of the *Army*, wife of the Emperor *Cæsar Septimius Severus Pertinax*, the Municipality of *Gozo* erected by the care of *Dapsinus* Patron of the Municipality."

## V. (LATIN — GOZO).

Epoch of *Constantius Aurelius*. — A. D. 305.

"To Our Lord *C. Aurelius Constantius Augustus* the Republic of *Gozo* through the care of *Pollio Rufus*, son of *M.*, one of the *IIII quadrumviri*."

## VI. (LATIN — GOZO).

"To *Cestius Gallus Verenianus Lutatius Æmilianus*, son of *Poampus*, Patron of the Municipality, *L. Marcius Marcianus S. L.* to the best and dearest of friends."

## VII. (GREEK — MALTA).

On a sepulchral marble.

"*Lucius Castricius* of the *Quirine Tribe*, *Prudens*, Roman Knight, the First of the *Maltese*, \* the First of the Patrons, *Archpriest (Flamen)* of the God *Augustus*."

\* It is remarkable that the Greek expression is *Protos Melitajon*, identical with the expression of *St. Luke* (Act XXVIII), *Protos Insulæ*, alluding to *St. Publius*. In the Latin inscriptions it is rendered "*Primus Melitensium*" meaning the Chief man of the natives, who perhaps had the dignity of *Flamen Augusti* conferred upon him as in the case of *Castricius*, but was not the Roman representative of the *Cæsars*.

## VIII. (LATIN — GOZO).

*“ To Ceres Julia Augusta wife of the God Augustus, mother of Tiberius Cæsar Augustus, Lutatia, daughter of C. priestless of Augustus Tiberius perpetual Emperor . . . . . ”*

There are the fragments of three or four more inscriptions quite in the same style.

19. Now summing up all the circumstances, thus stands our argument.

The three important buildings of which the ruins have been discovered at Notabile, respectively, in 1747 and February 1881, were undoubtedly Pagan. Those of 1747, namely the temple of Apollo and the theatre annexed to it, were on one occasion rebuilt or at least extensively repaired by the “First of the Maltese” of the Municipality to whom a statue and inscription testifying the gratitude of the Maltese people for his liberality was raised; and on another occasion were enriched with a statue and decorations by a Patron of the Municipality called Claudius Julius. The fragment of an inscription found amongst the ruins of 1881 evidently refers to the Municipal Order of the Decurions. The introduction of Municipal institutions in the Island is of a date much later than the coming of St. Paul, say A. D. 121. The inscriptions above reported testify to the coexistence of the *Seviri Augustales* and the dignity of *Flamen Divi Augusti*, together with the Municipal institutions during the same period. Hence, Heathenism having continued to be the only public worship allowed, at least up to the time of Aurelius Constantius, those three Pagan buildings must have been preserved for the use to which they had been originally destined up to the same epoch. The coins found in the last discoveries fully warrant us in dating the permanence of the building up to Constantius II in A. D. 360, whilst the total absence of remains belonging to the epoch of the Greek Emperors under whose sway the Islands remained up to A. C. 870, does not warrant us to presume that the same building was still in existence long after A. D. 360. In fact the mere inspection of these ruins and the wild destruction of so many statues show the overzeal of the Christians against Heathenism towards the middle of the IV century.

20. Before dismissing the subject of this paper, I wish to state that one of my principal aims, besides the information given about the ruins of three of the chief buildings during the Roman

period, is to show that the Islands of Malta possess an interesting classical history of their own, which it would be very desirable and honourable to cultivate.

On account of the subject of this memoir, I have been obliged to confine myself to the Roman period. But there are at least (not to mention the early Greek, the Carthaginian, the Byzantine, the Arab, and the Norman, of which very few monuments have been discovered) three other historical periods, which, if not of superior, are certainly of equal interest to the Roman Pagan. These periods are the Phœnician, the Roman Christian, and that of the Knights of St. John.

The area of the two Islands is dotted with monuments of Cyclopean character, as well as with Phœnician tombs and other remains in a much better state of preservation than the dolmens and cromlecks of druidic Gaul; whilst the numerous and extensive catacombs at Notabile, Siggieui, Mintna, &c. are still unexplored.

In a report to Government, dated 20th January last, I submitted the advisability of the formation of a National Museum by the aggregation of all interesting local collections, whether Historical or Paleontological, into one place, where, properly exhibited, they might be instructive and most interesting to the many visitors of the Island.

I further suggested that, as unfortunately a great number of valuable and interesting objects have been presented to foreign Museums, or appropriated by private collectors in the Island, two of the leading principles of the South Kensington Museum should be adopted, namely, the production of accurate facsimiles of objects at present existing in foreign Museums with accurate records of their discovery and transfer abroad, and of having objects on loan from private Collectors and Churches.

The preservation of objects of interest discovered in the Island along with accurate records attending their discovery, would preserve at least a memorial of the existence of many monuments illustrative of the history of our Islands.

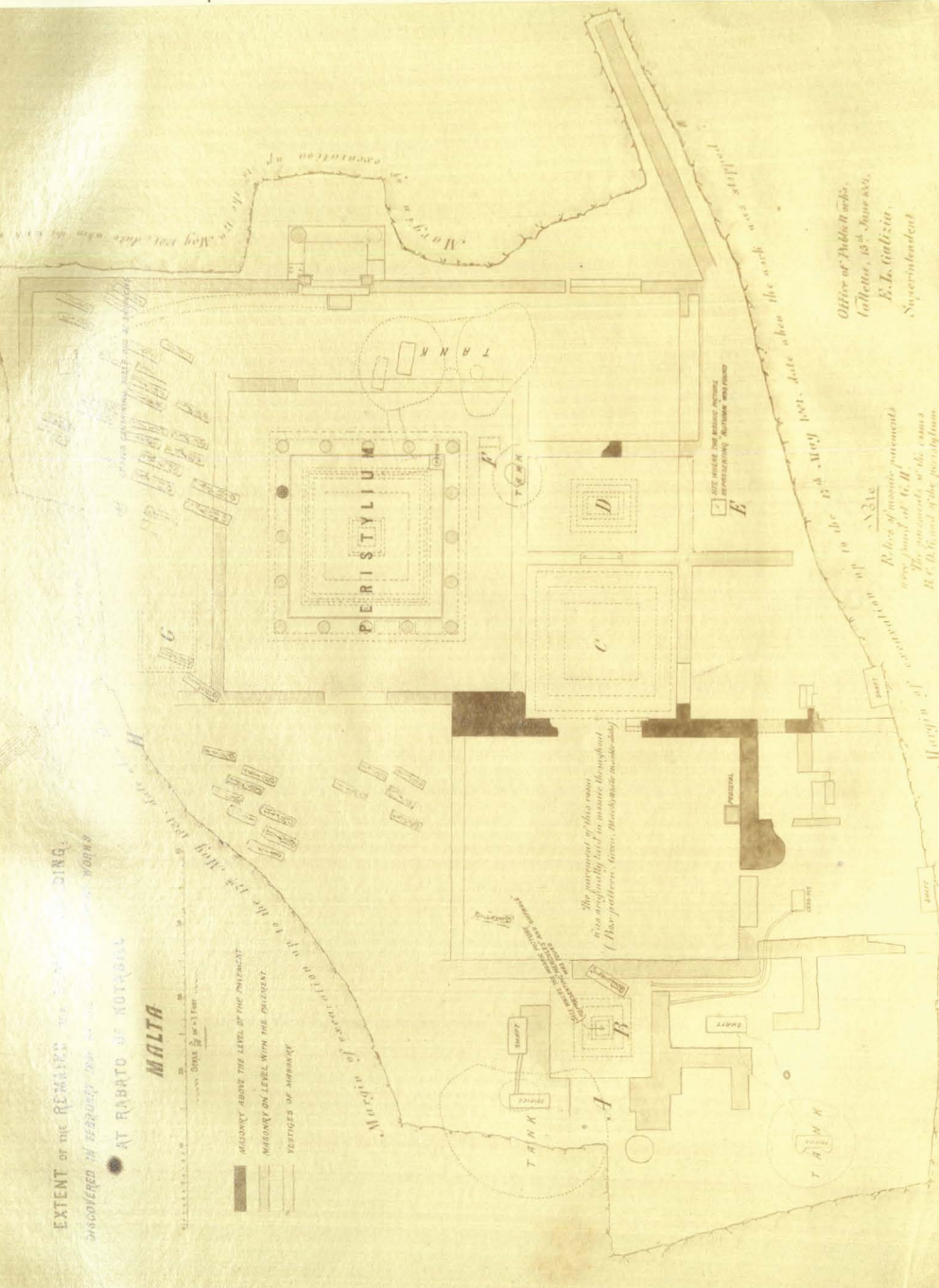
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EXTENT OF THE REMAINS DISCOVERED.  
 DISCOVERED BY SEPARATE MEASUREMENTS.

AT RABATO IN MONTAGNA

MALTA

MEASUREMENTS ABOVE THE LEVEL OF THE ENTRANCE  
 MEASUREMENTS ON LEVEL WITH THE QUICHEST  
 VESTIGES OF MURRAY



Office of Public Works,  
 Valletta, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1881.  
 E. L. Galizia,  
 Superintendent.

Relics of various monuments  
 were found at G. W. of the  
 The monuments of the ruins  
 were respectively built throughout  
 in various the various periods  
 of time the various being a table.

The pavement of this room  
 was originally laid in mosaic throughout  
 (The patterns, however, have since been mostly  
 destroyed)

SEE NOTE ON THE PLAN  
 APPROXIMATELY 100 FEET LONG

to the N. of the  
 to the S. of the  
 to the E. of the  
 to the W. of the  
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