
Malta Archaeological Review



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MALTA

The Archaeological Society Malta was founded in 1993 and is a registered Voluntary Organisation (V/O 195). It is formed of members with a genuine interest in archaeology in general and that of the Maltese Islands in particular. Anyone with such an interest, whether a professional archaeologist or not, is welcome to join. The Society is concerned with all matters pertaining to archaeology. One of its principal objectives is to promote and enhance the study of archaeology at all levels. It believes that it is only when there is a sufficient interest in, and understanding of, our archaeological heritage among the public at large, that this priceless heritage can be protected and preserved.

The Society organizes meetings and seminars, which are open to the public, as well as site visits both in the Maltese Islands and abroad. It publishes the *Malta Archaeological Review*, a peer-reviewed journal devoted to articles, reports, notes and reviews relating to current research on the archaeology of the Maltese Islands. The Society endeavours to maintain close relations with Heritage Malta, with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, and also the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta and to support their activities.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, MALTA

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MALTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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■ It has taken longer than expected to publish the eleventh issue of the Malta Archaeological Review. Your Editor is happy to carry a good part of the blame for the delay and will only say in his defence that the peer review process, and especially the revision of individual contributions that ensued, took longer than originally envisaged. Of course, it is left to readers to decide whether that wait was worth the while. We present in this issue seven research articles on a variety of subjects that range from prehistoric representations to British period glass, a report on the last surviving example of a *frilla* (the Maltese wooden boat), a note on the Phoenician Hall at the National Museum of Archaeology, a review article on the Bronze Age, besides a short selection of book reviews. We hope that future issues of the *Review* carry more archaeological reports or interim notes about discoveries that are announced in the press from time to time. The Society is pleased that sponsorship from APS Bank has allowed it to publish this issue, and to enrich its annual activities, including lectures and site visits, by speakers from abroad. We are also grateful for the support of The Agapi Trust which has enabled publication of this issue as well as other projects created by the Society.

■ Sadly, two archaeologists known to members of the Society passed away recently, Dr Andrew Townsend in 2015 and Dr David H. Trump in August 2016. We carry an appreciation of their life and work in this issue. Andrew will be remembered as the archaeology undergraduate student who discovered what are arguably the finest pieces of prehistoric art unearthed during the excavations of the Brocchtorff/Xagħra Circle excavations in September 1991: the seated paired figures on a bed and the so-called Shaman's cache. David, who made a formidable team with his archaeologist wife Bridget, will be fondly remembered

for his publications and for the talks on Maltese prehistory he delivered passionately to audiences that packed lecturing halls in Malta and Gozo. His firsthand experience of archaeological sites, not least his beloved Skorba, where he made discoveries between 1961 and 1963 that were to change the course of Maltese prehistory forever, brought it all to life in an inimitable way. The loss of Andrew and David has deprived us of two figures who were in love with the Maltese islands, their people, and their archaeology.

■ In the last issue we carried a review of Roger Ellul-Micallef's *magnum opus* on the life of Themistocles Zammit, first curator of the Valletta Museum and former Rector of the University of Malta (*Zammit of Malta: His times, life and achievements*. 2 vols. Allied Publications, 2013). Zammit was bestowed with an honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Oxford on 1 June 1920. Both Ellul-Micallef and the Editor, independently of each other, had long sought a copy of the oration that was read on the occasion by the university's orator A.D. Godley. But a copy of the speech was not kept, we were both told by the Bodleian archivist. As luck would have it, a copy had actually come your Editor's way years ago when Andrew Townsend had discovered that the oration had been published in the journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, *MAN* (issue 79-80, October 1920: 159-60) and sent it to him on 2 November 2002! The Editor had forgotten all about it and only came across it when going through some of Andrew's papers recently. Zammit had been made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1919 on the instigation of the archaeologist Margaret Murray. We reproduce here the Latin original together with a translation by Carmel Serracino, Assistant Lecturer in Classics at the University of Malta.

Duco ad vos hominem in eo scientiae genere versatum quod omnes universitates praecipuo studio fovere debent. Nam cum in Insula Melita non solum antiquissimae gentes, sed et multae quarum annales sunt in manibus, vestigia sua reliquerint; primus hic antiquitatis, praesertim vero templorum Tarsinensium et Hypogei, quod vocatur, reliquias tum diligentissime investigavit, tum in Vallettano illo musaeo quod ab ipso fundatum est, ita monumenta prioris aevi disposuit atque ordinavit ut priscae gentis mortalium vitae maximum lumen effunderet. Atque has curas et haec studia historicorum et archaeologorum animos praecipue tangentia ita secutus est homo versatilis ut non nisi ἐν παρέργῳ et quoties a medicina sua vacaret, laudem inter eruditos quaereret cuius enim est in maiora industriae et ingeni acuminis, idem febrium causas exquirendo et inventas tollendo Melitensibus suis vitae condicionem multo tolerabiliorem fecit.

Habetis virum omnium numerorum, et qui res praeteritas idem scrutandi et praesentes meliores reddendi sit peritus. Nunc igitur cum in Britanniam venerit ut repertorum suorum descriptione aures atque animos audientium oblectet, datur nobis occasio Asclepii eundem et Musarum discipulum ordinibus nostris ascribendi.

Itaque presento vobis virum eruditum Themistoclem Zammit, illustrissimi Ordinis Sanctorum Michaelis et Georgii comitem, Medicinae Doctorem, Chemiae Professore in Universitate Melitensi, Musaei quod est in urbe Valletta curatorem, ut admittatur ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

I present to you a man steeped in that field of learning which all universities should cherish with preeminent zeal. For in the Island of Malta it is not only the ancient races that have left their traces, but also many others whose chronicles are extant; this man was the first to carefully investigate the remains of ancient times, especially the temples at Tarxien and the Hypogeum, as it is called; then, in the renowned museum at Valletta which he himself founded, he placed and organised his ancestors' monuments in such a way as to shed as much light as possible on the life of the mortal beings of that ancient race. Yet such is the versatility of this man that, while following the careful and zealous perusal of history and especially that of the material essence of archaeology, which he did only as a secondary occupation and as often as he could find leisure from his dedication to medicine, he sought his place

of honour among the learned which is his for the exceptional degree of industry and sheer talent; moreover, by investigating and, once discovered, by removing the causes of a fever he also made the condition of life much more tolerable for his fellow Maltese countryman.

You have a man in every respect, and one who is likewise skilled in inspecting the past and in rendering the present better. Since he has now come to England to delight the ears and the minds of listeners with the description of his discoveries, we have the opportunity to induct this disciple of Asclepius and the Muses into our Order.

Therefore, I present to you Themistocles Zammit, an erudite man, a Companion in the most famous Order of St Michael and St George, a Doctor of Medicine, a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Malta, and the curator of the Museum in the city of Valletta, to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa.

■ The good work that Heritage Malta, the state agency entrusted with the management of many of Malta's heritage sites, is doing is there for all to see. Sites and monuments long neglected have been professionally conserved and restored, often after patient environmental monitoring campaigns were carried out to ensure the right visitor facilities and other preservation measures be put in place. Three of the projects – St Paul's Catacombs, the Tarxien Temples, Fort St Angelo – were carried out after substantial finances were secured from European structural funds, in particular the European Regional Development Fund which is meant for the protection, promotion and development of cultural heritage. Government did its bit by committing the fifteen per cent of the co-financing required. The inauguration of each project brought together months of work from dedicated teams, including field archaeologists who unearthed, in each and every site, material culture remains that throw valuable light on the past history of each site. Useful information appears in the three booklets that were published to mark the completion of the projects in 2015, besides other important research that appears in a collection of peer-reviewed papers that came out of a conference held in September 2013. Thanks to Heritage Malta, even the Phoenicians are on the way back in Malta after a chequered history of studies about which Anna Maria Rossi writes in an article in this issue. At long last, part of the first-



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
MALTA

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(V/O 195)

9 January 2015

Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici LL.D, MP
Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government
30, Old Treasury Street,
Valletta VLT 1512

Dear Hon. Minister,

We write with reference to the public consultation process of the amendments to the Cultural Heritage Act (2002) issued on 28 November 2014.

The importance of the legislation regulating Cultural Heritage enacted in the Maltese parliament in 2002 cannot be underestimated. We believe that the separation of the roles of regulator (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage) and operator (mainly Heritage Malta) in the field of Cultural Heritage has brought about important and far-reaching consequences in the field of archaeology. We are of the opinion that that separation should remain and, if anything, be strengthened to reflect the successes that have been achieved over the last twenty-two years. However, we are of the opinion that a number of issues should be tackled by specific changes to the Act.

1. We are concerned that the amount of data generated as a result of developer-funded archaeological interventions, required by law and international conventions to which Malta is a signatory, is **not** reaching the public in any form or shape. The Cultural Heritage Act (2002) makes no specific reference to publication as a medium for the dissemination of knowledge generated by archaeological interventions and explorations (namely, terrestrial and underwater excavations, terrestrial and underwater field-survey and prospection). This is clearly a grey area that should be addressed. In view of this, we are proposing that a system, acknowledged in the revised Act in appropriate clauses of Part VII, article 43, should be in place to ensure that:

(a) the results of archaeological interventions should be published so that Malta conforms to the requirements of the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992) to which it is party. We are suggesting that the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage should publish annually a list of all the archaeological excavations, explorations and investigations carried out in Malta and in Maltese territorial waters together with a brief interim report of each intervention. This information is to be accessible through the Web.

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(b) the entity which has been given a permit to carry out archaeological excavation and/or exploration will be given five years (in the case of minor interventions) and ten years (in the case of major interventions) from the completion of its fieldwork to publish a final report on the results obtained. After five or ten years, the rights of the licensee to publish those results will be forfeited to third parties in which case the original documentary archive and all the finds be passed on to the state regulator which will make them available for study to third parties.

(c) in the case where the state regulator is itself conducting archaeological excavations and/or explorations, the same expectations to publish a final report on the results obtained apply. The right to publish those results is forfeited to third parties after five or ten years have elapsed in which case the state regulator will have to ensure that access to researchers, including students and experienced researchers/practitioners is granted. In this case, the Committee of Guarantee will have to ensure that requests to study the material are not being withheld unnecessarily.

2. We are aware that the process of publication of the results of archaeological interventions and explorations is a time-consuming and expensive exercise. We believe that the principle laid down in the European Convention of the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage – whereby the developer should take on the cost of exploration and publication of results – be adhered to. We are suggesting that in the case of developer-funded archaeological excavations and interventions, funds be set aside for basic post-excavation analysis and at least the publication of an interim report.

3. In order for Government to be seen to be assisting in the task of ensuring that the knowledge generated through archaeological fieldwork is entering the public domain, we are proposing that a percentage of the funds from the Heritage Fund be devoted to the publication of the results of archaeological excavations and explorations (Article 15.3).

The Archaeological Society, Malta is aware that in order to implement the changes being proposed here the state's regulatory body – Superintendence of Cultural Heritage – needs to be strengthened. The current human resources of the office are **not** sufficient to meet the demands of the tasks for which it is responsible at law. We urge your Government to ensure that provisions are made in next year's financial estimates to rectify this situation.

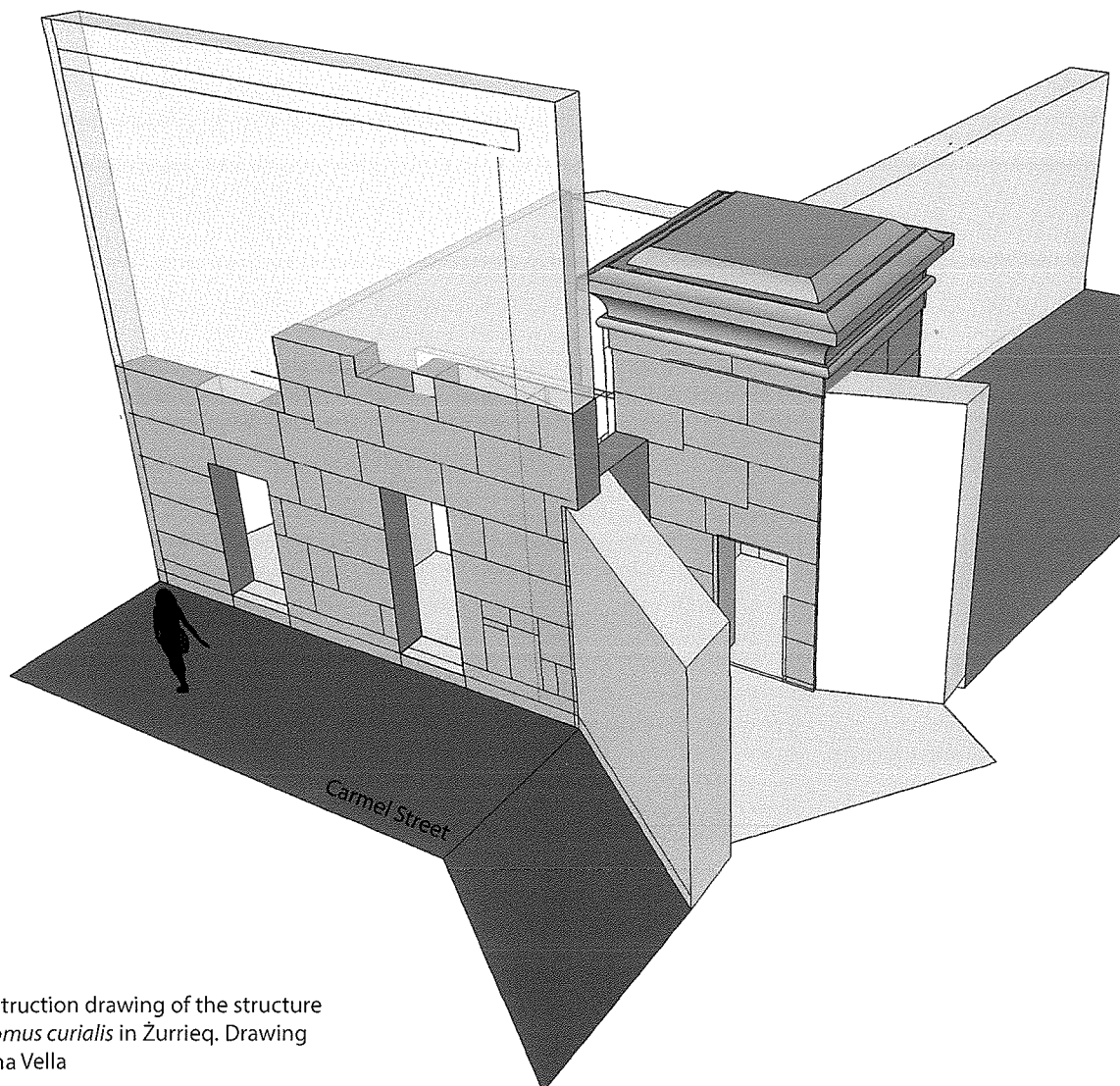
Finally, we believe that a serious effort has to be made to break down the barriers that are keeping data generated by any type of research from being shared effectively in order to allow all entities recognized by legal instruments to carry out their duties properly. We see no reason why the inventories and databases of Heritage Malta, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage should not be accessible by **all** parties.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicholas Vella [signed]
obo Committee, Archaeological Society Malta

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A reconstruction drawing of the structure in the *domus curialis* in Żurrieq. Drawing by Joanna Vella

millennium BC cultural legacy is on show in a new hall that was inaugurated recently at the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta, with some spectacular finds that find pride of place in any textbook on the ancient Phoenicians. Readers of the *Review* can learn more about the process of the curation of the exhibition elsewhere in this issue. How important that exhibition is, despite the size, dawned on your Editor when he was recently asked by an official from the Malta Tourism Authority to recommend archaeological sites and collections in Malta in order to set up a cultural heritage trail as part of an initiative called “The Phoenicians’ Route Cultural Tourism Programme” supported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. This is an international route crossing three continents, 18 Mediterranean countries and more than 80 towns of Phoenician-

Punic origin (http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/phoeniciansrouteculturaltourismprogramme_brief2.pdf). Alas! it was only possible to recommend the Phoenician Hall at the National Museum. For all the other sites worthy of a visit – namely, Tas-Silġ (Marsaxlokk), Ras il-Wardija (Kerċem), Ras ir-Raġeb (Baħrija) – are simply not open to the public with the cave site in Gozo even having had an emergency conservation order placed on it by the Planning Authority in 1998. Besides, none of the cemeteries or graves that dot the rocky Rabat-Dingli uplands are managed in any way to allow unhindered public access. Very few of them, in fact, are free of rubbish and overgrowth that has accumulated over the last century if not more. Themistocles Zammit had the foresight back in 1925 to ask Government to dismember a portion of its land at Ghajn Klieb, the site of a small

Phoenician and Punic cemetery, part reused in Roman times, for its archaeological importance (see N.C. Vella et al., 2000. Ghajn Klieb, Rabat (Malta). A preliminary report of an archaeological survey, *Malta Archaeological Review* 4: 10-16). By 1934, the public path leading to the site seems to have disappeared from the deeds, effectively making it impossible to get to the site without trespassing (see A. Borg, 2002. *Ruins in a Landscape*. Unpublished B.A.(Hons) dissertation, University of Malta). It is not clear now who has legal title to that piece of land where ancient remains are dwarfed by incongruous re-development. The star site to visit for Phoenician and Punic aficionados remains the building (often called "tower") that has been incorporated in the *domus curialis* in Żurrieq, but first recorded by Bishop Molina in 1680. A reconstruction drawing of the structure, prepared by Joanna Vella and based on a study she made with Maria Grazia Cassar is reproduced here. A visit to the site has to be pre-booked for a small party, and access will depend on the availability of the busy parish priest who will have to allow visitors right through his residence, parish office, and garden to enjoy what is a unique and little known site. But that will hardly suffice for a heritage trail and a concerted effort should be made to see that access to the other sites is facilitated. We take the opportunity to throw down the gauntlet to Heritage Malta so that the opening to the public of the multi-period temple remains at Tas-Silġ will be a key priority in the medium term.

■ In the last issue of the *Malta Archaeological Review* we reported that Government was intent on revising and updating the current cultural heritage legislation (Cultural Heritage Act (2002), Chapter 445 of the Laws of Malta), not least to ensure that warrants to Conservators-Restorers be issued – a long sixteen years after the enactment of the law. In January 2015, the Society had sent the Minister of Justice, Culture and Local Government its recommendations following a public consultation process on the revision of the law. Whilst we patiently wait to see what the revised act will include, we reproduce our recommendations in full here for the record and to inform readers where the Society stands on the matter of ensuring that knowledge about the large number of archaeological discoveries being made on the Maltese Islands reach the public without delay. Let's not forget, however, that any legal requirements made on practising archaeologists as a result of amendments

to the current legislation – possibly on the lines we suggested to the Minister – will not be backdated. Therefore, the pressing issue will remain how to tackle the enormous backlog of finds processing and report writing (stratigraphy and finds) without having to shift that burden lock, stock and barrel on future generations of archaeologists. If this were to happen, we run the risk that the task becomes in itself an archaeological one, in which far too much time will be wasted to "dig" through archives and collections, through notes, registers, stratigraphic unit sheets, and finds to come up with as comprehensible a narrative as records allow. We really should not get to this (see M. Heaton, P. Hinton & F. Meddens, Finishing someone else's story, *The Archaeologist* 59 (2006): 5). The narrative – even an interim one – should be written by those who were responsible for the excavations and did the actual work on site and in museum stores. In practice this can only be achieved by a dedicated team of researchers, possibly including senior students, with sufficient funds set aside for the purpose. The investment that Government will have to make in order for the long-awaited reports to appear will bear fruit in the short term. And if the usual questions are posed by short-sighted purse holders, of the sort, "why invest in something as 'shaky' as the humanities dealing with the past, at a time of precarious present and future?" I urge them to take some time off and go through the thought-provoking article by Eleftheria Pappa (Endangered humanities in a time of crisis in the EU and beyond: shrinking, downsize and the itinerant academic, *Fast Capitalism* 13(1) 2016 – available at www.fastcapitalism.com). The author, an archaeologist of the ancient Phoenician world, reminds us that:

'[...] archaeology is not a cultural product, a small extra something an affluent family enjoys on a Sunday morning. The humanities as a whole are not some added airy-fairy pursuit that wastes resources unless a tangible economic benefit can be linked to it. Humanities are central, indispensable to a society that needs reflection, critical thinking and cultivation to exist in a democratic society that values participation and collective decision-making through the careful selections of its representation bodies.'

Nicholas C. Vella
Msida, 1 October 2016

2012

18 January

Ms Maria Elena Zammit (Heritage Malta)
Lecture: *Update on the Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum: conservation, research, interpretation and management plan*

28 January

Mr David Cardona (Heritage Malta)
Site visit: *The quarries, cart ruts and tombs in the Żebbiegħ area*

15 February

Prof. Joseph M. Brincat (University of Malta)
Lecture: *Before Maltese. Languages in Malta from 5000 BC to AD 1000: theories, myths and facts*

25 February

Mr Oliver Mallia (independent researcher)
Site visit: *The underground flour mill at Xemxija/Mistra*

16 March

Heritage Malta and the Archaeological Society Malta
Book launch: *Site, artefacts and landscape: Prehistoric Borġ in-Nadur, Malta* edited by Davide Tanasi and Nicholas C. Vella

21 March

Prof. Anthony Bonanno (University of Malta) and Ms Maria Zammit (University of Malta)
Presentation: *Aphrodite or Pandora? An Attic krater by the Louvre Painter in the National Museum of Archaeology*

24 March

Fr Eugene P. Teuma (independent researcher)
Site visit: *The newly discovered and excavated catacombs below a private residence in Rabat*

18 April

Prof. Anthony J. Frendo (University of Malta)
Lecture: *Two sides of the same coin: Archaeology as a specialized form of history*

28 April

Mr Keith Buhagiar (independent researcher)
Site visit: *San Ġakbu, Qattara, Simblija and Għar Żerriegħa areas of Wied ir-Rum*

16 May

Dr Gordon J. Knox (geologist)
Lecture: *Geological hazards: Evidence from geology, archaeology and ancient to recent history*

27 October

Fr Eugene P. Teuma (independent researcher)
Site visit: *Wied Ingraw*

31 October

Dr Ina Berg (University of Manchester)
Lecture: *The sea in prehistoric Greece: symbolism, meaning, and living space*

7 November

Prof. Werner Mayer S.J. (Pontificio Istituto Biblico)
Lecture: *Un babilonese smarrito a Malta*

21 November

Dr Eoin Grogan (Maynooth University)
Lecture: *Megalithic monuments in a changing landscape—news from the Irish Neolithic*

12 December

Ms Iona Muscat (Heritage Malta)
Lecture: *Megalithism and monumentality in prehistoric North Africa: new perspectives on prehistoric tombs in the Maghreb and the Sahara*

2013

16 January

Mr Ernest Vella (independent researcher)
Lecture: *Giren*

26 January

Site visit: *St Gregory's Church, Żejtun, and a heritage trail in the outskirts of Żejtun, taking in the sparse remains of the prehistoric temple at Ħal Ġinwi and those of the Xrobb l-Għagin temple, followed by a visit to the 19th-century Delimara lighthouse*

20 February

Dr Heiko Wagner (independent archaeologist)
Lecture: *Roman Settlements in the Black Forest (SW-Germany) - finding the unexpected*

20 March

Dr Timmy Gambin (University of Malta)
Lecture: *Looking for Paul - between Scripture and Science*

17 April

Ms Sharon Sultana (Heritage Malta)

Lecture: *Presenting the Past to the Present: Updates on the Permanent Exhibition Project at the National Museum of Archaeology*

27 April

Ms Ella Samut-Tagliaferro (archaeological monitor)

Site visit: *Fort St Elmo*

15 May

Dr George Cassar (University of Malta) and Mr David Cardona (Heritage Malta)

Lecture: *Studies and investigations currently being carried out by Heritage Malta: the St Augustine and Ta' Bistra Catacombs project*

25 May

Mr David Cardona (Heritage Malta)

Site visit: *Ta' Bistra catacombs, Mosta and St Augustine catacombs, Rabat*

11 July

Dr Nicholas C. Vella (University of Malta)

Site visit: *Żejtun Roman Villa excavations*

23 October

Dr Timmy Gambin (University of Malta)

Lecture: *Four decades later: revisiting Honor Frost's excavation at Mellieħa Bay*

26 October

Mr Ernest Vella (independent researcher)

Site visit: *Mellieħa and Selmun*

20 November

Mr Christian Mifsud (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage)

Lecture: *Revisiting Ramla l-Ħamra - a Roman villa and its setting*

23 November

Dr Anton Bugeja (independent researcher)

Day trip to Gozo

11 December

Mr Keith Buhagiar (independent researcher)

Lecture: *Revisiting Wied ir-Rum: the Tal-Callus and Simblija estates and other recent archaeological discoveries*



Site visit to the unfinished salt pans at Tal-Arloġġar, limits of Marsalforn, Gozo. (Photograph: Anton Bugeja)

Dr Andrew Peter John Townsend

1961-2015

Nicholas C. Vella

It was nearly lunchtime on 29 September 1991. Somebody had just called out to all diggers to collect the loose spoil and pack up. It was a hot day at the Brochtorff Circle in Xagħra, Gozo and everybody was looking forward to a light lunch and a siesta before returning to the archaeological site at 4 o'clock. But one of us was riveted to the spot where he was digging, an area below the original cave wall in Area X. Something exciting had just turned up in the deposit. Andrew Townsend (Fig. 1) called out Caroline Malone, one of the site directors, to show her what he had found. Caroline was visibly excited. I walked over from my patch in Area H to have a look. A group of small stone figurines with their heads and parts of the bodies could be clearly made out. That season we had got used to exciting finds being recovered from this Late Neolithic burial complex. Small terracotta figurines – of the “Maltese fat lady” type – had been found regularly throughout the month of August. Andrew himself had made news some days earlier for not far from the same spot he had discovered a beautiful limestone statuette depicting two figures seated on a bed. But these pieces were altogether different from what had been found before not just at this prehistoric site but anywhere else on Malta and Gozo. Twice lucky in the same season, we all thought with a bit of envy! I quickly took a couple of photographs of Andrew’s finds for the fieldwork student report that I was to submit for assessment (one of which is reproduced here – Fig. 2; the conserved pieces appear in the photograph that graces the cover to this issue).

Years later when we were both doctoral students at the University of Bristol, Andrew and I often reminisced – with the mandatory wine glass in hand and music from Charles Camilleri’s *Malta Suite* in the background (or it may have been a band march from a village festa) – about those finds and their significance, and in particular how they were slowly

turning into icons of national identity: from postage stamps, telephone cards, tourist magazines and postcards to travelling exhibitions, they became choice pieces to put on display for public consumption, the first time for the opening of Malta House in Piccadilly, London, in June 1995. We were both extremely pleased to see the prehistoric pieces together on exhibition at the revamped Gozo museum in Casa Bondi in the Cittadella in 2011 and we were looking forward to seeing them again in the new visitors’ centre annexed to the Ġgantija temples inaugurated in 2013. Andrew knew what to expect since he was meant to review a book on Ġgantija and the new exhibition complex for this issue of the *Malta Archaeological Review*. This was not to be, unfortunately, as Andrew soon began to fight a deadly disease to which he succumbed on 25 June 2015 in Bristol.

Andrew Townsend was born in Germany on 2 February 1961 where his parents were stationed with the armed forces before moving to Cyprus. His earliest “excavations” took place there amidst prehistoric and Roman settlements. On the family’s return to England, Andrew boarded at Gordon’s School in Woking, Surrey, an experience that instilled in him discipline and rigour, qualities that were to characterise his professional life. In 1978 he joined the construction company Beard’s, in Swindon, Wiltshire, as a trainee quantity surveyor and obtained a Higher National Certificate. A short-lived marriage ended in divorce. In 1990 he joined the University of Bristol as a mature student and went on to achieve a joint Honours in Archaeology and History of Art in 1993. His participation in the Gozo excavation, with its rewarding finds, and the backing he received from Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone, must have played an important role in deciding what to do next. A University of Bristol Postgraduate Scholarship and later funding from the



Figure 1. Andrew Townsend during the 1993 excavation campaign at the Brochtorff Circle, Xaghra, Gozo.

British Academy allowed Andrew to start research for a doctorate on the social context of prehistoric figurines from the Mediterranean and the Near East which he completed in 1997. During these years he travelled as much as his dwindling savings and grants allowed, and sought first-hand experience at key sites, including 'Ain Ghazal in Jordan (1995-96), famous for its large anthropomorphic statuary in lime plaster from the eighth millennium BC. Before travelling to Jordan he even took Arabic lessons to make sure he would get along with the locals. Andrew also kept up correspondence and exchanged information with key specialists in the field of prehistoric figure studies, including Denise Shmandt-Besserat, for whom he had great respect. For the academic year 1997-98, he was awarded a Jerusalem scholarship at the British School of Archaeology in Israel where he had stayed for two weeks in May 1996. I can still recall him recounting – his eyes wide open, a big grin, nodding his head up and down – the experience he had at Tel Aviv airport on entering the country for the first time, when his research papers and photocopied articles from anthropology journals were carefully checked by the military security personnel. They kept asking why an



Figure 2. The so-called "Shaman's cache" photographed immediately after discovery, September 1991. Photograph by Nicholas C. Vella.

archaeologist would need 'pictures of naked women'. Andrew must have been steadfast in the matter-of-fact answer he repeated *ad nauseam* for more than an hour in the interrogation room: 'they are needed for interpreting prehistoric figures!' The way the human body was represented in the Neolithic was a theme to which Andrew returned on several occasions (Ephibism in Maltese prehistoric art, in *Cult in Context* edited by D. Barrowclough and C. Malone, Oxbow, 2007), not least in the fine volume of essays that he co-edited, with George Nash, with difficulty during the last phase of his illness but did not survive to see in print (Searching beyond the artefact for ritual practices: evidence for ritual surrounding the unclothed human body on prehistoric Malta during the Temple period, in *Decoding Neolithic Atlantic & Mediterranean Island Ritual*, Oxbow, 2016).

After his stay in Jerusalem, Andrew returned to Bristol and reluctantly sought employment in developer-funded archaeology, first with the Bath Archaeological Trust (1998-99) and Avon Archaeological Unit (1999-2001) before moving on to the Bristol & Regional Archaeological Services. Unbeknown to Andrew when he started, this job was

to bring with it great satisfaction over the next decade as it brought him close to the construction industry. During this period he attained a range of qualifications and professional accreditations, besides raising the bar for standards of research into primary source material. Fresh from his first experience on a project in Bath, he managed to convince the UK's Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) to publish a contract suitable for archaeological purposes, one that remains the preferred form of contract for all civil engineering projects with an archaeological component. Through his membership of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) he was a driving force in establishing understanding over health and safety concerns in the grey area that is the overlap between the construction industry and archaeological practice. In 2011 he was invited by the British Standards Institution Committee for the redrafting of BS 7913 'The Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings.' He also chaired the Health and Safety Group on behalf of the UK's Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers when the revised Construction and Design Management (CDM) Regulations were issued for public consultation in 2013. Andrew was also selected as an Ambassador for the CIOB in 2008, an honorary post he cherished. In the meantime, his scholarly interests remained alive, and for years, using personal leave, he travelled annually to Libya to work with David Mattingly on the Fezzan Project in the Sahara between 2000-2002 (and went on to publish a chapter on art objects modelled in clay and the accompanying catalogue in *The Archaeology of Fazzān*, vol. 4: survey and excavations at Old Jarma (Ancient Garama) carried out by C.M. Daniels (1962-69) and *The Fazzān Project* (1997-2001), edited by D. Mattingly *et al.*, Society for Libyan Studies, 2013) and

in the West Indies in 2002-2005 as part of the Nevis Heritage Project led by the University of Southampton.

Besides being a rock fan, Andrew was an authority on English porcelain, particularly Worcester porcelain (his grandfather was the great painter Edward (Ted) Townsend who worked at the Royal Worcester factory between 1918 and 1971, the year he retired) and remained a member of the English Ceramic Circle since joining in 1984. He was also elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2011.

Andrew will be remembered by everyone who was lucky to work with him as being courteous, loyal and kind. His advice and company, and above all his generosity of spirit, will be sorely missed by his close friends and acquaintances.

In choosing to award him posthumously, the Society for the Environment of which Andrew was a chartered member for eight years, the Chair of the Council, Prof. Peter Matthews OBE, had this to say about him: 'In many respects it is certainly no exaggeration to say that Andrew's efforts and unstinting personal commitment have helped improve the knowledge and skills of hundreds of his peers: this is something CIOB and society in general will always be grateful for.'

Andrew Townsend is survived by his mother Nova, his sister Helen and his brother Chris. A tree was planted in Andrew's memory in 2015 near White Tree roundabout in Durdham Down, Bristol.

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Dr David Hilary Trump

1931-2016

Nicholas C. Vella

David Trump died suddenly on 31st August 2016 in Cambridge, three days after celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday.

David was born in 1931 in Chelmsford in Essex, England. An interest in archaeology was to develop in his late teens when in the company of his father he took part in two excavations run by the newly founded Roman Essex Society. But it was a visit to Beeleigh Abbey near Maldon in Essex, the house of Mr and Mrs Foyle – of bookshop fame (W.A. Foyle's in Charing Cross Road, London) – and permission from the charismatic Willie Foyle to browse his library at will, that sparked David's imagination. By the time he read part 2 of volume 3 of Arthur Evans's *The Palace of Minos*, his ambitions were set. Trump went to King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford in 1942. A state scholarship allowed him to commence his undergraduate studies at the University of Cambridge, taking the Archaeology and Anthropology Tripos which he completed with a First in 1955.

Trump's connection with Malta goes back to Easter 1954 when he decided to join a young archaeologist, John Evans, on the island. Evans, a research fellow from Trump's own Pembroke College had just been appointed to catalogue the prehistoric antiquities of Malta and to carry out limited excavations at the megalithic temples as part of a major survey project of Malta's prehistory led by the Royal University of Malta and funded by the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund.

David Trump returned to Malta in 1958 to take up a five-year contract as curator of Archaeology at the National Museum. He had just wrapped up his doctorate on the Apennine Bronze Age, later published in the Ancient Peoples and Places series of Thames & Hudson (*Central and Southern Italy before Rome*, 1966), and sojourned at the British School in Rome as a holder of the Rome Scholarship for 1955-



Figure 1. David Trump with some finds from Skorba, 1963. Photograph from Trump's photographic archive/Daniel Cilia.

1957 during which he excavated the site of La Starza in the province of Avellino. During his tenure in Malta he was to train a local, the draughtsman Francis Mallia, to take his place when his contract expired. David brought to the job the experience gained on numerous study tours and excavations besides knowledge of museums and their collections, diggers, and curators. In the five years he was in Malta, he was to lay the foundations of modern archaeological practice. Excavations – whether of the rescue or research type – were carefully planned, observing a clear method of excavation, recording, and prompt publication in the government's annual report of the museums department, as articles in scholarly journals, or as separate monographs. For rescue work, involving chance discoveries of remains that often turned up as a result of the construction boom

at the time, a novel protocol was strictly adhered to. Within twenty-four hours of discovery, a site was excavated, recorded and cleared to allow the works to proceed! A novelty was also the fact that fieldwork was directed not from an office but from the trenches to ensure that the digging was a systematic endeavour, that untrained hands were carefully monitored, and that object findspots were carefully recorded. Most importantly, all excavation was stratigraphic, and layers of deposit were removed by trowel or pick in the reverse order in which they had formed over the millennia. Several scholars before had had an intuitive idea of stratigraphy, including Themistocles Zammit and Thomas Ashby at the Tarxien temples, but no one had insisted with such determination on the application of the principle. The value of all this was probably drummed home to David during the season that he spent digging at Jericho on Mortimer Wheeler's suggestion with the foremost British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon in 1955 as the holder of a scholarship at the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem and in Malta when he had assisted John Evans. The stratigraphic method allowed David to construct relative chronologies and to present typological studies of pottery on the basis of a site's stratification.

Even more important perhaps was David Trump's application of the novel radiocarbon dating technology to the problem of Maltese prehistory. The site of Skorba, which he excavated between 1961 and 1963, provided a stratification that covered all of Maltese prehistory, adding two new phases to the sequence established by Evans. Trump's dates that by 1972 were recalibrated using the information from tree-ring counts were to prove that the Maltese megalithic temples were the earliest such monuments anywhere. As a result of this work, much revision of what had hitherto been written on the origins and diffusion of the megalithic phenomenon in Europe and the Mediterranean was called for. Indeed, it is hard to think of the conclusions drawn by Colin Renfrew in his seminal book *Before Civilization* (Jonathan Cape, 1973) without Trump's results.

Apart from his stint in Malta, David's career was based in Cambridge. In 1963, on his return to England, he was appointed Staff Tutor in Archaeology with the Board of Extra-Mural Studies at Cambridge, which was later to set up quarters at Madingley Hall outside Cambridge. Here he worked until his retirement in 1996, during which time he led important research

excavations in Sardinia at the Grotta Filiestru and at Bonu Ighinu, and at the Xagħra Circle burial complex in Gozo (Malta), and wrote various monographs of a scope few would attempt today, not least his *Prehistory of the Mediterranean* (Penguin, 1980). His involvement with adult learners in Cambridge in lecture rooms and on numerous study trips is something he cherished. David found this experience to be most rewarding, far better than what was had from teaching Sardinian prehistory to the Cambridge undergraduates reading for a degree or from tutoring archaeology and anthropology students at Pembroke College. He felt that the undergraduates on the whole lacked an interest in the subject for its own sake, without expectation of reward, and completely lacked the lively comeback, even with the better students in supervisions. By the late Eighties this discomfort may have been intensified by the fact that David shunned archaeological theory for its own sake, never embracing the post-processual line of thought that was rearing its head in Cambridge, sticking instead to commonsensical assessments of archaeological evidence and bringing all his experience to bear on interpretation. At conversational level, this may have entailed making mischievous remarks to be provocative and instigate debate, even involving gender stereotypes that the academic great and good frowned upon. A history of technology that David wrote was refused flatly for being too male chauvinistic! But then David was to a certain extent a misfit amongst mainstream academic archaeologists. How else can one explain his serious interest in dowsing, a technique many remember him using in the first season of excavations at the Xagħra Circle to locate the extent of the pit from the explorations of 1820s? Trump decided to retire aged 65, rather than at 67, when extra-mural studies had to have quantifiable results and syllabuses were to be rigidly adhered to rather than be pursued out of pure interest.

On a personal level, David will be remembered for being courteous and for shunning controversy even if this meant enduring personal sacrifices for the greater good. In Malta he entertained an excellent working relationship with the director of the Museums Department, Charlie Zammit who took the twenty-seven-year-old David under his wing and treated him like a son. Acquaintance with an Englishwoman Vera (Vee) Greer, who lived on Malta between 1953 and 1990 and had assisted John Evans in his fieldwork, and with Joseph Attard Tabone brought him into

a circle of friends that knew the social and cultural scene well. The gatherings at Greer's house, 'San Clemente' at the foot of Saqqajja Hill in Rabat, are remembered by many of that generation and served to forge and strengthen Anglo-Maltese relations. In the case of Joe, the friendship brought with it a sound knowledge of the antiquarian literature and of sites which he had discovered and which David would go on to excavate as part of a large team, not least the Ghajnsielem Road prehistoric hut (in 1987) and the Xaghra Circle burial complex (between 1987-1994), both in Gozo. In 1960 excavations of a Bronze Age silo pit on Nuffara hill, again in Gozo, identified by Joe, brought with it important discoveries but, more importantly, a romance with an archaeology graduate from the University of Edinburgh. David married Bridget Wilson a year later and together they formed a formidable team. He remained devoted to her and did all his digging and travelling with her. Although David was not known to wish for public recognition he was extremely proud that the Republic of Malta recognized his worth and contribution formally in 2004 when it elected him an Honorary Officer in the National Order of Merit.

The last time many saw David in Malta was in December 2015 when the University of Malta bestowed on him an Honorary Doctorate of Literature (D.Litt.) in recognition of his life-long commitment to the prehistory of the Maltese islands. This memoir draws on the oration that I had the pleasure to make on that occasion. After that we did communicate by email, in June, when I asked David's permission to

publish a photograph from his collection for a history of Maltese archaeology I was writing. He replied in the affirmative whilst reminding me that he was still waiting for my answer to a question he had asked me some years earlier. I apologised profusely saying that I could not recall what that question was. He wrote that he wanted to know whether I felt that the autobiography that I had instigated him to write – back in 2005 or 2006, I believe – should, in fact, be published. I said that I would be thrilled to see *By Trowel and Barrow* in print, with a small selection of photographs to accompany the text. It is my hope that David's friend, the Gozitan photographer Daniel Cilia, will follow this up with the consent of the family in the months to come when he brings to completion several publications that they were working on lately. David's autobiography will serve as a record of a good man's life and work.

David is survived by his wife Bridget and his three sons, Roger, Gavin and Eric.

Note: This memoir has been written using Trump's own unpublished autobiography and recollections from his friend Joseph Attard Tabone FSA, MQR.

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Tradition, time and narrative: Rethinking the Late Neolithic of the Maltese Islands

Isabelle Vella Gregory

This paper reconsiders the Late Neolithic of the Maltese Islands from a broader perspective. It argues that the prevailing narrative centred on passively inherited cultural baggage obscures the dynamic narrative created by the ancient inhabitants. It is argued that a fuller understanding of the period requires an engagement with concepts of time and tradition, which are seen here on multiple scales. This enables a fuller reading of the period, particularly in terms of how people created and redefined time.

Introduction

At a glance, the Late Neolithic of the Maltese Islands can be perceived in terms of large megalithic structures that dominate the physical and conceptual landscape. These structures, frequently termed temples, are highly visible and can give the impression of a linear tradition centred on stone. However, the Late Neolithic is a period constituted of many materials and intersecting elements that in turn are related to a changing society concerned with the creation and maintenance of memory. As a discipline, archaeology makes use of narrative to communicate the past, but it also uncovers past narratives, more specifically their material forms. This paper explores time, tradition and narrative with reference to the period 4100-2500 BC in the Maltese Islands, showing how an established archaeological narrative has sometimes overlooked the Late Neolithic tradition and proposes a re-assessment of these issues.

Tradition

Tradition is not merely the handing down of customs, beliefs etc. It also carries the implication of a long-established, inherited way of thinking or acting.

Tradition implies ancient origins and time and repetition give it legitimacy. The concept of tradition is manifested in archaeology in two main ways. First, as Robb (2008) points out, 'tradition' in archaeology is often used to denote historical continuities in material. Furthermore, he points out that beyond the formal classification the language usage also denotes a group's passively inherited cultural baggage (Robb 2008, 333). Second, tradition in archaeology also denotes how particular problems are approached. In this sense, tradition creates an established narrative based on passively inherited cultural baggage. Consider the broader Neolithic narrative of the Maltese Islands. People arrived from Sicily, carrying with them the established 'Neolithic' package. They settled down c. 5000 BC and reproduced their Sicilian baggage until c. 3600 BC when the narrative shifts to a narrative (and tradition) of uniqueness, centred around large stones (Table 1).

This line of thinking has many implications, but this discussion will focus on the so-called Temple Period. In narrative terms, the entire period is seen as a single tradition, based on perceived continuity of material culture, which in turn is interpreted as evidence for a single Temple Period subjectivity. The archaeological record of this period has been interpreted in two principal stages: a pre-temple stage

Period	Phase	Dates, BC	Main Events	Traditional Narrative	Revised Narrative
Early Neolithic	Ghar Dalam	5000-4500	Initial settlement from Sicily, farming communities.	Received culture Neolithic package, reproduced	Under further investigation.
	Grey Skorba	4500-4400	Village life.		
	Red Skorba	4400-4100	Continuation of village life, communal shrines, clay figurines		
Middle Neolithic	Żebbuġ	4100-3800	Considered start of Temple Period. No temples. Beginning of collective burials.	New (received) culture Focus on ceramics, received technology	First known material expression of extension of life cycle and creation of new narrative.
	Mġarr	3800-3600	Poorly known phase.	'Transitional' phase, people defined solely by ceramics	
Late Neolithic	Ġgantija	3600-3000	Beginning of temple building.	Culture of uniqueness People largely defined by stone	Extension of life cycle becomes increasingly elaborate. Redefinition of time and space. Focus on community and memory.
	Saflieni	3300-3000	Transitional phase, overlapping.		
	Tarxien	3000-2500	Apex and eventual decline of temples. Restriction of areas within temples.		

Table 1: An alternative visualisation of chronology

of the Temple Period and a temple stage. For ease of clarity, this paper will refer to Temple Culture when referring to both stages and the Temple Period when referring to the temple-building stage. The pre-temple stage, divided into the Żebbuġ and Mġarr phases, is considered to mark the arrival of a new population with new traditions, seen via the ceramic repertoire. This paradox is more representative of how time and tradition have been conceptualized, rather than the actual Late Neolithic narrative. The issue is further complicated by the seemingly sudden appearance of the Żebbuġ phase, which is seen as both marking a new tradition and drawing on a Sicilian tradition. This is symptomatic of the problem of how archaeologists explain change and this example illustrates the dilemma posed by the archaeological record. This interpretation of tradition is problematic on another level: it effectively argues that the Żebbuġ people passively inherited a Sicilian tradition and kept passively leaving it as a legacy until the appearance of stone monuments in the Ġgantija phase. Following Robb (2008), this type of argument poses an inherited tradition, in which tradition itself is the structuring principle and people are passive.

The Żebbuġ repertoire indeed marks a departure in terms of form, technique, colour and decoration. Like pottery from the previous phase, it shows distinct

parallels with Sicily, particularly San Cono-Piano Notaro ware from Agrigento. This change underpins debates on the start of the Temple Culture, which often posit a new population (Bonanno 1986; Trump 2004). Explaining this change in terms of a migrating foreign population raises many issues, including the unlikelihood that societies instantly disappear and are immediately and completely replaced by new ones. Explanations which invoke maladies in human and animal populations do not adequately address the issue or explain the ceramic links with Sicily. The paucity of archaeological evidence makes explaining change an even more complex undertaking, especially if one wants to avoid a circular argument that is more focused on a society defined by temples. Fundamentally, however, this approach to tradition views technology as a passive reflection of external factors, thereby reducing people to passive objects. It does not engage with the underlying nature of change or the role of technology vis-à-vis people.

One problem with explanations of change in Maltese prehistory is the focus on a Temple Culture defined by temples where the origins and 'decline' of temple culture are taken as a given (although there tends to be more discussion on the latter). However, it is necessary to understand what is happening between 4100 and 3600 BC. The Żebbuġ and Mġarr

phases are denoted as precursors to temple-building, but one must also consider that there are 500 years of no temple-building. These phases have been traditionally viewed in ceramic terms, overlooking the generations of people who created a world that has been assigned secondary importance in the academic narrative. Rather than focusing on the 'new' external characteristics of an assemblage, the focus should be on technological changes as a means of materializing knowledge and ideas (Lawson 2010).

These issues are currently under further study by the author. The new approach moves away from a traditional typology of ceramic material. At face value, the Żebbuġ repertoire looks different and does indeed have Sicilian parallels. However, an approach based purely on surface characteristics does not address the underlying social and technological processes at play. Rather than equating new pottery types with new people, it is important to understand the underlying issues and also investigate issues like the continued occupation of Skorba during the Żebbuġ phase (Trump 1966). Pottery typologies themselves are thus examined using different techniques, including an examination of the attributes of the repertoire. Broadly speaking, the Żebbuġ repertoire is characterised by incised decoration, closed globular jar forms and a dark and irregularly fired fabric. Technological changes are seen via a new temper (small white grits) and less well-fired clay. Decoration is mostly incised and there are some examples of painted decoration.

The majority of the known assemblages are from the funerary sites of Ta' Trapna ż-Żgħira, Żebbuġ in Malta and the Xagħra Circle in Gozo (Fig. 1). Pottery from both sites has many parallels and clearly belongs to the same tradition. More broadly, both sites show the same emerging focus on collective burial and a consolidated identity. However, there are notable variations. There is more painted pottery in Malta as opposed to Gozo. Conversely, anthropomorphic representation is more prevalent in Gozo. The techniques of pottery decoration, currently under further investigation, follow a series of combination of incised elements. Each element (horizontal, vertical or diagonal lines and arcs) is combined in multiple ways, creating complex patterns. These tend to follow the shape of the vessel. Painted decoration is achieved using red ochre, although the assemblage is small and fragmentary and it is very difficult to reconstruct the schema of decorative elements. The variation in decoration is perhaps not apparent at a glance and to

date it has simply been seen as 'incised lines', without further investigation. However, the new ceramic repertoire needs to be seen in its broader social context, namely the beginnings of an investment in a collective identity. As such, it is reflective of a change in habitus and this is materialized in new ceramic production techniques, new burial techniques and new ways of using materials like stone and bone. In short, the Żebbuġ phase is a time when new knowledge is created.

The appearance of temples in 3600 BC needs to be further investigated within this context. It is worth remembering that temples do not suddenly appear on this date, especially in the form with which the modern scholar and visitor is familiar. Rather, 3600 BC heralds the emergence of temple-building. The temple-building phases of this period demonstrate that the siting of temples and the attendant material culture point to the creation of a Late Neolithic tradition that is structuring but not passive. Gell (1998, 255) argues that the transmission of tradition involves the recapitulation of a collectively held model, prompting Robb (2008) to argue that if we take longevity into account, it follows that, as per Gell we must attribute agency to tradition itself. Late Neolithic Malta illustrates a structuring tradition that endures over a long time. I argue that by the Tarxien phase, that tradition acquires its own form of agency and this is demonstrated within a temple context. Megalithic complexes (temples) were built over a long period of time, with numerous additions and changes in layout. These changes were not merely architectural, they created new experiences of the spaces and wider belief systems. Significant resources, including time, were invested in this endeavour. This kept the community engaged with these spaces and ensured they remained part of the general consciousness. By the Tarxien phase, significantly more emphasis is placed on the tradition of building and maintaining these complexes. Furthermore, areas within these buildings were closed off with the addition of doorways and screens, restricting access to activities carried out within these spaces.

Time

A linear chronological view of the Neolithic has many purposes, but focusing on a linear narrative tradition obscures one of the central questions, namely how



a



b

Figure 1. Żebbuġ phase pottery Żebbuġ phase jars, unknown provenance but typical of the repertoire found at Ta' Trapna ẓ-Żgħira and the Xagħra Circle. Dimensions of (a) are 24 x 21cm and (b) 14.8 x 17cm (Photograph: Daniel Cilia and Heritage Malta).

people constructed time and their worlds. Time in the Late Neolithic was not conceived in linear terms, neither was it an abstract concept. The idea of time was very much rooted in materiality. However, the conventional timeline for the Maltese Neolithic is rooted in a tradition that conceptualizes time in a linear way. This is partly related to ways in which time is constructed in archaeology (see for example Gosden 1994; van der Leeuw & McGlade 1997; Lucas 2008) but it also has repercussions in terms of conceptualizing the timeline of Maltese prehistory. The linearity of time is rooted in a tradition of ceramic repertoires and a received culture from neighbouring Sicily. In this tradition, people and things are separated from each other and ideas of time and memory.

Monumentalized Neolithic landscapes appear across the Atlantic, Baltic, Europe and the Mediterranean. Monumentalization appears at different times, but it is often preceded by non-monumental Neolithic life. This is clearly the case in Malta, and is best seen in the Żebbuġ and Mġarr phases. In Britain, monumentalized landscapes have many associations with the dead (Malone 2001). Specific locales for the living and the dead (temples and hypogea), both associated with monumentality

and megalithism, have been identified on Malta and Gozo. Both British and Maltese megaliths have an element of time and transformation to them and sites, particularly causewayed enclosures, change in appearance over time. After 4000 BC, monumental burial becomes more widespread across Britain and structures are remodelled over time. Parallels are seen in the re-arrangement of space in temples, particularly in the Tarxien phase. Of interest is that the fragmentation of the body is also practised in Britain and 'old' bones are re-deposited in some British sites (Malone 2001), parallels for which are found both at the Saffieni Hypogea and the Xagħra Circle.

One of the paradoxes of the Maltese Neolithic is thus related to the construction of time; relative chronologies rely on objects and stratigraphies but at the same time they obscure the ways in which people constructed time. They also limit discourse on objects, particularly the relationship between people, things and ideas. While relative chronologies usefully illustrate stratigraphic change, they do not adequately address change itself, and how and why it happened. Time and space are created through action and they exist on many different levels (Gosden 1994). Alternatively, a practice-based approach focusing on how people

created and maintained their worlds would enable an understanding of time at multiple scales. Practice shapes and is shaped by habitus. For example, while there is emerging settlement evidence for this period, temples contain many objects created in the everyday domain, in particular ceramics and stone tools. While some ceramics appear to have been created for use in temples, for example the Tarxien phase offering bowls, they were created in the domain of the everyday. The acquisition of clay and its transformation occurred outside the 'ritual' context. Some objects were intended to have longer biographies, for example figuration (Vella Gregory 2016), while objects like stone tools had shorter lifespans.

While Maltese megaliths have been firmly embedded in a temporal dimension, the social dimension remains poorly understood. In particular, on a broader level, acts of practice also shape and define bigger things, in particular the community. In Late Neolithic Malta there is significant investment in actively shaping habitus. A concept put forward by Pierre Bourdieu (1977), it refers to a schema of uniquely internalized dispositions which determine how we perceive and act in the world. The concept is not unproblematic and my approach takes habitus as both structured and structuring in relation to external systems. In material terms, habitus is seen in many ways, including the creation of specific arenas of practice, like temples and tombs, but also in the investment to extend the life cycle and create a society focused on ancestry and memory. In particular, the latter required sustained practice to remain effective and embedded in people's habitus. Consider, for example, the death rituals seen at the Xagħra Circle in Gozo. After death, the body is buried but it is unlikely that burial marked the end point of life. Once the flesh decayed, the living returned to the site and broke up the body into constituent parts, placing them at specific points in the site (Malone & Stoddart 2009). This involved the physical handling of the now decayed body, dismantling the whole and creating a collective pile of body parts, marking the end of the life cycle. Furthermore, this practice emphasized the focus on collective identity, which also endured in death and beyond. These acts required time and direct engagement with the body, at the same time further shaping the habitus of the living. They also made use of specific objects which helped create and maintain the community narrative.



Figure 2. A cache of figurines from the Xagħra Circle, Gozo. The highest figurine stands at 18.5 cm (Photograph: Daniel Cilia and Heritage Malta).

A group of figurines from the Xagħra Circle (Fig. 2) known as the shaman's cache is particularly evocative. Often interpreted in terms of shamanism (an approach not wholly appropriate in this case), these have been connected to rituals of death (Stoddart et al. 1993) and transformation (Stoddart 2002). However, these figurines materialize a rather more complex scenario. Looking at the group, these represent the idea of a person in a very abstract form. Six of these show the head of a person on an angular body. Two have very well-finished faces and the suggestion of clothing on the lower end of the abstract body. A third has less well-defined facial features (but still somewhat detailed) and no suggestion of clothing. Another three also clearly reference the human form but the facial features are less distinct, with one in particular having an almost blurred face. The final three objects are even more curious: two human heads on stumpy non-human bodies and the head of a pig on a stick. These images need to be examined from different perspectives. First, the bodies do not reference an individual human body. Rather, they are an abstract materialization of the idea of a body. Second, these bodies can be moved and reconfigured in multiple ways, creating many performances and narratives. Third, this occurs in a broader context that goes beyond death rituals and ideas of transformation. This group materializes the wider social ethos, one focused on community. The communal aspect of megalithic sites has long been recognized (see for example Pace 1997), although it has often been decoupled from practice. This group of figurines is not merely tied to

death rituals, rather it is an evocative materialization of complex concepts that affected the practice of the living and how they deal with the dead.

By the Tarxien phase, the created tradition of memory and ancestry acquired its own agency and became self-sustaining. Taken together, the Late Neolithic of the Maltese Islands demonstrates a multi-layered view of space comprised of specific siting of temples and the broader landscape context (Grima 2008), the use and meaning of space within temples (Grima 2001) and cosmological space. As Thomas (1999, 2002) has noted, monuments transform space through objects and people create new kinds of relationships with places and material substances. In the case of the Maltese Islands, this also comprised the creation of cosmological space, which transcended time and physical boundaries. Recognition of the latter significantly changes the narrative of the Late Neolithic.

Narrative

To understand the Late Neolithic tradition, it is important to engage with the concept of temple. The Maltese 'temples' are labelled as such purely on the grounds they are not a domestic structure and must therefore be ritual. As a result, figurines found within are often considered deities and discussion is framed in narrow ritual terms. The focus remains on big stones, in the tradition of Renfrew's (1973: 556) view that monuments constitute 'the natural counterparts of other features of society'. This view has cast a dominant shadow on the other features of Neolithic society. Moreover, while Maltese monuments are singled out for their antiquity and poorly defined ritual associations, elsewhere monuments are linked to ancestry and ceremony.

A reconsideration of the narrative should take into account the following points. The first two stages of the Temple Culture, Żebbuġ and Mġarr, are characterized by collectivity on a smaller scale, expressed in smaller hypogea, for example Ta' Trapna ż-Żgħira, Żebbuġ (Baldacchino & Evans 1954). The body is disarticulated and sprinkled extensively with ochre, which also appears on the few surviving examples of imagery. Grave goods tend to be small (pottery, beads), but two small menhirs from Ta' Trapna ż-Żgħira, Żebbuġ, and Xagħra Circle, Gozo (length 18 cm and 16.5 cm respectively) point to complex burial rituals (Vella Gregory 2005). Żebbuġ

phase pottery (currently undergoing further study by the author) is defined by complex incised lines and patterns based on linearity and, to a lesser extent, curves. Red ochre is found on pottery in burials and, more rarely, incised human-like depictions on vessels. These are stick figurines defined by lines and a lack of facial features. While the stone heads have a notion of a face, these faces are also abstract.

The visual narrative before the appearance of temples is characterized by linear-based abstraction and two-dimensionality, but it is already linked to a narrative based on time. Burial rites involved interaction with the dead body long after the point of death, a practice that becomes increasingly elaborate in the subsequent Ġgantija phase. In narrative terms, the first two phases of Temple Culture are linked to the appearance of temples via a set of practices that establish a tradition based on memory and performance. This evolved slowly and it became much more complex and widespread around the same time monumental buildings appeared.

The development of large monuments in the Ġgantija phase (3600-3300 BC) raises questions about their development. The main temple at Ta' Ħaġrat, for example, dates to the Ġgantija phase while the smaller building may be slightly later (Pace 2004). Yet, Ta' Ħaġrat never reached the size of Ġgantija temples in terms of area and architectural complexity. However, the Ġgantija phase does not herald the sudden appearance of large structures. The Ġgantija phase has a 600-year time window, during which time temples evolve and expand. Some temples, such as Ta' Ħaġrat, remained small, others like Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra reached large and complex proportions. The reasons require further thought (a tentative proposal can be found in Grima 2008).

The narrative should also consider space within temples, which played a crucial role in the performance of social relations. It is not sufficient to view temples as arenas for social relations if these arenas are not examined further, particularly since these performances required space in its various dimensions to be effective. While megaliths (and standard archaeological plans) may make temples appear visually similar, there is in fact no canonical temple layout. There are, however, some important points of commonality, such as larger open spaces that could accommodate a sizeable number of people and smaller apses for smaller gatherings. Doorways and thresholds are important in all temples and demarcate



Figure 3. A group of figurines from Hagar Qim. The height of each figurine is as follows: (a) 21.2 cm (b) 19.4 cm, (c) 23.5 cm, (d) 48.6 cm (Photograph: Daniel Cilia and Heritage Malta).

specific zones (Grima 2001). This suggests that on a broad level, there were commonalities in the types of experiences within temples. Thresholds do not simply demarcate zones. They most likely represent entering and exiting different domains, particularly since they tend to have steps. More broadly, megalithic sites are sited at specific locales in the landscape (Grima 2008), creating a world of multiple, intersecting dimensions that go beyond the physical domain (Helms 1988). Furthermore, the Late Neolithic visual narrative is strongly focused on broader ideas of community and memory (Vella Gregory 2005). Taken together, megalithic sites, the materialization of space and the visual narrative (Vella Gregory 2013) point to an experience (Skeates 2010) of the Late Neolithic defined by a collective identity sustained over many generations.

Conclusions

The crux of the Late Neolithic of the Maltese Islands does not inherently lie in architecturally complex buildings. That part of the narrative belongs in modernity and could be somewhat controversially viewed as an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1992),

although this is by no means a negative. The central point is that starting in 4100 BC a small island community redefined time, creating complex traditions and narratives in the process. Temples and burial sites should be seen as aggregation sites, arenas for social relations and cohesion. For reasons that may never become clear, this community consciously extended the life cycle and materialized it in numerous ways. The human body was systematically broken down into smaller parts, which were in turn placed together in a mass, in the process removing traces of an individual and placing emphasis on the community. These acts occurred in a landscape designed to remind people of their wider obligations even in the acts of everyday practice. Megalithic architecture was one element of this visual and conceptual landscape, its visibility maintained over many generations.

The visual landscape created a narrative focused on collectivity and ideas of a community whose essence lived on after physical death. The mortuary rituals (Malone *et al.* 2009) required the participation of the broader community, whose engaged acts ensured the continuation of these ideas, ideas which were fundamental to the propagation of the community. The figurine repertoire also places emphasis on ideas of the bigger whole. In the Late Neolithic, people

invested time and resources to create various iterations of the human body. This involved redefining ideas of scale, creating bodies that ranged from the miniature to the monumental (for a full discussion see Vella Gregory 2016). In particular, large and deliberately sexless bodies are visually impactful and direct focus on the whole. Looking at figurines from Haġar Qim (Fig. 3), the viewer's attention is directed to a large body mass. Furthermore, interchangeable heads provided an added element for performance and were used to create multiple narratives, albeit rooted in a central and large body.

Megalithic aggregation sites were thus the locales for the performance of social relations. Temples were also places where space, knowledge and tradition intersected. As actions, performances are linked with agency and are actively involved in social practice. They also affect identity, time and the body (Schechner 2003, 2006). Moreover, performances are entangled with space, and indeed can create space. Extraordinary performances, involving the manipulation of symbols in complex rituals, dramatize the values of a society and facilitate the propagation of ideology over different social groups (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996; Inomata and Coben 2006). This discussion, and scholarship more broadly, has largely focused on these extraordinary performances. However, every day performance is equally important (Hodder 2006) and future contributions on Temple Culture should explore this in more detail.

These aggregation sites had a cosmological domain, a place where knowledge and a complex web of social relations intersected and time was redefined. After the Mgarr phase, the life cycle was extended beyond previously known realms of possibility and slowly the cosmological domain created a new narrative of time that brought together the past, present and future. Above ground, space was partly experienced on the earthly plane, within temples, and via the use of knowledge and material culture, but it existed beyond the physical temple. The domains above and below ground were linked not just spatially, but more specifically in terms of performative acts and material culture. The meaning and power of this knowledge was enhanced via the body. Barth (2002, 3) notes that knowledge contains a 'corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world'. To understand the Late Neolithic narrative, it is thus important to consider time and tradition in terms of knowledge. The creation of a narrative focused

on collective identity and community required the intersectionality of various forms of knowledge. The materialization of space was read in different ways by members of the community. The siting of megalithic sites in specific locales ensured their place in everyday consciousness for everybody. The construction and division of space within these sites, particularly in the Tarxien phase, showed that certain forms of knowledge were restricted to a small section of the community (Stoddart & Malone 2008).

Current research focusing on the everyday domain outside of megalithic sites should further elucidate the question of knowledge in the Late Neolithic. The archaeological record of the Maltese Islands is complex, particularly in prehistory. While a long tradition of study has offered various narratives and data sets, there is a need for further research into Neolithic life. This research needs to be framed in an inclusive narrative that brings together the various strands of evidence, which will ultimately set the agenda for future directions. The central point of the Late Neolithic narrative is therefore not stone, but the ways in which people extended space and time beyond the physical domain.

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A farewell to Neo-Punic: Taċ-Ċaġħqi revisited

Abigail Zammit and Robert M. Kerr

Dedicated to the memory of Mons. Benedetto Rocco (1926-2013)

The alleged inscriptions in the south-east hypogeum of Taċ-Ċaġħqi (within the premises of St Nicholas College in Rabat, Malta) were discussed in depth by Mons. Benedetto Rocco in 1972. Rocco interpreted the glyphs as Neo-Punic, with a long 'Inscription' supposedly consisting of a prayer to appease the deceased through the offering of a gift, and an alleged minor 'Inscription' addressing the dead to 'rise'. These readings were discussed against the notion of possible libation rites that may have been a custom within the hypogeum, as suggested by the tomb furniture in situ. Rocco based his readings of the script and types of letters on his previous study of further alleged Punic and Neo-Punic inscriptions within cave sites in Palermo and Favignana (Sicily), in combination with semantic analysis of Biblical Hebrew. Nevertheless, the supposed Taċ-Ċaġħqi inscriptions come across as ambiguous sets of glyphs that are illegible, and actually cannot be deemed Punic or Neo-Punic script.

Introduction

The Taċ-Ċaġħqi Secondary School complex, located within St Nicholas College in Rabat, Malta, comprises two independent *hypogea*, which were discovered during construction works in January 1952 and subsequently surveyed by Captain Charles Zammit, Curator of what was then the National Museum in Valletta. The two *hypogea* are situated south-east and north-west respectively on the same axis, with the former lying at a higher level than the latter. Today, both are reached by a common stepped entrance in the basement of the school. Their individual layouts and furnishings suggest a difference in the cultures responsible for their construction, with the south-east hypogeum displaying an apparent pagan nature, while the other is most likely Palaeochristian. The present paper, however, will only tackle the south-east hypogeum, which displays what might be writing in red ochre on its walls.¹

The south-east hypogeum has a relatively symmetrical T-shaped vestibule, with five burial-chambers (I–II–III–IV–V) dug into three of its walls (Fig. 1), and has large glyphs painted in red ochre on the surrounding walls of the main hall. A sixth tomb (VI), probably of a later date, was dug into the wall between chambers I and II. As Buhagiar (1986, 189)

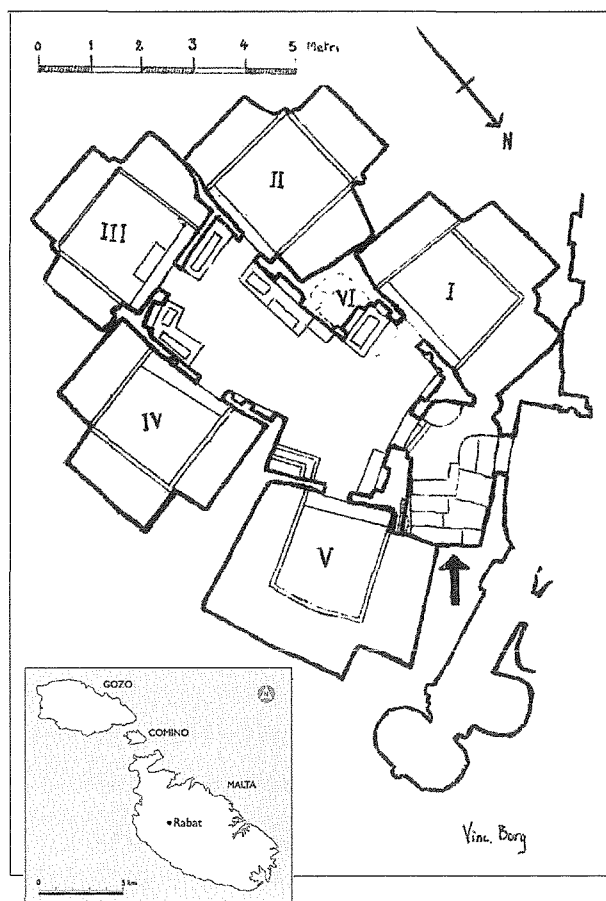


Figure 1. Location map and plan of the Taċ-Ċaġħqi South-East Hypogeum, St Nicholas College, Rabat (Malta) (after Borg 1972, 61).

remarks, it is likely that at least this part of the south-east hypogeum was reutilised. Dr J.G. Baldacchino, then Director of Museum Antiquities, reported that the hypogeum was rifled years before the 1952 discovery (Baldacchino 1954, I).

The signs observed in the south-east hypogeum were discussed at length by Mons. Benedetto Rocco (1972b). He observed two distinct texts: the so-called 'iscrizione maggiore', consisting of five separate lines of text individually painted above the entrances of five burial-chambers; and the 'iscrizione minore' painted in black pigment below two child *loculi* and accompanied by a line drawing. Below is a reanalysis of both of his readings, which, for the sake of continuity, will be referred to as 'Inscription' A, and the latter as 'Inscription' B (our quotation marks). For the actual dimensions of the glyphs, refer to Figs 3-8.

'Inscription' A

Above each of the five window-doors of the burial-chambers are the remains of various glyphs written in red ochre. As observed in the photographs and drawings presented in this paper, the paint seems at times to be sprinkled around the individual glyphs, suggesting that these signs were written with a thick brush on the undulating limestone surface.

Following the 1952 discovery of the south-east hypogeum, Baldacchino sent photographs and illustrations of three of the 'inscriptions' (on the walls of chambers I, II and III) to Fr Antonio Ferrua in Rome, requesting a transcription of the 'text'.² Ferrua was the first to posit that the find was in fact a Neo-Punic inscription, but the state of the glyphs even then inhibited any sound reading whatsoever.³ As a result, Ferrua suggested that the individual 'writings' stand for the names of the deceased interred within the tombs.⁴ Twenty years later, Rocco published his epigraphic study of these texts, which he considered to form rather a single text separated into five lines (Fig. 2) (1972b, 67). The tentative dating offered by Rocco was the second century BC as *terminus a quo* and the first century AD as *terminus ad quem* (1972b, 68). Unfortunately, the inscription was partially lost due to the friable surface of the Globigerina limestone walls, and possibly also owing to vandalism and/or looting.⁵ Of the fifth line, only one undeciphered letter was noticeable at the time of Rocco's publication, but was never published. Moreover, no record at all

of this fifth line turned up in the National Museum of Archaeology archives. Today, all that remains of the fifth line are very faint daubs of paint, which are reproduced in this study (Fig. 7).

As was previously noted, Ferrua proposed identifying the alleged text as a form of Neo-Punic, yet without being able to read a single word. The reason for this would appear to have been motivated by the notion that Neo-Punic is often very difficult to decipher, therefore, if illegible then Neo-Punic, which at that time was seen as a largely unreadable script rendering a 'corrupt' form of the Punic language, then on its last legs. By the latter, we mean the highly cursive script ductus which evolved from the Punic script in the former Carthaginian realm and which after the destruction of this metropolis by Rome in 146 BC became the lapidary standard. It should be noted that Neo-Punic actually refers exclusively to the script employed and has no linguistic implications. While the script is on occasion attested before the Third Punic War, its widespread usage throughout North Africa and beyond was probably due to the demise of the use of Punic in any official capacity after the Roman conquest. Hence, most Neo-Punic inscriptions, in the absence of contradictory evidence (such as at Carthage), are dated roughly to the Roman period. This delimitation is by no means rigid, so for example KAI 173 (see Jongeling 2008, 275-76) from Chia in Sardinia, probably dating to the reign of Marcus Aurelius (see the discussion proffered by Zucca 2001, 528-30, n. 70; see also Mastino 2005, 237-40), displays a script which is typologically Punic rather than Neo-Punic. This local idiosyncratic development is attributable to Sardinia coming under Roman suzerainty already in the third century BC. Furthermore, while Neo-Punic denotes the cursive *Weiterentwicklung* of the Punic script, it can by no means be viewed as a uniform entity: the script differs considerably from site to site and often, seemingly to a considerable extent dependent on the abilities of the lapicides, who were often illiterate.⁶ Even forms of one and the same grapheme can differ in one inscription (Kerr 2013). Consequently, these texts are largely unsuited for in-depth palaeographical analysis.

Two further caveats must be noted here. Firstly, due to the difficulty involved in reading Neo-Punic, often only lapidary texts which render standard funerary or sacrificial formulae are readily legible. Second, despite the sizeable yet fragmentary corpus (see Pisano and Travaglini 2003), our understanding of the

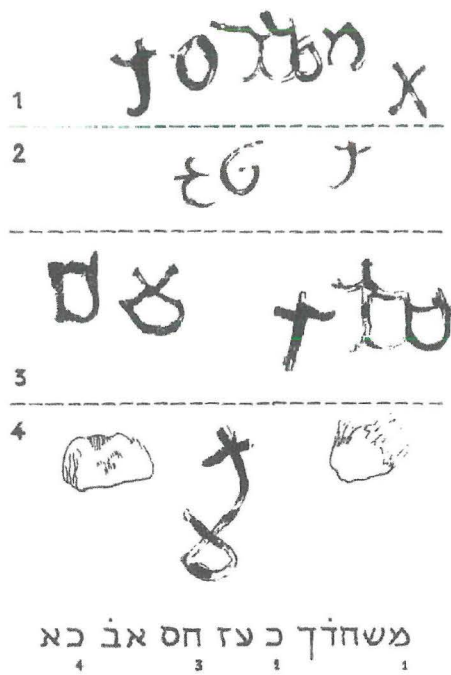


Figure 2. Illustration of the four visible lines of 'Inscription' A, with Hebrew transliteration (Rocco 1972b, 67, fig. 1).



Figure 3. Line 1 ('Inscription' A) (Photograph [a] and Drawing [b] by A. Zammit).

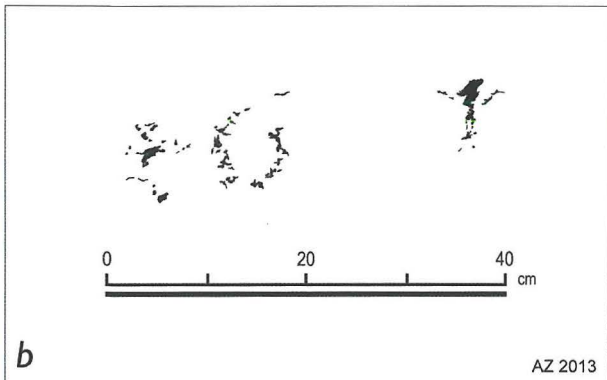
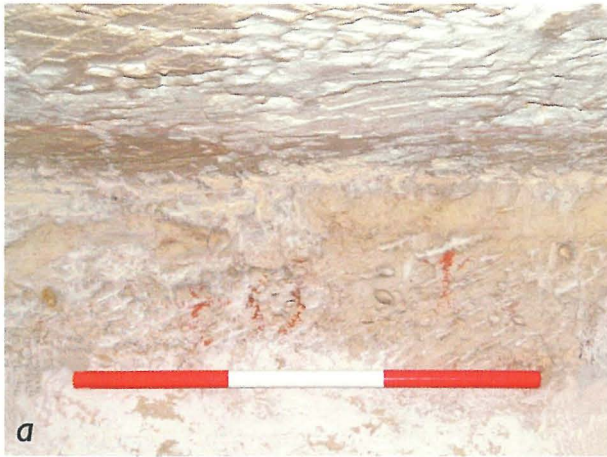


Figure 4. Line 2 ('Inscription' A) (Photograph [a] and Drawing [b] by A. Zammit).

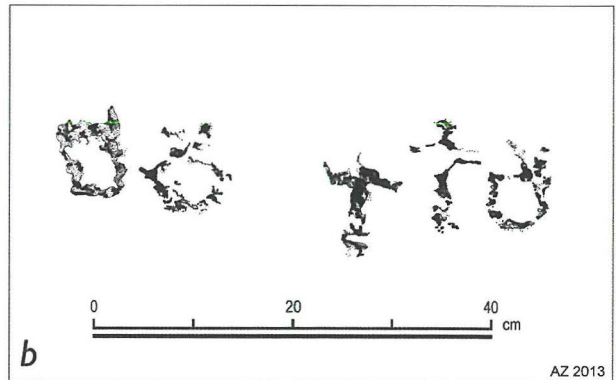


Figure 5. Line 3 ('Inscription' A) (Photograph [a] and Drawing [b] by A. Zammit).

Punic palaeography of *dipinto* texts is quite rudimentary at best. Moreover, as the subject matter of the latter naturally does not overlap with the former, it is often difficult to glean certain readings from such texts.

Thus, while Neo-Punic texts have been found in Malta (Jongeling 2008, 262-67), and there is clear archaeological/epigraphic evidence of the survival of the Punic language in Roman Malta (namely, during the Late Republican and Early Imperial ages) (see Zammit 2011, 78-87 and references therein), as in Sardinia and Sicily (Jongeling 2008, 274-83, 269-71 resp.), the texts under discussion here actually display no resemblance to either the lapidary, or more relevantly the *dipinto* texts found at these sites hitherto. The initial identification by Ferrua, in a period when the rudiments of Neo-Punic writing were still quite poorly understood, strikes us today as *ignotum per ignotius*. Hence, until at least even a letter can be certainly identified, there is no credible reason to view these texts as Neo-Punic.

Ferrua's identification in all likelihood appealed to Rocco, who was then studying what he believed were Neo-Punic texts in neighbouring Sicily, namely the cave-sanctuary of Grotta Regina, on the slopes of Monte Gallo in Palermo, and the caves of Grotta del Pozzo, in Favignana (off the western Sicilian coast). Rocco further considered the Tač-Ċaghqi find to belong to the same cultural setting as what he thought were Punic/Neo-Punic inscriptions at the two Sicilian caves (Rocco 1972b, 68 and references therein). The validity of this assumption remains unproven, especially since Rocco's proposed reading of the Tač-Ċaghqi text is highly problematic both with regard to palaeographical analysis and morpho-lexemic identification. This observation also applies for Rocco's questionable interpretations of the above-mentioned Sicilian inscriptions, for that matter.

First, let us comment on Rocco's readings of the Tač-Ċaghqi glyphs (1972b, 67, 70), which, at the time, corroborated observations and speculations made on the tomb furniture *in situ*, namely decorated holes in the burial chambers' plug-doors, allegedly for libation rites (see Borg 1972):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. <i>In forza del dono a te offerto,</i> | משחדך |
| 2. <i>o tu che sei forte,</i> | כ עז |
| 3. <i>sta tranquillo, Spirito,</i> | חם אב |
| 4. <i>desisti...</i> | כא |
| 5. (?) . | |

Line 1: משחדך

Written in somewhat semicircular fashion, and, *contra* Rocco, comprising six and not five glyphs (Fig. 3), this line starts off with a cross-like glyph, which Rocco interpreted as the Neo-Punic letter *mê*, standing for the preposition *m-* prefixed to the following consonant, a *šin*. While the shapes of these two glyphs may bear some vague resemblance to certain realisations of Neo-Punic *mê* and *šin* respectively, and recall somewhat similar 'letters' Rocco allegedly identified at Grotta Regina and Grotta del Pozzo,⁷ the supposed *mê*, however, has further traces of paint on top, which casts this reading in severe doubt. Rocco's proposed interpretation of the third glyph is even more problematic. First of all, it seems rather to consist of two separate symbols. Rocco (1971, 7, n. 9) however identified it as *hêt*, based on his reading of the Grotta Regina inscriptions. The typical Neo-Punic *hêt* is usually composed of three strokes next to each other with the first and third sometimes resembling a *kâp*, and the second having a variable form, but sometimes the first part of *hêt* has the shape of a mirrored capital R (see examples in Rocco 1971, 7; Jongeling & Kerr 2005, 11), or even three hooked parallel strokes (such as e.g. at Hr. Maktar: cf. e.g. the illustrations in Jongeling 2008, 129). Nevertheless, the strokes rarely link to each other to form a single letter, as would seem to be the case here. Rocco (1972b, 69) deemed the fourth letter a *dâlet*, given its circular shape and flat top, or as a closed 'ayin, yet he adds that an open 'ayin may also be read, according to him, with certainty in line 2. Even so, the shape of the glyph in line 1 is quite odd, and steers away from the typical triangular Punic or Neo-Punic *dâlet*. While in Neo-Punic, *dâlet* on occasion often seems quite similar to 'ayin, especially if lacking a tail, it is only on rare occasions that there is any doubt as to the actual reading (cf. Jongeling and Kerr 2005, 17-18). According to Rocco, the second, third and fourth signs therefore constitute the noun חתם 'gift, offering, bribe', which is known from the Hebrew Bible and Aramaic inscriptions of post-700 BC (Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, 1120), but otherwise unattested in Phoenicio-Punic (and is seemingly an Aramaic loan word in Canaanite, and hence very unlikely in Punic). The final glyph is allegedly the pronominal *kâp* (-k) of second person masculine (or feminine) singular (although given his reading of 'b in line 3, one must assume that the gender implied here is masculine). Similar shapes of *kâp* are found in Grotta Regina.⁸

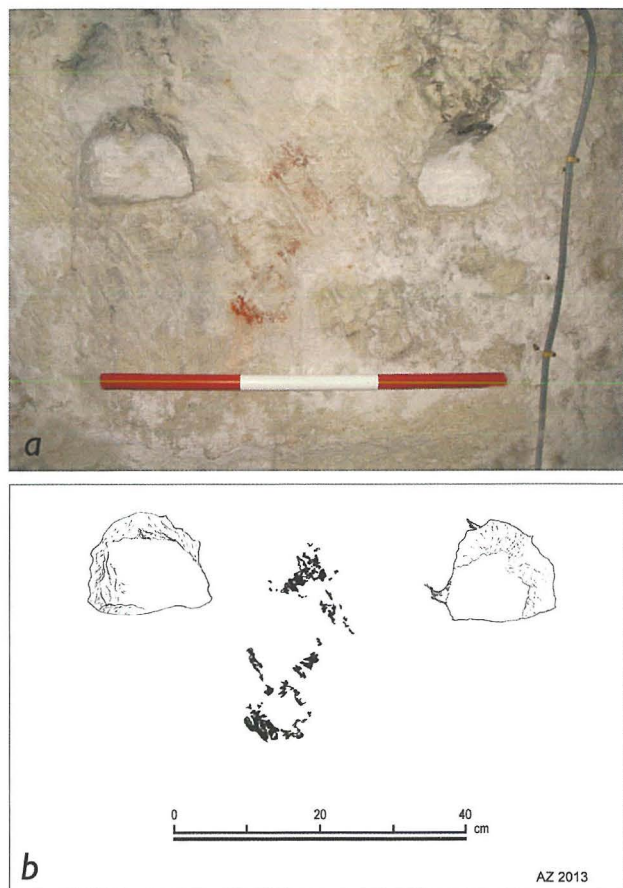


Figure 6. Line 4 ('Inscription' A) (Photograph [a] and Drawing [b] by A. Zammit).

Oddly enough, though, Rocco (1972b, 70) stated that the pronominal suffix *-k* is here used with dative force: 'your gift' (i.e. *donum tibi offerebatur*). The preposition *m-* in this interpretation is said to specify the logical cause, therefore 'on account of the gift offered to you'.

There is evidently a curious space between the first and second signs, even though the marking of word boundaries by dots or spacing is very rare in Phoenician, Punic and Neo-Punic, as continuous writing in lapidary inscriptions was practised as a rule (cf. e.g. Segert 1976, 54-55 §21.82-83, yet note Lehmann 2008). If this is actually a text, there indeed might be exceptions, not only in line 1 but also in lines 2 and 3. Rocco (1972b, 69, n. 11) suggested the space in line 1 might have been intentional to distinguish initial monosyllables from the subsequent words, as the monosyllables might have been pronounced in a distinct accent, possibly in proclitic fashion, yet he does not mark the space in his transliteration. Rocco attempted valiantly to establish space syntax to indicate word boundaries, which if present actually

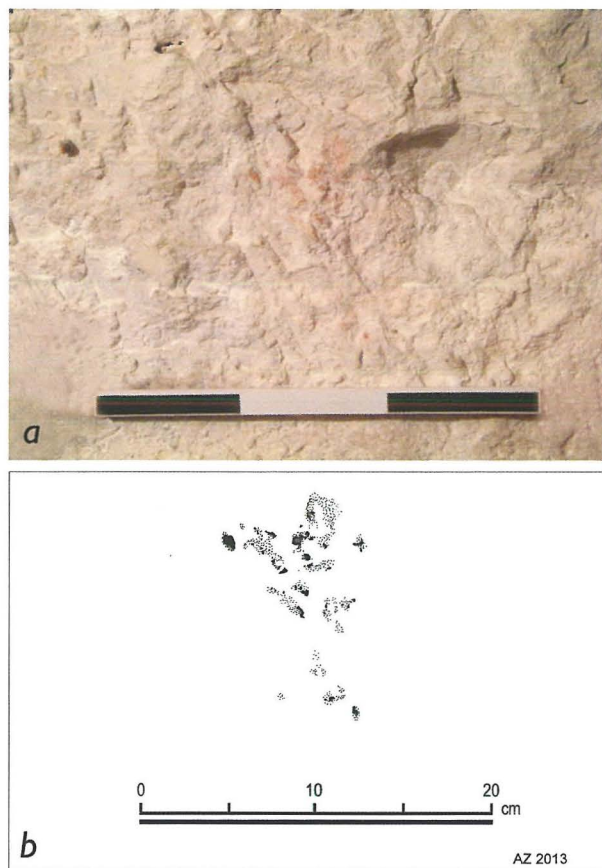


Figure 7. The faint daubs of paint of line 5 ('Inscription' A) (Photograph [a] and Drawing [b] by A. Zammit).

render unlikely the text's identification as Neo-Punic, in order to lend his otherwise unfounded reading support.

Line 2: עז | כ

Rocco (1972b, 69) notes line 2 consists of three glyphs, which today are very badly preserved and barely legible (Fig. 4). The first glyph might bear some superficial similarity to a *kāp*, similar to the one he reads in line 1, and is spaced out from the other two glyphs. What Rocco subsequently deems an open *'ayin* is quite impossible as this is the one grapheme seemingly even the most incompetent Neo-Punic scribe gets right, allegedly followed by a *zayin*. Let us consider Rocco's reading first. The conjunction *k* (Hebrew כ) 'for, because' is written in Phoenicio-Punic without the *yôd* (Jongeling 1986), which in Rocco's reading would be an otherwise unattested Punic emphatic demonstrative particle. Moreover, the conjugation *k* can be employed adverbially in Phoenician Punic in the emphatic sense 'behold' (cf.

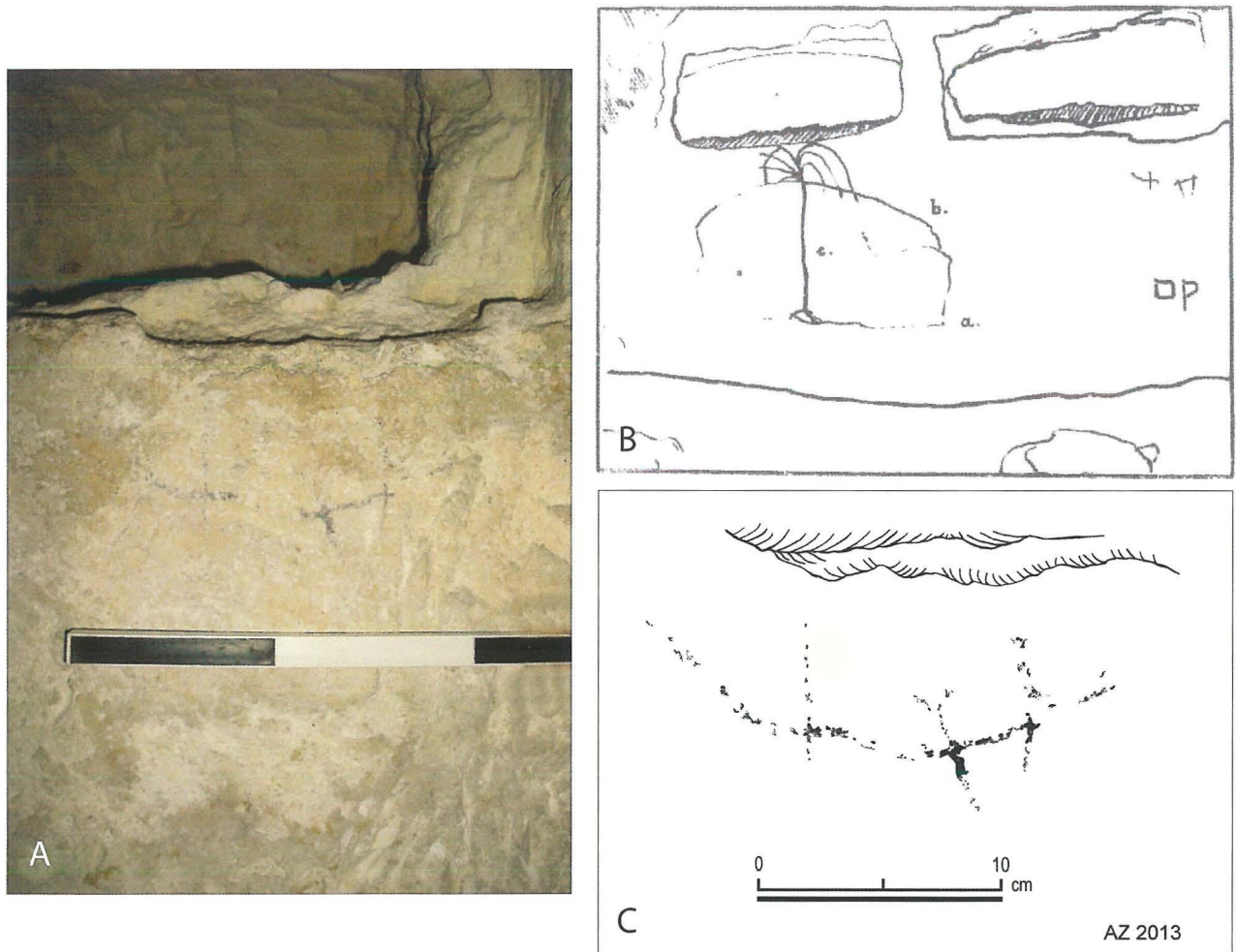


Figure 8. [A] Illustration of the alleged 'Tree of Life' (with the letters a, denoting the earthly ground; b, the arch of the heavens; and c, the palm that connects the two); on the tree's right is the hypothetical qm inscription, with Hebrew transliteration (Rocco 1972b: 72, fig. 2); the traces of black pigment that were mistaken for the Neo-Punic qm ('Inscription' B), and which clearly seem to continue into further lines (Photograph [B] and Drawing [C] by A. Zammit).

CIS I, 4; see Kerr 2016). The other two glyphs in line 2 allegedly form the adjective עז 'strong, powerful, fierce, violent'. Rocco (1972b, 70-71) called the construction עז (י) כ 'un costruito di grande eleganza stilistica che si ritrova in alcuni salmi biblici', but nevertheless quite un-Punic, and the second masculine singular pronoun אַתָּה would be unnecessary in such a phrase of supplication, since עז (י) כ reinforces the address that follows (cf. the use of כִּי in Psalms 52:9 and 54:6 (note Rocco's different [non-Hebrew] biblical numerology), and the phrase כִּי עֵץ (or כִּי־עֵץ) in Genesis 49:7; Numbers 13:28; 21:24).

Nevertheless, due to the bad state of preservation, we cannot confirm any of Rocco's proposed readings. Even based on his drawings, none of his proposals appear to have any merit.

Line 3: חס | אב

This line is ambiguous, owing mostly to the shape and identification of the first glyph. Despite its complexity, Rocco (1972b, 69) considered it to be a *hêt*, supposedly similar in shape to the one in line 1, which we already deemed highly improbable. The one in line 3 is even more ambiguous, as can be seen in Fig. 5. Once again, there seem to be two separate glyphs instead of Rocco's one: the first, on the far right, is almost circular in shape, with a diagonal upstroke and further paint traces on top, while the second sign from the right is cross-shaped, with a slight tail at the bottom right, which does not link with the first sign, as Rocco thought and reproduced in his drawing (Fig. 2). Supposedly following is an alleged cross-shaped *sāmek*, of which Rocco found

join up with the alleged letters *qm*, not to mention that faint traces of pigment seem to tie the two 'letters' (Fig. 8). Through careful scrutiny of the actual daubs of paint *in situ*, we therefore completely dismiss the idea that this 'Inscription' is a text at all. The fact that there are further traces of pigment that seem to be part of the letters read by Rocco as ⲓⲛ could very well indicate the presence of either further glyphs of sorts (now faded), or (parts of) a linear drawing, given the presence of the alleged 'Tree of Life' drawing on the same wall surface towards the left side. Even so, the schematic nature of the general decoration in black pigment and its present degraded state inhibit further judgement.

Conclusion

'Inscription' A within the Taċ-Ċaġhqi south-east hypogeum is by all accounts a unique artefact, though whether we are actually dealing with an inscription or the remnants of a drawing remains uncertain. Given its location, assuming it is an inscription, this long text might well be of the funerary type, but it remains illegible. The fact that this 'Inscription' is supposedly divided into five parts on five separate chamber doors makes it even more peculiar. One cannot rule out the idea that each individual text could equally stand for names, perhaps those of the deceased or the original ancestor first interred within each individual chamber. However, as the matter now stands, none of Rocco's readings can be confirmed. Furthermore, even if we are to take his drawings at face value, the glyphs illustrated can in no way be read or interpreted as Neo-Punic.

'Inscription' B is definitely part of a faded out linear decoration or drawing in black ink on the outside wall of window-tomb VI/chamber II. Therefore, one can confidently abandon the hypothesis proposed by Rocco that this was the Neo-Punic word *qm* addressed to the deceased. The remnant traces of ink could have formed part of the drawing of the palm-tree on the left, but the effaced state of the wall inhibits any further judgement. It is nonetheless quite certain that we are not dealing with Neo-Punic texts.

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Notes

- 1 For more information on the two hypogea see Baldacchino 1954, I-III; Borg 1972; Buhagiar 1986, 182, 186-90.
- 2 Two letters dated 16 February 1952 and 26 March 1952 respectively (National Museum of Archaeology archives).
- 3 Letter dated 11 March 1952 (National Museum of Archaeology archives).
- 4 Letter dated 22 April 1952 (National Museum of Archaeology archives); Ferrua stated that he had consulted with linguist [Giorgio] Levi Della Vida and other Semitic scholars, but without any successful interpretation whatsoever.
- 5 In his first letter to Ferrua (dated 16 February 1952), Baldacchino refers to the south-east hypogeum as a 'rifled family catacomb'; and in his replies (two letters dated 11 March 1952 and 22 April 1952 respectively), Ferrua in fact laments about the vandalism and looting that have so unfortunately inhibited further conclusions about the inscription and the hypogeum in general (National Museum of Archaeology archives).
- 6 For a striking Punic example of lapical illiteracy see Jongeling 1996.
- 7 For *mem* see Grotta Regina inscriptions 10, 11, 21 and 26b (Rocco 1971, 5-6), and for *šin* see inscriptions 12, 13, 16 and 21 (Grotta Regina) and inscription 1 (Grotta del Pozzo) (Rocco 1972a, 11-13).
- 8 See inscriptions 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 16, 17, 23, 26, 32, 33, 38 and 40 (Rocco 1971, 3).
- 9 One cannot tell whether there was a ligature between the two glyphs, owing to their faded state. The glyphs of an alleged (Neo-Punic) text are similarly written in a downward motion in Grotta Regina ('inscription' 14), close to the present ground level, and the scribe apparently had to write the glyphs in a squatting or kneeling position (cf. Rocco 1971, 16-17).
- 10 For further reading on the St Paul Shipwreck controversy in relation to the early Christianisation of Malta see Buhagiar 2007a: 1-10 and references therein; 2007b.
- 11 Furthermore, Sagona (2009, 27-28) speculates that the alleged palm tree might refer to the canopy of the firmament, and that both drawing and inscription were inspired by Mithraic beliefs concerning resurrection.
- 12 Dr Keith Buhagiar, *pers. comm.* 2010, following a close examination of the wall drawing *in situ*.

Religious identity and perceptions of afterlife gleaned from a funerary monument to a young girl from (late) Roman Melite

George Azzopardi

Possibly late during the Roman occupation of Malta, a young deceased girl had a funerary monument set up in her memory by her loving mother. Analysis of both epigraphic content and iconographic elements on this monument would show that the mother, at least, is likely to have been originally a public slave but later achieved manumission, a status which remained to be enjoyed by herself and by her daughter. Moreover, they seem to have adhered to the then commonly held beliefs regarding the nature of death and afterlife. Yet, identifying their beliefs on the nature of death and afterlife did not prove sufficient to determine their religious identity as such beliefs were evidently shared by different religious groups.

Introduction

One particular monument, the whereabouts of which have long been completely lost, may have risked being completely forgotten had it not been documented graphically a few decades after its discovery. Its graphic documentation was not published in its entirety either and had the original preparatory drawing, with its detailed graphic documentation, not been preserved, a useful bit of evidence on funerary beliefs in (late) Roman Malta would have been lost forever.

The surviving preparatory drawing facilitated an analysis of both epigraphic content and iconographic elements on this monument. Through such an exercise, this paper seeks to reveal the social status of both mother and daughter. No less importantly, it tries to gain an insight into their beliefs on the nature of death and afterlife and, through these, attempts to unravel their religious identity.

The monument

An illustration of this monument was published by Hoüel (1787, pl. CCLXI). The monument consists of a female figure seated within a scallop shell flanked by two fluted pilasters and topped by a simple tympanum

forming an aedicular shrine. The intriguing object shown in her hands, and what appears to be a *cista* (cylindrical basket) next to her feet as well as her general outward appearance might have visually represented and communicated personal qualities, virtues, values, or ideals which the person (represented by the depicted female figure) might have been identified with (for similar examples, see Borg 2013, 25-43). The monument occupies the central part of the drawing and is flanked by a funerary monument¹ on the left side and architectural specimens (column shafts, bases, and capitals) on the right side (Fig. 1).

Now preserved at the Hermitage in St Petersburg (Russia), Hoüel's preparatory drawing was, for some reason, not reproduced in full when published. As shown on the original preparatory drawing, the published part of the monument stood above a framed inscription which must have also formed part of the same monument and complemented the sculpted relief figure (Fig. 2).

The monument's provenance

Making reference to Hoüel's published version of this monument but without citing his own sources, A.A. Caruana states that the monument was found in

‘Rabato, Notabile’ around 1725 and that it ended up in the possession of Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena. He adds that its whereabouts were, by the time of his writing, unknown (Caruana 1882, 117).

Caruana does not indicate the part of ‘Rabato’ where the monument came from. However, as it was of a funerary nature (see below), one may safely assume that it originated from the part of ‘Rabato’ that in Classical antiquity formed the cemetery area beyond the walls of the Roman town of Melite (today’s Mdina and part of today’s Rabat) in conformity with what was prescribed by Table 10 in the mid-fifth-century BC Law of the 12 Tables which did not permit burials or cremations in a city/town (Toynbee 1996, 48; Mellor 2013, 4). This picture is so far confirmed by the distribution of known burials beyond the confines of the towns of Melite and Gaulos (Said-Zammit 1997).

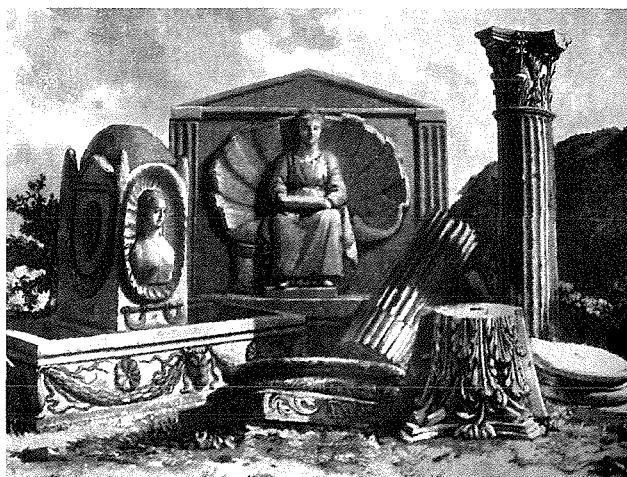


Figure 1. The funerary monument as published by Jean Hoüel. The monument occupies the central space on plate CCLXI reproduced here from Hoüel (1787). Courtesy: Malta Libraries.

The inscription²

Text:

D(is) M(anibus)

Publiciae Glycerae
F(iliae) Su<a>e carissimae
et Pientissimae quae
VIXIT ANNIS XV DIEBUS XXV VIRGI(NE)
BENE MERENTE FECIT PUBLICIA
IRENE MATER

Translation:

To the gods Manes

Publicia Irene, the mother, well deservedly erected (this monument) to Publicia Glycera, her dearest and most affectionate daughter, who lived as a maiden for 15 years and 25 days.

As shown by its inscription, the monument was erected, presumably over her tomb, by Publicia Irene for her daughter Publicia Glycera who died at the age of 15 years and nearly a month. No date is given for its erection. However, the opening dedicatory formula *Dis Manibus* (abbreviated *DM*), followed by the name of the deceased in the dative case and the name of the dedicator in the nominative case, as on our inscription,

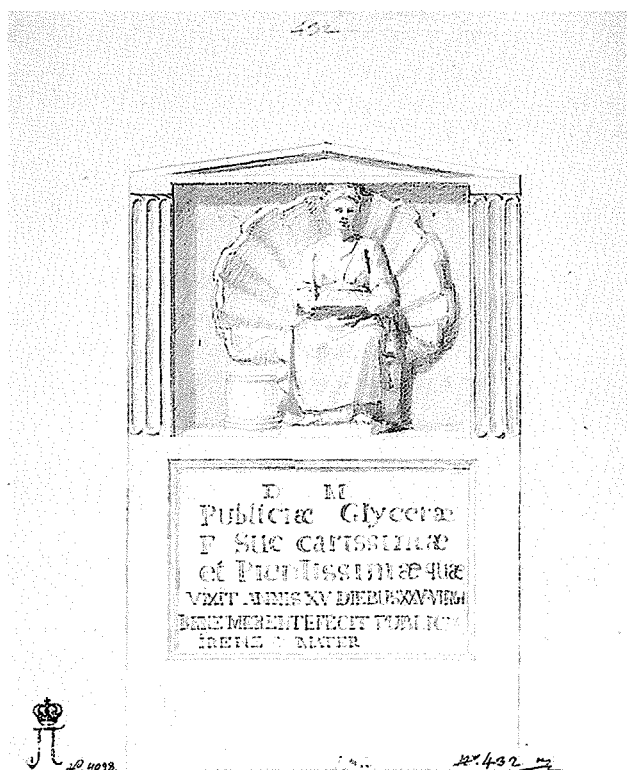


Figure 2. The entire funerary monument as shown on the original preparatory drawing preserved in the album, Series of preparatory drawings for the engraved edition ‘Picturesque journey around the islands of Sicily, Malta and Lipari’, 1782-1787, kept at the Hermitage in St Petersburg, Russia. Drawing: Black chalk, 21x17.2 cm. Source: <http://www.arthermitage.org/Jean-Pierre-Laurent-Houel/Tombstone-with-a-Bas-Relief-and-an-Inscription-from-La-Valletta.html> (accessed on 17th November 2014). Courtesy: State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg and Mr Daniel Cilia.

became popular – particularly on provincial funerary inscriptions – after the Julio-Claudian dynasty that came to an end in AD 68. It became more common from the end of the first century AD and during the following three centuries (Calabi Limentani 1968, 176; Cooley 2012, 61, 421). The presence of an *hedera distinguentis* (ivy-leaf motif used as interpunct) integrated before the final word in the inscribed text would also point to the Roman Imperial period as the period during which the monument was erected (Calabi Limentani 1968, 149), but perhaps not before the second half of the second century AD when *hederae distinguentes* became common. The use of such ivy leaf motifs as interpuncts at Rome may have had its origins during the Trajanic period (AD 98-117) although elsewhere in the empire it was found before this period. However, it became common during the second half of the second century AD (Cooley 2012, 432). Nonetheless, a date even as late as the fourth century AD cannot be entirely excluded for our monument and its inscription as the latter seems to betray certain traits that are attributable also to Christianity in this late period (see below).

Some observations on the social identity of Publicia Irene and her daughter Publicia Glycera

As was customary in Roman times, a (freeborn) daughter's name was composed of the feminine form of her father's *nomen gentilicium* or *gens/family name*, either on its own or followed (sometimes, preceded) by a *cognomen/personal epithet*. Inheriting, instead, the maternal *nomen gentilicium*, would generally indicate an illegitimate birth (Calabi Limentani 1968, 157, 162; Keppie 1991, 20). Both mother and daughter on our inscription carried the feminine form of the *gens name Publicius*. It may seem, therefore, that either both Publicia Irene's father and her husband, who was also Publicia Glycera's father, belonged to the *gens Publicia*, carrying the *gens name Publicius* as their second name in their respective *tria nomina*,³ implying also that Publicia Irene was married within her paternal *gens* of the *Publicii*, or else her daughter Publicia Glycera was of an illegitimate birth.

In addition, both mother and daughter carried a *cognomen*. Though different from each other's, both of their *cognomina* are of a Greek (or Hellenistic) derivation. Irene, the mother's *cognomen*, is derived from the Greek word for 'peace' and is also

encountered on Jewish and Christian epitaphs. On the latter, for example, it seems to have borne an etymological link with the Christian value of peace (Calabi Limentani 1968, 164; Cooley 2012, 234, 268).⁴ On the other hand, Glycera (the daughter's *cognomen*) was a popular name for Hellenistic courtesans.

It is unclear what these *cognomina* truly reflect of their respective holders' true personal identities. Apart from other information they may provide (see below), their Greek *cognomina* may reveal that they were *libertae/freedwomen* after having previously been slaves. Freedmen and freedwomen (i.e., ex-slaves or freed slaves) carried the *gens name* of their former master in their official nomenclature, generally adding, from the first century BC, a Greek (or non-Latin) *cognomen* that could be the same name by which they were known as slaves (Calabi Limentani 1968, 157, 161, 163; Cooley 2012, 410-11; Harvey 1984, 398; Verboven 2013, 90, 93, 102 notes 18, 21). If so, rendered in the feminine form as *Publicia* in their respective names, the *gens name Publicius* (see above) would have not been that of their respective fathers but that of their former common master who would thus have belonged to a *gens Publicia*. But *Publicius* (or *Publicia*) was generally the *nomen gentilicium* of the *liberti* (or *libertae*) who had been previously public slaves employed in the public service of the state and the municipalities. Public slaves of municipalities used to be freed by a decree of the local senate (Buckland 1921, 66-67, 82; Calabi Limentani 1968, 161). Thus, the *gens name Publicia* common to both mother and daughter may rather suggest that, before being manumitted, both of them had previously been public slaves presumably employed in the public service of the Maltese *municipium* by whose local senate's decree they are expected to have achieved manumission. As the *cognomina* amongst families of the *liberti/libertae* and of the inferior classes were not inherited (Calabi Limentani 1968, 158), the different *cognomina* of the mother and daughter (namely, Irene and Glycera) would also seem to indicate manumission.

Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether Publicia Irene and her daughter were *libertae* (freedwomen) or first-generation *ingenuae/freeborn* women from previously freed parents but who still carried nomenclature typical of the *liberti/libertae* (see Lee 1956, 50; Keppie 1991, 20; Borg 2013, 41). While the former may be more likely, it might have also been the case that only Publicia Glycera was freeborn



Figure 3. The birth of the goddess Venus shown on a scallop shell rising above the sea waves. Mural on one of the walls of the House of Venus in Pompeii. Source: http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/paula_chabot/house/pchouse.38.jpg (accessed on 17th November 2014). Courtesy: VRoma Project's Image Archive.

(*ingenua*) and carried nomenclature typical of the *liberti/libertae*, while her mother Publicia Irene had been freed (*liberta*) from her servile status earlier, before the daughter was born.

In any case, two important ingredients seem to stand out: the free status (whether as *libertae* or as *ingenuae* with nomenclature typical of the *liberti/libertae*) of both dedicator and deceased and the moral virtues of the latter epitomised by her maiden status. This seems to correspond with what one would usually find expressed on tomb reliefs and inscriptions of freedmen/freedwomen in particular (Borg 2013, 29) even if one cannot fail to note the contradictory nature of the deceased's *cognomen* Glycera on the inscription of our monument in respect of her attributed maiden status (see below).

Furthermore, while they could sometimes have also been used by the freeborn population, sculpted reliefs (commonly in bust form, less frequently as complete figures) like the one we have on our monument are rather typical of freedmen/freedwomen funerary art (Borg 2013, 26, 41-42).

The funerary nature of the monument

The inscription starts with a dedication to the gods Manes (see above). These were the deified spirits of

the dead ancestors and, thus, every family had its own Manes. It was customary for funerary inscriptions to start with such a dedication.

But, apart from this dedication which is, itself, a sufficient criterion for the identification of the funerary nature of the monument, the scallop shell within which the female figure, supposedly representing Publicia Glycera, is shown seated forms another useful criterion.

In Classical iconography, the scallop shell was a symbol of birth or re-birth (Werness 2004, 359). It seems to be within this symbolic context that scenes showing the birth of the goddess Venus depict her on a scallop shell rising above the sea waves. The best known ancient representation of this theme is perhaps the mural, executed before AD 79, preserved on one of the walls of the House of Venus in Roman Pompeii (Fig. 3).

But, when associated with burials, the scallop shell could have symbolised re-birth in the context of death as illustrated, for example, by the portrait of a deceased person within a scallop shell shown, with another deceased person, on a funerary monument now in the Museo Capitolino, Rome (monument no. 17 in Calabi Limentani 1968, 206-208). In funerary contexts, therefore, the scallop shell might have signified re-birth, through death, to a new life. It is presumably with this meaning that scallop shells are



Figure 4. Relief portrait of a deceased couple within a scallop shell on a sarcophagus (inv. no. 31535) of the first half of the fourth century AD from the cemetery of St Calixtus in Rome. Apart from the portrait of the deceased couple, the sarcophagus carries also biblical scenes. Source: http://www.vroma.org/images/raia_images/couple_sarcophagus.jpg (accessed on 17th November 2014). Courtesy: VRoma Project's Image Archive.

sometimes found deposited in burials as part of the funerary repertoire accompanying the deceased (see, for example, Ciurana *et al.* 2013). This same meaning or belief is evidently manifested in the execution of our monument and in the symbolism it employs. Thus, one can more easily comprehend why the female figure, evidently representing the deceased Publicia Glycera, is shown in close relation to a scallop shell on our funerary monument.

Finally, without implying that it was necessarily inspired by it, one cannot fail to note a degree of iconographic similarity between the figure of the deceased girl on our monument where she is shown seated within a scallop shell and the figure of the newly-born Venus on the Pompeii mural where she is shown reclining on a scallop shell.

Possible Christian elements

In late Roman times, Christians would also adopt the scallop shell symbolism evidently to express the same belief which they also shared since, for them, death was, and still is, regarded as the moment of true birth (see Cooley 2012, 62, 231). In fact, the scallop shell motif is sometimes found on Christian sarcophagi where it is often seen in close relation to portraits of the deceased, almost as seen on our example. Fine examples, with biblical scenes, of the first half of the

fourth century AD are to be seen at the Museo Pio Cristiano, in the Vatican. Their respective portraits shown within scallop shells (Fig. 4) range from those of deceased couples (e.g. inv. nos 31532, 31535, 31551) to those of deceased brothers (e.g. inv. no. 31543) and individuals (e.g. inv. no. 31431). The scallop shell motif is also seen in window tombs in presumed Christian catacombs in Malta. Examples are found in the Tal-Mintna catacombs (c. fourth century AD) near Mqabba, and in one of a group of hypogea at Il-Magħlaq, in the vicinity of Mnajdra prehistoric temples (see Adams 1870, 253, pl. VIII (fig. 2), pl. IX (fig. 9); Bonanno 2005, 336). One particular example coming from a small hypogeum at Ix-Xagħra ta' Santa Duminka, Kalkara, is seen lightly scratched on a window tomb in close relation to a rudely engraved stylised portrait of an orant figure – presumably the deceased as in the examples on the early Christian sarcophagi mentioned above – whom it frames (see Buhagiar 2005, 5). The same motif still maintains its presence – though less frequently – on tombstones in modern-day Christian cemeteries (Fig. 5) where it seems to retain the same message of belief in re-birth, through death, to a new life.

But the use of the scallop shell and the belief it conveyed are not the only elements encountered on our funerary monument that were common to Christians and to the Graeco-Roman world. The formula *bene merente fecit* on our inscription is

frequently encountered on Christian epitaphs but is not necessarily exclusive to these (Cooley 2012, 231). Along with elements indicating family roles (in our case, mother and daughter), verbs like *fecit* that indicate the dedication of the tomb/funerary monument, and epithets of affection like *carissima* and *pietissima*, the formula *bene merente* made gradual appearance on Christian funerary inscriptions between the mid-third and the beginning of the fourth centuries AD, having already been present on non-Christian funerary inscriptions of the third century AD (Calabi Limentani 1968, 201-202; Carletti 1986, 15-16) from where they may have been borrowed and retained. Likewise, the use of the opening dedicatory formula *Dis Manibus* persisted even amongst Christians, albeit to a lesser extent, in Rome until the mid-fifth century AD, while amongst Christians in North Africa it persisted until the sixth and seventh centuries AD (Calabi Limentani 1968, 202; Cooley 2012, 232-34). Early Christians may have kept resorting to this formula in the hope that it would help protect the inviolability of the tomb (Cooley 2012, 232). An example is provided by a fifth- to sixth-century AD inscription from Via Portuense, Rome (inscription no. 117 in Carletti 1986, 127).

Christian epitaphs became increasingly distinctive during the fourth century AD with details relating to the deceased's age at death amongst others and epithets qualifying his/her lifestyle in relation to the Christian faith (including emphases on maidenhood) while, by the end of the same century, individuals' names began to increasingly reflect Christian ideals, values, and beliefs. Such names often comprised a new baptismal name (*cognomen*) adopted alongside the former one (Calabi Limentani 1968, 200-201; Carletti 1986, 17-18; Cooley 2012, 234-35).

Perhaps, one may observe traits possibly similar to the above ones even on our monument's inscription. Being also etymologically linked with the Christian value of peace, Publicia Irene's own *cognomen* Irene may have been added to her other name Publicia to reflect a Christian identity (see above). However, this *cognomen* could also have been added simply to reflect her status as freedwoman (see above) leaving us, in this case, with no clear identification of her religious identity. Other possibly similar traits are detailed information of the age of Publicia Glycera at the time of her death, and the importance apparently afforded to her claimed maiden status. Nonetheless, it would seem difficult to reconcile Publicia Glycera's own *cognomen* Glycera with any Christian ideals,



Figure 5. A nineteenth-century tombstone from St Oswald's church graveyard in Durham (England) displaying the scallop shell motif on top. Photograph: the author.

values, and beliefs and, particularly, with the maiden status attributed to her on the inscription. Unhappily, this would leave us again with no conclusive views about the latter's true religious identity.

Concluding remarks

Along with its inscription, our funerary monument seems to present a juxtaposition of elements that are equally attributable to different religious groups, including Christians, thus making the precise religious identity of both dedicator and dedicatee all the more difficult to establish. At least, however, we know that they seem to have embraced the common belief of an afterlife following the termination of the earthly one.

In addition, the picture so far attained seems to confirm the scenario marking the period to which our monument is tentatively dated: a period of transition during which religious traditions (including Christianity) co-existed on the Maltese islands (Azzopardi 2007, 24) to such an extent and in

such a way that, as confirmed by the case studied, the co-existing religious identities could hardly display any distinctive characteristics or elements enabling the positive identification of any particular religious group.

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Notes

- 1 This monument (labelled *n* in Hoüel 1787, pl. CCLXI) was seen by Hoüel near the Citadel (in Victoria), Gozo but he was informed that it originated from a tomb or sepulchral chamber (Hoüel 1787, 108-109).
- 2 This inscription does not feature in the tenth volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* published by Mommsen (1883), indicating that, by then, the inscription (and, presumably, the entire monument) was probably already lost.
- 3 As required by the Gracchan *lex repetundarum*, Roman official nomenclature of male citizens consisted of three main elements in the following order: 1. the *praenomen*: forename or the name given on birth; 2. the *nomen* or *nomen gentilicium* (usually ending in *-ius*): the *gens* (or family) name followed, first, by the patronymic (or father's name) and, then, by the name of the voting-tribe to which, as a Roman citizen, the individual was ascribed; and 3. The *cognomen* (sometimes, two *cognomina* and, rarely, even more): a sort of a nickname or epithet which served as a distinguishing factor.
- 4 As if to underscore the Christian value of peace, from the first half of the third century AD, the 'peace' salutation (itself of biblical derivation and already in use amongst the living Christians) was also resorted to by Christians to address their deceased, at first in combination with and then substituting earlier non-Christian/secular expressions of salutation. By the mid-third century AD, the same Christian form of salutation assumed a more eschatological dimension (Carletti 1986, 13-14).

A Functional Analysis of Glass from an Officers' Mess, Malta

Russell Palmer

The nineteenth century witnessed an explosion in the use of glass as a material from which containers and tableware were made. No longer confined to the packaging and consuming of liquids, a wealth of products were packaged in branded and patented containers. This article presents an initial analysis of glass recovered from archaeological investigations at the Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa, which in the second half of the nineteenth century was an army mess house and officers' quarters. Focusing on function, key groups of glass finds are described. Where possible, brands and manufacturers are contextualised through complementary documentary sources, providing a broader focus and relevance to the material. From baby food jars to hard liquor bottles, the glass finds present a picture of daily life that stretches beyond typical views of military life and highlights the importance of glass finds to understanding post-medieval contexts.

Introduction

Glass is a key material in later-period archaeology. Not only used for drinking and containing liquids, during the nineteenth century glass became an important container-material for moving food and household products around the globe. It can also provide invaluable information about past eating and drinking habits, as well as trade, supply, and business patterns. In this short article, an overview of the glass recorded from assemblages excavated at the Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa, is presented, thereby contributing to the wider understanding of material culture in and of later historical periods in Malta. While post-medieval sites have been—and continue to be—excavated, there exists a dearth of accompanying literature, grey or published, and it is hoped that this contribution will go some way to start correcting the situation.

The glass finds described and analysed were excavated between 1998 and 2002, under the joint guidance of Kenneth Gambin (Heritage Malta) and Nathaniel Catajar (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, then Museums Department). The previously unstudied assemblages derive from a cistern commonly referred to as the 'Garden Well' (IPM-GW), a 'cess pit' (IPM-CPMC), and the levelling down of the old 'prison yard' (IPM-MPY; Fig. 1). Material uncovered by an electric company, known as the Enemalta Store

(IPM-ENE), is also included. The assortment of large and conjoining fragments, and complete or near-complete vessels among the glass and pottery suggests that the assemblages are chronologically homogenous and a result of dumping or clearance sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century, with exception of the Enemalta Store, which seems to have a slightly later yet pre-WWI date. Commandeered by the British in the early nineteenth century, the building was used as an infirmary at least until 1826 (T[he] N[ational]A[rchives, Kew, UK] MPH 1/912/6-8). Shortly after the site was taken over by the regiments, comprising by the mid nineteenth century the mess house and quarters of officers whose troops were stationed nearby (Tallack, 1861, 83–84; Badger, 1869, 247). In 1899 it was reported as being disused, in 1900 it was 'temporarily occupied by troops' (TNA WO/33/3237), and in 1904 it was again housing officers (*Portsmouth Evening News* 9 August 1904, 3). In the 1920s it became a museum (Gambin 2003, 27).

Classification

The glass finds have been divided into five main categories (containers, tableware, flat glass, miscellaneous, and unidentified), with functional subdivisions based on those suggested by Jones and

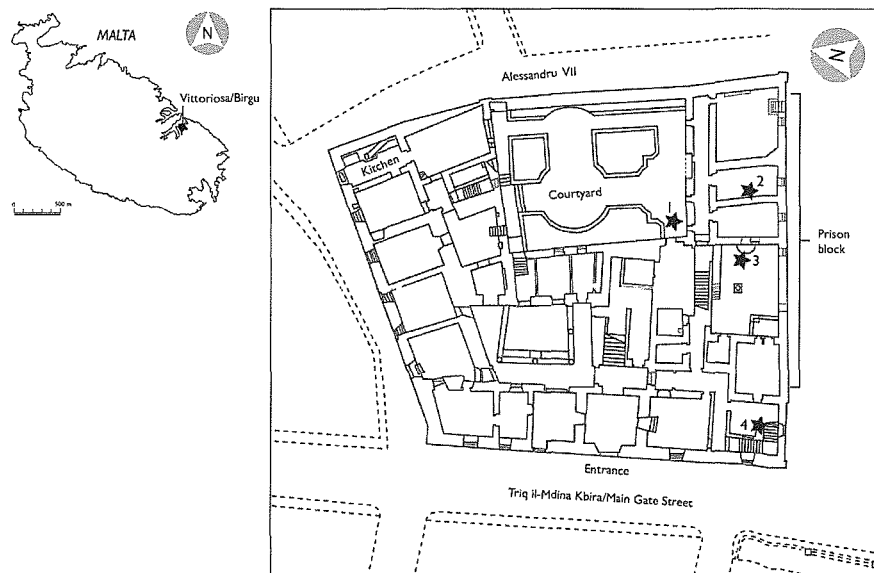


Figure 1. Plan of Inquisitor's Palace, Malta, showing locations of excavations: (1) IPM-GW, (2) IPM-CPMC, (3) IPM-MPY, and (4) IPM-ENE. Image: R. Palmer.

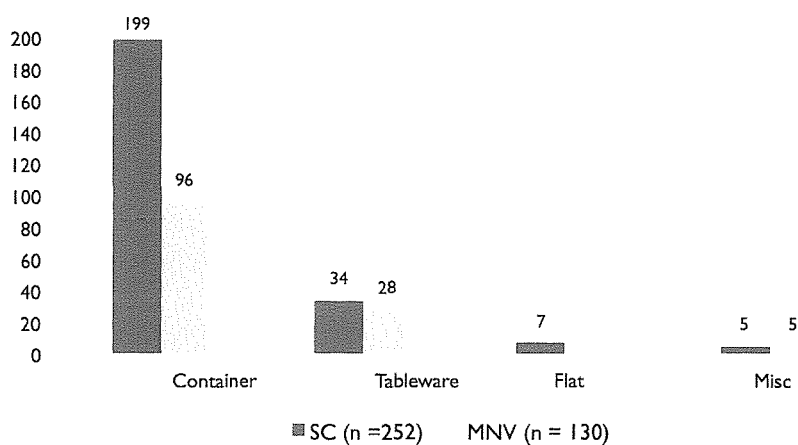


Figure 2. Breakdown of glass by vessel type (SC = shard count; MNV = mean number of vessels).

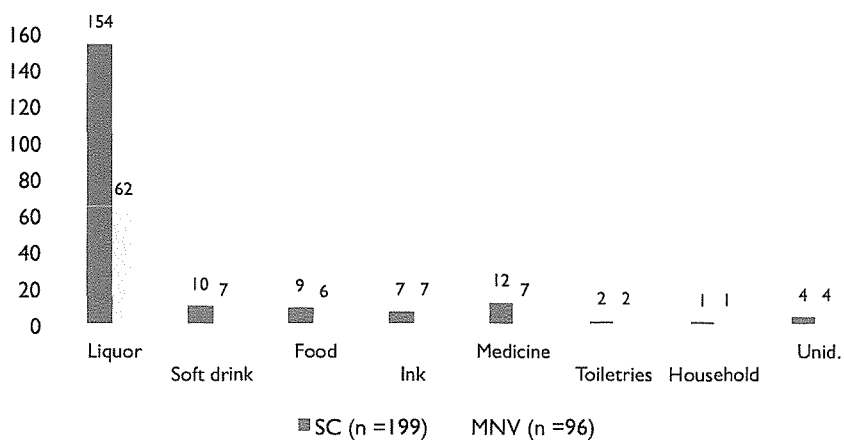


Figure 3. Breakdown of containers by functional category.

Sullivan (1989). A further resource used throughout the analysis has been the historic bottle website hosted by The Society for Historical Archaeology (www.sha.org/bottle). Minimum Number of Vessels (MNV) values are calculated by counting the number of non-conjoining rim and base shards, and taking the higher of the two values. Of the 252 shards recorded, over three-quarters came from containers (MNV 96), a significant number from tableware (MNV 28), and the remainder comprise shards of flat window and tile glass, along with some miscellaneous and unidentifiable shards (Fig. 2; Table 1).

Containers

The assemblages exhibit a wide range of bottles (MNV 92), a few jars (MNV 3), three stoppers, and a single vial. Many of the bottle shards are sufficiently diagnostic as to enable identification, which has resulted in a large number of forms for which only one example exists. These bottles were used to package and sell beverage, food, and household products. Containers have been sub-divided into the following functional categories (Jones & Sullivan 1989; Fig. 3; Table 2): liquor/alcohol (MNV 62), soft drinks (MNV 7), food (MNV 6), inks (MNV 7), medicine (MNV 7), household (MNV 1), toiletries (MNV 2), and unidentified (MNV 4).

Liquor

The category of liquor (MNV 62), or alcohol, is dominated by olive to dark olive-coloured tall (approx. 27cm), mould-blown cylindrical bottles with cork-closures and push-up bases. Also referred to as 'black glass', these bottles are ubiquitous finds in nineteenth-century contexts and were used for bottling wine, beer, and other products. These bottles exhibit an array of finishes (single or double down-tooled or flattened string rim, champagne), necks (bulged, conical, or cylindrical), and bases (bell-shaped, conical, domed, or rounded). However none of these characteristics are definitive in assessing age or provenance, and as they were commonly reused, it is impossible to specify the exact contents that brought them to the officers' mess. The late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century date of the assemblages may suggest more wine and spirits, as beer was being increasingly bottled in other forms. The only bottle of this category that can be positively identified with respect to its contents and maker has

Vessel type	SC	SC %	MNV	MNV %
Container	199	79.0	96	73.8
Tableware	34	13.5	28	21.5
Flat	7	2.8	0	0.0
Misc.	5	2.0	5	3.8
Unid.	7	2.8	1	0.8
Total	252	100	130	100

Table 1. Breakdown of glass from the Inquisitor's Palace site by vessel type.

Functional Category	SC	SC %	MNV	MNV %
Container				
Liquor	154	61.1	62	47.7
Soft drink	10	4	7	5.4
Food	9	3.6	6	4.6
Ink	7	2.8	7	5.4
Medicine	12	4.8	7	5.4
Toiletries	2	0.8	2	1.5
Household	1	0.4	1	0.8
Unid.	4	1.6	4	3.1
Total	199	79	96	73.8
Tableware				
Tumbler	15	6	14	10.8
Stemware	13	5.2	10	7.7
Bowl	3	1.2	2	1.5
Cruet/cas-tor	1	0.4	1	0.8
Vase	1	0.4	1	0.8
Handle	1	0.4	0	0
Total	34	13.5	28	21.5
Flat				
Window	5	2	0	0
Unid.	2	0.8	0	0
Total	7	2.8	0	0
Misc.				
Misc.	4	1.6	4	3.1
Unid.	1	0.4	1	0.8
Total	5	2	5	3.8
Unid.				
Unid.	7	2.8	1	0.8
Total	7	2.8	1	0.8
Total	252	100	130	100

Table 2. Breakdown of glass at Inquisitor's Palace site by functional category.

Figure 4. (a) Ale or stout bottle embossed with 'Geoghegan and Co' and 'MALTA' (IPM-ENE.1.27); (b) Three Codd-style bottles: left Carmelo Cutajar (IPM-FNF 1 19), centre and right Charles Julious (IPM-ENE.1.16 & IPM-ENE.1.17).; (c) Bottle of Arconaut Straw Hat Dye containing remnants of the dye (IPM-ENE-1.10); (d) Three tumblers with press-moulded fluted panels; (e) Squat ink bottle with burst-off finish, containing remnants of ink (IPM-ENE.1.96). Photographs: R. Palmer.



'Geoghegan and Co' and 'MALTA' embossed on the body (IPM-ENE.1.27; Fig. 4a). Stannus Geoghegan,¹ a brewer in Dublin from at least 1872 (*The London Gazette* 7 May 1872, 2207), had moved to Floriana by 1894 (Mitchel 1904, 165), and in 1895 entered into a partnership with Antonio Despott of Cospicua as brewers of stout and ale (Refalo 2009, 59). Therefore the bottle can be dated after 1895.

Beer bottles were present in the form of lightning closures (Fig. 5a). Lightning finishes were very common for beer and other carbonated drinks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jones & Sullivan 1989, 162), being gradually replaced by the still common crown top finish, of which one example has been recorded.

Many products were sold in large quantities, which inspired the use of standard bottle sizes and shapes. Two square gin 'case' bottles were recorded, so-called because their square body and short restricted neck made them easier to pack into cases. A complete Benedictine bottle was recorded, along with an olive-coloured oval base on which was embossed 'JJW P[eters] H[amburg]'. J.J.W. Peters was a firm shipping schnapps, gin, cordials, and other drinks throughout

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Van Den Bersselaar 2007, 72; *Official Catalogue* 2014, 294).

Soft drinks

The number of shards identified as soft drink bottles, containing natural and artificial waters, soda, and other non-alcoholic drinks, is relatively low (5.4% of containers by MNV). In part, this is skewed by focusing on one archaeological material, as stoneware ginger beer bottles and earthenware water vessels were present in the assemblages (see Palmer 2014). It is also possible that some of the olive cylindrical bottles discussed above could have contained mineral water. However, two clear forms arise. At least six Codd-style bottles made of aqua-coloured glass were recorded (Fig. 4b). These bottles were popular in Britain and her colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were designed to contain carbonated drinks, almost exclusively mineral waters. Codd-style bottles have a complicated neck that contains a 'Codd ball' and an internal rubber ring just below the orifice. The pressure of the carbonated drink forces the ball against the rubber ring, hence forming a closure. Interestingly, not a single Codd-ball has been

recovered, although one neck shard still contains the rubber ring (IPM-GW.6.65). The recorded examples were produced in England for businesses in Malta. Four of the minimum six are embossed on the rear with the name of London bottle manufacturer 'W.M. Barnard & Sons'. William Barnard and Sons, a partnership of glass bottle merchants registered at 66 Fenchurch Street, was dissolved on 25th June 1902, which puts their manufacture before that date (*London Gazette* 3 February 1903, 710). On the front of one of these bottles is the name 'Carmelo Cutajar' along with 'Gudia', suggesting that Cutajar was bottling waters in Gudja. The other two bottles were sold by Charles Julious, based in Valletta in the 1890s and possibly later (*Daily Malta Chronicle* 8 July 1897, 7). Julious appears to have worked with several British bottle producers, including Bratby & Hinchliffe (IPM-ENE.1.18), the Manchester-based 'Aerated Water Engineers and Manufacturing Chemists' (Hart 1898, unpaginated advertisement), who were producing Codd-style bottles from 1885 (Talbot 1974, 50–51). The final soft drinks container was a colourless crown top finished bottle. Clearly visible seams suggest it was blown from a 3-part mould, with the finish and an applied collar added separately (IPM-ENE.1.26).

Food

While this category is not numerous (MNV 6), several of the containers have clear uses and demonstrate the growing popularity of commercially prepared and branded foodstuffs. Fully identifiable bottles include two sauce bottles. IMP-ENE.1.188 is a colourless bottle, square in cross-section with bevelled corners ('French square'). One of the sides is embossed with 'MASON' and the base with an anchor and '1397', and is similar to that described by Mephram (2012, 20). In 1905, Mason's OK Sauce was advertised as having had '25 years reputation' (*Sheffield Evening Telegraph* 12 April 1905, 2), suggesting a likely turn-of-the-century date of manufacture. A colourless, 8-sided 'octagon catsup' Heinz Ketchup bottle with a simple external screw thread was recorded (IPM-CPMC.1.177). Embossed on the base, this 255-variety was patented in USA in 1893 (Heinz 1893), and likely dates to the first decade of the twentieth century. Two aqua-coloured stoppers are included in this category. In both cases the finial is horizontal with a flat top containing a central depression. There is no neck, and the shank tapers gently towards the point. On the larger (IPM-ENE.1.4; radius 1.4 cm, height 3.8

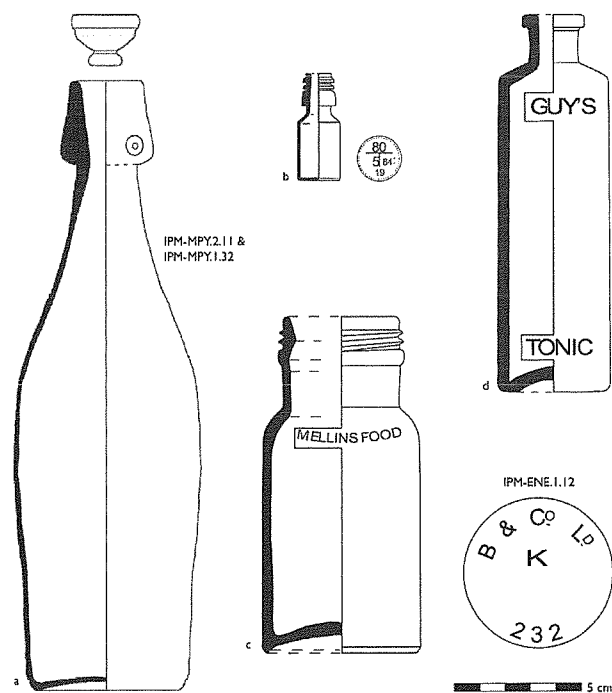


Figure 5. (a) Lightning finished bottles with stopper (IPM-MPY.2.11); (b) Amber machine made pill bottle with external screw thread and embossed-lettered base (IPM-MPY.2.19); (c) Mellins Food bottle (IPM-ENE.1.12); (d) Square-based bottle of Guy's Tonic (IPM-ENE.1.11). Drawings: R. Palmer.

cm), the point is rounded, and on the smaller (IPM-ENE.1.3; radius 1.3 cm, height 3.1 cm), the point is obscured by the pontil scar. Stoppers of this nature were used in conjunction with a sleeve of cork, and are often associated with sauce bottles (Jones & Sullivan 1989, 152–53).

Two food containers are of particular interest. A colourless machine-made, wide-mouthed vessel with the finish and cylindrical neck making up approximately one quarter of the vessel's height (IPM-ENE.1.12; Fig. 5c) has an external screw thread that leads immediately to a moulded collar band, followed by short sloped shoulders, a cylindrical body, chamfered heels with flat resting point, and a shallow concave base. Moulded marks on base ('B & Co L^d 232') suggest it was made by Bagley and Co. Ltd, a bottle and jar manufacturer based in Yorkshire. The shoulder is embossed with 'MELLINS FOOD', suggesting that the jar originally contained baby food. A further jar made by Bagley and Co. was recorded, and though it was most likely for food it has no further makings. Both jars date to 1895–1920s (Lockhart *et al.* undated). In addition to the jars, a partial jar lid (IPM-CPMC.1.78, radius 4.5 cm) was recorded with



Figure 6. Embossed and labelled Florida Water bottle (IPM-ENE.1.80). Drawing and Photograph: R. Palmer.

the letters ‘... ILNER BROTHERS LIMITED’ and ‘ORO’ embossed on its top. Originally it would have belonged to a vessel produced by Kilner Brothers Limited, who had a glass works at Conisbrough, Yorkshire, which was often then written ‘Conisboro’ (*Hull Daily Mail* Thursday 23 May 1935, 7). The jars were sold empty in sets and designed to be closed with a glass lid and rubber band, creating an air-tight closure perfect for preserving fruits (*Kent & Sussex Courier* Friday 17 September 1909, 6).

Inks

The ink bottles found can be broadly divided into two types: squat (max. height 6 cm, MNV 5) and tall (max. height 11 cm, MNV 2). All exhibit characteristically jagged and sharp burst-off finishes except IPM-MPY.3.73, which is made of colourless glass, has a flat base, a cylindrical body, sloping shoulders, a cylindrical neck, and a patent finish. A medium-green coloured example (IPM-ENE.1.95) was 3-part mould blown, demonstrated by obvious seams, with a flat base, a squat and slightly carinated body, sloping shoulders separated by a moulded band, a restricted cylindrical neck and a rounded collar approximately 1 cm below the finish. A further two bottles (IPM-ENE.1.96 and IPM-ENE.1.97) have flat bases, slightly tapered cylindrical bodies with the widest point

being at the shoulders, which are rounded and lead to a cylindrical neck (Fig. 4e). The final squat ink is square in cross-section, with plain body panels, and abruptly sloping shoulders leading to a cylindrical neck which makes up one-third of its height. The wider-than-tall squat appearance is common for table use as it positions the bottle’s weight towards the base of the vessel, creating a stable bottle, less likely to spill or overturn. The two taller and larger bottles are both of aqua-coloured glass containing seed-bubbles and displaying mould seams. The 3-part moulded bottles have shallow concave bases, are cylindrical (IPM-ENE.1.79) and oval (IPM-ENE.1.84) in body, with rounded shoulders leading to a cylindrical neck with moulded band collar.

Medicine

Only seven vessels and one stopper have been identified as originally containing medicines. These include three aqua-coloured bottles: one barrel-bodied with a concave base, cylindrical neck, and patent finish (IPM-CPMC.1.83, height 6.0 cm); a partial bottle with an applied flared (or wide prescription) finish and sloping shoulders (IPM-GW.6.67); and a square-sectioned bottle, with a cylindrical neck and patent finish, of Guy’s Tonic, which cured ‘habitual weakness of the stomach’ (*Aberdeen People’s Journal* 8 April 1905, 8; Fig. 5d). A dark amber, machine-moulded, cylindrical bottle (IPM-MPY.2.19, height 4.2 cm) with a concave base, pronounced shoulders, cylindrical neck, and external screw thread finish was also recorded. Embossed on the base are numbers suggesting that it was a tablet bottle (Fig. 5b). This is true also of another machine-moulded bottle (IPM-MPY.1.40, height 7.2 cm), colourless and rounded-rectangle in cross-section. It also has an external screw thread finish. The final vessel is a so-called homeopathy vial (IPM-ENE.1.8), a colourless, cylindrical, and flat-based tube. The finish is missing. This group also includes a colourless glass stopper (IPM-ENE.1.5, radius 0.9 cm, height 4.6 cm). The vertical finial is flat, rectangular, and rounds to a very short constricted neck. The top of the square-bottomed tapered shank forms the shoulders. This type of stopper was most frequently used in medicine and druggist bottles (Jones & Sullivan 1989, 153–4).

Toiletries

Toiletry bottles are present in the form of an aqua-coloured, cylindrical-bodied bottle with a flat base.

The neck and finish are missing, and embossed on the rear-side is '[F]LORIDA-WATER BEST QUALITY' (Fig. 6). Remnants of a label look very similar to an example made in Germany (see Sullivan 1994, 81). Perhaps the most distinctive container recorded is a tooth powder flask made of opaque white glass (milk glass). Although incomplete (IPM-ENE.1.29), the recti-octagonal body sits on a flat inverted base, with a neck that narrows and bends so as to end in an orifice that is perpendicular to the body. The base is embossed with 'PATENT'.

Household

Only one vessel can be reliably categorised as household (IPM-ENE.1.10). It is a bottle that is rectangular in cross-section, with a cylindrical neck leading to a patent finish, with a vessel height of 13.3 cm. The aqua-coloured vessel is moulded in three parts with each of the four body panels depressed. On one of the side panels is embossed 'ARCONAUT', indicating that it was an early twentieth-century bottle of Arconaut Straw Hat Dye, which in 1913 was advertised as costing 3d. (*Derby Daily Telegraph* 20 March 1913, 2). Dried remains of the dye are still visible (Fig. 4c).

Tableware

The tableware (MNV 28) was categorised as tumbler (MNV 14), stemware (MNV 10), bowl (MNV 2), cruet/castor (MNV 1), vase (MNV 1), and handle (MNV 0). Descriptive nomenclature is based on Jones & Sullivan (1989, 139–40).

Tumblers

The ten tumblers from IPM-ENE are all different, four of them having bowls divided between 11 and 13 pressed panels, and flat bases (Fig. 4d). Two exhibit applied foot rings, and apart from one (IPM-ENE.1.100), which appears to be of cut glass with cut foliage decoration on the bowl, all have funnel-shaped lower bowls (the upper bowls missing). IPM-GW contains a flat-based tumbler with a rounded heel and a bowl comprising pattern-moulded flute panels (GW.6.56) and two with concave bases and unknown bowls.

Stemware

The stemware consists broadly of two groups of wine glasses. A group of nine undecorated pressed-moulded drinking glasses (Fig. 7), each missing the uppermost part of the bowl, come from IPM-

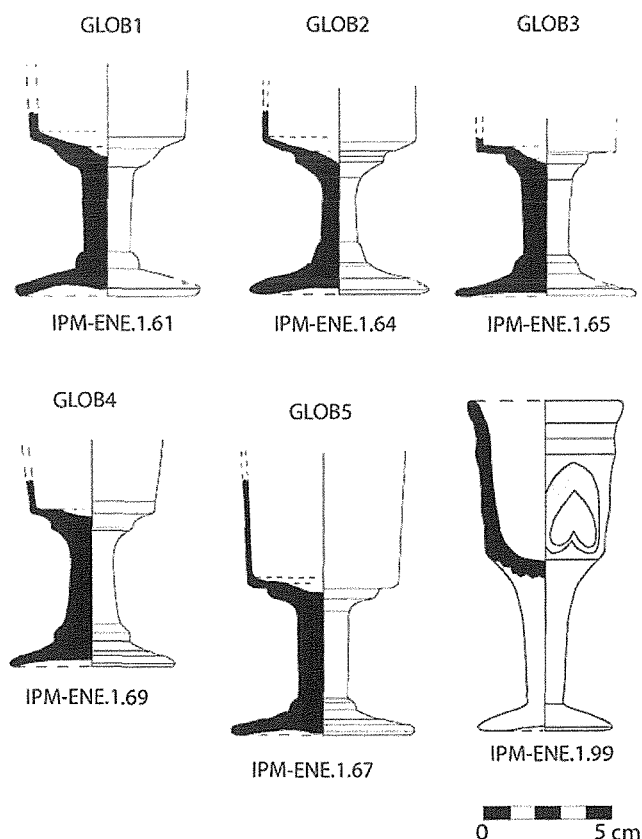


Figure 7. Press-moulded stemmed drinking glasses. Drawings: R. Palmer.

ENE. Plain conical or slightly domed-conical bases culminate in a step or basal knob from which a plain stem leads to a cordoned collar before opening into a bucket-shaped bowl. These have been interpreted as wine glasses and of very early twentieth-century date. They are almost certainly British in origin. The bowl of a further press-moulded vessel (IPM-ENE.1.99) is funnel-shaped and decorated with a moulded motif of inverted hearts surrounded by 'hobnailing' (groups of square, circular, or diamond-shaped bumps [Jones & Sullivan 1989, 58]). Three shards were found in assemblage IPM-GW of cut wine glasses. These are not included in the minimum vessel count as neither rim nor base is present, only part of the stem and lower bowl. Two of the stems are decorated with a central annular knob. The other has an angular knob in the central position and another just below the collar which leads to the ogee-shaped bowl. These are likely to date to the 1880s, which saw a revival of cut glass in Britain (Charlton 1984, 229). No two stemmed drinking glasses are exactly the same, suggesting that

complete sets were not discarded, but the presence of wine drinking glasses fits well with the 'black glass' bottles that I have interpreted as representing mostly wine bottles.

Other tableware

A fancy press-moulded bowl has an oval starburst base and footring, with a rounded profile, flat rim, and a height of 2.7 cm (IPM-ENE.1.75). The bowl is externally decorated with hobnail panels interspersed with smooth vertical band. A square-based cruet or castor (rim missing) is present, which shows the use of table condiments. The tableware is all made of colourless glass with the exception of IPM-ENE.1.9, which is made from opaque turquoise glass and appears to be the central part of some kind of vase. Four playing marbles were also recorded, suggesting gaming and possibly gambling. Such activities may also account for the lack of Codd balls, as they can be used in place of marbles.

Discussion

The majority of the finds relate to alcohol consumption (Sherd Count 72.2%, MNV 66.2%), notably wine and beer, but also spirits such as gin, schnapps, and whisky. Wine glasses, used perhaps against custom for multiple types of wine and liquor, confirm this, along with tumblers for spirits and cordials. The presence of these drinking glasses contrasts strongly with the paucity of ceramic drinking vessels found at the site: only an isolated example of a teacup stamped with the regiment number of the 53rd and a few other sherds have been found. This contrast, rather than suggesting more alcohol was drunk than tea, coffee or chocolate, is telling of the military practice of moving all regimentally marked and/or owned wares with the company when it moves on, and might reflect the cost of a ceramic service. The higher occurrence of mostly mass-produced and inexpensive glass drinking vessels may also in part be due to their disposability and physical fragility—they are more likely to be broken both in use and transit than ceramic vessels. Together with the range of creamware and whiteware ceramic dinner, side, and soup plates found in the assemblages, the wine glasses and tumblers imply traditions of formal Victorian dining often associated with an officers' mess. The 'ordinariness' of the plates and glasses is in line with Lynne Sussman's assertion that military populations generally use the same wares as their civic counterparts (1978, 93–4), and any mess

silverware or cut glass is unlikely to have been left behind or even broken (breakages were charged and fined by the regiment). The presence of a cruet or castor further conforms to traditions of formal Victorian dining and table decoration, which is suggested by contemporaneous illustrations of army life in Malta (*The Graphic* 25 April 1891). Other items are found in the assemblages that endorse this idea of decorating the formal rooms with contemporaneous decorative material culture, such as the c. 1830s 'Zoological' patterned blue-on-white transfer-printed vase formed in Robinson, Wood and Brownfield's 'Stoneware', which was in fact a refined white earthenware (Coysh and Henrywood 1982, 304, 416).

The presence of domestic and toiletry items is interesting and demonstrates the importance of studying the glass finds, as the ceramics from assemblages are mostly silent on these matters. By the late nineteenth century, officers are likely to have carried some form of toiletry case with them, but it is doubtful that these would have accommodated bulkier items such as tooth powder flasks, which explain their discard. The Florida Water bottle provides a pivot for some speculation. While colognes were used by men (especially of the officer rank), such products could equally have been used by women (Sullivan 1994, 84). The same is true also of the hat dye, and the jar of Masons baby food may suggest the presence of young children. Newspaper reports testify to the presence of women and children at the site through the birth of a son to Jeanette and Captain Arthur Richard Cole-Hamilton on 3 April, 1883 (*Leamington Spa Courier*, 7 April 1883, 5), and further material evidence for women and children at the site can be found in the shoes recovered. While the army was building more married quarters, there were not enough and these finds remind us that a too-overt focus on military life can overlook the wives, children, and followers of armies.

An officers' mess was also a place of work and the many administrative tasks, as well as a well-developed letter-writing culture (Lyons 2012), accounts for the presence of ink bottles. While ink bottles were mostly glass, there is an example of a, perhaps older, earthenware ink bottle in the assemblages.

The overwhelming majority of the glass recorded from this site originates from Britain, a fact that is unsurprising in a nineteenth-century British colony. However, many of the finds, particularly the containers, demonstrate far more complex business and trade

patterns than wholesale importation of goods from Britain to Malta. The use of purpose-made British jars and bottles for locally-based producers, sellers and entrepreneurs can be seen in the mineral water bottles of Carmelo Cutajar as well as the colonial (?) settler Charles Julious, whose trade also extended to ginger beer production in Valletta, sold in purpose-made British stoneware bottles. Furthermore, Irish-born Geoghegan's ale bottle provides material evidence of colonial subjects exploiting the imperial networks of the British Empire to their own advantage, as well as the complicated trail of movements to and from Malta in the nineteenth century, of people and things.

Conclusions

Other appropriately analysed sites are not yet available within Malta, but comparisons with other British colonies within the Mediterranean and farther afield would bring wider context to the assemblages. As in any study of only part of the material assemblage left behind, the picture presented is necessarily incomplete and the glass finds will in due course be integrated into the analysis of the ceramic and other finds from the site. However, it can be seen how important glass finds at archaeological sites are to understanding the lives of those who left them behind, especially in the late nineteenth century, when the glass industry was booming in many parts of the world and an ever increasing array of goods were contained, consumed and transported in glass.

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Notes

- 1 Not to be confused with his son, also Stannus Geoghegan, who served with the Royal Irish Regiment (*London Gazette* 12 November 1889: 5988) and later the Indian Army (*London Gazette* 3 November 1911: 7959).

Archaeology and archaeological discourse in pre-Independence Malta

Anna Maria Rossi

This paper argues that the institution of the Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta in 1963 is the offspring of the archaeological policies endorsed by the Nationalist Party (PN) that guided Malta to Independence. By looking at the archaeological debate in 1950s – early 1960s Malta this paper suggests that the revival of post-prehistoric studies by the Italians suited the cultural aspirations of the PN government and provided an effective answer to the colonial control of the discipline set out earlier by the British with the Malta Ancient Monuments Survey.

Politics of archaeology in pre-Independence Malta

The use of archaeological narratives to promote or challenge political ideologies, interests and actions (e.g. Díaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998) also in relations to colonial contexts (Gosden 2001; 2004) has a long history. The involvement of archaeology in processes of political legitimization has been studied in connection to European nationalisms (Díaz-Andreu & Champion 1996) and has been also explored on a global and contemporary perspective (amongst others, Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998). In addition to the scholarly appeal for the theme of the political manipulation of archaeology, there is also a recent general call for a less determinist and more cautious approach to the subject (Meskell 2012). Essentially, the role of archaeological materiality and narratives in shaping collective identities, often at the expense of others, is necessarily situated: the circumstances of every encounter are different and produce very different outcomes (Meskell 2012, 230-32; on Spanish archaeology see Díaz-Andreu 2010). In following this paradigm this paper seeks to unpack the 'micro-politics' (Meskell 2012, 236) of the archaeological debate in pre-Independence Malta.

Local and foreign political and cultural forces have framed the archaeological discourse in colonial Malta

(Grima 2005, 51; Vella & Gilkes 2001; Pessina & Vella 2009). In particular, British and Italian competing interests dominated the pre-Independence debate between the 1950s and the early 1960s (Vella & Gilkes 2001). Following the approach developed by Actor-Network-Theory researchers (Latour 1987; 2005), this paper explores the fundamental controversies and traces them in the words and the actions of the actors involved in the process. The format is a rich textured account that engages with institutional, group and individual associations (Latour 2005). Archival material from Malta and Italy constitutes the primary data source for developing this analysis.

In addressing the British-Italian dispute, the role of local political and intellectual elites is considered. This is because they did not simply provide the stage for the contest, but also actively engaged in the process and mediated in the relationship between Italy and Britain. This approach originates from the widely accepted awareness that colonialism is a fragmented and fluid encounter that does not necessarily fit into the dualist paradigm of oppressor/colonial and victim/colonized (Gosden 2001; 2004; 2012; van Dommelen 2006; 2011). The dynamics between colonizers and colonized are rather of an evolving nature and shaped by specific power relations, which are rarely plain and predictable in their development (Gosden 2012, 256).

A political scenario like the Maltese one, where this archaeological debate is embedded, appropriately reflects the complexity of colonial identities. In the 1950s Malta embarked on a short but intense journey towards political self-determination (Frendo 1991). The circumstances of being a British territory since 1813 and in geographical and cultural proximity to Italy had a crucial impact on the way Malta set the stage for the proclamation of political independence on the 21st September 1964 (Frendo 1991). Italy, in particular, had a pivotal role in nurturing Maltese anti-colonial nationalism since the Risorgimento, which is the political and social movement behind the creation of the Italian nation-state in the nineteenth century (Frendo 2000). The path that eventually led to Malta's political independence has its origins in the 1880s with the gradual rise of a polarized political scene and the creation in the 1920s of the pro-Italian Partito Nazionalista (PN – the 'Nationalist Party') and the pro-British Malta Labour Party (MLP) (Frendo 1992). In the 1950s the political debate focused on how to redefine the relationship between Malta and the United Kingdom. The options ranged between independence as advocated by the PN leader George Borg Olivier to full integration into the United Kingdom as supported by the leader of the MLP, Dom Mintoff (De Marco 2007, 60).

In the mid-1950s, under Mintoff's leadership, the integration proposal became subject of political debate both in Malta and in Westminster, but later eventually abandoned (Smith 2006, xl). In the aftermath of the failed attempt to integrate Malta with the UK, the colonial authority published a Defence White Paper that foresaw the drastic reduction of the local workforce employed in HM's Dockyard (Pirota 2001, 17-22). Against the backdrop of this gloomy economic and social scenario, the relationship between Mintoff and the British government significantly deteriorated up to the point of turning into violent political confrontation. Following Mintoff's resignation in April 1958 and the PN's failed attempt to form a new cabinet, the Colonial Office declared a state of emergency. The 1947 constitution was suspended and the archipelago became subject of the direct rule of HM Governor, Sir Robert Laycock (Pirota 2001, 30-37). The colonial administration exploited the tensions existing between the PN and the MLP and between the MLP and the Church. This lack of unity among Maltese political players delayed the return of legitimate government (Pirota 2001, 586; 650; De

Marco 2007, 61-65). These circumstances favoured the PN and the rise of its leader, Borg Olivier, who was perceived both in Malta and in the UK as the key player for a positive solution of the crisis (De Marco 2007, 61-65).

Under a new interim Constitution, enacted at the end of 1961, the PN led by Borg Olivier won the 1962 general elections and formed a new cabinet (Smith 2006, lv). Following the declaration of sovereignty in March 1962, the question of Malta's independence from colonial rule dominated the political agenda at home and abroad, not to mention some international political circumstances that exacerbated the debate (Smith 2006, l-lvi). The referendum on independence was held in May 1964, resulting in a slight victory for the pro-independence supporters (Smith 2006, lviii). Moreover, the role of the Church in the new constitutional arrangements and the terms of a new defence agreement proved to be controversial issues in Westminster. It was, however, primarily the risk of a return to power of Mintoff that prompted Westminster to quickly pass the Bill on Maltese independence. On 21st September 1964, once the British Cabinet ratified the proposed plan for Maltese political self-determination, independence became a reality (Smith 2006, lix).

Malta's Prehistoric Antiquities and...

In the 1950s the British imprinted a clear direction to Maltese archaeology with the Malta Ancient Monuments Survey (hereafter, Survey). The ambitious project was a statement of power and was conceived by the colonial authority as a way to correct the drift taken by Maltese archaeology following the popular work of the Italian researcher Ugolini on the islands' prehistory (Vella & Gilkes 2001, 368-72; Pessina & Vella 2009, 410-3; Skeates 2010, 58-60).

One of the first executive acts of the Survey project was the appointment of the scientific Commission in charge of supervising the research progress. According to the plans, the Commission had to be formed of three experts: John Bryan Ward-Perkins, Director of the British School at Rome and chief advisor for the Survey, Stuart Piggott, Professor at the University of Edinburgh, and a third non-British scholar to conceive the 'Commission international in character' (BSR 470/2). Both Ward-Perkins and Piggott advocated the engagement of Luigi Bernabò

Brea, Superintendent of Antiquities in Eastern Sicily and director of the Archaeological Museum at Syracuse in Sicily. He was 'one of the foremost archaeologists in Europe in mental power, but his understanding of central Mediterranean prehistoric problems in particular, puts him for this job in a class by himself [...] better than another Englishman and all those who have worked in the Mediterranean' (BSR 470/2). Despite all the scientific arguments, Brea was not appointed. Political circumstances put a firm veto on the involvement of the Italian archaeologist. As Piggott claimed: '[...] I appreciate the political etc difficulties involved... do you want an English (non-Welsh, non-Irish, non-Scotch) member? If so I've no suggestions as I don't know the field' (BSR 470/2). To justify the exclusion, Ward-Perkins used the scientific argument based on a different approach to the research so that 'our third member should be a north-west European, who will see eye-to-eye with you about the way to approach the problem and to present the material [...] person who will collaborate easily' (BSR 470/2). The issue of the third expert was eventually 'circumvented' by limiting the Commission to just two members (BSR 470/3).

In September 1952, having resolved the question of the Commission, the Survey's activities effectively started. The principal investigator for the Survey was the late Director of the Institute of Archaeology at UCL, John Evans (Evans 1959, 28; Evans 1971, v). The project began well and was brought to the public attention in the summer of 1954 when BBC's third programme broadcast the interviews of Ward-Perkins, Piggott and Evans (Crawford 1954, 131; Daniel 1954, 204; Skeates 2010, 59). However, by 1956 the publication of the Survey was far from being concluded, although some efforts were made to complete it while 'Malta is (or isn't?) being integrated into Britain itself' (BSR 476b1). Little progress was made in the following years (BSR 479b2). Ward-Perkins, who considered himself responsible for the entire project, expressed all his disappointment in a letter to Glyn E. Daniel, Fellow of St John's College at Cambridge and editor of *Antiquity*. He held that Evans, then Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at UCL, was the only person to be blamed for delaying the project: '(to say the least) Malta gave him an opportunity from which he has himself had great profit, both academically and materially' (BSR 479b2). Evans's volume *Malta* in Thames & Hudson's Ancient Peoples and Places series edited by Daniel, partially

responded to Ward-Perkins's concern (Evans 1959).

By 1963 the material was ready, but the lack of funding further delayed the conclusion of the project (BW 90/647). In 1971, the publication of *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: a Survey* marked the end of the Survey's difficult journey. David Trump, in reviewing the volume noted: 'for many years now, the "Evans Corpus" has been spoken of in Malta in tones varying from eager anticipation to frank disbelief. It can now expect, and will surely receive, a very warm welcome' (Trump 1971, 237).

... the post-prehistoric studies

The approach to the study of Maltese archaeology promoted in the Survey had a fundamental impact on the development of a broader debate on the Islands' past. The strong emphasis placed on prehistory came at a very high price. Devoting all financial and human resources to the study of prehistory negatively affected a comprehensive development of the discipline in Malta. The Survey shaped Maltese archaeology by dictating how to do it and what was worth investigating. At first, the Survey's decision makers authoritatively precluded the study of Phoenician-Punic antiquities. However, this deficiency turned into a success when in the early 1960s the *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta* (hereafter, *Missione*) filled the disciplinary vacuum created by the Survey's unilateral policy. In 1963 the PN in government successfully entered into a research agreement with the newly created *Missione*. These crucial circumstances evolved and interplayed as follows.

While the Survey Committee was about to be appointed, the future Committee member Joseph G. Baldacchino, director of the Museum Department, secured funds to set up a research programme on Maltese Phoenician antiquities (Bugeja 2006, 36). To that purpose, he personally invited Donald Harden, keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to prepare a research proposal (BSR 470/1; Bugeja 2006, 36) and a detailed plan for the study of the islands' Phoenician tombs (BSR 470/1; Bugeja 2006, 36).

Ward-Perkins interpreted Harden's interest in Malta as a direct threat to the Survey, to which – he recommended – all available resources should have been directed. Ward-Perkins added that Harden's interference 'has already trailed a very juicy red-

herring in front of Maltese noses that love nothing better' (BSR 470/3). At the time Ward-Perkins successfully managed to make a case against the Baldacchino-Harden plan. There is evidence that Baldacchino reacted negatively to the forced interruption of his project. The Director of the British School at Rome warned Piggott on the eve of his first visit to Malta of Baldacchino's unsupportive attitude and of his Punicophilia, stressing the need for 'certain diplomatic skills in dealing with him' (BSR 470/3). During his visit, however, Piggott found the Museum Director to be an attentive and kind host (BSR 470/2). It is not surprising therefore, that the Museum Director's attitude towards the Survey project was unenthusiastic given the overwhelming show of power at the highest colonial level, directly in conflict with his research ambitions.

The circumstances of the Phoenician research promoted by Baldacchino show how colonial authority needed to maintain a strict hierarchy of power-relations to ensure the status quo. In blocking the development of this project Ward-Perkins exerted a power that went beyond Maltese shores. It mirrored from an archaeological perspective the extent to which British colonial power directly controlled overseas possessions.

It could be argued that Baldacchino himself used his connections with British academia to set up his own project. This however should probably not be surprising if appropriate reference is made to the fact that Malta, as the small colony, outsourced most of the archaeologists working there and that at that time it was logical to choose a British academic. Foreign influence was not the issue, but rather the fact that a local initiative did not comply with a plan set up at the highest colonial level. This was unacceptable as the local expert in question was Maltese, held a powerful position, and *de facto* was not also an enthusiastic supporter of the Survey. In Ward-Perkins's view dealing with Maltese people was *per se* a risky business because they were difficult to control. Italy played a crucial role in exacerbating this ambivalent relation of Malta with its ruler, traditionally threatening the balance of power set by the colonial authority, more so when the prospect of independence gained momentum and Italy offered an appealing alternative to British control over Maltese archaeology.

Tas-Silġ: the point of attack

Notwithstanding the efforts to keep archaeological research strictly on the path set up by the colonial authorities, unexpected changes in post-prehistoric studies occurred in the following years.

The first person to warn of the imminent danger was David Trump, Curator of the archaeological section of the Museum Department between 1958 and 1963 (MUS 86/58; MUS 37/58). As a locally-based British archaeologist, Trump certainly had a clear understanding of the interplay between political and cultural stances on the Maltese archaeological stage, and of the fragile balance between local and overseas interests, in particular during the years of radical changes in Maltese history. In 1962 Richard David Barnett of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum and Benedikt Isserlin from the Department of Semitic Languages and Literature at the University of Leeds made an inquiry to undertake research on Punic Malta. In replying to their inquiry, Trump shared his concerns on the state of Punic archaeology in Malta:

Something should have been done years ago [...] If excavation is to be the point of attack, and there is much to be said for this, the temple site at Tas-Silġ offers far better hopes [...]: there is a good depth of soil, part of a colonnade was still standing to the end of the 18th century, inscriptional material has been found [...] (MUS 'Letters').

And a few days later Trump remarked: 'If anyone wants a Punic site here [i.e. Ras ir-Raheb], we have a much better one, with several feet of soil, at the other end of the island [i.e. Tas-Silġ]' (MUS 'Letters').

The statements made by Trump are of great interest even if their interpretation is controversial. Firstly, he complained about the timing of the proposal: it came late. He had possibly learnt of the Government plan to approach Italy on heritage matters and he likely appreciated the risks of this plan. Further to the timing issue, Trump's remarks contain reference to a single-site strategy to be adopted in Tas-Silġ as a 'point of attack'. This was in direct opposition to the landscape approach used in the prehistoric Survey.

Isserlin did not visit Malta until a year later, in March 1963. This delay proved to be critical and on the 26th April Trump wrote to him the following lines full of dismay:



Figure 1. 'The Hon. Dr. A. Paris gives the first stroke of the pick to inaugurate excavations at Tas-Silġ by the Italian Archaeological Team.' Caption that accompanied this photograph in *The Times of Malta*, October 17, 1963.



Figure 2. The inauguration of the 1963 excavation campaign at Tas-Silġ. First from right is the Minister of Education Paris with the *Missione* general director Moscati next to him (Malta 1963 1 – Foglio 002 fig. 3. Reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

The Tas-Silġ business becomes more and more grotesque. Moscati has his permission to go ahead but if this is in writing no copy has reached the Museum Department. Certainly we were not consulted before and after. The Italians are being given a completely free hand with the Phoenician and Roman archaeology of Malta, with no conditions whatsoever. I gather that if I want to dig up anything Roman for the museum I would have to ask Moscati's permission. The whole business is political from first to last, no regard having been paid to archaeological consideration at all.

Frankly if you wish to do anything at Zurrieq [the site where substantial remains of a Punic building stood] the only course now is to ask Moscati direct. It would still have to go through the Minister of Education but without Moscati's blessing I very much doubt if it would stand a chance. As you can gather from the above, anything we did or said from here would count for nothing with the powers that be. Similarly I trust them so little that they would be the last people to whom I should announce your discovery. Any importance of Zurrieq should be played right down until we can get your permission to work there.

... Our only hope is that the Italians may show a bit more sense and fair-dealing than the Nationalist (so-called) Maltese. They could hardly show less' (MUS 'Letters').

Some of the themes in Trump's allegation are directly connected with the arrival of the *Missione*, namely: 1) the political nature of Italian involvement; 2) the *Missione's* overwhelming power over Maltese historical archaeology; and 3) the Museum Department's powerless position.

Trump found outrageous the way that the PN government and the *Missione* politically manoeuvred the whole 'Tas-Silġ business'. Over a period of only a few months the *Missione* gained full control over Phoenician and Roman archaeology in Malta to such an extent that any decisions in these fields needed the approval of both the Minister of Education and Sabatino Moscati, the Director of the *Missione*. To use Trump's words, under these 'grotesque' circumstances the study of archaeology was effectively overpowered by politics and the Museum Department was a hopeless spectator of its own business.

Trump's allegations were sharp and accurate in many respects. It is unquestionable that the *Missione* had the backing of the PN Government with the Minister of Education, Hon. Antonio Paris, at the forefront and it is also true that the *Missione* obtained unprecedented control over Maltese historical archaeology (Figs 1 and 2). Furthermore, the politicised Italian involvement put the Museum Department in an awkward and uncomfortable position. As Director of the Maltese institution in charge of archaeological matters, Charles G. Zammit also became involved



Figure 3. The inauguration of the 1963 excavation at Tas-Silġ. The *Missione* scientific director Cagiano de Azevedo (right) and the Minister of Education Paris (left) between two journalists (Malta 1963 1 – Foglio 002 fig. 2. Reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

in the process (NAM, ME 25/62; NAM, ME 35/63, 19). However, beyond institutional compliments and public proclamations of collaboration, at this stage Zammit had probably no real power of veto, but was simply following decisions taken at the highest political level.

Ward-Perkins shared Trump's feelings of consternation and the sense of frustrating impotence. He labelled the first Italian campaign at Tas-Silġ 'an attack on one of the few remaining excavable sites in Malta, accompanied by a barrage of publicity highly nationalistic in tone. Those who have seen the excavation will appreciate that the word "attack" is used advisedly [...]' (BSR 484b1). Ward-Perkins despised the Italians for their aggressive approach to the archaeological deposits at Tas-Silġ (Fig. 3) and was inclined to dismiss the first results from the fieldwork as 'tendentious and half-baked nonsense' in line with the politically distorted conclusions of Ugolini's *Malta e le origini della Civiltà Mediterranea* (Vella & Gilkes 2001, 372). The timely publication of the Survey was 'well calculated' to give 'the proper answer' (BSR 484b1) to the biased, unskilled approach to archaeology shown by generations of Italians (Pessina & Vella 2009, 410-3; Skeates 2010, 58-60).

In Ward-Perkins's and Trump's view the Italian excavations in Tas-Silġ offended the entire archaeological discipline. This rhetoric of the Italian attack shows all its power when considered from a

colonial perspective. This is because the Italian control over the Islands' historical archaeology introduces a crucial element of instability to an already weakened system of power. The inverse fortunes of the Survey and the *Missione* project mirror the shift in power relations between Britain and Italy over Maltese archaeology in a crucial moment of the Islands' history.

It has been noted that a negligible archaeological impact in Malta had always haunted British academia (Vella & Gilkes 2001, 361, 371-72). What is relevant to emphasize here is not the British contribution to Maltese archaeology, which was deep and valuable well beyond the Survey project (Peet 1910; Ashby *et al.* 1913; Potter & Stoddart 2001, 8-9; Skeates 2010, 58-62), but rather its political impact. The British tried and failed to use the discipline as an effective political tool for affirming their influence over the Islands. On the contrary the institution of the *Missione* operated as a powerful political tool to effectively reduce the colonial control over archaeological practice and research.

In 1962 the Minister of Education Paris officially invited Michelangelo Cagiano de Azevedo, Professor of Greek and Roman Archaeology and History of Art at the Catholic University in Milan to provide scientific advice to the government (MUS 62/62; NAM, ME 110/62, 3) and 'to review the position obtained in Malta with regard to Archaeology' (NAM, ME 110/62, 3). Cagiano de Azevedo summarized his findings in the Report on the Antiquities of Malta (NAM, ME 25/62, 2) that landed on Paris's desk in January 1963. In March 1963 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially assigned the *Missione* in Malta to the Institute of Near Eastern Studies, under Moscati's directorship (Pos. IVO/B 11 Prot. 289). At the beginning of the following month, the *Missione* director offered to send an archaeological expedition '[...] in the frame of the fruitful cultural relationships between Malta and Italy [...]' (NAM, ME 25/62). The positive answer of the Maltese authorities was so rapid that the main points of the agreement between the *Missione* and Malta were defined in a few days.

In early April, while Moscati was in Malta for a short visit (NAM, ME 35/63), Paris formally submitted the proposal to authorize an Italian expedition to the Prime Minister, explicitly stressing the urgency of the matter. Borg Olivier gave his approval on the same day, promising 'full cooperation of the competent Maltese authorities' (NAM, ME 25/62). On April



Figure 4. The 1963 excavation campaign at Tas-Silġ (Malta 1963 2 – Foglio 005 fig. 95. Reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*). The use of the pick axe to go through layers of archaeological deposit was a common occurrence.

15th 1963 Cagiano de Azevedo, as newly appointed Director of the excavations, wrote to Zammit on the successful conclusion of the agreements: '*Come vede non abbiamo dormito e tutto ora è felicemente in porto*' (NAM, ME 25/62, 14).

Conclusions

In this paper it has been argued that the archaeological debate in pre-Independence Malta was at first dominated by the research agenda imposed by a colonial authority, as a means to reaffirm British control over the study of prehistory. In this light, the twin perspective on landscape and prehistory of the Survey project, as advocated by the British School at Rome, can be seen to have reinstated this colonial power over the discipline. However, this colonial paradigm failed under the combined effects of internal and external factors. The Maltese colonial experience was coming to an end and the system of power relations at the foundations of the Survey was in disarray. As illustrated above, the PN government seized the opportunity to subvert the colonial archaeological construct by inviting the Italians to conduct excavations on Maltese soil. The nature of this plan highlights a pattern of transition from a colonial to a post-colonial status for Malta. However, it should be kept in mind that the *Missione* hailed from Italy, the country that traditionally was

considered the alternative to British archaeology in Malta (Grima 2005; Vella & Gilkes 2001) and that Malta is a polarized country. So as happened in other circumstances in the course of Maltese recent history (Frendo 1991; 2000) it was not Malta as a unified entity that led the change, but only a part of it. This part was the pro-Italian establishment that governed the country in those years (Frendo 1991; 1992) and supported the *Missione* operation. This finding goes beyond colonial/post-colonial arguments and highlights an existing local pattern of political and cultural division. On a specific archaeological level the *Missione* project countered piece by piece the colonial construct shaped around the Survey. History replaced prehistory as the principal research focus, intensive single-site excavations replaced the survey as an investigation strategy. Last but not least, a foreign team replaced individual British researchers that worked within local institutions controlled and supervised by the Colonial authority.

While this paper does not fully engage with the discussion on the shift from colonial archaeology to archaeology by foreigners, it suggests that the *Missione* was formally the product of post-colonial power structures and that it countered colonial archaeological paradigms. In controlling the discipline, however, the *Missione* reproduced asymmetries of power typically associated with colonialism and *de facto* replaced the colonial authority in dictating which past matters for Malta.

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Deciding what to exhibit in museums: Does it really matter?

Veronica Barbara

Of all the abundant papers focusing on museum environments, few dismantle the decision-making process which characterizes the planning of displays and site presentations, going beyond space restrictions and physical needs of ancient artefacts. Such an approach is essential to understand why these decisions matter. A natural question which is seldom asked is, why display to the public in the first place? The present paper will start with this question, discussing briefly the two main theoretical stances in current western discourse on the subject. Two local case-studies will follow, supplemented by examples of projects which revolve around archaeology and communities. In the conclusion, theory and case-studies will be brought together in order to explain the link between archaeologists and non-archaeologists vis-à-vis archaeological heritage presentation.

Models of museum and site presentation

Why do people feel the need to display archaeological material? The two main museum models in western discourse are the Deficit Model and the Multiple Perspective Model (Merriman 2004, 5). The Deficit Model considers “the public” as an uneducated mass in need of professionals to give them “the science” behind artefacts. The main aim of exhibiting within this model is to make people understand archaeology and support archaeologists. Public involvement is allowed as long as it fits the agenda. Contestation, debate and conflict are ignored. Within the Multiple Perspective Model, focus is not on archaeology but on people. Projects and displays are intended to enrich them, and not the archaeological record. The main aim is to stimulate reflection and creativity. Each model has its positive and negative sides and will influence museum exhibitions and projects accordingly (Merriman 2004, Smith & Waterton 2012). But does it really make a difference which model is adopted? Can a model be used exclusively, without the influence of the other? The next sections will delve into two local case-studies which show that what is displayed, and how, does make a difference in people’s lives.

‘Neanderthal Man in Malta?’

The first case-study has as its focus the site of Għar Dalam (Birżebbuġa). Albeit not as ‘touristically’ popular as other sites, it is extremely significant for speleological, paleontological, ecological and archaeological reasons (Zammit Maempel 1989, Fabri 2007). The pillar of deposits left in place by the archaeologists makes it the perfect site to understand stratigraphic processes. It is the only place in Malta where one may see an example of the Victorian-style museum since the old museum display has been kept intact and can still be visited alongside the didactic museum set up in 2002 (Fabri 2007). The showcase which this case-study focuses on deals with the cultural layers discovered in the cave, more precisely the bottom shelf entitled ‘Neanderthal Man in Malta?’ (Fig. 1).

The story of this display started in December 1996 with an article by journalist Natalino Fenech in *The Malta Independent on Sunday* which presented the theories of three medical doctors (Anton Mifsud, Simon Mifsud and Charles Savona Ventura) arguing for a Neanderthal presence in Malta. Among the evidence mentioned there were two ‘taurodontic teeth’ said to have been found at Għar Dalam. These teeth became the lynch-pin in a newspaper debate which



Figure 1. Display at Għar Dalam Museum, entitled 'Neanderthal Man in Malta?' Photograph: the author 12 March 2012.

followed in 1997 between Anton Mifsud and John Samut-Tagliaferro, an archaeologist and consultant palaeo-pathologist. The main point of dissention was not the possibility of a Neanderthal presence in Malta but rather the validity of the evidence being put forward in support of the theory. One crucial point of contention was the tests carried out on the teeth in 1963 by Dr Kenneth P. Oakley from the British Museum. Test results indicated that the teeth were not earlier than the Neolithic, however the Mifsuds argued that these results had been forged. They explained this extensively in their publication *Dossier Malta: Evidence for the Magdalenian*, published by the authors in 1997, in the middle of the newspaper debate. Of particular note is the interest shown by other people in what must have seemed trivial to many. Letters to the editor of *The Malta Independent on Sunday* were sent by at least two non-archaeologists (George Camilleri 12 January 1997, 23) and Joseph Ellul (19 January 1997, 27).

The newspaper debate ended in summer of the same year, rather inconclusively since the conspiracy theory being put forth was difficult to prove or disprove. In spite of this, the theory still found its way in the Għar Dalam display, alongside the infamous teeth, a bust showing a reconstruction of a Neanderthal human and a timeline of related studies dated 1917-1997. Seemingly innocuous, this display had serious consequences.

On 30 May 2012, the *Times of Malta* published a letter written by Giles Oakley, Kenneth P. Oakley's

son, where he expressed his disappointment to find in one of the displays at Għar Dalam a statement that his father had been accused of forgery. He said that people might think it did not matter but 'it's very simply about fair play and decency'. He wrote, '[m]y father was no forger and no reputable museum should give the impression he was', asking for the removal of this reference. A letter in support of Oakley's plea was written by Anthony Bonanno, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Malta (*Times of Malta* 5 June 2012, 10), and a reply letter to Oakley was written by Anton Mifsud (*Times of Malta* 8 June, 9), claiming he based himself on authentic documents and declaring he would be willing to review his statements if presented with the necessary evidence. Ultimately the display was changed as explained in a letter by Kenneth Gambin, at the time Heritage Malta's Chief Curator, published in the *Times of Malta* dated 16 June 2013. The offending sentence was removed after consultation with George Zammit Maempel, the person who curated the permanent display at Għar Dalam in 2002.

If the role of museums is also to stimulate discussion, then presenting different points of view is essential. However, the Għar Dalam incident shows how important it is to explain why a display is set up in a particular manner and why an artefact found its way there. An example is the "merman" displayed at the British Museum (mentioned in the Museum's online catalogue www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?ob

jectId=558837&partId=1). Although it is a fake, it is displayed in the Enlightenment Gallery as an example of the kind of curiosity to be found in a collector's cabinet, showing 'how museums changed during the eighteenth century from cabinets of curiosity to the type of museums we are more familiar with today', as explained on the Museum's website www.britishmuseum.tumblr.com (accessed on 3 April 2016).

As evidenced by this case-study, exhibiting alternative theories in museums can backfire badly so rigorous and professional research needs to be carried out to back the alternative choices involved as well as to try to foresee as much as possible the consequences of the display. Thus, the discussion should revolve around how to be professional whilst embracing the concept which acknowledges multiple voices within site/museum presentation, thereby bridging the realities of archaeologists and non-archaeologists and the social, as well as academic potential of archaeological sites/museums.

The Muslim cemetery in Rabat

The second case-study concerns the *Domvs Romana* (Rabat, Malta), focusing on the display of the Muslim Cemetery remains. Discovered in 1881 whilst planting trees, the first remains uncovered at the site consisted mainly of an ancient Roman house and Muslim graves of a later date. As was typical of the era, attention was focussed almost exclusively on the classical remains. In fact, at the beginning of the 1900s, the site opened to the public as the "Roman Villa Museum". After a revamp in 1948, it reopened as the "Museum of Roman Antiquities", with its Muslim medieval aspect still very much on the margin. Medieval archaeology was still relatively obscure at the time, so this is not too surprising. It was only in 1984 that the so-called "Arab Rooms" were inaugurated, although this Arab display was located at the very end of the visit, as the least prominent display.

In 2002 the site had to be closed for extensive works. A new display opened in 2005, and the site is now officially called *Domvs Romana*. Since the site is quite complex, with parts pertaining to different periods, a chronological approach was preferred, with the most recent happenings displayed first (curator Suzannah Depasquale, *pers. comm.* 2012). Thus the Muslim cemetery display is now prominently positioned almost exactly upon entering the premises. During interviews carried out by the author it was learnt that pressure was exerted for this not to happen (Barbara 2013, 147).

To understand why this would be an issue one needs to move away from archaeological material and consider the Arab community in Malta in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and its contextualisation within a European frame of mind.¹

The analysis carried out by the author in this respect was based on qualitative interviews with members of, or people in contact with, the Muslim community in Malta as well as textual analysis of twentieth century history textbooks (Table 1). All the textbooks analysed are characterized by deixis and exteriorizing language, placing the readers in a specific space, assuming them always Maltese-born Roman Catholics. The textbooks issued in the first half of the twentieth century show this extremely clearly and, through diction and images, the Arab period in Maltese history is portrayed negatively especially when compared to the arrival of Count Roger (Barbara 2013, 122-132).

During the 1920s, Maltese attitudes towards Arab peoples appear to have undergone significant changes. The disassociation from Arabs during this period was most probably the result not only of religious differences but also of fear following important legislative decisions. With the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order of 1925, all Blacks, Indians and Arabs within the British Empire had to be registered as aliens, making employability difficult, decreasing the value of their work and

Name of textbook	Date	Author/s (if any listed)
<i>Ġrajjet Malta u n-nies ta'għha</i>	1935	A. V. Laferla
<i>Gateway to our Nation's History</i>	1969	C. G. Bonavia and J. M. Demanuele
<i>Ġrajjet il-Gżejjer Maltin</i>	1971	S. Laspina
<i>Ġrajjet Malta: minn żmien il-qedem sal-ħakma Għarbija</i>	1976	-

Table 1. List of history textbooks analysed.

putting them at risk of deportation (Tabili 1994, 56). Therefore, Maltese personalities abreast of political and legislative changes, such as Gerald Strickland, wanted to differentiate Maltese people from Arab ones (Kasvikis *et al.* 2007, 135).

In the 1960s, a Nationalist government wanted to strengthen the notions of *Italianità* so we notice a revival of Latin propaganda, which naturally avoided any emphasis on connections with North Africa (Vella & Gilkes 2001, 274). This approach could be strengthened even further post-Independence. A noticeable shift took place in the 1970s with a Labour Government and its successful attempts to forge relationships with North African countries (Partit tal-Ħaddiema 1979, 46). This may explain the inauguration of the “Arab Rooms” in 1984. By the end of the 1980s, with the Nationalist Party once again in government paving the way for Malta to join the European Union, focus reverted once again on the European traits of Maltese culture. The annual reports of the Museums Department (MARs) are very telling in this respect. The situation towards the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century was also affected by international happenings such as 9/11 and immigration. These events did not change the view of people but rather brought to the fore certain issues that were up till then dormant, especially the “us” and “them” argument. Grima (2014, 119) points out that these views and attitudes may be traced back to ‘native understandings of the historical past’.

Analysis of this case-study enabled the author to think more on the apparent lack of interest in Muslim archaeological remains in Malta among members of the Muslim community. By way of example, during an interview with the author, curator Suzannah Depasquale mentioned that an attempt to contact and involve the Imam in the *Domvs Romana* project was not successful (*pers. comm.* 2012). This might have been a case of trying to contact the wrong people at the wrong time, especially at a time when Muslim minorities were keeping a low profile. Apart from that, one cannot expect people to be interested in something they do not know about. Few people (Muslim and non-Muslim) know of the existence of a Muslim cemetery at the *Domvs Romana*. Dissemination of information and project creation therefore should not be based only on visitors’ interest, as interest is very much linked to what is disseminated. If what is presented is the same, the “audience” will want the same or, not knowing other options are available, will not want anything at all. This circular thinking needs

to be broken, otherwise the museum/site cannot develop into a creative and active space.

But why go through all this theoretical debate? Is not archaeology simply the study of ancient things and are not museums there to showcase these ancient objects? The most important thing that one has to keep in mind is that a structure is important not because it exists but because it means something to people now. The present community is a crucial element. Visiting is a personal and intimate experience, not always understood by those setting up the display. ‘Personal heritage tourism’ is a perfect example, with people visiting sites for personal reasons such as ancestral links (Timothy 2014, 34). Often the act of visiting is also linked with understanding who we are and who we want to be (Smith 2006, 2; Timothy 2014, 35). Although it is practically impossible to integrate all existing perspectives, it has to be understood that heritage managers are governing not only ‘heritage’ as a broad term but the cultural and social values and emotions associated with the sites.

Zimmerman (2006, 42) narrates how during one of his digs in Mexico he went to the Anthropological Museum of Mexico City with local workers, some of whom had never been there. At one point he saw a worker crying in front of the stone calendar. Asked why he was crying he replied that he never knew how great his people once were. Archaeological sites and museums are indeed the setting where processes of experience and discovery occur, where different experiences meet each other, enriching one another through sharing of ideas or creating dissonance by confrontation, which is also part of value creation.

Many people think that striking a balance between the social potential of sites and responsibility to the site and to the discipline is impossible but the next section offers a brief overview of two projects that managed to incorporate both aspects.

Past objects, present communities

The Stanwell Mothers Project

This project consisted of a 12-hour course with young mothers from Stanwell in England (Cole 2012). Through handling of archaeological artefacts associated with food and farming, its aim was that the mothers would understand the origin of food and the nature of agriculture as well as helping to raise their self-

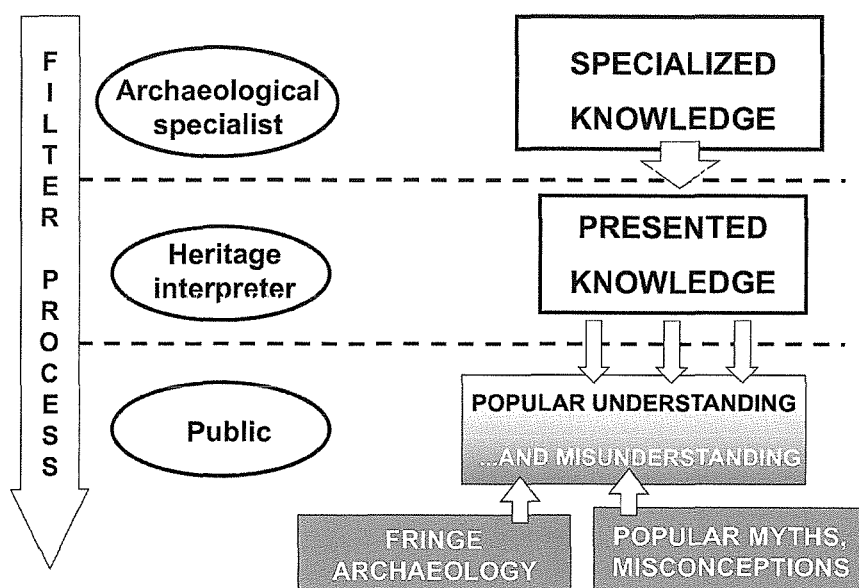


Figure 2. A deficit model for the dissemination of knowledge about the past (after Grima 2004, 1).

esteem and increase their skills, thanks to observation exercises, photography, and cooking sessions.

Cole admits that at first she had portrayed the Stanwell Mothers Project as post-processual, and she had thought she was adopting the altruistic multiple-perspective model. Yet, in the end, she makes it clear that she had adopted elements from both the deficit and the multiple-perspective models. She had started this project to experiment with how non-archaeologists interpreted “mysterious” archaeological objects. She had also set the parameters of study herself and the mothers still looked for her assistance and approval throughout every stage. Archaeology was brought to a new audience and the coordinator (an archaeologist) gathered new insights.

At the same time Cole explained how the project was very beneficial for the mothers, especially since all of them came from an area marked with poverty and malnutrition. Many of them had experienced a difficult childhood with limited educational opportunities and, as a consequence, lack of employment. After the project all of them had a higher self-esteem, some of them changed their eating habits, and others moved on to further courses. According to Cole (2012, 74), ‘[t]his was not just an archaeological project that involved the community. It was a community project that affected archaeology.’

Most of the mothers had not been very enthusiastic about the course initially. They confessed that they were not sure they were going to enjoy it since they had always associated archaeology with ‘bearded men, dusty objects and boring lessons.’ And yet they became so engaged that

they actually forgot to take cigarette breaks. Their attitude might be explained as apparent lack of interest since they had never really been exposed much to archaeology and therefore they could not really know whether the subject matter was engaging or not.

Hunt the Saxons

Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group in Kent, England (FSARG) is a NGO composed of community members (not archaeologists) established in 2005 ‘to empower local people in dealing confidently with the archaeology of their hometown’ (Reid 2012, 18). For their first project they wanted to ‘develop a low-profile low-cost research project open to participation by anyone prepared to put in time and effort.’ The research question was carefully chosen as they wanted to avoid creating conflict with contracting units and other stakeholders since Faversham is a highly-contested space. It also needed to be an exercise which did not require a lot of skill and which could be done short-term, involving as many people as possible whilst using their imagination.

FSARG chose the Saxon period (AD410-1066) because a Saxon zone had been delineated but only on assumptions rather than actual findings. This project, “*Hunt the Saxons*”, consisted of excavation of 1m² test pits in gardens of properties situated in the Saxon zone, with the consent and participation of the garden owners. The exercise also included sieving, metal detecting, reporting, and pottery training sessions carried out by professional archaeologists. Although nothing properly Anglo-Saxon was discovered during

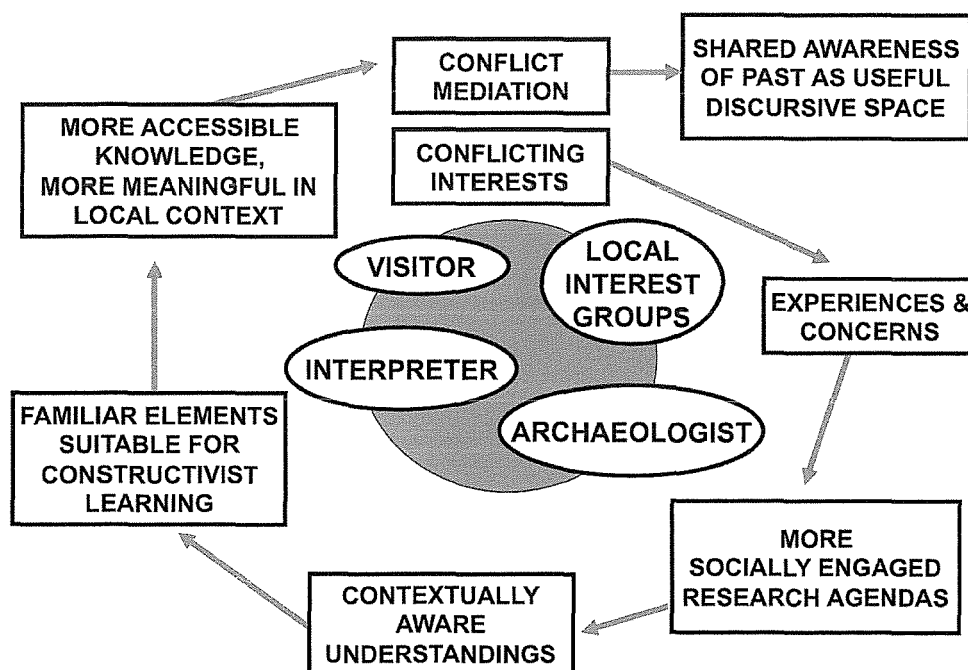


Figure 3. An interactive model for the creation and dissemination of knowledge (after Grima 2004, 4).

the first season, the first year resulted in an exhibition and in the publication of an interim report.

Both archaeologists and non-archaeologists benefited from the project. Participants enjoyed themselves, learnt new skills, improved existing ones, and increased a sense of community and pride in their own heritage. Archaeologists learnt more about an area which they did not have the time and money to research plus they obtained further insights since community members also carried out oral history exercises. There were limitations but it was a good start. FSARG's website shows how three similar projects followed and a fifth was being planned at the time of writing.

Conclusions

The brief theoretical introduction and the case-studies presented above lead to a discussion of a wider picture. It is clear that the linear process for the dissemination of knowledge about the past (Fig. 2) based mainly on the deficit model, is not satisfactory any longer on its own. In the linear process detailed information is produced by archaeological experts, watered down by heritage managers, and then fed to the public in sizeable pieces (Grima 2004, 1). This contrast heavily with the interactive model for the creation and dissemination of information about the past (Fig. 3) developed in the past decade.

The interactive process acknowledges the main actors as being the visitor, the interpreter, the archaeologist and the local interest group, placed on an equal level even though they may differ intellectually, socially, economically, and emotionally (Grima 2004, 4). This difference is not considered a drawback because conflicting interests present a variety of experiences and concerns. If research questions and projects are based on this variety, they would cover a wider range of interests. Thus the research agenda would be alive, evolving in an active (as opposed to a static) space and responding to current needs and interests of various audiences. Within such an approach, attention is paid to context, taking everything into account, facilitating learning and meaning-making. Knowledge is made more accessible, both physically and intellectually, so it is more likely to assume deeper meaning and greater value, even to those not initially interested in archaeology. Individuals are more likely to become receptive to archaeological heritage, since archaeological heritage would be more open to them. This whole process can lead to 'conflict mediation' which goes beyond archaeology and the past as it is transferred to the present.

Positivity does not result automatically, however, but needs to be worked for. The author is therefore proposing three actions, which will be referred to as pillars since they can sustain the interactive model, trying to put theory into practice.

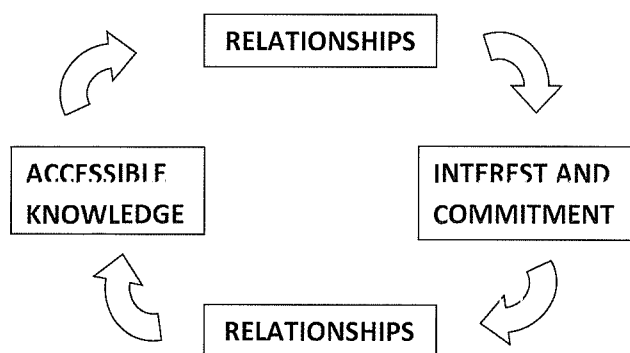


Figure 4. The three pillars which can enable an interactive model to result in a multi-vocal approach.

Accessible Knowledge: The first action is to make information accessible to allow curators and community representatives intellectual access to what might be the foundation of joint projects, as well as physical access to carry out such projects. Here cultural heritage regulatory and management bodies, together with academics, have a very important role to play.

Relationships: The second action is to form the right alliances and approach the right people, in the right way. What needs to be developed are real relationships between archaeologists and non-archaeologists – not obligatory business transactions between sectors but intense sharing of experiences between individuals. Although this is primarily the role of curators, one needs to keep in mind that curators are often too overburdened and simply have no time for this. Creation of meaningful relationships needs to be facilitated from above, by allowing curators to have an adequate team around them, thus allowing time for social interaction which goes beyond simply attending conferences and working-groups which focus exclusively on the subject matter of the site/collection under their care.

Interest and commitment from local communities: The third action can only be achieved if the first two become entrenched in archaeological heritage management. Ultimately awakening of interest and declaration of commitment is something which should be present on the part of all parties involved.

These three pillars are connected with one another (Fig. 4). Accessible knowledge is transferred via relationships to result in interest and commitment. Ultimately interest and commitment, through strengthening of existing relationships and the creation

of new ones, will generate more accessible knowledge. For the circular movement to start and gain momentum it has to be recognized that non-archaeologists are not a passive mass audience and so '[f]or ethical, intellectual and social reasons' they must not be left out of the picture (Reid 2012, 26).

Archaeology is indeed the study of past remains but we study the past because of the present. As Klamer (2014, 64) succinctly explains 'a museum tells the story of the past' but 'brings it alive in the present'. This article has tried to explain that although at face value there seem to exist two competing models: the deficit model (which sometimes might appear selfish), and the multiple perspective model (which diffuses power for the people's own good, seemingly completely positive). In practice elements of both are likely to converge in any project or museum presentation.

Turning back to the title of the paper: Does it really matter what we exhibit in our museums? Indeed it does. Archaeologists should reflect more on the relationship between archaeologists and other groups in society to understand why it matters so much. Archaeological sites can be important for anyone, albeit not necessarily for their archaeological aspect. Sites might be key players in processes of individualisation and social participation. A more comprehensive approach is needed, encouraging a deeper analysis of the persona of the archaeologist (in the various roles s/he performs) in a wider social context which problematizes certain concepts resulting into a constructive critique of that which is often taken for granted.

It is hoped that studies in this direction will lead to more interdisciplinary studies on the visitor's experience of sites, especially in terms of social bonding, self-realisation, self-esteem and therapy, instead of focusing only on academic education. Such studies might help archaeologists and heritage managers acknowledge the fundamental social role of the sites and collections they care so much about.

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Notes

- 1 The author acknowledges that "community" is not a satisfactory term as it emphasises more the aggregation rather than the choices of individuals. However, for practicality, it will be retained throughout the article.

A stratigraphic study of the *giren* at Ix-Xagħra l-Ħamra, limits of Mellieħa, Malta

Ernest Vella

The history of the Maltese corbelled hut, known as il-girna (pl. giren), dispersed in the karstic plains of the Maltese islands has been quite elusive. Little is known about these dry-stone buildings. Queries related to the origins and role of the present giren in the development of the historical rural Maltese landscape remain partially unanswered. This article will present a synthesis of a research exercise that made use of an archaeological approach to study architectural structures such as the girna (Vella 2010). Such an exercise had as its principal objective the understanding of the reasons for construction of the corbelled hut and its dating. The methodology of study proposed is based on the principles of archaeological stratification combined with Landscape Archaeology and Historical Archaeology, starting with the premise that any structure needs to be understood as a cultural unit within its landscape. Thus farmhouses, corbelled huts, rubble walls, apiaries and so forth, as well as artificial spaces including fields, surface-quarries, roads and pathways, are perceived as cultural units within the landscape. At this point, landscape is not seen as a mere backdrop but recognised as a cultural palimpsest, preserving traces of past use, similar to stratified layers in an archaeological excavation. Hence the girna is understood as a unit within a stratigraphic sequence that can be represented through a matrix. Additionally, historical documents are utilized to obtain a chronological base for the structures built in the rural landscape. Consequently, the stratigraphic sequence is pegged to the dates obtained from the historical documents, making it possible to date particular units within it, including the girna. This method shows that it is possible to study the archaeological stratification of cultural units in rocky terrain where archaeological excavation is not possible because the terrain lacks discernible archaeological deposit.

Introduction

Corbelled huts are not just a Maltese phenomenon but are spread throughout Western Europe and the Mediterranean region. Different types of corbelled huts can be found in several countries across Europe including the British Isles, Switzerland, France and Germany. Corbelled huts extend through the western Mediterranean basin including Spain and the Balearic islands, Italy and Croatia, and are also found in the eastern Mediterranean basin such as in Crete, Israel and Palestine. Southwards one can find corbelled huts in North Africa, as in Egypt and Morocco. Previous studies have shown that there is a whole typology of corbelled huts, reflecting the different cultures of the people who built and used them (Rohlf 1963; Juvanec 2004). However all these buildings have three

characteristics in common: they are built of undressed stones, are built in dry-stone technique, and are roofed through the corbelling technique.

Definition of a corbelled hut

The corbelled hut is an architectural structure mostly built from undressed stones that occur naturally in the area or are quarried from the surface of the bedrock. The most widely used stone is frost-shattered outcropping limestone, but sandstone, granite, schist, *breccia*, basalt and pumice stone are employed, depending on the geology of the area (Rohlf 1963, 11; Lassure n.d.)

A distinctive characteristic of the corbelled hut is the roofing system. All corbelled huts are roofed

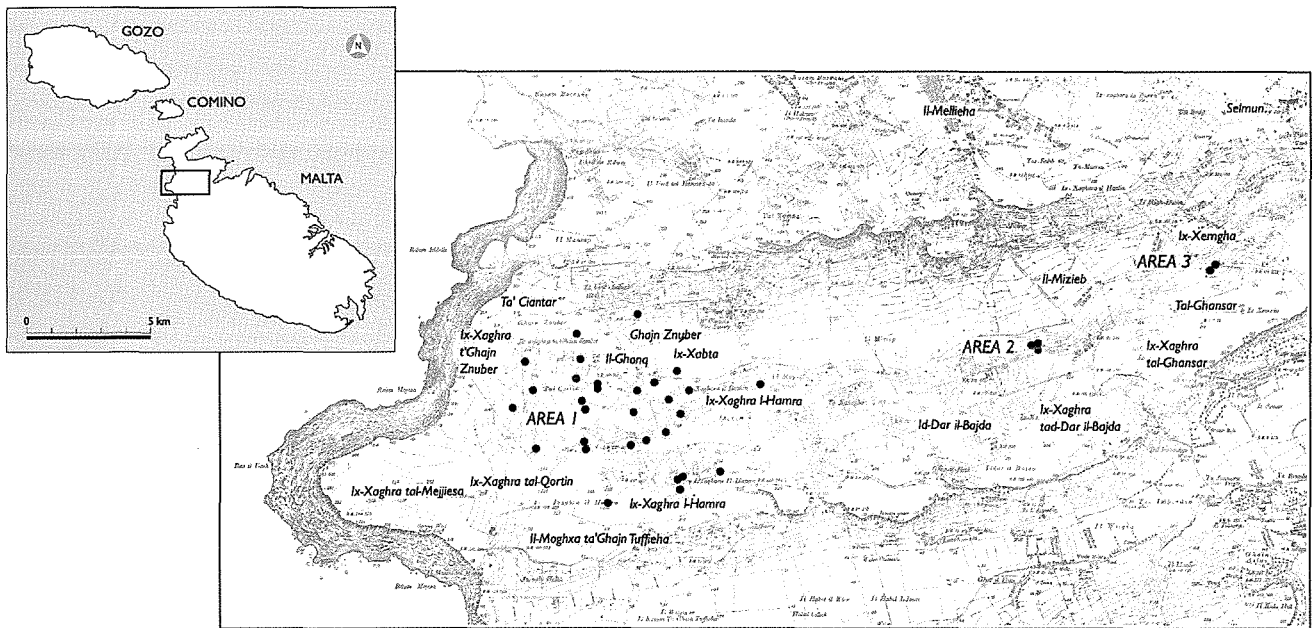


Figure 1. (a) A map of Malta highlighting the three areas under study as an inset; (b) inset showing the Bajda Ridge with place-names mentioned in the text and the distribution of *giren* superimposed on a 6 inches to the mile map (1971).

using the corbelling technique. The stones are laid in courses so that the upper course slightly overhangs the underlying course. Thus succeeding courses curve inward gradually until they almost meet at the top. The final layer ends with a single capstone if the hut has a circular plan or with several slabs if it has a quadrangular plan (Rohlf 1963, 11; Cassar 1961, 67; Thake 1987, 32; Fsadni 1992, 15; Jaccarini 2002, 169). Furthermore the stones are laid without the help of binding agents such as mortar or cement (Cassar 1961, 65; De Lucca 1984, 13; Fsadni 1992, 15, 81; Juvanec 2004, Lassure n.d.). In fact, all corbelled huts in different regions share these three main features although they may differ in plan and in elevation. Different types of corbelled hut can be found throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and on the Levantine coast (Rohlf 1963; Fabinajić 1987, 334; Gnesda 1996, 24; Micati 2001, 8,15; Di Rosa 2002, 184-5; Lassure 2002, 1; Juvanec 2004, 6).

The study of the *girna*

In order to put this study into context, a cursory overview will be given of earlier studies about the *girna*. The first scholarly study was written

by the medical historian Paul Cassar in 1961. His work concentrated on the origins of the Maltese corbelled hut. He approached this by investigating the architecture of the *girna* (Cassar 1961). Maltese scholars who took an interest in this subject followed suit and remained preoccupied with the origins and functions of the *girna*. They continued to emphasize an architectural approach towards the study of the Maltese corbelled hut (e.g. Thake 1987; Fsadni 1992; Jaccarini 1998; Buhagiar 1993, M. Buhagiar 2005). Meanwhile, Italian and French researchers started to apply historical analysis to the corbelled huts found in their respective countries (e.g. Artigues 1979, 41-44; Mirizzi 1987, 467; Lassure 2001, 1). Research in notarial deeds, terriers and other cartographic sources, contracts and photographs started unearthing answers about the function and sometimes the origins of particular corbelled huts. Such documents revealed, for instance, that the *trulli* of the Puglia region in Italy were already being built in Calabria by the late fourteenth century, and corbelled huts in France were also being constructed during the seventeenth century and up to the early twentieth century (Mirizzi 1987, 466-88; Lassure 2001, 11; Micati 2001, 55). Through the decades, spanning from the 1970s to the early 1990s, corbelled huts

were being excavated in Vaucluse, Gard and Uzège, in France. These excavations demonstrated that the earliest layers of occupation in these huts dated to the middle of the nineteenth century (Lassure 1979, 6; Chevalier-Devron 1994; Lassure 2002, 1-2).

This development in the study of corbelled huts confirmed the need to take a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the *girna*, mainly through the disciplines of archaeology and history. It is being proposed that the *girna* should be understood not only as an architectural building on its own, but also as a cultural unit within its context, that is, its surrounding landscape (Vella 2010, 44). In this article a cultural unit is taken to mean any artefact, structure or feature that stands above the surface.

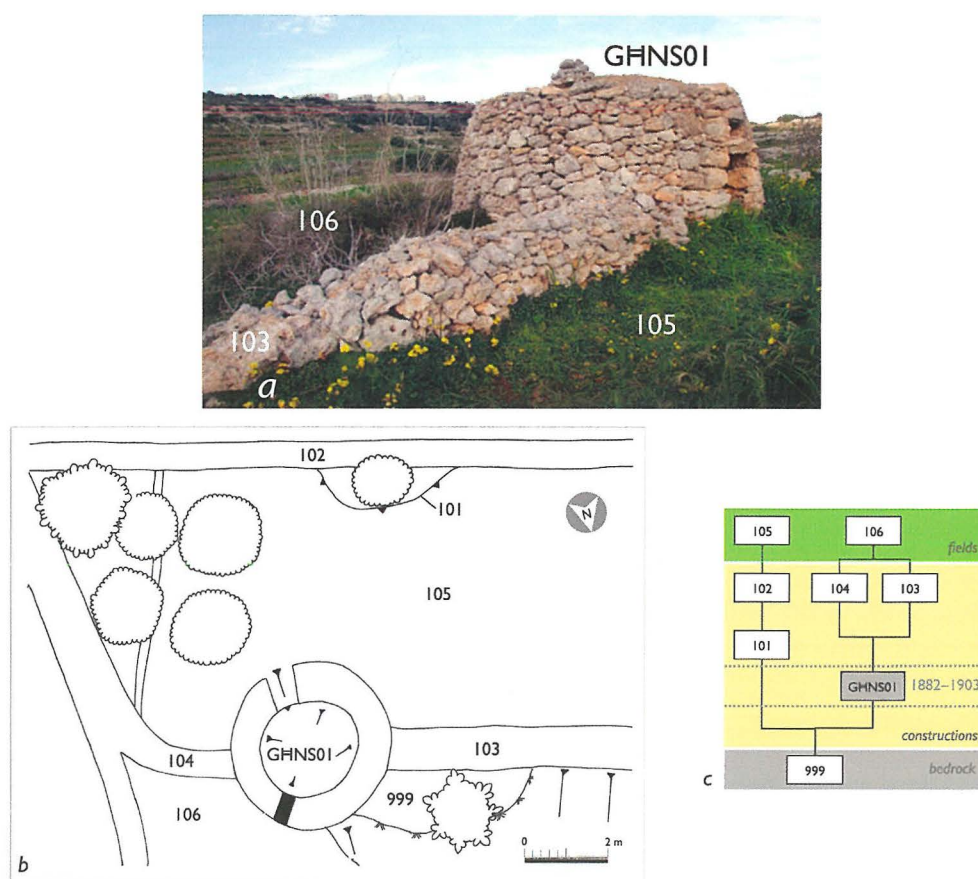
A proposed methodology for the study of the Maltese *girna*

This approach entails considering the landscape (the context of the *girna*) as a palimpsest that can be investigated through the principles of archaeological stratification. Hence, if the landscape is seen to be

an ancient parchment that has been written over and erased imperfectly between successive uses, then the visible written text on the parchment is the most recent cultural material in a landscape, whilst the traces of erased text are the earlier phases of past actions (Crawford 1953, 52; Roberts 1996, x; Johnson 2007, 5; Vella & Spiteri 2009, 16). Like the signs of erased text, remains of early structures or deposits may be partially obliterated or hidden within the present landscape (Crawford 1953, 51-52; Johnson 2007, 57). This makes it possible to study the cultural units present on the surface of the landscape retrogressively, peeling layer by layer from the most recent to the most ancient, following the principles of archaeological excavation (Rippon 2004, 10). Consequently, matrices of such stratifications may be compiled.

To test this methodology, the *giren* in the area of Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra, Id-Dar il-Bajda and tal-Għansar, in the north-western region of Malta, were surveyed systematically (Fig. 1). Meanwhile the history of the area was investigated through documentary sources, namely archival records, in an effort to understand the development of land-use in the area over the

Figure 2. *Girna* GHNS01 (a) and adjoining features (b) with stratigraphic matrix (c). Photograph and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.



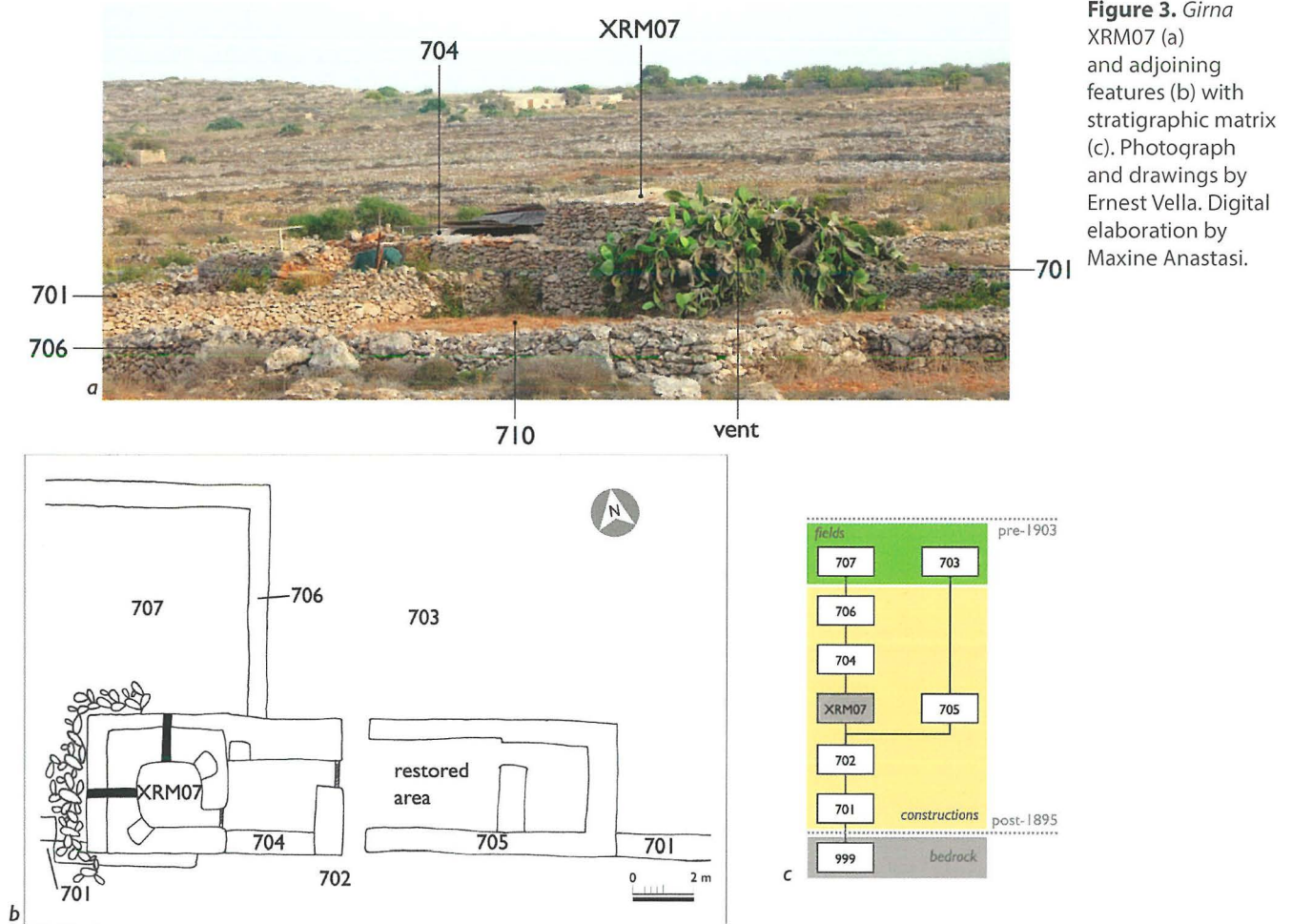


Figure 3. Giren XRM07 (a) and adjoining features (b) with stratigraphic matrix (c). Photograph and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.

last 325 years. Finally, a Harris matrix was drawn up for a select number of *giren*. These matrices were compared to the accounts recorded in the archival records. Through this exercise it was possible to understand better the role that the *giren* played in the development of the rural landscape. Moreover, this correlation provides sufficient evidence to posit an absolute date for a number of *giren* (Vella 2010, 54, 238).

The field survey

The survey was conducted in August 2007, February and March 2008. In all 37 *giren* were identified, recorded and studied. Each field survey exercise started from a particular *giren* and proceeded to the surrounding area. The field survey recorded the place name, the geographical position of the site, the relief, geology and pedology of the area surrounding the *giren*, and also the natural vegetation cover. Any

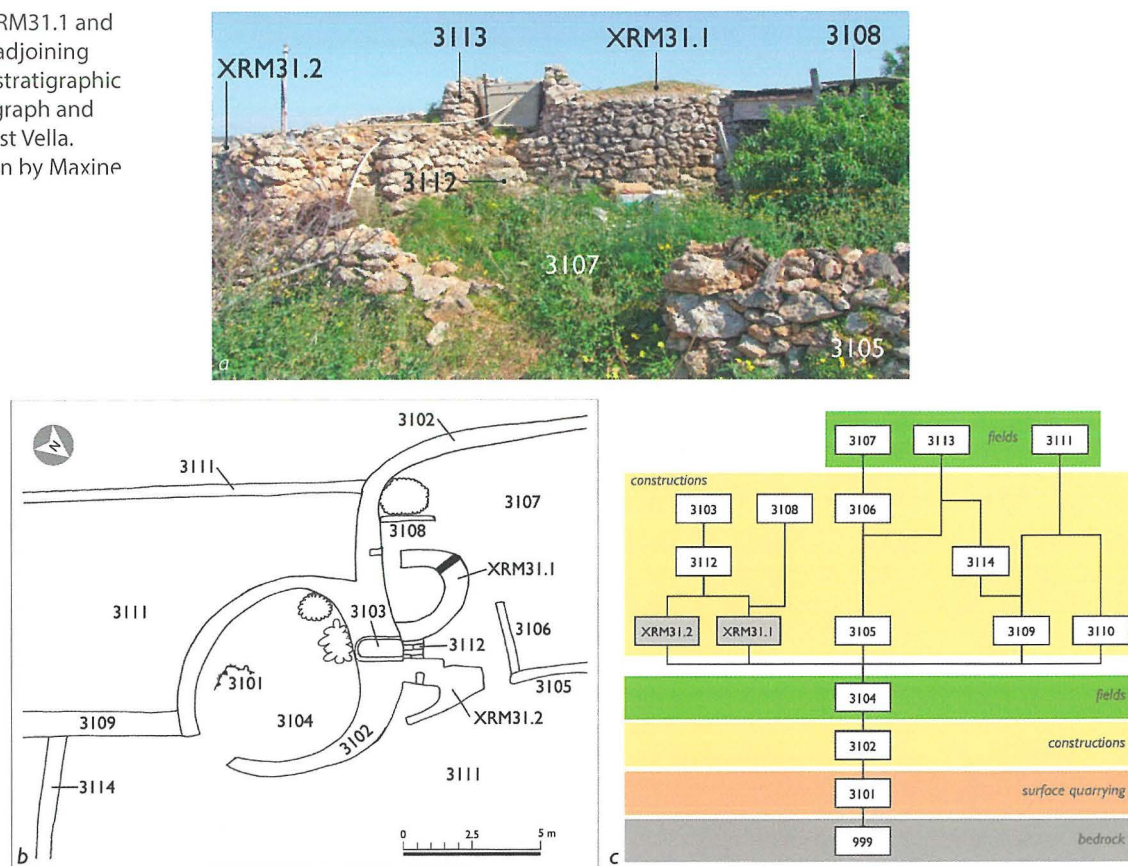
hydrological systems as well as type of land use were also noted. Furthermore, cultural units, including rubble walls, surface quarrying, water catchment systems and field patterns were also recorded and given a stratigraphic unit. These units were recorded in apposite plans, sections, elevations and photographs that were produced (Vella 2010, 71-72).

A brief description of the areas surveyed

The areas are found lying along the northern slopes of the Bajda Ridge in northern Malta. The Bajda Ridge is a part of a series of ridges and basins that were formed by tectonic movements (Scerri 2005, 27; Camilleri 2002, 12). The areas where the field survey was conducted are located in the Miżieb basins nestled between the Mellieħa ridge to the north, and the Bajda ridge to the south.

The Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra area dips eastwards towards the Miżieb syncline and climbs westwards

Figure 4. *Giren* XRM31.1 and XRM31.2 (a) and adjoining features (b) with stratigraphic matrix (c). Photograph and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.



at Tal-Qortin. Here the land rises into a promontory that breaks into the Il-Majjiesa cliffs. Weathering and the Blue Clay have eroded the sheer cliffs into boulder scree cliff sides (Scerri 2005, 31). The fields at Id-Dar il-Bajda are situated on the north-western side of the Bajda ridge. These fields are located where the Mizieb basin starts to rise southwards to form the sides of the Bajda Ridge (House *et al.* 1961, 38). The other fields, at Tal-Għansar on the eastern part of the Bajda Ridge, are located on the northern side of the limestone ridge that dips into the Mizieb basin (Hunt & Vella 2005, 62).

The rock surface of the areas surveyed is made up of Upper Coralline Limestone. The rock surface of Ix-Xaġhra l-Hamra is of the Ġebel Imbark Member, whilst the rock at Id-Dar Il-Bajda and Tal-Għansar is of the Tal-Pitkal Member (Scerri 2005, 26). The rock typical of these areas is known to be a thin layer, referred to by farmers as *tal-inforra* (J. Buhagiar 2005, 15). This rock allows for water percolation and root penetration, which help the farmers to sustain good crops in spite of the shallow soil (J. Buhagiar 2005, 15).

A brief history of the area

A retrogressive approach was adopted for the study of the history of the area. Thus, the historical analysis started from the latest document, being the 1971 survey sheets to the earliest, that of the property book or *cabreo* of the Order of St John's Fondazione Lascaris dating to 1646 (Vella 2010, 81). The cartographic material showed how land use was recorded during the last three hundred years. For instance, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, two tenements were reorganized and renamed. This implies a change in tenement ownership probably because of the increase in the number of tenents working the area. This change occurred during the period when the tenement that pertained to the Fondazione Lascaris was partitioned into smaller allotments. It is against this background that the first standing *giren* in this area appear to have been built.

All the 37 *giren* under study, except for three niche *giren* were marked on the 1971 Survey sheets. These niche *giren* are built within rubble walls that are marked on the 1971 survey sheets. Of the 37 *giren*, 14 corbelled huts are marked on the Ordnance Survey

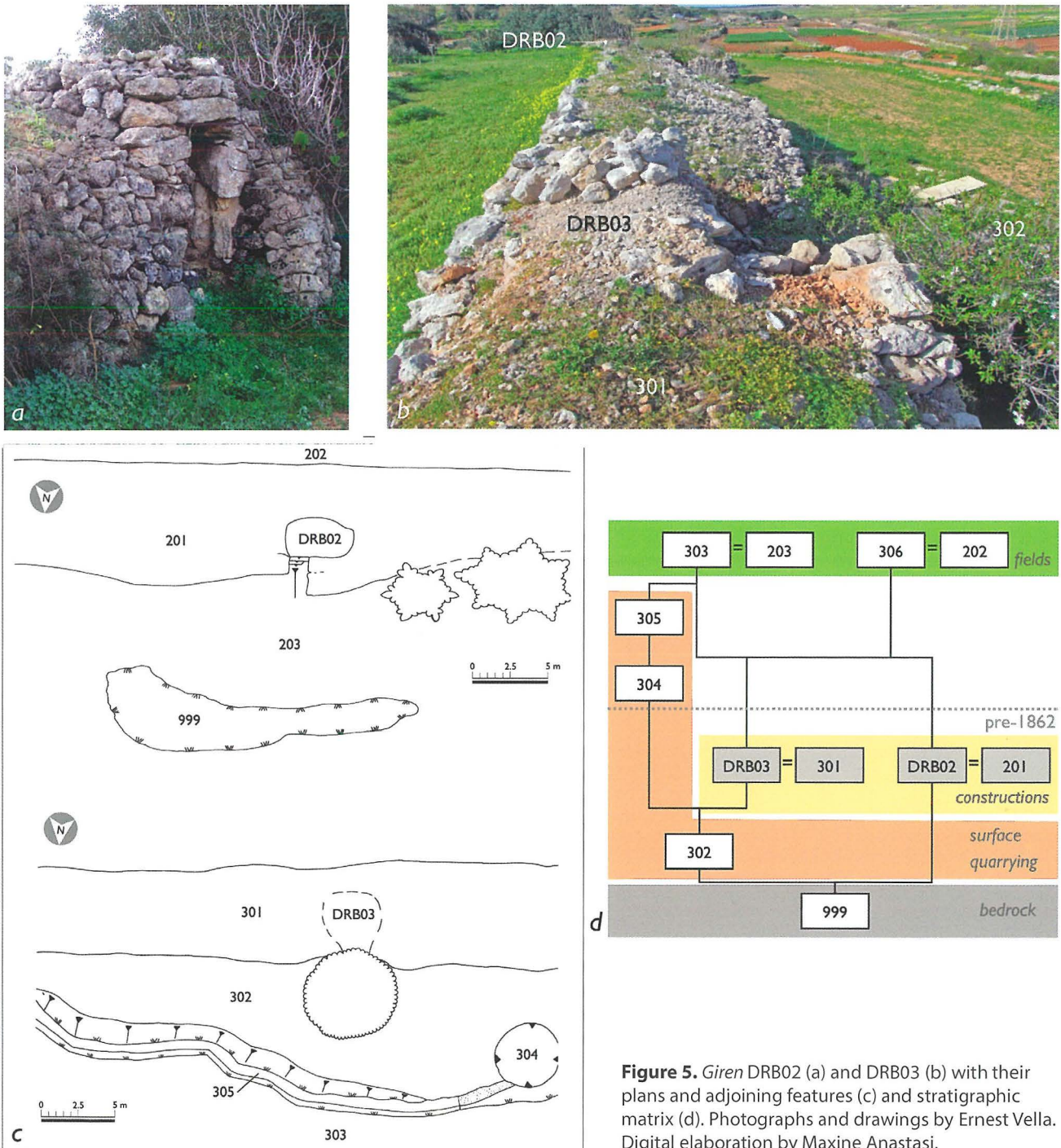
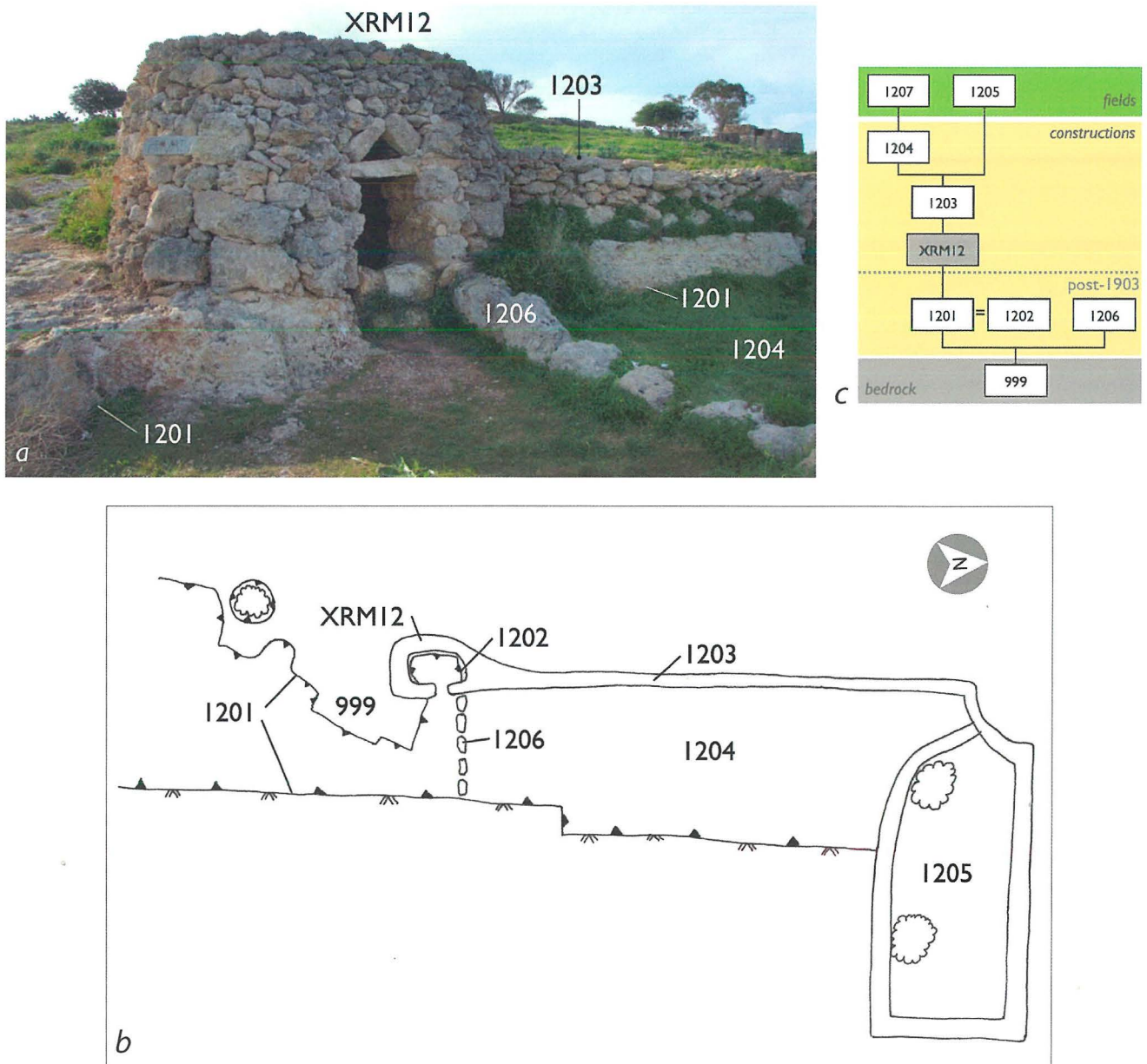


Figure 5. *Giren* DRB02 (a) and DRB03 (b) with their plans and adjoining features (c) and stratigraphic matrix (d). Photographs and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.

sheet of 1903. Unfortunately in the Crown Property plans dating back to 1866 no structure could be identified with the existing *giren*, except for two niche *giren* built into a rubble wall at Id-Dar il-Bajda.

The nineteenth-century portioning system of the land is well documented in archives, particularly in the notarial contracts pertaining to this area. These contracts show that by 1862 the areas had already

been divided into several portions and between 1862 and 1863, most of the portions were leased (NAV, Not. Luigi Vella 1862-63, Vols 91-96). The contracts stipulated several conditions, one of which was that in the first five years of the lease, the tenant was obliged to turn the leased land into fields. Rocky terrain had to be quarried in order to create fields (NAV, Not. Luigi Vella 1862, Vol. 91, ff. 1060-1372).



It seems that the nineteenth-century colonial government had followed the Order of St John in trying to improve these tenements. In 1784 the Fondazione Lascaris compiled the second *cabreo* (NLM, Treas. B 301 and 302), mentioning structures such as animal folds, known as '*ricetti di animali*', and enclosures or '*clausure*' (Blouet 1963, 108). In 1652, five years before Grand Master Lascaris died, the Fondazione Lascaris acquired the land known as il Cortino di Hain Toffieha. The land was described in 1658 as surrounded by walls of which 26 salme consisted of mediocre arable land. There was also a threshing floor or '*ayra*' and an enclosure for animals (NI M, Libr. Ms. 1302 ff. 20-21; Blouet 1963, 107).

Figure 6. *Girna* XRM12 (a) and adjoining features (b) with stratigraphic matrix (c). Photograph and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.

A general description of the *giren* surveyed

The *giren* were divided according to their layout, with the first group comprising single structures and the second group forming part of a complex, usually having an enclosure. In two complexes, two *giren* shared the same enclosure. Of the 37 *giren*, 10 form complexes and 17 are single units with no other structures added to them (Vella 2010, 129). The corbelled huts surveyed were also grouped according

to their plan. These fell into three categories: those *giren* which have the same external plan, those which have the same internal plan, and the *giren* which have the same external and internal plans (Vella 2010, 133). Of the 39 *giren*, 14 have a circular external plan and 13 have an oval plan, taken to include *giren* which do not have a perfect circular plan either intentionally, unintentionally or because the structure had suffered damage. Eight have a rectangular plan, three are built into the rubble wall and one has a rectangular plan.

In order to identify each *girna*, a site code was given to each corbelled hut. The site code included a part of the place-name: XRM (Xaghra l-Hamra), DRB (Dar il-Bajda) and GHNS (Tal-Għansar), and the number of the *girna*. Thus, the first *girna* to be surveyed at Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra was numbered XRM01.

The stratigraphic matrices of the *giren*

As pointed out earlier, the aim of this study was to establish if the application of the the notions of archaeological stratification to the *girna* and other cultural units would make it possible to obtain their relative dating. Consequently the matrices of seven *giren* were compiled. The choice of these *giren* was based on the location, the cultural units related to the individual *girna*, and the availability of data retrieved from the documentary sources. Each matrix was then validated against the absolute dating pegged to the cultural units as obtained from an analysis of the archival material.

The *giren* were chosen from the three study areas so that each area is represented at least by one *girna*. All the *giren* chosen are related to cultural units including surface quarrying, rubble walls, fields, and tracks. These *giren* were also chosen so as to represent the different groups as marked on the plans. The first group consists of *giren* that are depicted on the 1903 Ordnance Survey sheets. These are *giren* GHNS01 (Fig. 2), XRM07 (Fig. 3) and XRM31 (Fig. 4), the latter being made up of a complex of two *giren* identified as XRM31.1 and XRM31.2. The second group, DRB02 and DRB03 (Fig. 5), is associated with a cultural unit marked on a plan before 1863. The third group, made up of *giren* XRM12 (Fig. 6) and XRM19 (Fig. 7), is not marked on the 1903 Ordnance Survey sheet (see Vella 2010, 203 for details).

In all the matrices, except those produced for XRM31, DRB02 and DRB03, the *giren* occupy the

lower part of the matrix. In the matrix for XRM31, XRM31.1 and XRM31.2 are found in the middle part of the matrix, directly above cultural unit 3102, which is a rubble wall, and the field numbered as cultural unit 3104 (Fig. 4c). In the matrix representing DRB02 and DRB03 (Fig. 5d), the *giren* are contemporary with rubble wall 201 (201 and 301 are the same rubble wall). In the matrix for XRM07 (Fig. 3c), the *girna* stands above rubble wall 701. Conversely, in the matrix for GHNS01 (Fig. 2c), the *girna* is represented directly above bedrock 999. In the case of GHNS01, surface quarry 101 also stands directly above bedrock 999. The matrices of XRM12 (Fig. 6b) and XRM19 (Fig. 7c) represent the *giren* directly above surface quarrying, 1201 and 1901 respectively.

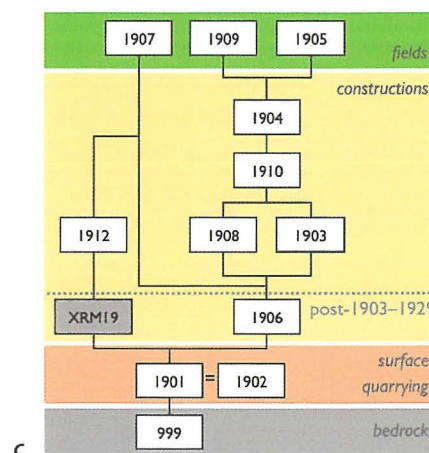
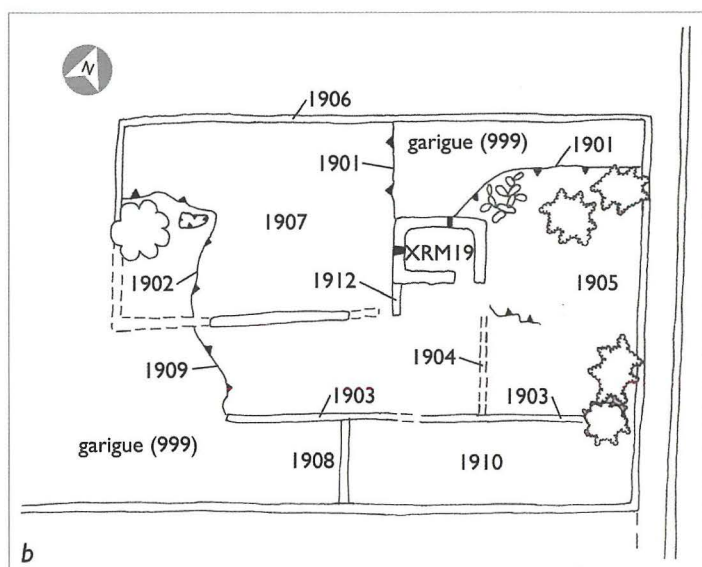
Of the seven matrices, four – XRM07 (Fig. 3c), XRM12 (Fig. 6b), XRM19 (Fig. 7c) and GHNS01 (Fig. 2c) – show that rubble walls are in the unit above the *giren*. In the case of matrix DRB02 and DRB03 (Fig. 5d), fields are found to be in the unit directly above the *giren*, whilst in XRM31 a group of steps is in the “layer” above the *giren* (Fig. 4c). The stratigraphic matrices show that these *giren* are related to a set of cultural units, consisting of bedrock, surface quarrying, rubble walls and fields.

In the case of XRM31 the matrix shows that the *giren* were built at a later stage, after the land was quarried and rubble walls enclosing the fields were already built. In fact, the *giren* are directly associated with structure 3102 and rubble wall 3104 (Fig. 4b, c). The matrix reveals that the *giren* were built after the rubble walls, which do not appear on the 1903 Ordnance Survey sheet. This means that the structure depicted on the 1903 Ordnance Survey sheet, interpreted as being XRM31, was an earlier structure that was probably destroyed in order to make space for the new complex of circular rubble walls and *giren* XRM31.1 and XRM31.2

The matrix for *giren* DRB02 and DRB03 shows that the rubble wall and the *giren* were built before the fields and the water catchment system 304 and 305 (Fig. 5d). In fact the *giren* are situated in rubble walls 201 and 301 which is the same rubble wall (Fig. 5c). This wall is already indicated in the contract dating to 1862. This demonstrates that the rubble wall together with the *giren* was already built by this time.

In the stratigraphic context of GHNS01, the *girna* together with the surface quarrying 101 was built before the rubble walls and the fields (Fig. 2c). This indicates that the *girna* was built in the early stages

Figure 7. *Girna* XRM19 (a) and adjoining features (b) with stratigraphic matrix (c). Photograph and drawings by Ernest Vella. Digital elaboration by Maxine Anastasi.



of the reclamation of the area. Wall 102 was depicted in the plan of the contract dating to 1863. However the quarrying of fields 105 and 106 took place after this date as the area is shown completely bare and rocky. According to oral information gathered (Vella 2010, 206), the *girna* was constructed by a certain John Micallef whilst extending the complex of fields. Micallef, who was born in 1858 (Mellieħa Parish Archives 1858), acquired this portion through marriage to Carmela Vella in 1882 (Borg n.d., 1). Hence *girna* GHNS01 would have been built between 1882 and 1902, that is, in the first 10 years of the extension of the fields. However, as mentioned above, contracts usually stipulated that the rocky terrain had to be rendered fertile in the first five years. If Micallef

did follow this obligation, then the *girna* should have been built between 1882 and 1887.

In the stratigraphic matrix of XRM07 the *girna* is again built in the early stages of the development of the area (Fig. 3c). In fact it was preceded by rubble wall 701 which defines track 702. In reality, the *girna* and enclosure 704 cut into 701. As in DRB02 and DRB03, and in GHNS01, *girna* XRM07 is situated in the early layers of the matrix, meaning that the *girna* was built before the fields. Comparing the matrix with the Ordnance Survey sheet it is possible to date layers from 701 to 703 to the years between 1895 and 1903.

In the matrix of XRM12, the *girna* features as a unit directly above the quarrying and beneath the fields. As in the other cases the *girna* was built in the

early stages of the reclamation of the portion (Fig. 9b) However the quarrying does not appear on the early twentieth-century map, hence this *girna* post-dates 1903.

The matrix of XRM19 also shows that the *girna* is the second unit from bedrock. Hence like the other *giren*, XRM19 was built after the quarrying in the initial stages of the reclamation (see *infra*) (Fig. 7c). This complex does not appear on the Ordnance Survey sheet of 1903 but the date inscribed on the entrance of the *girna* suggests that XRM19 was already built by 1929. Hence the lowest units starting from XRM19 downwards to 1902 can be tentatively dated to the years between 1929 and 1904.

The results of the matrices show that the *girna* forms a stratigraphic relationship with surface quarries, rubble walls and fields. Moreover the position of the *giren* in the matrix supports the evidence that the *girna* was built during the process of reclamation in which the karstland was being quarried to reclaim it into fields.

Conclusion

The matrices and the cartographic evidence demonstrate that the earliest surviving *giren* investigated in this field survey were built after 1784 and before 1862, and between 1882 and 1903. The nineteenth-century contracts and the 1903 Ordnance Survey sheet provided absolute dating for some cultural units, including the *giren*, quarrying and rubble walls. Historical documentation shows how the increase in the Maltese population in the nineteenth century led to the expansion of the cultivation of marginal land in north-west Malta including the areas of Ix-Xagħra l-Hamra, Id-Dar il-Bajda and Tal-Għansar. Furthermore, the portioning of the tenements earmarked for improvement coincided with the construction of the nearby settlement of Mellieħa. The notarial contracts related to those areas under scrutiny revealed that the quarrying of the surface rock was part of the process of land reclamation. Traces of quarrying were confirmed through the field survey. Furthermore, from the field survey there emerged a pattern in the species of trees clustered in spots near the *giren*, mainly carob, fig, olive, almonds trees, prickly pears and palm trees. This reflects the agricultural practices that characterize landscapes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, planted by

such trees in shallow, rocky, windy fields (Vella 2010, 115-16, 174-76).

The representation of the strata in the landscape through matrices showed that in most cases the *girna* was one of the earliest cultural units present in the landscape. This study showed that, contrary to popular opinion, the *giren* were not built solely of naturally occurring stones but mostly from stones produced by quarrying activity (Fsadni 1992, 92). Neither were the *giren* in the area under investigation built in the farmers' free time. Furthermore, the matrices and archives provide evidence that the *giren* were planned by the farmers as they tried to reclaim fields from the karstic areas.

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- Ernest VELLA** graduated B.A.(Hons) in Archaeology from the University of Malta in 1998. In 2010 he was awarded a Masters (Research) in Archaeology from the same university with a dissertation entitled: *A Landscape Archaeological Approach to the Maltese Girna: A case study based on the areas of Ix-Xagħra l-Hamra, id-Dar il-Bajda and Ta' l-Għansar in Northern Malta*. He has contributed to a study on the archaeology of Mellieħa in *Mellieħa Through the Tides of Time* (Mellieħa Local Council, 2002) and co-authored, with Marlene Borg and Anthony Bonanno, *L-Arkeologija ta' Malta* (PIN, 2004). He is a founder and member of the ASC (Archaeology Services Coop) which offers various professional services in Archaeology. He is also a founder and member of the Fondazzjoni Arkeo which is currently managing the Selmun-Imġiebah Visitor Centre.

Documenting the last surviving traditional boats on the Maltese Islands: a case study on the *firilla*

Stephanie Said

This report focuses on research carried out on the collection of firilli boats found at the Maritime Museum in Vittoriosa, Malta. The objectives were to document and record this boat type, by collecting knowledge from oral traditions and literature, paintings and photographs, tools and materials and ideologies. An environmental and historical background is outlined at the beginning of this study, providing the context for the firilla boat. Following this, previous literature dealing with documentation of traditional craft is presented. The methodology applied to document the primary sources is explained, along with a brief description of the secondary data collection. The subsequent section describes the results of the boat documentation, leading to a discussion of the most prominent differences.

Introduction

Project Background

The following report is based on a study conducted as part of a Master's thesis in Maritime Archaeology at the University of Southern Denmark, titled *The Firilla: A Case-Study of a Maltese Traditional Boat* (Said 2015). The study aimed at collecting primary and secondary data on the *firilla*, a local traditional boat that is no longer being constructed. The study included the following:

- i). The documentation of three examples of *firilli* boats to archaeological standards, including two-dimensional plans and three-dimensional models
- ii). The extraction of naval architectural line plans from the above data
- iii). The extraction of hydrostatic analysis from the three-dimensional models, and
- iv). The carrying out of ethnographic research on local boats and their construction sequence, with a focus on the *firilla* type.

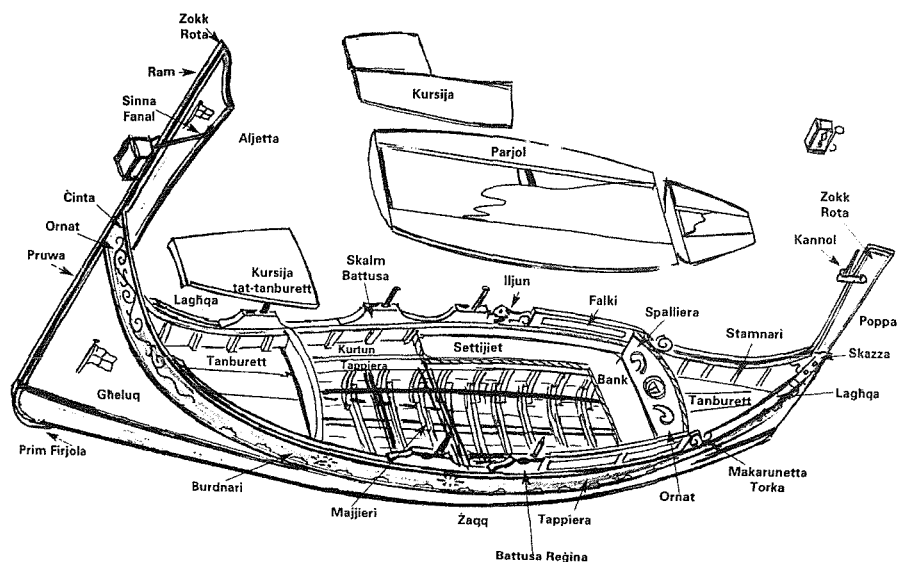
The time frame being discussed covers the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Malta.

Maltese Local Wooden Boats

Environmental and Historical Background

One need not expand on the fact that the Maltese Islands have long been influenced by the surrounding waters. Traditional wooden boats are a phenomenon of an enduring maritime culture and their survival reflects the island's inevitable need for some form of water transport. Unfortunately, the tradition of constructing wooden boats is a diminishing one, with modern fibreglass replicas being preferred. The wooden fishing fleet has drastically decreased, whilst the few remaining passenger boats ferry tourists around the harbour areas. There is a lack of interest in the art of wooden boat building, boat builders now opting for a more efficient means of earning a living. Furthermore, the older generation of boat builders has gradually passed away, taking with it the knowledge of this craft. The handful of still active boat builders form part of regatta clubs, taking care of and maintaining regatta racing boats, whilst the few boat building families are limited to restoring boats rather than constructing new ones. The realities have resulted in a dying tradition of building local wooden boats, with a radical loss of the knowledge and skill, which has been present for centuries.

Figure 1. Maltese *dghajsa* with its respective elements: from top left; stem or sternpost (*rota*), forefoot or gripe (*zokk*), brass or copper fittings (*ram*), lamp fitting (*sinna, fanal*), rubbing strake (*ċinta*), decoration (*ornat*), stem/fore (*pruwa*), keel (*prim*), 'false keel' (*firjola/kurriġġa*) can also be made of brass or copper, planking (*gheluq*), scuppers (*burdnari*), floor frames (*majjieri*), mid-section (*zaqq*), rowlock (*battusa*), sheer strake (*tappiera*), fitting found on the gunwale holding in place a washboard (*makarunetta*), gunwale (*bardnell/laghqa*), stern/aft (*poppa*), lamp fitting (*kannol*), futtocks (*stamnari*), triangular fixed deck (*tamburett*), back board (*spalliera*), bench (*bank*), washboards (*falki*), side benches (*settijiet*), horizontal plank that forms part of the waterway (*kurtun/trinkarin*), triangular removable deck (*kursija*), floor boards (*parjol*) (after Pulè 2000).



The characteristics defining the *firilla* are its high stempost and shorter sternpost. They are open, double ended boats, exhibiting a U-shaped central cross-section and a V-shaped fore and aft cross-section. (Fig. 1). Initially the *firilla* was used as a multi-purpose boat, but later it was solely used as a fishing boat. The *firilla* boat also took part in regatta races after it was modified to perform faster, with a much lighter and shallower hull.

Literary sources regard the *firilla* as one of the earliest types of local boat, followed by the *kajjikk* and later the *luzzu* and *fregatina* (Muscat 1999, 85). Initially, the *firilla* was described as 'a small, swift passenger boat rowed by one or two boatmen, plying between Birgu and Senglea' (Muscat 1999, 85). Later the term *firilla* was applied to a fishing vessel, which became popular amongst local fishermen by the end of the nineteenth century (Muscat 1999, 86). Muscat adds that, 'The name *firilla* remains part of the Maltese language and refers to swiftness as in the expression as nimble as a *firilla*' (Muscat 1999, 85).

The *firilla* is described as an open double-ended boat, carvel built, with a straight keel and stemposts fitted at 90 degrees, a feature that was introduced by the turn of the twentieth century (Muscat 1999, 86). This later feature seems to coincide with the boat's change in function as a fishing vessel rather than a multi-purpose boat. Originally the boat had a rounded fore and aft bow (spoon bow). Speed was not a central criterion and transportation occurred

within relatively calm waters (within harbours and bays). The change in design led to a greater hull speed due to a finer entry into the water as the front bow pushed the water gradually away from the hull, cutting through the waves. This resulted in less energy needed to propel the boat and shorter travelling time. Boats could now travel outside of the sheltered areas, in relatively less calm waters.

It was often steered by means of a rudder and a sprit-rig. However, within the limits of the harbour the boat was rowed, 'usually manned by four men and a *padrone*' (Prins 1986, 197). The length of a *firilla* is said to be between 4.70 m and 8.90 m (Camenzuli 1968, 12). According to Farrugia Randon, in the past this boat was used as a 'lamp boat for *lampara*-fishing and for fishing inside bays and creeks' (1995, 87).

What distinguishes the *firilla* from other boats is its tall stempost and a higher free board. The reason for the high stempost was that it functioned as a support and a mooring device. The boatman held onto the stem when he was about to moor the boat to shore. Any passengers coming onto the boat stepped over onto the front deck, holding onto the stempost and then moving to the centre. None of the passengers were allowed to board the boat from the port side as this might cause the boat to heel (Pulè 2000, 59).

The *firilla* boat also took part in the annual regatta races. During the early nineteenth century, the regatta race was introduced by the locals in order to 'compete for a prize as part of the festivities of Our Lady of

Victory and commemorate the Great Siege of 1565' (Muscat 1999, 168). Initially the boats that took part in this race were traditional passenger boats, namely *frilli* and *caiques* (Muscat 1999, 168). Today the races are held with three boat categories and are held twice a year, on the 31st March, celebrating Freedom Day and 8th September, dedicated to Our Lady of Victory.

Previous Research

Theoretical Background

Very often we look at boats or ships as objects in isolation. However, these need to be studied in their broader context. This idea is highlighted by Lucy Blue who states that:

approaching the boat in its broadest context, communicating with the boat builders and users – asking them questions about their boats and their view of the world: by no longer approaching the object in isolation; then a far more complex, explicit picture will emerge (2000, 335).

This idea was already put forward by O. Hasslöf in 1972, who coined the concept of Living Tradition, which includes all matters concerning the survival of traditional ways of living. Hasslöf defines three components that make up the tradition – what is handed over; the handing over taking place between the giver and receiver; and the means of communicating this transfer (1972, 20). He expands the latter to include the various media through which one can transmit information – 'such as the spoken and the written word, pictures, actions and behaviour, objects and equipment (artefacts), social groups and institutions' (1972, 20).

Foreign & Local Literature

Numerous studies reflecting the above views have been carried out around the globe directed at recording traditional wooden vessels. Some of the major foreign published works stem from Scandinavia, the United States and the United Kingdom. The aims of these works were primarily to document traditional local craft which were on the decline, due to the introduction of the engine. Two such works include *Inshore Craft of Norway*, published in 1979 by A.E. Christensen and *Working Boats of Britain, their shape and purpose* published in 1983 by Eric McKee.

Case studies have also been conducted in Oman

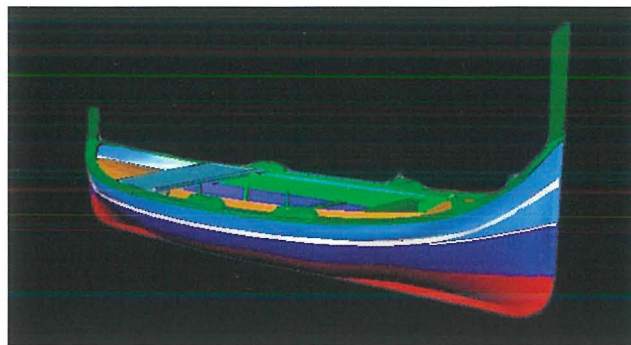


Figure 2. Rowed *firilla* three-dimensional model (after Said 2014).

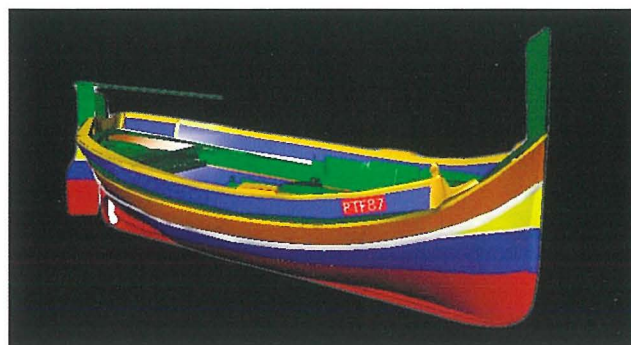


Figure 3. PTF87 *firilla* three-dimensional model (after Said 2014).

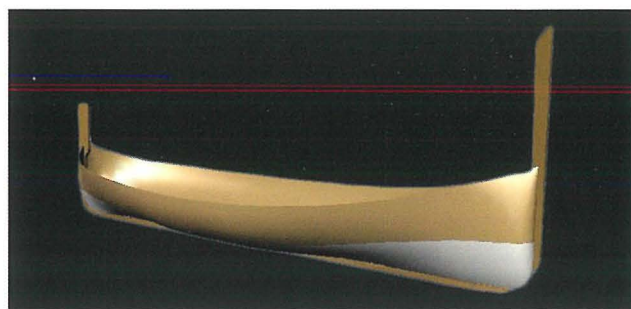


Figure 4. Regatta *firilla* three-dimensional model (after Said 2014).

and the Bay of Bengal consisting of ethnographic works on still living tradition. *A Survey of Traditional Vessels of the Sultanate of Oman – The Omani Dhow Recording Project Field Research* was conducted in 1992 and led by T.A. Vosmer, R.E. Margariti and A.F. Tilley. The project had three aims: to collect data, to analyse the data and to formulate hypotheses and theories (1992, 1), on a still living tradition. Similarly, *The Patia Fishing Boat of Orissa: A Case Study in Ethnoarchaeology*, carried out by L. Blue, E. Kentley, S. McGrail and U. Mishra in 1996 within the North West Bay of Bengal was aimed at assessing the potential of coastal Orissa for archaeological and

ethnographic studies of water transport. The ultimate aim of this fieldschool was to create a template for future recording of surviving examples of boat types found along the coastal area of Orissa, as this area has potential for surviving ancient rafts and boats (1996, 191).

Unlike Scandinavia and the UK, there have been no inter-disciplinary studies carried out on this subject in the Maltese Islands. The available literature dealing with Maltese traditional boats is limited to three main authors, namely the publications of J. Muscat, C. Pulè and P.G. Camenzuli. These works are based on personal experiences and networks, and were not carried out with the intention of conducting a systematic documentation of local boats.

Muscat and Pulè published their books in 1999 and 2000 respectively. Muscat's book, *The Dghajsa and Other Traditional Maltese Boats*, focuses on giving a general overview of the *dghajsa*, including a tentative evolution, its construction sequence and then a chapter dedicated to the main types of local boats. He provides ample photographic evidence along with paintings, including some of his own drawings (none are to scale). His final chapter concludes with the September regatta. Muscat has published other shorter articles, however the information provided is generally recycled.

Qxur, Bicċiet, u Opri Tal-Baħar written by Pulè, is published in Maltese, as he believes that such heritage should be documented in the local language. The work is a description of a living technology (Pulè, 2000, x). The author starts off with a general overview of timber conversion and the required tools. He then gives a brief introduction to the different boats and how they react to the seas found around the Maltese Islands. In the third section, a chapter is dedicated to each boat type. These are described and hand drawings illustrate each element of the boat. Methods of steering, including oars and sails along with some fishing equipment are also mentioned. Sea ventures are narrated in the last chapter.

These local publications are invaluable studies as they record building methods, function, general characteristics and ethnographic details. The authors have exhausted their excellent access to social groups who are not renowned for their openness with unfamiliar people. However, what has not been done so far is an archaeological documentation of the boats themselves, incorporating a systematic survey which collects data, conducts analysis and then formulates

hypotheses and conclusions. This report will attempt to do so, despite the fact that this will be carried out on one specific boat type.

Methodology

The primary data has been extracted from three examples of *firilli* boats located within the stores at the Maritime Museum in Vittoriosa, under the care of Heritage Malta. The secondary sources focused on oral traditions/information, written texts, iconographic material such as paintings and photographs, traditional tools used for boat building and institutions represented as the regatta clubs. A lot of the terminology that is applied to name and describe elements making up the boats, tools used for boat building and fishing techniques and equipment survives in its original form. For practical reasons, the terms will be written in English within this report, unless otherwise stated.

Primary Data Collection

Traditional hand drawings using the offset method, along with electronic/digital tools for three-dimensional recording, were applied to document the boats. The application of electronic/digital recording was found to be a more efficient recording method than hand-drawn plans. However, both methods were applied due to limitations encountered when documenting the interior framing systems of the boats, as these were hidden beneath other elements.

The initial task involved the cleaning of the boats and surrounding areas, which enabled the visual observations of elements, such as scarfs, caulking application, paint layers and wood identification. This was followed by the recording of the boats in the following order, namely exterior, interior and decorative elements, with the final step incorporating any recapturing of data. Post-processing of the data resulted in finalised three-dimensional models, presenting a visual representation of each boat (Figs 2-4). Naval architecture line plans and hydrostatic analysis were extracted utilising other software and techniques. However, limitations of space do not permit going into greater detail here. Boat descriptions were compiled, listing all the elements involved in their construction and their respective dimensions. The features were listed following the construction sequence of the boats, following the skeleton-

based technique. Along with this, the biography of each boat was researched via museum records and museum personnel. Finally, both detail and general photographs were taken of the boats.

Hand-drawings were done using a scale of 1:10, with each element numerically labelled starting from the bow and finishing at the stern. The drawings were then digitized using Inkscape, a freeware vector programme, and retained as two-dimensional plans, making it easier to present the data.

Electronic/digital recording was achieved via the use of a Total Station directly connected to a laptop running Rhinoceros 4.0 CAD software, via Termitte interface software developed by F. Hyttel. This method is both functionally and financially feasible, and has a number of advantages. These include real-time recording allowing for corrections to be made instantaneously, as well as relocation and orientation of the total station with minimal effort (Hyttel 2011, 3). The advantage of using Rhinoceros software is its ease of use, and the fact that it can process both two- and three-dimensional curvature (Hyttel 2011, 27), making it easier to create the models from the data collected.

Secondary Data Collection

The most informative sources were the regatta boat builders and their assistants, who were willing to share their knowledge on the construction of wooden boats. Unfortunately, a reserved approach was encountered with a few of the older boat builders. However, retaining knowledge within the family is an old tradition, which still seems to persist.

Archival documents found at the National Archives (Mdina and Rabat), reflected the popularity of local wooden boats, with a handful of instances specifically mentioning the *firilla* type. The decline in use of traditional local boats is clearly seen in the Fishing Vessel Registers retained by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, with only three *firilli* boats being registered in 2014.

Photographic collections and paintings representing local craft dating to the 19th and 20th centuries have also been looked into. The Malta Maritime Museum in Birgu and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta possess a number of iconographic images depicting local boats, some of which have been identified as *firilli*. Some of these images provide information on changes that took place on the shape of the hull, specifically with regards



Figure 5. An image of a *firilla*, exhibiting a spur and a raked bow. Image is captioned as follows 'C. R. Jones: A beached Luzzu, (a calotype negative), 1845-6 (Kraus Collection)' (Harker 2000: 8).

to the presence of a spur on the bow and a rounded bow (spoon bow) (Fig. 5). These two features are not seen on examples of *firilli* dating after the twentieth century.

The spur was present on another boat type, called *xprunara* or *sepronara*. In fact the vessel name came from *xprun*, *sperone* or spur which was a sort of triangular wooden element fitted on the cutwater of the vessel. This element was adopted on other local water craft such as the *firilla* and *luzzu* (Muscat 1999, 122). Its function seems to be of a decorative nature.

It is also interesting to note that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the demanding dockyard and harbour activities required a larger labour force, including porters, carriers, coal heavers and other commercial activities (Mallia-Milanes 1988, 95). Fishing within these areas was not possible, therefore fishermen needed to go further afield to fish or change location completely. As previously mentioned, the change in function very likely affected the design of the boat. This possibly resulted in the need to alter the design of the boats in order to withstand rougher sea conditions. The rounded bow would have been altered to a more plumb bow and additional washboards, whether removable or not, would have protected the boat from excess sea spray.

Results

Each one of the documented boats is a unique example of the boat type called *firilla*. The author will be referring to these under the following names: Rowed *firilla*; PTF87 *firilla*; and Regatta *firilla*. The first two examples functioned as fishing boats, whilst the latter boat was used as a racing boat.

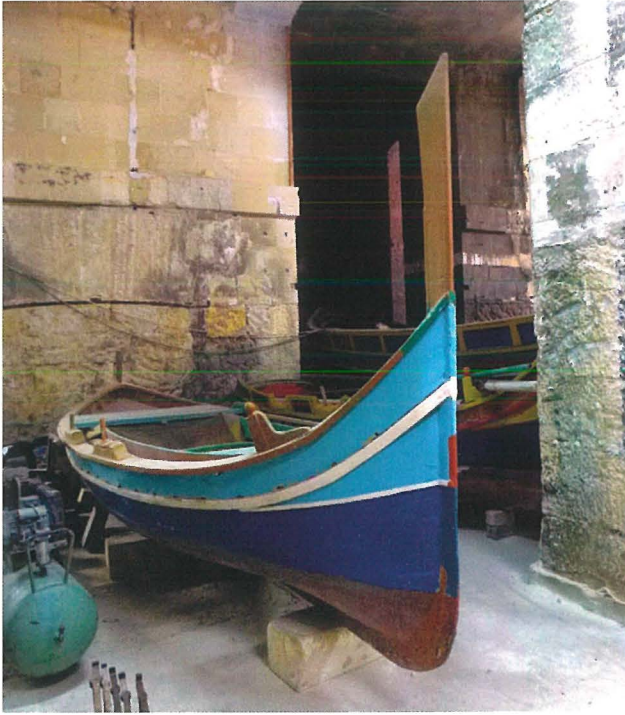


Figure 6. Rowed *firilla* as found in the store at the Maritime Museum (after Said 2014).

General Characteristics

All three boats are double-ended open boats, carvel built, with a tall stempost and a much shorter sternpost. The boats have a straight keel with the posts fixed at 90 degrees to the keel. Overall the boats have a wide hull amidships, with a U-shaped cross-section. The fore and aft ends however are narrow, turning into a V-shape. The sheer line inclines upwards towards the bow, making this end higher than the stern. However, in the regatta *firilla* this inclination is not as steep and does not rise abruptly. They all follow the same construction sequence, referred to as skeleton-based technique, starting with the keel, end posts and apron, followed by the framing system, framing supports, interior elements and ending with the strakes.

Rowed *firilla* (Fig. 6)

This boat is described within museum records as a full size *firilla*, having a length of 17 *palmi* (*palmo* is equivalent to 0.2619 m; see Muscat 1999, 84). As the name implies, the boat was rowed, as there is no evidence for a rudder or sprit rig. The boat was purchased by the Malta Maritime Museum in January 1992, for a small sum of money off a fisherman from Marsaxlokk. Its origin and year of construction are unknown, however it might have been in use as early as the 1880s (*pers. comm.* L. Gauci, Curator of

the Malta Maritime Museum, 11.09.13). Originally the *mustacċ* (triangular part at the bow and stern, often where the oculus is attached) was an ochre colour, corresponding to its provenance, that being Marsaxlokk.

Dimensions

According to the description in the Museum records the boat is 17 *palmi* long, equivalent to 4.4523 m. The description does not specify whether this is the overall length, length between perpendiculars, length of keel or any other possible length dimension. This dimension closely matches the dimensions of the keel, without the forefoot which joins the keel to the posts. Actual measurement of the boat revealed a length between perpendiculars of 5.20 m, a maximum breadth of 1.78 m and depth of 0.60 m.

Wood Used for Construction

Table 1 shows the results observed by a wood conservator. As can be noted, pine was used on most of the hull structure, whilst ash was used for interior elements supporting the hull structure. The use of greenheart, teak and beech were sparingly applied to specific elements, which received most wear and tear.

Boat Feature	Wood Genus	Common Name
Keel	<i>Chlorocardium</i> sp.	Greenheart
Zokk (forefoot)	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Post Ends	<i>Tectona</i> sp.	Teak
Framing System	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Ċinta (rubbing strake)	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Gunwale	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Sheer Strake	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Hull Strakes	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Thwarts	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Deck Planks	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Oars	<i>Fagus</i> spp.	Beech

Table 1. Wood used for elements making up the rowed *firilla* (*pers. comm.* J. Aquilina, wood conservator, 30.01.2014).

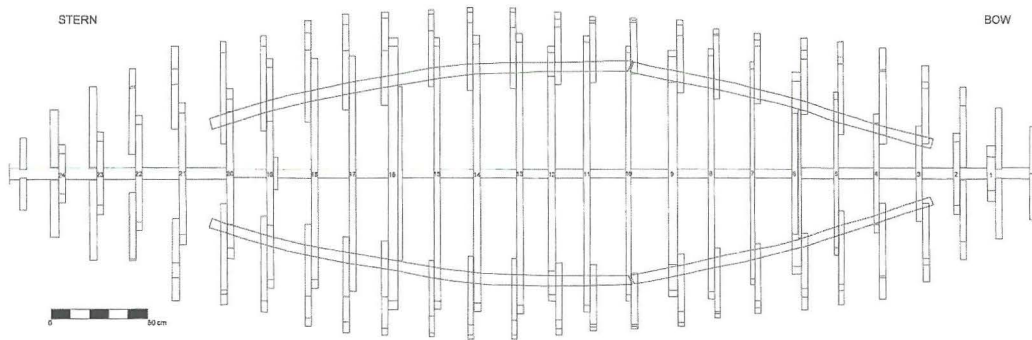


Figure 7. Plan of the framing system of the rowed *firilla* (after Said 2014).

Features

The keel is joined to the posts by means of a forefoot, with hooked scarfs. It measures 8 cm in height and 4 cm wide. An apron sits upon the fore and aft of the keel, accommodating the first and last few frames. There are 24 floor frames (Fig. 7), measuring 2 cm to 3.5 cm sided and 3.5 cm to 7 cm moulded. There are a total of 52 futtocks, divided equally between port and starboard. Of the 26, 24 are found fixed to the floor frames, whilst the last two are found on either end of the boat attached to the apron and referred to as *żengul* (*żniegel* plural). The distance between each frame from front to front ranges from 16 cm to 23 cm, with the narrowest gap located between the

central frames. Twenty-six scupper holes are aligned with the 26 futtock frames. The latter keep running up to and through the gunwale, finishing flush with the surface. The gunwale is split into three pieces, joined together by means of Z-scarfs. Five strakes form the hull of the boat, excluding the sheer strake, measuring 1.5 cm thick and 14 cm to 20 cm wide. Features are held together by means of brass nails, with a flattened head or diamond shaped head, riveted brass nails and screw nails. The former are the most common, with a standard measurement of 4 cm in length.

Treatments, Changes and Restoration

The rowed *firilla* has never seen any changes since

Figure 8. PTF87 *firilla* as found in the store at the Maritime Museum (after Said 2014).



it entered the museum collection (*pers. comm.* L. Gauci, 11.09.13). There do not seem to be any repairs carried out on the boat either. The only changes that are visible are the colours painted on the boat and possibly the rowlock found on the aft of the port side.

PTF87 *firilla* (Fig. 8)

The Maritime Museum has no paper record of this boat. It joined the Museum collection in 1995. PTF87 refers to the registration number provided by the Fisheries Department, PTF standing for part-time fisherman. This number is still visible on the washboards. The *mustaċċ* is a bright yellow, reflecting its area of provenance, that being Msida. It was brought over from this town, located on the east coast of Malta, by museum personnel, prior to being scrapped (*pers. comm.* L. Gauci, 8.01.14). Its date of construction is unknown and unfortunately the boat owner is also anonymous. It was used as a fishing vessel, propelled by oar and sail, and later on modified to introduce the engine, which ran on fuel and was sea water cooled. The introduction of the engine to Maltese boats started in the 1920s (Muscat 1999, 84), giving a *terminus post quem* date.

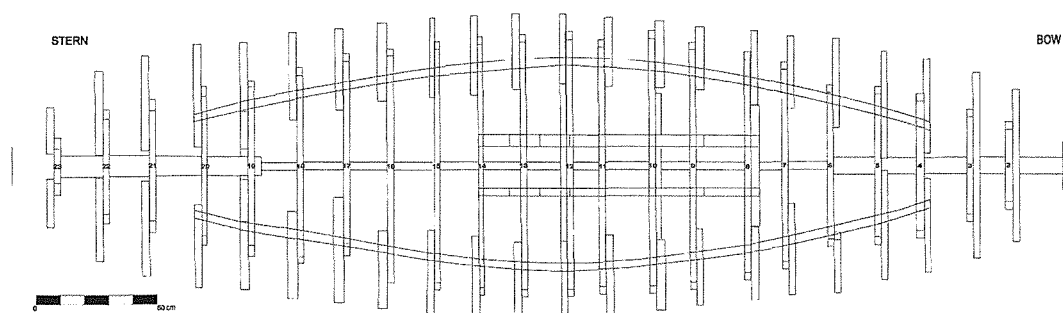
Dimensions

The length overall is 4.80 m with a maximum breadth of 1.84 m (1.77 m at the gunwale) and a depth of 0.78 m.

Wood Used for Construction

Table 2 shows the extensive use of pine wood, whilst ash was only applied for the supporting elements, along with the keel. Teak could only be identified on the post ends.

Figure 9. Plan of the framing system of the PTF87 *firilla* (after Said 2014).



Boat Feature	Wood Genus	Common Name
Keel	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Zokk (forefoot)	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Post Ends	<i>Tectona</i> sp.	Teak
Framing System	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Ċinta (rubbing strake)	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Gunwale	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Washboards	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Hull Strakes	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Sheer Strake	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Thwart	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Deck Planks	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Rowlocks	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Oars	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Rudder	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine

Table 2. Wood used for elements making up the PTF87 *firilla* (*pers. comm.* J. Aquilina, wood conservator, 30.01.2014).

Features

The keel is made of one straight wooden timber, measuring 8 cm in height and 4 cm wide. The keel is connected to the stempost by means of a forefoot, with two hooked scarfs, whilst an L-shaped element connected the keel to the sternpost, in order to accommodate the propeller. An apron is also present on the inside of the keel, at the fore and aft ends of



Figure 10. Regatta *firilla*, after being brought down from its storage place (after Said 2014).

the boat. There are 23 floor frames and a total of 46 futtock frames (Fig. 9), one on either end of the floor frame. The former measure 2.5 cm to 3 cm sided and 3 cm to 5 cm moulded, whilst the latter measure 2 cm to 4 cm sided and 3 cm to 4 cm moulded. The distance between each frame from front to front ranges from 13.5 cm to 23 cm, the average being 18 cm. The narrowest gap is located between frames nine and ten, and the remaining small gaps are located towards the fore part of the boat. All futtock frames run up and through the gunwale, which is split into three parts and joined together by means of two butt joints and a diagonal joint. A total of 5 strakes make up the hull, excluding the top washboard. The thickness of the planks measure 1.5 cm and varies in width, from 22 cm to 27 cm. The elements are held together by means of brass nails, measuring 4 cm in length, however screw nails are also present but limited in use.

Treatments, Changes and Restoration

No changes have been made to the boat during its storage in the Malta Maritime Museum. However, some changes were definitely made during its lifetime, namely to the engine and the addition of washboards to make the sides higher and reduce water intake. The rowlocks were therefore moved from the original gunwale and attached to the added washboards.

However, these seem to have received no strain as there is no depression where the oar would have rubbed. There seems to be a repair on the starboard hull and along the interior side of the hull. Some of the plank seams have been covered over with a white paint filler, or white lead paint. This might have been a later treatment in order to keep water from seeping in.

Regatta *firilla* (Fig. 10)

This boat has *Victoria X* engraved on the sheer strake, likely indicating its dedication to Our Lady of Victory. Although the regatta *firilla* has been assigned a museum number (MM 0047), its fascinating biography has not been recorded. The regatta *firilla* was originally from Senglea, and it took part in the annual regatta race, competing for the Senglea regatta club. It was propelled by four rowers, the method used for steering the boats during the races. The red and yellow colours, which are still visible on the regatta *firilla*, represent the club colours. After it stopped competing, it was placed in the outdoor courtyard at Fort San Lucian in Marsaxlokk, along with a couple of other wooden boats. During the winter of 1989, strong north-easterly winds managed to lift the boats lying out in the courtyard and smash them against the tower, reducing them to fragments. The regatta *firilla*, which was already in a fragile state had little chances of surviving this storm (*pers. comm.* A. Espinosa Rodriguez, Curator of the Malta Maritime Museum at the time of acquisition, 12.08.13).

From the above information we can definitely say that the regatta *firilla* ceased to take part in the annual races prior to 1989. In fact from newspaper records the last two participating *firilli* hailed from Senglea and last took part in the 1957 race (Serracino, Vol. 2, 90). It has been confirmed that the regatta *firilla* at the Museum was one of the last *firilli* to take part in the races (Muscat 1999, 169), and is possibly identified with the *firilla* named *Forti St Mikiel* as seen in the image (Fig. 11) provided by Serracino (1988). This photograph depicts the boat along with its crew of four men after the race of 1922. The name *Victoria X*, is also visible on the sheer strake of the boat, along with the floral decorations and the winged creature found on the fore part of the sheer strake. These match those found on the smashed regatta *firilla* that is now part of the Museum collection.



Figure 11. Image present by Serracino captioned as “Forti San Mikiel; another famous Ferilla from Senglea, with her crew” (Serracino 1988).

Dimensions

The current state of the boat can only provide hypothetical overall dimensions. The length of the keel is 5.50 m, from scarf to scarf. To this, one has to add the length of the forefoot, to get an overall length. According to Muscat (1999, 170) ‘the fancy *firilla* or the specially light boat, which was introduced in 1925 had a length of 6.13 m, beam 1.74 m and depth of 0.56 m’.

Wood Used for Construction

A combination of wood types was used to construct this boat (Table 3). Pine wood was only used for the hull planking, whilst ash was again used in the framing system and other retaining elements. Teak was used on both the post end and sheer strake, the latter being finely decorated, and once again, greenheart was specifically used for the keel.

Boat Feature	Wood Genus	Common Name
Keel	<i>Chlorocardium</i> sp.	Greenheart
Zokk (forefoot)	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Post Ends	<i>Tectona</i> sp.	Teak
Framing System	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Ċinta (rubbing strake)	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine
Gunwale	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Ash
Sheer Strake	<i>Tectona</i> sp.	Teak
Hull Strakes	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Pine

Table 3. Wood used for elements making up the regatta *firilla* (pers. comm. J. Aquilina, wood conservator, 30.01.2014).

Features

The existing keel measures 5.50 m in length, 7 cm in height and 3 cm wide (Fig. 12). It is still connected to the stern post by means of a forefoot, with a hooked scarf joining the post to the forefoot and a flat scarf joining the forefoot to the keel. A hooked scarf is present on the fore part of the keel. The apron is also present on the fore and aft part of the inner keel, measuring 4.5 cm sided and 4 cm moulded. The apron accommodated the first four and last six floor frames. There are a total of 28 floor frames and a total of 56 futtock frames, the latter being equally divided between port and starboard sides. From the existing examples of the framing system, measurements range from 2 cm to 3 cm sided and 2.5 cm to 4 cm moulded, with futtock frames all measuring 2 cm sided and 2.5 cm to 3.5 cm moulded. The distance between frames from front to front ranges from 15.5 cm to 23.5 cm, with the narrowest gap being between frames 14 and 15. Like the former two boats, the gunwale is split into three parts, joined by means of a flat scarf. Roman numerals are engraved on the inner side of the gunwale. These are found marking rectangular slots, which retained the futtock frames in place. A total of 6 strakes formed the hull, including the sheer strake, their thickness being 1 cm to 1.2 cm and their width measuring 10 cm to 15 cm. Brass nails are present throughout the boat, as the means of fastening elements together. Caulking is also visible along the edges of some strakes, consisting of twisted cotton which was wedged between seams.

Treatment, Changes and Restoration

A large bulk of this boat still exists, however only a few parts are still in their original position. The stern end of the boat is the best preserved part, along with the keel and to some extent the stempost. The sternpost is still fixed to the keel along with some of the planking and framing system. The port side is in a much better state of preservation than the starboard side. Identifying any changes or restoration activities is impossible, however the boat was definitely constructed for racing and retained this function throughout its lifetime.

Discussion

The characteristics that make up a *firilla* boat have been confirmed and clearly identified. However, the differences between the three studied examples are

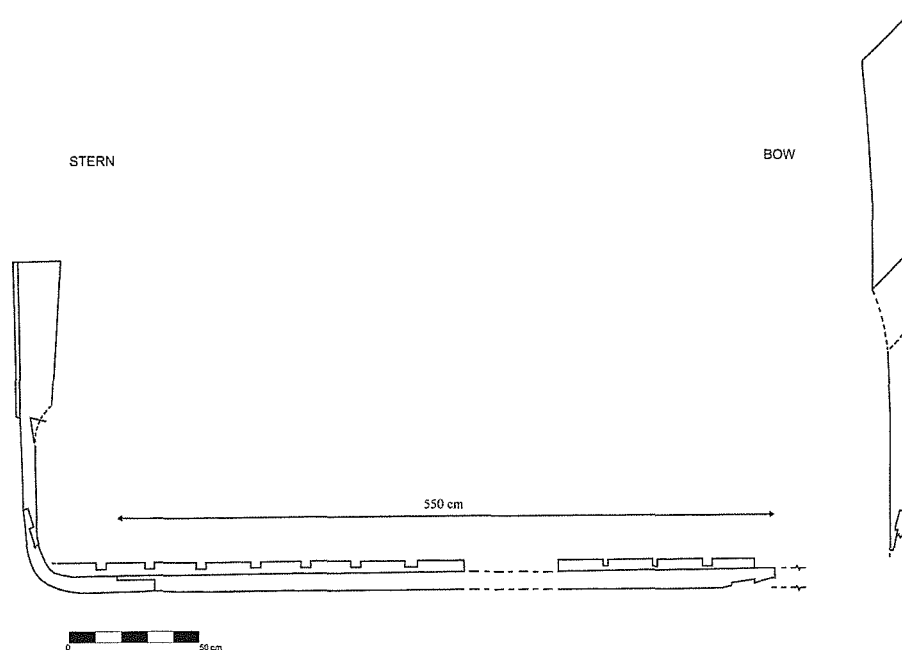


Figure 12. Side elevation of the regatta *firilla* (after Said 2014).

still quite striking. It is hard to define an evolution in these three boats related to the advancement of technology from the use of oars and sail to the instalment of the engine. It is also unlikely that one can date the boats. The closest that could be achieved was from the information available for the regatta *firilla*, whereby historical, oral and archaeological data were combined to provide a wider biography of the boat. It is clear that this boat was constructed specifically to be utilised in races, as clearly seen by the shape, the plumb bow, the low sheer line and slim, shallow hull, and materials used, relatively thin hull planks, providing a light hull and the use of teak for the sheer strake, which was super thin and finely decorated. Teak was and still is an expensive wood, therefore used sparingly for specific parts which would be most prominent. Teak also features on the post ends for all three boats. Greenheart was also used sparingly, as it only features on the keel of the rowed and regatta *firilla*. This is extremely hard to fashion, but resistant to rot and durable in marine environments. These two *firilli* share the same wood type for all the elements making up the boats, with the exception of the sheer strake. The PTF87 also shares the same wood type, with the exception of the keel, made from ash, and the gunwale and oars, made from pine. Ash is not resistant to rot, whilst pine is durable and easy to work, the reason it is utilised to shape the hull strakes. Unfortunately, the use of different wood types is also not a good working base to date the boats, for the simple reason that boat builders often had to work with what they found.

The overall dimensions of the three boats are different, with the longest the regatta *firilla* and the shortest the PTF87 *firilla*. The PTF87 is the beamiest of the three boats, and also the deepest, making it a far more stable boat. The other two boats are relatively shallow boats, with a more faired hull shape. The PTF87 clearly is different from the other two boats. The installation of the engine meant that it could travel further afield in open waters. However, this resulted in the addition of the washboards to reduce the risk of water intake. The sail must have been retained as a backup in case of engine failure. The rowed *firilla* exhibits a plumb bow, yet it was still being rowed. Probably this is an early example displaying the new change from rounded to vertical bow. This boat would still have kept relatively close to the shore as it relied solely on oars. Several photographs dating to the early twentieth century show examples of rowed *firilli* with a plumb bow, within sheltered areas. One particular model of a *firilla* (82 MM/4 (MOD) 6607/8; Malta Maritime Museum) exhibits the plumb bow and is propelled by sails and four oars and dates to c.1920. Such an example would have sailed further away from the coast, taking advantage of our prevailing winds.

As mentioned earlier, increased activity in the harbour areas restricted fishing within these protected areas. Legislation related to fishing was established in order to either restrict fishermen from fishing in certain areas, or to promote fishing away from local shores (Muscat 1999, 80). Apart from this a number of boats accompanying the larger British men-of-war

were being launched in Maltese waters. These boats must have had some form of impact, whether visible or not, on local water craft. Undoubtedly, further research would be necessary to define the boat's evolution and probable influences from incoming water crafts and neighbouring designs.

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The Phoenician “permanent” display at the National Museum of Archaeology, Malta

Sharon Sultana

Instead of only placing our objects on pedestals,
it's time we placed our visitors on pedestals as well

– Mc Lean 1993, 5 cited by Black 2005, 7

The aims of museums all over the world have been changing throughout the years, but it is only recently that a critical objective of their existence, namely their visitors, is being taken into consideration. If people do not visit museums then these may as well close their doors and the care that the museum staff lavish on their collections would be futile since it would remain inaccessible. An audience-focused approach should not deter from having the collection as the main focus but it should unite the needs of the audience with the stories that the collection can tell.

Although the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Phoenician period display at the National Museum of Archaeology took place on the 27 February 2013, the initial meetings with the various stakeholders took place a number of years preceding that. During this period plans changed and ideas had to be rekindled especially since the planning process was not a continuous one. This was due to the lack of human and financial resources, a syndrome which people working in public museums have unfortunately learnt to live with.

The setting up of a museum display requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving people from various working backgrounds, and the crux towards a fruitful outcome is proper channelling and homogenising of the ideas of all the stakeholders

from the initial stages. The people on board varied. We had curators, a consultant, exhibition designers, conservators, IT personnel, production team, proof readers, and the list goes on. Apart from the academic consultant – Dr Nicholas C. Vella from the University of Malta – the team working on this project consisted of Heritage Malta staff.

An audience survey carried out in 2008 questioned Maltese households about local museums (Sultana 2008). Specific questions were targeted at expectations of the projected halls at the National Museum of Archaeology. When asked about preferred means of information dissemination, 75% chose audiovisuals and 43.7% opted for texts and images on interpretative panels.¹ With this information in hand, we analysed such responses during our decision making process for the Phoenician hall. The storyline, which was drafted together with the academic consultant, evolved from generic information about the Phoenicians, to the Phoenicians' arrival in Malta and their cultural practices. The chosen themes were the following: Who were the Phoenicians? Phoenician seafaring and trade (including sections on Metal, Textiles and purple dye, Glass and Wood); Ceramic forms from Phoenician Malta; Foreign pottery and local imitations; Phoenicians in the Maltese islands; Phoenicians and Death, A Phoenician coffin; Tophets;



Figure 1. Selecting the artefacts for display.

Containers for the dead; Tomb groups; Faces from the Phoenician past; and Afterlife. The text for the interpretation panels could not exceed 150 words for each of our official languages, and archival images, cartoons and audiovisuals were integrated into the design as supportive tools.

An obvious integral part of the preparation stage was the choice of artefacts. Choosing a good representative sample from the thousands which were sourced, researched and documented from the reserve collection, whilst keeping in mind the space allocation we had for this period, was not easy (Fig. 1). This exercise was carried out by the curators, consultant and the lead designer. The first draft layout reflected the chosen themes (Fig. 2a), which was then consolidated by listing the required artefacts for each showcase so that we could finalise the showcase size and type needed (Fig. 2b). In turn this turned into a scaled plan of the room, an important step in the development of the tasks to follow (Fig. 2c). The artefacts were sourced and sent for conservation. The manufacturing team started working on the structural shell of the display whilst the consultant started producing the text. The designers could then embark on producing the interpretation panels, in

constant liaison with the curators and consultant especially with regard to the accompanying images. In the meantime, some of the pieces earmarked for display underwent extensive research and analysis, resulting in some original conclusions (Vella *et al.* 2009; Vella 2012, 2013).

It is worth pointing out at this stage that, in parallel, there were also structural works being carried out on the building. Conservation works at the National Museum of Archaeology, the former Auberge de Provence, had already been carried out on the outer masonry on Melita Street to eliminate water infiltration. Having a museum housed in a scheduled building is very prestigious, however this brings with it a number of challenges which practically dictate some display outcomes. With a multidisciplinary approach and great teamwork such challenges were always overcome and in some cases even turned to our advantage. Thus, for example, the space which existed under the timber flooring of the hall earmarked for the Phoenician period display was exploited to house a tomb reconstruction in order to give visitors a better understanding of one of the Phoenician burial methods. The timber flooring beams were restored, while the ones which had to make way for the tomb

reconstruction were stored underneath the same flooring as part of the reversibility process which we always adhere to.

Challenges are constant but the rewards greatly outnumber them (Fig 3) The feedback we received post-opening was very positive. The museum’s comments book is evaluated on a monthly basis to assess if there are any things that need to and can be changed. At times the feedback gives positive new insights to decisions taken. One such example is the case of the main audiovisual which was filmed to give a better oral interpretation of the Phoenicians and their impact on the local scenario. Whereas our decision to film the narrator speaking in Maltese, and provide English subtitles, was purely a patriotic one, foreigners constantly comment that they are fascinated by the sound of the Maltese language, since as they rightly point out, they are rarely exposed to it during their stay on the islands.

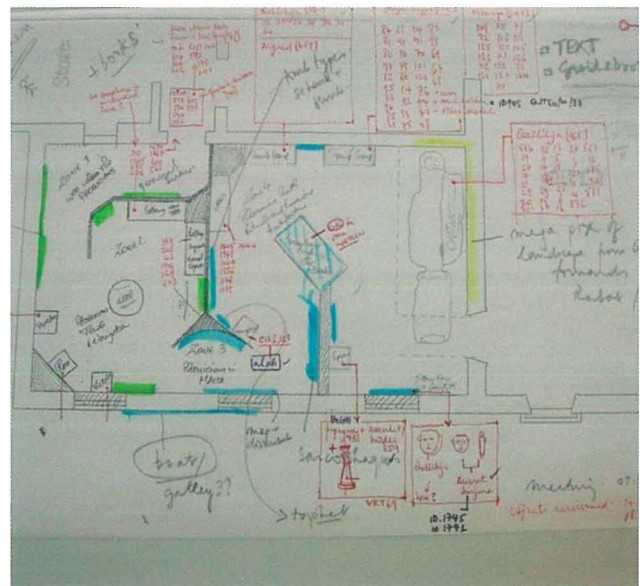
One may have noticed that the word permanent in the title appears in single quotation marks. The reason is simple. There is no such thing as a permanent display in a museum. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, a museum needs to acknowledge and appease visitors’ needs, which are constantly changing, as should a museum display after a number of years, if one aims for a living museum and not a mausoleum.

Acknowledgements

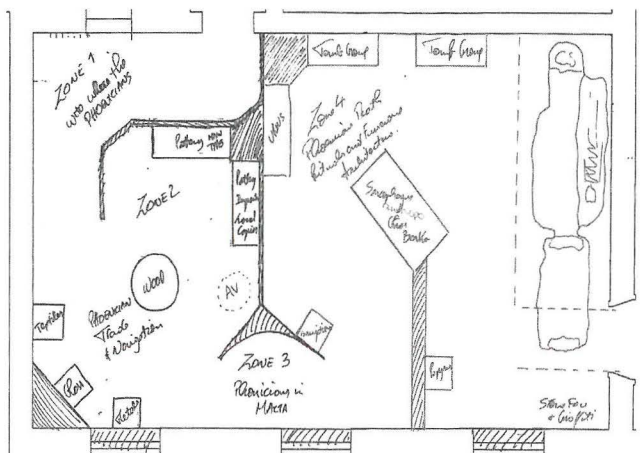
I would like to thank all who were in one way or another involved in the setting up of the Phoenician Period Hall, in particular Heritage Malta staff, and Dr Nicholas C. Vella who provided valuable insight on the themes to be addressed and represented by the artefacts on display.

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a



b



c

Figure 2. (a-c) Working plan of the display area and contents in its progressive stages.



Figure 3. Section of the Phoenician Hall, National Museum of Archaeology, after completion.

VELLA, N.C., 2013. Vases, bones and two Phoenician inscriptions: an assessment of a discovery made in Malta in 1816, in O. LORETZ, S. RIBICHINI, W.A. WATSON & J. Á. ZAMORA (eds) *Ritual, Religion and Reason: Studies in the Ancient World in Honour of Paolo Xella* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament series): 589-605. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

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Notes

- 1 Respondents could choose more than one option. Moreover 29.7% chose audio guides, 18.7% guidebooks and catalogues, and 10.9% take home leaflets. Other suggestions included interactive spaces especially for children, different types of media, simple language use, help at hand by staff, and more consideration for a wider audience including persons with disabilities and the illiterate.

The Bronze Age of the Maltese Islands

Isabelle Vella Gregory

Tanasi, D. & N. C. Vella (eds) 2015.

The Late Prehistory of Malta: Essays on Borġ in-Nadur and other sites.
vii+199pp. Oxford: Archaeopress. ISBN 9781784911270, £35.

Studies on the prehistory of the Maltese Islands have tended to focus on the Late Neolithic. This is not to say that the Bronze Age has been neglected, but it has certainly received less attention. Overall, Maltese prehistory is in an exciting state of flux, one which involves both new projects and research directions. This process also requires a certain amount of self-reflexivity, particularly in terms of setting broader research questions. The latest volume by Davide Tanasi and Nicholas C. Vella, *The Late Prehistory of Malta: Essays on Borġ in-Nadur and other sites* makes an important and vital contribution to this endeavour.

Tanasi and Vella have led a project that goes beyond a study of Borġ in-Nadur. Their previous volume (Tanasi & Vella 2011) offered an in-depth study of the site of Borġ in-Nadur. In doing so, Tanasi, Vella and contributors set the agenda for a systematic study of the Bronze Age. They also highlighted various research avenues which require further discussion. First, they recognize the value of archival archaeology. This is part of a growing trend in archaeology in the Mediterranean and beyond (the present author has been involved in similar studies regarding the Maltese Neolithic). Second, they have demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of a systematic approach to data, enabling a more structured and complete interpretation. Third, they have shown how an in-depth study of a key site

sets the methodological agenda for a wider debate on the Bronze Age. Fourth, they have widened the debate to include issues of heritage.

These factors are particularly important considering the broader trends in Mediterranean Bronze Age studies. The legacy of a Bronze Age perceived as a mosaic of cultures has in the past contributed to a lack of comparative studies of material. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of problematization of ideas of transmission and connectivity. Questions arise on whether these issues are the same or more problematic on islands. This debate has already occurred vis-à-vis the Maltese Neolithic, but it is only very recently that it has been extended to the Bronze Age (Tanasi & Vella, 2014).

Throughout their various works, which should be read together, Tanasi and Vella have called for a systematic approach to data and an explicit focus on interaction. The former has been achieved, the latter remains a work in progress. Overall, the volume *The Later Prehistory of Malta* is mostly focused on the major site of Borġ in-Nadur. This is not inherently problematic, given that Borġ in-Nadur remains one of the largest and most investigated sites of the Bronze Age. The editors convincingly make the case for further fieldwork. This book should be seen as a first step towards a wider investigation of the later prehistory of Malta, which to

date includes the large-scale FRAGSUS project (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/FRAGSUS/>) and one of its stated aims is an investigation of the origins of the Bronze Age.

What the Borg in-Nadur volumes demonstrate is that while the origins are important, it is also necessary to understand the general character of the Bronze Age. A major step in this regard is Tanasi's detailed chapter on pottery. Titled 'The pottery from excavation campaigns of David H. Trump (1959) at the settlement of Borg in-Nadur', this chapter gives a complete cultural profile of the site's pottery repertoire, reaffirming it as the current guide site for the Bronze Age. The re-analysis of Trump's material is extremely detailed and benefits from stratigraphic information gleaned from field notebooks (Vella, Chapter 2). Tanasi builds on Trump's previous work, in the process showing that the previous was both solid but also in need of re-evaluation. More importantly, Tanasi has generated new data from chemical and petrographic studies. As often happens with petrography, fabrics which look so different macroscopically may turn out to be a lot less varied under the microscope. The two main fabric groups identified are discussed in the following chapter, 'Archaeometric characterization of Middle Bronze Age pottery from the settlement at Borg in-Nadur', by Barone *et al.* However, given that this is now a definitive study of Borg in-Nadur pottery, it would have been useful to include a very brief summary at the outset, as this helps the reader understand the rest of the repertoire.

The results from archaeometry are particularly valuable, given the paucity of such data in Maltese prehistory. Barone, Mazzoleni, Raneri, Tanasi and Giuffrida deploy both petrographic and chemical analyses and have chosen samples from all macroscopically identified ware types. This has resulted in the identification of two fabrics and provided important comparative data for ceramics from Ognina. The latter are in the process of publication. The Borg in-Nadur ceramics reveal important information about firing temperature, inclusions and, by extension, the technological process. The latter remains in need of further discussion, now made possible due to solid published data.

Tanasi has demonstrated that fabric types cannot be assigned to chronological phases. He turns instead to shape and surface treatment to analyse changes in the pottery assemblage over time. Tanasi's shape typology, first published in 2011, provides an extremely valuable guide for Borg in-Nadur pottery. This present and expanded study provides a useful and very handy

guide for researchers and the illustrations are extremely welcome and needed. More importantly, it relates shapes to stratigraphic units. This sets the perfect background for future studies, which could include further studies on residues (providing much needed information on pot usage and other matters) and statistical studies. In particular, it would be great to see the co-occurrence of attributes. This should also include the data discussed from Tas-Silg.

Tanasi also tackles the problem of chronology. This problem is not just particular to Maltese prehistory but to the south and west-central Mediterranean more broadly. Indeed, the relationship with Sicily is rendered even more difficult to determine in view of chronological problems at both ends. Chronology can only be solved with a series of dates from both Malta and Sicily. Beyond chronology, however, Tanasi (in this and his other publications) provides some very interesting data and arguments regarding the relationship between Malta and Sicily.

This is part of the broader problem of Maltese prehistory. The relationship with Sicily needs to be reconfigured. It is time for new discussions to take place and to move away from entrenched narratives. For example, the Bronze Age remains conceptualized in terms of defence but there is yet to be a serious debate on the *idea* of defence. What is being defended and from what? How else could we interpret these 'fortifications'? The question of defence has reared its head throughout prehistory, for example the Neolithic ditched villages in Sicily. This is not going to be solved by doggedly following the current narrative canon. What is needed is a proper engagement with social complexity. Moreover, rather than trying to compare anything that looks like a fortification in the Mediterranean (see Terranova's contribution, Chapter 2), maybe the focus should be on the use of these structures and what it means in terms of practice.

What the entire volume and previous studies by many of the same authors clearly demonstrate is that there is much that needs to be discovered about the Bronze Age in Malta. Their calls for further excavations should be heeded. Equally, as archaeologists all of us need to rethink the broader research questions and ensure we are equipped with the tools to answer them. As things stand, the research on ceramics has provided an important data-set that can, and must, be used to ask questions on the social embeddedness of technology, practice and networks of relations.

What is especially interesting and useful about this volume as a whole is that the editors have also published

non-ceramic data, thereby providing a more complete picture of life in the Bronze Age. Baiamonte's study of a leaf impression on a pottery sherd (Chapter 5) finally helps answer some questions on the Bronze Age environment and attendant implications. This should be read in conjunction with the data presented in Fenech & Schembri's study on shells and fossils (Chapter 7) and Messina & Tanasi's study of animal skeletal remains from the site (Chapter 8). Braccchitta discusses the stone artefacts recovered from the site (Chapter 6). These are not numerous but the catalogue is particularly useful and, read in conjunction with other data and a refocusing of approach, will in fact prove to be even more useful.

Some of these broader issues are discussed in two key papers, one by Cazzella & Recchia (Chapter 9) and another by Tanasi (Chapter 11). These should be read in conjunction with the paper by Cardona & Zammit (Chapter 10), who discuss another Bronze Age settlement in Malta. Eric Peet's excavations at Il-Qlejgħa tal-Baħrija revealed a settlement, mostly via large quantities of ceramic, animal bone, sea shells, pebbles and carbonised matter. Subsequent investigations by Trump also point to more evidence of a settlement. Other remains included loom weights and spindle whorls, pointing to textile production. Peet also identified possible remains of wattle huts. Other features of the areas are 42 rock-cut pits on the plateau, 38 of which are grouped into three clusters. None was found intact but they are similar to pits found elsewhere on the Islands. The use of the Baħrija pits remains unknown, but Cardona and Zammit build a convincing argument about the technological processes involved in their creation. They observe that further study may provide information on land use, and such a study needs to engage with the social embeddedness of technology during the Bronze Age.

In Chapter 9, 'The Early Bronze Age of the Maltese Islands', Cazzella & Recchia note that the Early Bronze Age is a time of deep transformation. More research is pointing towards less of a break between the end of the Temple Period and the beginning of the Bronze Age. The nature of this change remains unclear. The authors favour a hypothesis of cultural transmission via the Aegean. In this instance transmission, an approach perhaps best known in archaeology via evolutionary studies, concerns the processes by which traditions are passed on between people across time and space. The nature of transmission is a matter for debate both in evolutionary studies and more broadly in archaeology

and anthropology. Current debates centre on branching vs blending (see for example Collard *et al.* 2006; Shennan 2009). The branching hypothesis posits that cultural similarities and differences are the result of information transmission within a group. Populations subsequently split and take these ideas with them. This hypothesis predicts that similarities and differences among cultures is best represented by a branching tree diagram, similar to the one used in biology to depict relationships among species.

The blending hypothesis rejects the notion that history (and/or human behaviour) is patterned like the nodes and branches on the branching tree. The argument is that relationships between human populations need to be represented as a braided stream, a series of channels that flow into one another and then split again. These approaches are not merely about how to represent change. Fundamentally they are about how one conceptualizes human behaviour. Branching assumes a certain regularity in human behaviour, which follows paths that can be predicted. By contrast, blending acknowledges that human interaction consists of multiple, intersecting layers. This includes things like genes but also innovation, cultural practice etc. Much like genes, the latter are acknowledged to flow between communities. The blending model predicts a close relationship between cultural patterns and the type of contact among social groups, generally due to geographical proximity.

Debates about the Maltese Bronze Age have yet to engage with the very foundation of the idea of transmission. Transmission is assumed and investigated via artefact traits that are deemed similar. Yet, there is no attempt to engage with the people behind these traits (for a study on this subject in the eastern Mediterranean see Bevan 2007 and for an examination of consumption and connectivity in the region see Steel 2013). While artefact attributes need to be carefully considered, there also needs to be engagement with how and why these traits spread from the north-eastern Aegean to Dalmatia and eventually Sicily and Malta. This is not to say there was no contact, but this contact needs to be investigated. At present it appears that studies, even if not perhaps very explicitly, are favouring the branching model rather than the blending model, but whichever approach one takes, it is essential to explain how and why certain processes generate distributions of cultural similarities and differences.

What the research to date has done, and has done very well, is to start mapping these transmissions. Next, it is important to ask whether one can detect a pattern of both deviation and blending and, more importantly, how this occurs. There is much to be done in this respect. In the meantime, the question of Thermi Ware in Malta seems to point to transmission that involves both the adoption of traits and modification via social learning. Cazzella & Recchia point out that the Maltese Islands maintained connections with their neighbours while only adopting select extraneous traits. Furthermore, their observation that Thermi Ware appears to be limited in select areas of the archipelago, particularly in sites already occupied in the Late Neolithic, provides very thought-provoking material for future research. Cazzella & Recchia's systematic approach to the data will prove very valuable indeed in the near future and could potentially be a major contributor to wider debates on cultural transmission.

This debate also needs to engage with the core issue of technology. The 2011 and 2015 volumes by Tanasi & Vella provide ample data. It is clear that links between Malta and Sicily need to be extensively reconsidered. In many ways, this work has already started (see for example Chapter 11 in the 2015 volume). What is now needed is a solid engagement with the nature of connectivity and networks. Tanasi & Vella (2014) have previously made a convincing case for maritime and the Maltese Islands provide an excellent starting point for a larger project.

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Buhagiar, M. 2014.

Essays on the Archaeology and Ancient History of the Maltese Islands: Bronze Age to Byzantine.
xxiv+498 pp., illustrated.

Malta: Midsea Books Ltd. ISBN 978-99932-7-482-7. €55.

This book consists of a collection of essays on topics relating to Maltese archaeology and ancient history. Their scope is very wide, ranging from prehistory to Byzantine times, though the title of the last essay extends it beyond the latter, to include 'Muslim times'. Prehistory is represented by only one essay, on the Maltese Bronze Age settlements.

The majority of the essays (11) republished together in this collection emanated from the author's MPhil dissertation on the late Roman and early Christian

catacombs, which was later published with British Archaeological Reports of Oxford in 1986. They start with an overview of the early Christian cemeteries published in 2008 (essay 6) and end with the one focussed on the 'Jewish Catacombs of Roman Melite' published in the *Antiquaries Journal* as recently as 2011 (essay 16).

Buhagiar's contribution to the study of late Roman and early Christian cemeteries in the Maltese islands remains undisputed to this very day. His 1986 catalogue of these archaeological features remains the standard reference work on this class of Maltese cultural heritage, comparable to John Evans's *Survey of the Prehistoric Antiquities* of these islands. Like Evans's volume, I presume that Buhagiar's catalogue needs updating and, to a great extent, the revisions made on these essays amount to an exercise in that direction.

Essays 17 to 19 deal with the historiography of the late Roman and Byzantine times, with essay 18 examining in detail, and making some sense of, the raw archaeological evidence relating to early Christianity unearthed by the *Missione Archeologica Italiana* at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi in the 1960s. In view of the intention to update these essays expressed in the preface, it is a pity that this particular essay did not take up the spectacular discoveries made by the renewed campaigns of the same *Missione* since 1996, in particular their investigations inside the baptistery of the church planted on the site by the fifth century AD. The last essay, originally published in 1997, focussed on Gozo in Late Roman, Byzantine and Muslim times, also stops short of taking into consideration the controversy raised by the long poem in Greek verse published by three Maltese scholars in 2010. Since the title includes specifically the Muslim period, I was looking forward to reading Buhagiar's assessment and interpretation of the historical evidence extracted from the poem and brought forth to assert a continuity of Christianity in Malta, at least on its sister island.

As I have not enough space to comment on the essays concerning the Pauline tradition, I am left only with the first three essays, of a more archaeological nature.

The first one was a paper delivered way back in July 1991 at an international colloquium held in the small town of Tende in the Alpes Maritimes, France, not far from Nice. Buhagiar's paper on the fortified Bronze Age Settlements of the Maltese islands does not aspire to contribute new data or novel ideas about that topic but it constitutes an easy-to-follow summary of the issues involved.

Another good summary of already acquired data is the second essay dealing with two well-known archaeological sites: Ras ir-Raheb and Ras il-Wardija. The connection between the two, apart from the first component of each place name and their impressive topographical location on the edge of sheer cliffs over the Mediterranean, is their probable religious nature. That of Ras il-Wardija was already fairly secured by the Italian excavators, the possibility of the Ras ir-Raheb one had been mooted by Frank Ventura, who tentatively identified it with Ptolemy's sanctuary of Herakles, and re-proposed, with some hesitation by Buhagiar, followed by a much more affirmative statement by Nicholas C. Vella.

The third essay, Roman Malta, bears the greatest affinity to my speciality and, therefore, deserves

closer attention, especially since the author has kindly credited my work as being the 'backbone' of this essay. The essay is divided in two parts: Part I: Socio-Political Aspects; and Part II: Economic and Industrial Aspects. In Part I, however, he also includes a section on the 'Architectural and Artistic Context' and another one on the 'Major Cult Centres'. I think that he makes a correct assessment of the political status of Malta and Gozo as 'civitates' forming part of the province of Sicily, and as such, heavily imbued with the prevailing Hellenistic and Greek-speaking culture, along with another social stratum adhering to the old Punic language and 'cultural idiosyncrasies', which explains Luke's 'stigmatisation' – the author's choice of vocabulary – of the natives of the island of Melite in AD 60 as 'barbaroi'.

Buhagiar favours a bright, highly optimistic picture of life in Roman Malta, characterized by 'gracious living and cultured sophistication' (p. 27), while admitting the existence of 'obvious social inequalities' in the two cities of Melite and Gaulos, apparent in the hovel-like structures revealed by T. Zammit on the north side of the Roman domus in 1921-23. Like many earlier writings on Roman Malta (including Ashby) the essay generalizes many aspects gleaned from the sources, applying them to the whole eight centuries of Roman domination, such as the municipal status which is not attested to before the second half of the second century AD. In my 2005 book, *Malta: Phoenician, Punic, and Roman*, I tried to introduce some degree of periodization in Roman Malta, at least what I find to be an obvious distinction between the age of Republic Rome and Imperial Rome.

The section I liked best in this chapter is the one titled 'The Architectural and Artistic Context', probably because of my own penchant for art and, for that matter, Buhagiar's own passion for the subject. It contains an admirable collection of references to finds of remains of buildings, some adorned with mosaics or wall painting, all culled from the writings of enlightened antiquarians, like G.F. Abela, Cesare Vassallo and, most of all, Antonio Annetto Caruana.

Here I would like to note that one of the two portrait heads listed as 'unaccounted for' in page 35, the portrait of Claudius illustrated by Hoüel in 1787 in his plate 261, has in fact been traced in the reserve collection of the Louvre.

The volume is very well illustrated and the reader cannot but be thankful for the rich index at the end, which is not limited to personal and place names but is also analytical.

One cannot but be struck by Mario Buhagiar's daring courage and stamina in embracing such a wide spectrum of academic interests. Even more admirable is the depth of his probing into different aspects of each period, culling titbits of information from diverse sources, both published and unpublished. Abroad, writers in general, and academics of the calibre of Professor Buhagiar enjoy editorial assistance in the form of copy editors and proof readers from their respective publishing houses. It is a great pity that here in Malta we do not enjoy such small, but greatly appreciated privileges. I firmly believe that this publication would have gained significantly from them.

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Tas-Silġ, Marsaxlokk (Malta) I: Archaeological Excavations conducted by the University of Malta, 1996–2005.

[Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Supplement 48]
xxxii + 496 pp., illustrated. Leuven: Peeters.
ISBN: 978-90-429-3076-6. €105.

Bonanno, A. & N.C. Vella (eds) 2015.

Tas-Silġ, Marsaxlokk (Malta) II: Archaeological Excavations conducted by the University of Malta, 1996–2005.

[Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Supplement 49]
xxxii + 666 pp., illustrated. Leuven: Peeters.
ISBN: 978-90-429-3077-3. €120.

This two-volume report is devoted to the ten-year excavation project carried out by the University of Malta at the multi-period sanctuary site of Tas-Silġ, in the south-eastern part of Malta, close to the Marsaxlokk Harbour. A site as significant as Tas-Silġ merited such lavishly detailed and beautifully illustrated monographs. Previous excavations by the *Missione Archeologica Italiana* (1963-1970) (in the Northern and part of the Southern enclosures) identified the site with the

renowned sanctuary to Juno (the Phoenician Astarte) mentioned by Cicero and Ptolemy. The University of Malta revisited the site, under the direction of A. Bonanno (1996-2005) and A.J. Frendo (1996-1999), and the field supervision of S. Mason and N.C. Vella.

Notwithstanding preliminary publications (Bonanno & Frendo 1997; 2000; Frendo & Bonanno 1997), this two-volume collaboration comprises a good number of the team's results. The first monograph thematically presents the site, the excavations, the material culture, and environmental studies. The two editors introduce the site and the project (Chapter 1), whilst A. Bugeja (Chapter 2) provides a well-researched account on the toponyms and the change in land ownership and field boundaries of the Tas-Silġ area during the past four centuries, with supplementary information provided in Appendix 1 and on p. 473. Chapter 3 is indeed 'the backbone of [the first] monograph' (p. 5). It is painstakingly put together by field supervisors Mason and Vella, with the assistance of R. Farrugia and M.E. Zammit. The project's aims are outlined on p. 45. The team's research agenda and field investigation practices aimed at understanding site formation, reconstructing the region's environment and landscape, identifying the exploitation of non-marine and marine resources, and understanding the ritual practices at the site. Four areas were selected for excavation in 1996 on the South slope (the Southern enclosure) of the Tas-Silġ hillock: Areas A, B, and C in the upper field, and Area D in the lower field (Figs 1:3 and 1:7). The team's efforts on this small excavated area (ca. 315 m²) have recovered a long stratigraphic sequence, spanning from the Late Neolithic (Period I) down to Modern times (Period VII). The fruits of the detailed documentation, visual records, and recording of material *in situ* during the course of excavation are reflected (and for the most part reproduced) in this stratigraphic report, which is as meticulous as the excavation method employed on site. Commendable are the copious plan and section drawings, photographs, and detailed stratigraphic matrices and sequences that complement the exhaustive report.

The deposits are predominantly of secondary nature, given that 'after the prehistoric period, the excavated area was mainly a dumping ground on the edge of an active sanctuary', as put by Bonanno (p. 276). As a result, the original source and function of the recovered material culture are brought into question. The contributors thus present the material culture largely in a typological manner. C. Vella (Chapter 4) broadly divides the

prehistoric lithic assemblage into tools and non-tools, to highlight the main technological attributes, and provides a catalogue in Appendix 2. R. Tykot lists obsidian lithics studied via X-ray Fluorescence in Appendix 3. Bonanno (Chapter 5) catalogues the small (mainly votive) figurative material: Egyptian(izing) scarabs and amulets, and sculpture in stone and terracotta. D. Cardona (Chapter 6) typologically describes 207 architectural fragments and worked stone pieces, largely originating from secondary layers used in the various levelling phases. S. Frey-Kupper (Chapter 7) catalogues 29 coins recovered on the South slope (19 Punic, 4 Greek, 5 uncertain, 1 British halfpenny of 1863), and discusses them in both their local and wider Mediterranean framework.

Animal remains recovered by the University are still undergoing analysis, but preliminary results on Area B were published by Corrado, Bonanno and Vella (2004). The final chapters of Volume I are devoted to environmental sample studies, with K. Fenech and P.J. Schembri looking at marine and non-marine molluscan remains (Chapter 8), whilst C.O. Hunt analyses pollen samples (Chapter 9). Both chapters accentuate the importance of environmental studies in any archaeological investigation, as they aim to identify ancient land and marine environments, and resource exploitation. A particular point I would like to stress is the following. Fenech and Schembri remark that the 760 specimens of *Hexaplex trunculus* and the 40 specimens of *Bolinus brandaris* (the respective purple and red-purple dye murex) are insufficient for purple dye production, since 'all-natural dyeing of 1 g of wool requires about seven or more snails, depending [...] on the final shade desired' (Koren 2005, 146). The authors thus suggest that these were likely food remains (sections 8.2.2.2 and 8.2.2.3). This observation is likely to be accurate, since the situation presented thus far at Tas-Silġ is far from sufficient to justify purple-dye activity. Nevertheless, the authors do not clarify the shell condition of either species (particularly *trunculus*), unlike in their preliminary study (Schembri 2000, 106). Purple dye production necessitated the manual breaking or puncturing of the murex shell to extract the hypobranchial gland situated at the apex, which contains the colourless secretion needed for the dye (Jensen 1963; Boesken Kanold & Haubrichs 2008). A missing, broken, or punctured apex of a murex shell is one possible indicator for manual gland extraction for the dye. Furthermore, Spanier & Karmon (1987) demonstrated that experiments depriving murex snails of food led the snails to cannibalize each other by

boring holes in their shells via (acidic) secretions. Burke (1999, 80-81) thus observes that any excavated murex shells bearing bore holes would strongly suggest that the snails were kept in artificial installations, probably for dye production. Alternatively, murex snails were used as a food source, for bait, for bead production, and to produce lime for wall and floor plaster by crushing the shells (Burke 1999, 81, n. 37). Granted, Fenech and Schembri explain that any hand-picked apex (of any mollusc species) was considered a countable part of the shell, and when only one identifiable shell fragment was found, this was counted as one specimen (section 8.2.1.2). Even so, they do not go into detail about the condition of the *trunculus* and *brandaris* shells that would allow other (hypothetical) conclusions to be drawn.

The second monograph is devoted to the pottery and the inscribed pottery. C. Sagona's extensive study of the Tas-Silġ ceramics (Chapter 1) brings together a full, illustrated discussion of the identified ware types, and a compilation of the shape range within each ware category relative to Tas-Silġ. Any ceramic samples studied via Neutron Activation Analysis at the University of Bonn were published by Mommsen *et al.* (2006). A list of Special Finds mentioned by Sagona is incorporated in Chapter 1 (pp. 501-13). In Chapter 2, A. Frendo and D. Mizzi examine the 1933 pottery inscriptions processed to date. The authors carefully wade through the major difficulties presented by most inscriptions, particularly their fragmentary (and therefore incomplete) status. Moreover, a large number of inscriptions are written in the notoriously difficult to decipher/distinguish Neo-Punic graphemes. The corpus essentially comprises isolated Punic or Neo-Punic letters, mostly incised pre-firing, which the authors deem possible abbreviations for specific terms related to cultic practices at the site. Given the secondary deposits, 'it is impossible to trace the precise development of the script used in our corpus as well as the patterns relative to the original historical context of the inscriptions' (p. 527). As for the 'longer' inscriptions, notwithstanding dedications to the chief deity Astarte, it is intriguing to see the addition of two new (reconstructed) LMLK^cSTRT inscriptions (Figs 2:3:10-11), alongside the one example recovered by the Italian excavations (Amadasi Guzzo 2011). Altogether they offer 'explicit evidence for the presence of the deity Milk-Astarte at the sanctuary of Tas-Silġ' (p. 550) (accentuated by the preposition *lamed*, typical of dedicatory inscriptions). Noteworthy is the fact that all three LMLK^cSTRT dedications display "archaic" Punic letters. The processed inscriptions are presented in an

(untitled) appendix or, rather, a catalogue within the chapter (pp. 581-650).

In general, the language flows freely and fluently in both monographs and I have noted relatively few typos, which nonetheless do not mar either piece of work. The major downside in each publication is the publisher's choice to place figures at the end of the texts in virtually all chapters, particularly those contributions fraught with technical detail (e.g. Chapter 3 in Volume I, and both chapters of Volume II), as it makes referring to the relevant figures overly cumbersome and impractical.

Apart from the few caveats expressed here, the Tas-Silġ monographs set an exemplary standard in terms of archaeological reports. Studies on this important sanctuary site are far from over, yet the University excavations on the Southern enclosure have 'paved the way for a new methodology and a new research agenda' compared to previous work at the site (I, p. 9). Hats off to all contributors and participants of the project!

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VELLA, C. 2013.
*The Mediterranean Artistic Context of Late
Medieval Malta, 1091-1530.*
vi+234 pp., illustrated. Malta: Midsea Books.
ISBN 978-99932-7-447-6. €55.

This interesting book discusses the evolution of the cultural heritage of Malta as conditioned by a geographic location which marked the historical and cultural events for the period under study. The successive rule of the Arabs, Normans, Angevins and Aragonese left its mark on the territory. Within this scenario, Malta shared historical, diocesan and artistic events with Sicily, and the link between the two islands is so strong that Malta often seemed to be a kind of province of the largest island of the Mediterranean. In view of this, each chapter is preceded by a historical study which is essential to an understanding of the dynamics behind the evolution of the artistic as well as the religious, social, commercial and economic phenomena.

The Arab domination, from the ninth to the late eleventh centuries, has left few traces in the architectural and artistic fields, in contrast with what occurs in the fields of toponomy and onomastics. Unlike Sicily, Malta has few Arabic inscriptions. Vella focuses on the Maimuna stone (Fig. 12), a marble funerary stele of high quality in the Archaeological Museum of Gozo, for which the author points out strong affinities with an example in Trapani (Fig. 11).

It is a pity that medieval buildings have often undergone substantial changes. This is particularly so at St Anne Chapel in Fort St Angelo where wooden roof trusses were replaced by vaults of good quality, which for the first time in Malta attest to a knowledge of the French Romanesque experience.

An engraving of 1631, depicting the city of Mdina, Malta, shows the medieval cathedral at the centre (Fig. 32). The façade shows a building with a gabled roof, a raised nave, side aisles, and a rose window above a large portal. From a description of 1647 we know that it had a wooden trussed roof. Vella presents some similarities with Apulian Romanesque buildings, such as the Cathedral of Trani. From the same region the author is right to single out a capital crowned by heavy arches beneath which lies a Biblical scene. I agree with Vella that this object should be studied further (Figs 35-37). The author compares it to a huge capital from Brindisi which comes from the late eleventh century Benedictine monastery of Sant' Andrea all'Isola rather than from a Cathedral (Fig. 37) (Belli D'Elia 1975, 212-14; fig. on p. 215). Despite the difference in size and material, the comparison seems totally acceptable to me. Maltese medieval cave church murals should also be compared to the art of this region.

It is the artistic culture of the region of Puglia, rather than that of Sicily, that brings to my mind the post-twelfth-century murals of some medieval cave churches of Malta. I find the paintings of saints interesting, amongst them those related to Sicilian cults, such as St Filippo di Fragalà, already noted by the well-known Maltese scholar Mario Buhagiar. A special place is reserved for Agatha, the martyr of Catania, much venerated in Malta, as shown, for example, in the Siculo-Byzantine wall icon in the cave church of St Agatha in Rabat where the saint is depicted with a veil on her head (Fig. 55), a common iconographical representation also used for St Lucy. Agatha is depicted near a monk saint, holding a T-shaped stick, whom Vella hesitantly identifies with St Paul or St Anthony the Abbot, but who in my opinion is St Anthony the

Great. The two surviving letters *th* near the face of the saint refer to the Latin name of Agatha, as the author is correct in suggesting.

Vestiges of an abbreviation in Latin survive in a painting of the Virgin and Child at the sanctuary of the Virgin in Mellieħa (Figs 57 and 58). All the inscriptions accompanying these frescoes, and other examples, show that the late fifteenth century paintings of the Church of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri, erroneously matched by Bautier Bresc to the Byzantine high quality paintings at the church of Santa Maria di Cerrate in the province of Lecce, whose first layer is dated to the late twelfth century (Falla Castelfranchi 1991, 125ff.), always had painted Latin inscriptions, and sometimes, as noted by Vella, had Gothic characters. The absence of Greek inscriptions is significant.

It seems to me that after the Norman conquest, the similarities in the field of Byzantine painting with the production of Puglia are more convincing. The background of these paintings is almost always in two colours, blue and a thin white line at the head or bust, as in the paintings of Puglia. Sicily in fact, with the exception of the great mosaics of the period from the reign of Roger II to that of his grandson William II (d. 1189) does not have a rich mural heritage, unlike the situation in Puglia where there is plentiful evidence, and of good quality. The painted images of warrior saints at Hal Millieri, for example, should be compared to the rich repertoire which is preserved in Puglia (cf. Falla Castelfranchi 1991; Milella 1997, 214-17), particularly the painting of a mounted saint in the church of Santa Catarina in Galatina (Fig. 137), cited by the author.

I find the late medieval artistic period, right up to about the middle of the sixteenth century extraordinary, with the cultural framework enhanced because of historical, social and economic reasons, as well as through the presence of new monastic orders. A Catalan painter, close to the circle of the Catalan-Aragonese artist Lluís Borrassa (1360-1424) was responsible for the polyptych of St Paul painted for the cathedral of Mdina. In my opinion it was a local commission, in the light of the choice of St Paul and the saints depicted around the figure of the Virgin and Child in the top central panel. I should note that the type of altarpiece combines the Catalan tradition with the Byzantine one. It is a type of hagiographic icon, with the protagonist at the centre surrounded by some episodes from his life. Another, albeit older, remarkable painting linked to the Catalan culture is the panel with the *Dormitio Virginis* in the central part (Fig. 91). The very tall and narrow

shape is unusual and equally so is the iconography with the Resurrection of Christ at the top and St Michael weighing souls at the bottom, episodes that do not present iconological associations with the scene of the *Dormitio*. A more complete appreciation should take note of the new studies on late Gothic Catalan painting that have appeared in recent years (Puig 2005; Cornudella *et al.* 2012).

At the same time, links with Sicily were being strengthened. Some artists moved to Malta from the provinces of Messina and Palermo, in particular the painters Salvo D'Antonio (Figs 174-176) and other artists of his circle (Fig. 181), and Antonello de Saliba (Figs 177-178), both close relatives of Antonello da Messina. Apart from the 1993 Pugliatti volume on sixteenth-century painting in Sicily, quoted by Vella, mention should be made of an interesting essay by the Sicilian scholar Lo Castro (2011). Also worth mentioning is the presence in Malta of Antonello Gagini (Figs 168-169), who sculpted the funerary monument of Grand Master Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam, now in the Baroque crypt of the Grand Masters at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta (Fig. 171). It is an impressive work that exhibits conventional iconography which has generally attracted little or no attention as a work by this well known sculptor whose family was originally from Canton Ticino, but settled in Sicily.

We should also look towards Sicily for sources of most buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, well treated by Vella, who correctly compares them to a group of Sicilian palaces such as, for example, Palazzo Corvaja in Taormina. Palazzo Gatto Murina (Fig. 104), and Palazzo Falson (Fig. 109), both in Mdina, are two such examples, cut through horizontally with an elegant stringcourse, below large mullioned windows.

Local artists emerged in this international climate, one of whom was a Carmelite friar, the painter Giovanni Antonio Pulcella, documented from the late fifteenth century in small towns and also in Mdina Cathedral. Major works in wood were executed by the Maltese sculptor Cola Curmi between 1520 and 1535. Among these examples we find the finely executed wooden doors of the main portal of the Cathedral of Mdina, completed in 1535 (Figs 185-186). Even older are the stalls for the choir of the same Cathedral. Judging by the various works of high quality, this building is rightly considered to be the most important religious building of the island, receiving both religious and secular commissions.

The author dedicates a few but significant columns to the small number of surviving silver items from this period. Once again, the subject is placed within the cultural context of Sicily and Spain. This is particularly so for the silver gilt processional cross that I believe has particular affinities with the processional cross of 1498, and therefore more or less coeval, preserved in the treasury of the church of St Nicola Rondazzo in the province of Catania, by the master silversmith Messina (Gambino 1981, 51-53).

A better understanding of the subject can come through a study of silversmiths' stamps, with the aim of identifying the goldsmiths and the date of manufacture along the lines of what has been done in Sicily, which led to the identification of goldsmiths in Messina and Palermo through such stamps.

This book is undoubtedly of interest for the study of Maltese art for a period that shaped the cultural identity of Malta. Together with the numerous studies of Mario Buhagiar, it is an indispensable reference for the study of the medieval period of Malta.

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NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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