

ISSUE EDITORS' FOREWORD

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By its very geographical position Malta is destined to play a crucial role in international affairs, and in a special way in Mediterranean maritime affairs. It has done so in the past, ancient and not so remote, but mainly as a tool of war. In its new role, as an agent of peace, it was only recently that it was selected as the venue of an important meeting of the two super powers, a meeting that contributed in a singular manner towards the end of the cold war.

In the field of heritage Malta has also made a solid contribution in the international forum when it persuaded the United Nations to approve the principle of the Common Heritage of Mankind. So the choice of Malta as the venue for the *IV Forum for the Debate on the Maritime Heritage of the Mediterranean* was a natural one, almost overdue. The meeting was held in the premises of the Maritime Museum on 12-14 November 1997.

A substantial number of papers, some of which of considerable interest, were delivered during that meeting, but they would have remained a dead letter since no provision was made for the publication of the proceedings of the *Forum*. It is for this reason that the senior of the two co-editors suggested to the Board of the Mediterranean Institute of the University of Malta, way back in 1988, the publication of a selection of the papers delivered in the meeting as one of the issues of the *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*. What started as a simple offer on his part to help in the editing and publication of the papers ended up by his having to assume the greater part of the responsibility of seeing the contents of this edition to reach its destination. A number of difficulties were encountered which caused the delay in the completion of this number, for which we apologize to the subscribers of the *Journal*.

The selected sequence of the papers follows, in our view, a logical order.

The first three papers deal with archival resources for the writing of the history of maritime trade and of the movement of works of art and other goods as well as people, converging on the central Mediterranean, precisely Malta and Adriatic northern Italy.

Starting with the middle ages, Stanley Fiorini's article makes use both of Maltese and Vatican archival sources to track the overseas provenance of some of the architectural and artistic adornments for the Mdina Cathedral and other churches in Malta. Carmel Vassallo, then, focuses on one archival source, the records of the *Consolato di Mare*, covering the period 1697 to 1814 which, according to the author, contain a mine of information on Malta's maritime trade of the period. Moving northwards away from Malta, Gabriele Cavezzi and Alberto Silvestro's first paper covers a period that ranges from the middle ages to the 19th century. Its focus is on the maritime traffic in the northern Adriatic, mostly by sailing boats, before the arrival of the railway, and on the small anchorages along a 30 km coastal strip of the Italian Piceno.

The second paper by Cavezzi and Silvestri serves as a convenient *trait d'union* between the use of archival sources and the study of different types of boats. The paper concentrates on those boats used along the coast of the Piceno, one of the Papal States. Sergio Bellabarba combines two tasks: a study of about fifty different types of craft used in Italian waters during the age of sail, with special reference to the *luntro*; and an overview of the evolution of the Italian Merchant Navy.

Since Anica Kisić's article deals with the maritime relations between Malta and the Republic of Dubrovnic, one might have expected it to be placed with the first three papers. However, since a prominent feature discussed in it is the *ex-voto* paintings from Malta it has been deemed more appropriate to make it provide a smooth passage from the contributions on the Adriatic to the one on Maltese ship graffiti. Although this is not the first time Joseph Muscat discusses this topic, he is here presenting it for the first time in its Mediterranean and international context. He also brings out, and highlights, the religious, *ex-voto* value of these ship graffiti. We are confident that the reproductions of the Maltese graffiti attached to the article will provide a good reference tool for international researchers in this field.

The last three papers deal with the maritime archaeological heritage. Sergio Piconi's paper is concerned with the *valorisation* of this heritage as part of the educational process within the museum context. The author ends his paper with a synoptic flow chart of the different stages involved in the preparation of underwater archaeology finds for museological purposes.

The other two papers deal with the legislation governing the maritime archaeological heritage. David Attard's paper discusses the existing international legislation within the Mediterranean perspective. The existing legislative vacuum regarding the heritage lying in 'international' waters induces the writer to appeal to Mediterranean states to take positive action to remedy the situation. Albert Ganado's historical overview of Malta's legislation connected with the cultural heritage, including that situated within its territorial waters, also ends with an appeal for a consolidated law that will do away with the duplication of roles and conflict between government agencies that characterizes the present situation in Malta. This seems to be on the point of taking place right now.

Acknowledgements

Of the two co-editors, the second one was responsible, in the first place, for the organization of the meeting of the *IV Forum for the Debate on the Maritime Heritage of the Mediterranean* and, secondly, for collecting the papers (in one case even for typing the paper) for the purposes of this publication. The editing and final preparation of the papers for publication were undertaken by the first co-editor.

Both editors are greatly indebted to Dr Carmel Vassallo for his invaluable help in salvaging one of the papers for publication; to Ms Tita Bonnici for her patience in seeing this issue, as well as previous issues, of the *Journal* through the press; and to Mr Reginald Bartolo for the typesetting of the same. They also thank Mr Niksa Blonder for identifying missing Croatian characters in one of the papers.

Apologies are due to those contributors who responded to our request to revise their papers to fit the *Journal's* format and whose papers had, for logistical and editorial reasons, to be left out of this publication.