



Conference Abstracts

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Cultural Perspectives and Military Engineering the 18th Century through the Drawings of Fra' Giuseppe Giorgio Valperga di Masino, Knight of the Order of Saint John

This paper represents a first phase of an ongoing comprehensive research project, and offers new insights into the documents preserved in the Historical Library of Masino Castle. The two brothers Tommaso and Giorgio Giuseppe Valperga di Masino were affiliated with the Order of St John and accumulated an extensive collection of books, drawings, and plans related to Malta in the 18th century.

While it is documented that Tommaso served as a military engineer for the Order in 1761, the biography of Giorgio Giuseppe remains somewhat obscure. In this study, Giorgio Giuseppe's profile is examined through his book collection, facilitated by an unpublished inventory dating back to the early 19th century. His collection comprised treatises on military engineering, architectural studies, and other printed works, underscoring his sophisticated interest in architecture. A discerning expert in weaponry and fortification systems, he spent at least five years in Malta as part of his religious training with the Order before returning to Piedmont. The Masino Collections feature numerous cityscapes, plans, and urban sections of Valletta, as well as an intriguing plan for a new rope-making factory in Malta, explicitly modelled after the one built by Vauban in Toulon.

Ongoing research into the multifaceted persona of Giorgio Giuseppe serves to contextualise the experiences of the Valperga di Masino family within a broader international framework. Valperga di Masino's combined interests in civil and military architecture exerted significant influence in the Piedmont area during the latter part of the 18th century, particularly among the upper echelons of the nobility.



Anne Brogini

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The Hospitaller frontier. The Circulation of Military Models in the 16th -Century Mediterranean

The development of States in the Early Modern era was based on a new mastery of warfare and led to a shift from private noble fortifications (castles) to public fortifications. The transformation of the art of fortification was a response to the development of artillery in armies, and led to new ways of attacking and defending fortresses. The appearance of the bastion in Italy spread at the beginning of the Sixteenth century, transforming the walls of Rhodes and the Hospitallers' military habits. From Rhodes, the Hospitallers had already developed an original defence technique of the frontier, by possessing and controlling several fortified island points against the Infidel. In the midst of the military and maritime confrontations between the Spanish and Ottoman empires, the Hospitallers settled in Malta since 1530 were able both to revive a tradition of defending Christian fortified fronts and to modernise this practice with new techniques in fortification. Synthesising the latest trends and bringing architects from all over Europe, they made Malta the frontier of Christendom and the symbol of a modern and impregnable fortification, a place to be visited and admired by Christians from the second half of the 16th century.

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The papers of Fra' Obizzo Guidotti (1569-1638). Techniques of representation and circulation of ideas between Bologna, Rome and Malta

The proposed research aims to examine the figure of Obizzo Guidotti (1569-1638), a knight and religious of the Jerusalemite Order of Malta, and his links with some of the most dynamic centres of the Mediterranean in terms of the circulation of knowledge: Bologna, Rome and Malta. The first part of the talk will delve into the cultural environment in Bologna and Rome, investigating Obizzo's education and the cultural and social relations in which the Guidotti family was embedded. The young Obizzo carried out a period of service in Rome, at the court of Cardinal Andrea d'Asburgo (1558- 1600), and it is here that, in



addition to his years in the service of the Order of Malta, we find the beginnings of his interest in certain themes that are made explicit in the manuscript he drafted and that is the subject of the present talk. After the overview on the social and political relations of the Bolognese nobleman, attention will be focused on the autograph manuscript of the Jerusalemite knight preserved in the Colonna Archive in Subiaco (Lazio) and in some documents in the family archive in Bologna. As recent studies have shown, the document outlines the figure of a cultured aristocrat who was part of the up-to-date debate on a wide range of issues: military, cultural and religious, all linked to the Jerusalemite Order. The document contains astronomical information, descriptions of the islands and coastlines of the Mediterranean as well as details on the organisation of galleys and militias. An interesting part consists of drawings of coastlines and fortresses. These latter representations allow us to advance some thoughts on the development and dissemination of models of *alla moderna* fortification both on the current Italian peninsula and on the island of Malta. Finally, the techniques of coastal representation and drawing for the purposes of navigation by sea will be examined, in relation to the *portolani* produced in the same period by some cartographers and draughtsmen in the service of the Serenissima.

Claude Busuttil

University of Malta

17th and early 18th-century French engravings at the National Library of Malta

Amongst the large number of publications and manuscripts in the French language originating from France or Malta, one finds at the National Library in Valletta twenty-two volumes of engravings depicting various subjects related to the arts and culture of seventeenth-century France. This large collection of engravings was brought to Malta from France probably in different periods since the subjects of the engravings span from mid-seventeenth century to the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The aim of sending these engravings to Malta was probably to demonstrate to the Grand Master and his Council the strong development of the arts in France during this period. Furthermore, these prints also served as part of a strategy of political influence which France was exerting on the Order's foreign policy between the second half of the seventeenth century and during the whole of the eighteenth century. This collection consists of 22 volumes which tackle various subjects representing the best of the French arts and architecture, as well as considerable achievements carried out during the various military campaigns of Louis XIV. The latter tackle numerous famous sieges and depict in detail the various battles against various towns in Flanders. These of course served as political propaganda to convince the Order of the growing military power of France in comparison to the dwindling power of the Spanish Empire. Architectural prints



depict the plans for the Louvre and the Tuileries palaces, the Chateau de Versailles together with its extensive gardens, as well as Louis Le Vau's design for the Institut de France and Hardouin Mansart's project for Les Invalides, both in Paris, built under Louis XIV. Other drawings include the Tapisseries du Roi, theatrical costumes and defiles of Louis XIV's period, hunting scenes and landscape views, as well as several architectural details. Furthermore, one of the volumes depicts the Royal collection of antique sculptures such as busts and statues of Roman origin. The paper thus shall present some of these unpublished drawings in these twenty-two volumes within the historical framework of their subject. The proposed contribution shall make an attempt to understand the sphere of influence, in particular the political influence these books represent on the administration of the Order of Malta.

Steven Terence Camilleri and Gabrielle Cachia

University of Malta

For a census of Early-Modern Architectural Treatises at the National Library of Malta: the librarian perspective

This contribution aims to present an ongoing pilot project including the census, identification and analysis of early modern publications concerning architecture and related fields preserved at the National Library of Malta. This research project is part of a broader exploration and reconstruction of the complex origin(s) of the National Library collection, a genesis which still needs to be fully investigated. Indeed, contrary to many scholarly expectations, the Library does not only house the Order's Conventual Library - which was dismembered, merged with other collections and reorganised - but also the library material once belonging to other religious orders and later acquisitions happened during the British period. Until now, the project focused on printed publications to set out the methodology but will also delve into the Manuscript section at a second stage.

In order to understand the actual shape of the collection and reach our aim, the pre-1955 card catalogues of the Library were used. This allowed for a thorough investigation of the collection and several books matching our criteria - including gaps - were identified. Also, additional metadata was noted to supplement the bibliographic information on each book.

Finally, this exercise attempted to establish the provenance of some of these books. This was mainly done through an analysis of the old reference shelfmarks with corresponding catalogues and - if existent - the *ex libris* found on some of these books. This exercise proved very valuable, since it sheds light on how and when certain items were acquired by the NLM, whilst also dispelling some presumed beliefs.

Sabina de Cavi

FCSH-IHA , Universidade Nova Lisboa

Noticias singulares (1684): Baroque Mediterranean Connectivities from Istanbul to Lisbon

By focusing on a book published in Lisbon in 1684, this paper sets out to discuss the zigzagging of military, political and architectural information from Istanbul to Lisbon across the Mediterranean. Written in Constantinople and sent to a Venetian nobleman, the *Noticias singulares* were published in 1683 by book seller and printer Miguel Deslandes in Rua de Figueira, who will be considered as an important hub for the reading world in Lisbon.

Originally written in Constantinople, the text travelled to Venice, Malta and then to Lisbon, where it was translated into Portuguese. The book testifies that Lisbon belonged quite actively to the Mediterranean circulation of knowledge through the Early Modern Mediterranean History, offering the ultimate stop before the Atlantic and the Northern routes. Lisbon and Malta were strictly entangled within and through this Mediterranean circulation which is rarely considered when Portugal is under focus.

The edition of this book will offer the occasion to cast a general panorama of the cartographic, drawing and manuscript sources regarding Malta preserved in Portuguese public libraries in Lisbon.

Caroline Chaplain

Musée Fabre Université Paul Valéry

Artistic exchanges between the Langue of Provence and Malta during the 17th and 18th centuries

The victory of the Knights Hospitaller over the Ottoman troops who came to besiege the island in 1565 had an unprecedented impact throughout Christendom. The impact of this victory is measured, in part, by the abundance of publications relating to this event, such as the account of the Great Siege, written by witnesses or participants in the battle, but also engravings and reproductions that allowed contemporaries to represent the facts. It was engraving, due to the print revolution, that largely contributed to creating and then disseminating a certain image of the Order. Giacomo Bosio's work is a brilliant demonstration of this; moreover, his story ends with the Great Siege of Malta and the construction of the Order's capital, Valletta, proposing to make them inseparable from each other. Many knights from the oldest Langue of the Order, the Langue of Provence, proud to have the largest number of commanderies and knights, have decorations directly inspired by



Maltese models. Just think of the Château de La Cassagne (currently in the Gers department), or the Grand Priory of Toulouse, whose work done under the direction of Pierre Rivalz (1625-1706), architect and painter, aims to depict some of the decorations of the Magistral Palace of Valletta. These examples should not make us forget, first of all, the mobility of men, of knights received in the Langue of Provence of course, but also of artists, painters or architects, in particular. Some examples must be examined, whether their stay was due to the Order or not, such as the architect Jean Lombard, who came to Malta to make astronomical observations at the beginning of the 17th century, or Antoine Garcin, whose ties to the painter Gilles Garcin of Aix-en-Provence, who worked for the prior Jean-Claude Viany (1639-1726), are still to be clarified. The practice of collection or the taste for the Antiques, characterised by some knights, also helps to circulate models as much as to shape a certain image of the island of Malta. However, the library of Valletta also wanted to be a conservatory of Antiques, of which travellers made drawings. Some great figures of the Order also stand out as antique dealers, such as the knight Jean-Chrysostome de Gaillard (1724-1797), who exchanged correspondence with a certain Navarre, librarian of Malta. Therefore, it will be a question of exposing the role of the Knights of the Langue of Provence in the dissemination of artistic models between Malta and France, and of better understanding how these exchanges were articulated.

Lorenzo Mancini

CNR-ILIESI - Roma

The Collegium Melitense and its staff. A longue durée prosopographical study in Jesuit-Maltese history

Even if the Jesuits arrived in Malta at the beginning of the second half of the 16th century, the turning point of their presence and influence on Maltese cultural and political history was the foundation of their college in 1592. Both recent and older publications already dealt with some aspects of the Collegium Melitense history, included its role for some Jesuits specialised in architecture and military constructions, a peculiarity strictly connected to the needs of the government of the island and, also, of other European courts where the Jesuits were active. Nonetheless, what still lacks is an overall picture of the fathers who actually lived, travelled, studied and taught in Malta and who were responsible for the spreading of knowledge and ideas throughout the Jesuit colleges network and beyond. Following a recent approach already used for other Jesuit provinces (e.g. the Mediolanensis province or the ones in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), this contribution aims to analyse the *catalogi breves* and *triennales* related to Malta, a Jesuit source that describes who lived in a specific establishment, his duties and qualities. Limited to the period of activity of the



Collegium (1592-1768), this research will help to draw a detailed sketch of the Jesuits in Malta from a quantitative perspective (origin, age, years of permanence etc.) and also highlighting their roles in the subjects addressed in this conference.

Christian Mifsud

International Institute for Baroque Studies; Heritage Malta

A City and its Palaces: New Documentary Evidence for Designs of Palatial Residences in 16th century Valletta

The presence of the Order of St John in Malta was undoubtedly one of the most important drivers of change that transformed the Maltese Islands from an intrinsically insular one into a modern society with strong links to Europe. The imprint of the Knights is today visible in the rich architectural and urban heritage they left behind when the Order was expelled by the French from the islands in 1798. Historically, there has been no doubt about Malta's architectural affinities and influences with the places of origin of the Knights, most of whom came from the principal urban centres around the European continent. Finding tangible connections without resorting to attributions based on stylistic comparatives, however, has proven more complex and has been frequently frowned upon by researchers of architectural history. This study presents a preliminary analysis of a reinterpreted documentary source by this author during the research for his doctoral studies. These plans, which were previously interpreted as the design of residences in Italy, have now been confirmed through other documentary sources to be a set of residences designed specifically for Valletta at the time of its foundation. An in-depth analysis of these plans has provided additional information about the architect who designed them, allowing for a unique insight into the influences and connections brought with him upon arriving to work in Malta. The possibility to explore the design of the palatial residences as conceived by the architect can also be taken further since the survival of some of these buildings has been proven, although not devoid of subsequent alterations carried out up to the 20th century. On a micro-scale, this study will allow for a close investigation of the various links between the plan designs, the architect, the buildings themselves, and the patrons who are behind the project. The study will also allow for a macro-scale evidence-based interpretation of where such construction sites stand within the Maltese environment vis-à-vis the European scene.

Marco Rosario Nobile

Università degli Studi di Palermo

Una ipotesi su disegni del Cinquecento maltese

The paper sets out to examine two drawings from the “Tarsia Codex”, preserved at the National Library in Naples, proposing the hypothesis of an identification with Maltese institutional architecture of the second half of the sixteenth century. The paper then explores the potential of this identification, also assessing the possible direct role by Girolamo Cassar.

Gaia Nuccio

Università degli Studi di Palermo

Marco Capponi

Università di Firenze

Guglielmo Balbiano from Chieri: a fortification expert and Grand Prior of the Order of Malta between the Duchy of Savoy and the Republic of Venice

The proposed research deals with the figure of "fra Guglielmo Balbiano gran Priore di Malta e Maggiorduomo di S.A.R". Thus, he is mentioned in the engraving of the Padri Somaschis' church façade that Guarino Guarini dedicated to him (Guarini, 1686, tav nn.). Guglielmo Balbiano from Chieri was "soprintendente alle fortificazioni" in Turin from 1670 to 1675, dealing with the main architects and military engineers at the time working in the Duchy of Savoy: Maurizio Valperga, Michelangelo Morello, Amedeo di Castellammonte and, of course, Guarini. His position at the Savoyard court came to an end when he came back to Malta, perhaps for career advancement within the Order, where he probably spent the following three years. In 1678 he became Gran Priore of Venice (Lange, 1970, pp. 220-221). During his tenure he contributed to the organisation of the archive of the Venetian Grand Priory, commissioning the drafting of a two-volume index. He died in summer 1685, before the publication of *Disegni di Architettura civile et Ecclesiastica* by Guarino Guarini, which contained the engraving dedicated to him. A focus on Guglielmo Balbiano could significantly contribute to an in-depth analysis of the mobility circuit of professionals between Turin, Malta and the Republic of Venice in the 1670s. In fact, he became Superintendent in Turin at the same time as the commitment to the Piedmontese engineer Maurizio Valperga for reviewing the Maltese fortification system (1669-1671). The investigation of Guarini's dedication is also relevant, in the absence of a documented link between Guglielmo Balbiano and the project of the church for the Somaschi Fathers of Messina. In this sense, two hypotheses can be explored in depth: a deeper link of the

architect with the Veneto territory and architecture, as proposed by Susan Klaiber; instead (or together with) a financier role played by Balbiano for the engraving and publication of the collection of Guarino Guarini's projects, thus contributing in the codification and circulation of the ideas and architectural solutions proposed by the famous Theatine.

Isabella Pascucci

Università del Salento

Cardinal Vincenzo Maculani: a military architect between Galileo and the Order of St. John

«Sopra le fortificat. ni. Die 26. Mensis Novembris 1638. L'Em:mo e R.mo Sig:r Grana M'ro, et il Ven:do Consiglio inteso il discorso fatto dal P're Fiorenzola, e secondo il suo parere con lo scrut:o delle palle senz'alcuna discrepanza determinarono, che si debbano fortificare le sommità, ò [sic] Colli di S.ta Margharita, e della Mandra [...]» (Liber Conciliorum Status 1624-38).

The so-called "P're Fiorenzola", cited in this document from the Archives of the Order of St John at the National Library of Malta, was Vincenzo Maculani (1578-1667) one of the most relevant – but less studied – military architects who worked in Malta and contributed to the project of the Firenzuola Lines in Bormla.

In my presentation, I will analyse the complex historical figure of this man of Church known - exclusively, until now - for his role in the trial of Galileo Galilei (1633) when, as the Prosecutor of the Holy Office, he interrogated the Pisan scientist and drafted the final condemnation. However, Maculani was active also as a military architect and an engineer of the fortifications, designing and reinforcing fortifications and defensive town walls in several Italian cities (Genova, La Spezia, Piacenza, Castelfranco Emilia, Roma, etc.) and on the island of Malta.

My contribution will deepen his role as an architect in Malta, where he collaborated with the Order of St John from 1637 until 1639. The research has been developed on the basis of the unpublished archival documents the author traced and studied during her three months internship and research period in the National Library of Malta (Libri Conciliorum, the section of the 'Congregazione della Guerra', the volumes of the Grand Masters' correspondence with the Order's ambassador in Rome, the volumes of the Miscellanea section, etc.).

The research also considered some documents held at the National Archives of Malta and the Mdina Metropolitan Archives, and allowed to identify at the Vatican Apostolic Library in Rome other meaningful – mostly unpublished – documents on Cardinal Maculani's architectural activity in Malta.



This paper, that is part of the Author's ongoing PhD research project on Cardinal Maculani and his rediscovered collection of paintings and extensive library, will examine Maculani's polyhedric cultural interests and his innovative architectural ideas in connections with the political, social and cultural Maltese environment in the fourth decade of the Seventeenth century, under the Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar. The paper aims to reveal innovative points of view and new ways of research, presenting also a large volume of documents on the Art of the fortifications and on the position of the military architects in relationship with the Order: not least, among them, some anonymous treatises on the fortifications, today part of the Manuscripts section in the National Library of Malta.

Luigi Paolantonio

Università "Gabriele d'Annunzio" Chieti Pescara

The Jerusalem Hospitals in the Kingdom of Naples: the Model of the Annunziata in Southern Italy

Hospitals have played a key role in the history of the Order of St John, beginning with the establishment of their first major hospital in Jerusalem. In the Abruzzo area, the Order maintained up to five hospitals during periods of peak prosperity, and were located in L'Aquila, Sulmona, Penne, Vasto, and Pescara. The church and convent of San Giovanni Battista, founded in 1291 as Santa Maria in Borgonuovo, was among only four properties of the Dames Hospitaller in Italy, highlighting the Order's regional significance.

Statutes were promptly established for the Order's hospitals, granting physicians significant freedom to practice medicine while adhering to detailed administrative rules. A notable instance is Sulmona, where the Lay Confraternity of Penitents founded the Church of "Beata Maria Vergine dell'Annunziata" and an adjoining hospital in 1320, placing them under the jurisdiction of the Order's Priory of Capua in 1321.

This development coincided with similar initiatives in southern Italy, with the Angevins promoting a network of hospitals named after the Santissima Annunziata and managed by the Order. The Sulmona facility, established as a model for others, referenced earlier institutions in Naples, Capua, and Aversa. These hospital-church complexes, serving as hubs for healthcare and urban development, justified the support of the ruling dynasty.

Helena Pérez Gallardo

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Architecture in Images: Historiography, Myths and Constructions around the Order of the Knights of St John

The inclusion of Maltese architecture, especially Valletta, in the European imagination of the Order of St John through literary descriptions, drawings or prints, shows, depending on the national origin of these descriptions, a clear desire to highlight its particularities and signs of identity with respect to neighbouring territories. This peculiarity would last through the centuries and would become fixed with 19th-century photography, although buildings, details and characteristics would be the continuity of what had already been expressed in previous graphic formats. Historical positivism will use these images, repeated and consolidated over time, as the basis for historical discourse on the shaping and definition of Valletta's architecture and its undeniable role as representative of the Order of St John. This paper is intended as an introduction to the historical sources and iconographic repertoires of the Order's architecture and its consolidation during the Modern Age, the continuity of which remained until the 19th century.

Sandra Sansone

Università Iuav di Venezia

The influence of Maltese architecture on the work of Niccolò Nasoni

The second half of the 18th century is a particularly flourishing period for the architecture of Northern Portugal, for the city of Porto, in particular. This is also due to the thrust provided by the presence of Niccolò Nasoni, to whom several buildings are attributed, including churches, palaces, and suburban villas, as well as the renowned Clerigos complex in Porto. Nasoni introduced a distinctive architectural language in the country, a "festive" style capable of interpreting the spirit of Portuguese architecture, which he enriched with Italian and international models.

The still-open question concerns the years of Niccolò Nasoni's training. He was a painter, specialising in frescoes and quadratura. In Italy, he was first found in Siena and then in Bologna, where he worked and studied with master painters. In 1722, he left Italy for Malta, where he stayed until before his transfer to Portugal in 1725. The years in Malta were crucial for Niccolò Nasoni, as he worked on the main construction sites in Valletta. He was involved in both the Grand Master's Palace and the Cathedral of St. John. It is certainly here that Niccolò Nasoni acquired the architectural knowledge that would support him throughout his future professional career.



The proposed presentation at the conference aims to investigate these aspects and analyze Nasoni's architecture, highlighting the significant and profound influences left by his Maltese experience.

Giannantonio Scaglione

Università della Calabria

Charles François de Mondion: Theoretical Models and Architectural Techniques in Malta in the Eighteenth Century

This presentation will explore in depth the architectural references and the international models that contributed to the urban planning of Borgo Vilhena, in Malta, in the Eighteenth Century.

An impressive residential project arose within the fortified military space of Floriana. This vast area had the purpose of amplifying the distance between Valletta and the countryside (D'Amelio, 2011). The initial stages of the planning and subsequent development of the Borgo have recently been retraced in my monographic research (Scaglione, 2022). The project for the construction of the village was appointed to military engineer Charles François de Mondion (De Lucca, 2003) during the session of the Venerable Council of 8th May 1724, presided over by Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736). In Malta the events linked to the foundation of Borgo Vilhena intersected with its defensive architecture (Brogini, 2006), marking a tight connection between the military and civilian spheres. These architectural models are to be traced back to spaces not being built upon (*non aedificandi*), which were typical of fortified centres of the Modern Age.

The construction of defensive belts in the areas surrounding the cities, which were generally structures of notable physical and visual impact, modified the links between the city and the countryside and, in particular, they generated new forms of suburban relationships and anthropization. The considerations expressed through this research, which are sometimes analytical and sometimes reflective, allow us to place emphasis on a complex object of study and try to answer questions that connect the history of the fortifications with that of the reality of the urban margins of cities in the Modern Age (D'Orgeix, 2019).

In this case, it was Mondion himself who indicated in his project (still preserved among the documents of the *Liber Conciliorum Status* of the Archive of the Order of Malta), the international experiences of urban-architectural models and the knowledge network theories and techniques that had influenced him. Based on these indications, we will try to reconstruct the historical events that formed the epistemological basis of the connection between the residential and the military space in Malta during the planning of the Borgo Vilhena.



Roger Vella Bonavita

University of Malta; University of Western Australia

Francesco Laparelli di Cortona 1521–1570: Architect and Civil Engineer

Except for a very few specialised publications produced by academics in Cortona, Laparelli's work as a civil architect, designing, constructing, and modifying civil and ecclesiastical buildings has not been studied in any depth. The reason for this lacuna is of course the fact that the basic documentation simply does not exist in public archives. I have had the fortune of having access to the important body of Laparelli's original texts, plans and drawings in the private archives of his descendants and a few other archives. These throw important light on his architectural makeup: who taught him, what he read, who he knew and what interested him in specific architectural features: doors, windows, churches - even scaffolding - and so on. They also contain details (plans etc) of buildings he worked on, humble and palatial - his health and directions to contractors - as well as a row with his patron. By studying this evidence and other materials, it is possible to better understand and appreciate what went into the making of an important Renaissance architect and military engineer.