THE TRADITION OF AN ANCIENT GREEK COLONY IN MALTA

Anthony Bonanno

The persistent tradition of a Greek colonization of the Maltese Islands in ancient times was inspired mainly by ancient literary allusions. These are basically: 1) the identification of the Homeric island of Ogygia, Calypso's refuge, with Malta; 2) the reference in the Greek poet Lycophron to the settlement in Malta of a group of Greek warriors on their return home from the Trojan war; 3) the ties of friendship between the Maltese and Phalaris, the Greek tyrant of Agrigento, revealed in three of a group of letters attributed to him; 4) the mythical reign of a king of Malta, named Battus, homonymous of another Greek king historically associated with the foundation of the Greek colony of Cyrene in North Africa; 5) Thucydides' inclusion of 'the small islands' with that part of Sicily which, after an alleged Phoenician domination, was colonized by the Greeks.

This theory appeared to receive confirmation from numerous archaeological objects found in these islands which showed Greek characteristics or bore inscriptions in the Greek language.

LITERARY EVIDENCE

For this reason, although Quintinus cannot be considered the inventor or originator of this particular tradition (as he is of other traditions concerning Maltese ancient history), because he did not write specifically of a Greek domination of Malta, still he sowed the first seeds which were to germinate in the works dealing with Maltese antiquities in the following century. He did so by failing to question the historical value of the legendary reign of a Maltese Battus and of the apocryphal connection with Phalaris (both of which he mentions in his description of Malta) and by reproducing a Greek inscription and a Maltese coin both containing the Greek version of the name of the Maltese people (MELITAIION).

The first writer to advocate this theory of a Greek settlement in Malta was the German geographer and antiquarian Philipp Cluver in his book on ancient Sicily published in 1619. Initially Cluver appears convinced that the Phoenicians, hav-

3. Ph. Cluverius, Sicilia antiqua; cum notaribus insularis et adiacentibus; item Sardina et Corsica, Leiden 1619, T. Fuzellius, De veteribus scoliis divesque ducet, Palermo 1558, pp. 10-12, following closely in the footsteps of Quintinus, had also avoided commenting on a Greek colonization of Malta.
AN ANCIENT GREEK COLONY IN MALTA

lived in the countryside whereas the Greeks populated the town.13

The last section of Cluer’s chapter on Malta is taken up by a discussion of
the identification of Ogygia, the island of Calypso, with Malta.14 He finds a
surprisingly close correspondence between Homer’s description of the island
inhabited by the daughter of Atlas15 and Quintin’s account of the fertility of
Malta16 and finds further proof in support of his identification in the
geographical location of the same island given by Homer elsewhere in the
Odyssey. In book VII Ogygia is said to lie far out in the open sea and in Book I it
is placed “where the navel of the sea” is.17

The identification of Gozo, Malta’s sister island, with the Homeric island of
Calypso (which is taken for granted by the local people) is not a modern ‘inven-
tion’ but goes back to the third century B.C. writer Callimachus (c.305-245
B.C.).18 Callimachus was an Alexandrian grammaticus and one of the most
representative writers of Alexandrian poetry of the early period. Most of his
works have gone lost but he is often quoted by other ancient grammarians.
Besides, the papyrological discoveries in Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
have filled many gaps in his works. This reference to Gozo survives in a fragment
which is classified as incertae sedis, i.e. it is not known to which of Callimachus’
works it belonged.19

Cluer adopts Callimachus’s identification, substituting Malta for Gozo.
Abele20 follows suit and quotes also the authorities of Geronimo Manduca, the
Maltese Jesuit, who had gone even further and, in his description of the caves
of Mellieha, in particular the crypt consecrated to Our Lady, had written of a
“palatium miro ordine in splendis excitum ex Homericis notis, recens
reprehensum a Philippo Cluverio in descriptione Melitae, Siciliae”.21 The
tradition of this Homeric connection with Malta was kept alive by numerous
other writers, both Maltese and foreign,22 but several other islands were proposed

15. Homer, Odyssey, V, 11.55-75.
12.
17. Homer, Odyssey, VII, 1.244; I, 11.50-51
18. It is thought that its origin might be taken as far as Hesiod: G. D’ippolito, “Malta nell’
vol.1, p.407.
(ed.), Callimachus, Oxford 1949 (reprinted 1965) pp.355-356, frag.470 Callimachus’ identifica-
tion of Ogygia with Gozo was criticized by a contemporary Hellenistic poet and grammian-
Appolodoros, who defended the position taken by the geographer Eratosthenes: Sirabo, I, 44;
VII, 299, see J. Busuttil, “The Isle of Calypso-Gozo?”; Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Royal
University of Malta, VI, no.2 (1975) pp.218-220.
20. G.F. Abele, Della Descrizione di Malta, Malta 1647, p.119, 139, 158-160. The text is reproduc-
22. For a more bibliography see J. Houter, Voyage Pittoresque des Iles de Sicile, de Lipari et de
Malte, vol.IV, Paris 1787, pp.114-117; O. Bres, Recherches Historiques et Politiques sur Malte,
Paris 1799, p.12, note 1; A.A. Caruana, Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities of
Malta 1882, pp.77-78; Id., Frammento Critico della Storia Fenicio-Cartaginese, Greco-Romana

4. Cluerius, pp.430-431. There were several authors by the name of Skylax. The earliest one, men-
tioned by Herodoteus, lived in the fifth century B.C. But it appears that the Periplous, which con-
tains a reference to Malta, was written a few years before the reign of Alexander (mid-4th cen-
pp.xxvii-xxviii; J. Busuttil, “The Periplous of the Mediterranean”, Journal of the Faculty of Arts,
Royal University of Malta, III, no.4 (1960) pp.320-322. It is obvious, on the other hand, that
than a century.
6. Ibid., p.432.
11. Ibid., pp.434-435.
Western Sicily by a number of Aeneas’s companions has been finding increasing corroboration from recent archaeological discoveries, which seem to provide some linguistic evidence for an Anatolian, that is possibly Trojan, provenance of the language spoken there in later historical times.28

The historical value of Lycophron’s reference is, therefore, similar to that of the possible identification of the island with the Homer’s Eryxgia. It could be a vague recollection of a real historical situation in the late Maltese Bronze Age, that is in the last few hundred years before the eighth century when the first sure evidence of a Phoenician presence in Malta occurs. Although there is already some archaeological evidence which may be brought forward in support of a Greek (i.e. Mycenaean) element in Malta at this time, it needs much more unequivocal data which can only be acquired by further archaeological investigation.29

It is uncertain to which period the episode of Battus’s hospitality to Anna should be made to refer. The traditional date of the foundation of Carthage by Dido (also known as Elissa) is the late ninth century (814 B.C.).30 When Didon died her sister Anna was forced to flee from Carthage and sought refuge with Battus in Malta from where she left for Rome a couple of years later.31 This would mean that Battus was king of Malta towards the end of the ninth century. Virgil, however, dedicated a whole book of his epic on the legendary origins of Rome to the romance between the same Dido and Aeneas, the hero of the epic, who stopped at Carthage on his way to Latium where he was destined to found the Roman nation.32 Aeneas and his companions were also refugees, this time of Trojan stock, from the siege of Troy. Virgil, therefore, placed Dido’s reign around 1250 B.C. Consequently even Battus was king of Malta at that time. As a matter of fact even Ovid makes Anna a contemporary of Aeneas because in Latium she is given hospitality by the latter before throwing herself into the Tiber. But both instances appear to be anachronisms introduced by the Latin poet Naevius after the First Punic War, and as such should not be taken seriously.

Quintus did not pronounce himself on the ethnic origin of the Maltese Battus.33 Though very likely of African origin the name Battus is mostly associated with the founder of the Greek colony of Cyrene in modern Libya (631 B.C.) and with the successive kings of that city.34 Cluvier took this as further proof of a Greek colony in Malta, of which Ovid must have been aware and has transposed it to the time of the Trojan war.35 Abela, however, disagreed with Cluvier and deem-

29. See infra.
32. Virgil, Aeneid, VI.
33. Quintus (II, 1, 3-4); Vella, Earliest Description, pp. 18-22.
34. See Pauli-Wissowa, Reussencyclopaedie, III, 3, 1897, pp. 146-149, s.v. ‘Battos’. See also Bonanno, Quintus (in the press) note 5.
ed Batrus Phoenician. 36

The ancient literary allusions discussed so far are all extracts from poetry and as such their historical value is questionable. But the fourth ancient source quoted for the first time by Cluver to support his contention of a Greek colony in Malta is a historian, namely Thucydides. Thucydides is respected even by modern standards as one of the most, if not the most, reliable historian of the Classical world. His History of the Peloponnesian War was concerned, however, with contemporary or quasi-contemporary history and rarely does he make digressions into Greek history of previous centuries as he does in this case. Furthermore, the evidence extracted from Cluver for the sentence in question is of a purely negative nature, a classic argumentum ex silentio. Thucydides' brief comment, which is of paramount importance in the context of Greek and Phoenician colonisation in Sicily is the following:

37

The Phoenicians at one time had settlements all around the island; they fortified headlands on the sea-coast and settled in the small islands adjacent, for the sake of trading with the Sicels. But when the Hellenes began to find their way by sea to Sicily in greater numbers they withdrew from the larger part of the island, and formed a union established themselves in Motya, Soloeis and Panormus, in the neighbourhood of the Elymii.

In Cluver's view Malta and Gozo should be numbered among the 'small islands' lying around Sicily mentioned in the first sentence as being occupied by the Phoenicians. In fact, always according to Cluver, they had been so since the latter had taken over from the Phoenicians before the Trojan war. But at this crucial point in the history of Sicily when that island was colonised by the Greeks (as from the second half of the eighth century B.C.) the only Phoenician possessions in the area are indicated by Thucydides in the sentence to be Motya, Solus and Panormus. Cluver notices the significant absence of the 'small islands' and concludes that 'immediately after their first passage into Sicily the Greeks ousted the Phoenicians from Malta'. 3.4 Abela follows closely on Cluver quoting his very words and concludes that the Greeks started to come to Sicily and Malta in 735 B.C. (foundation of Naxos, the first Greek colony in Sicily). 38

The last ancient reference which gave sustenance to the view of a Greek permanence in Malta consists of three from a collection of letters ascribed to Phalaris, the notorious tyrant of Akragas between 570 and 555 B.C. 39 In one of these letters, the very friendly relations between himself and the Maltese. The other two letters are addressed to the people of Malta: the first one deals with a sum of money the tyrant had been persuaded to lend to the Maltese and the second advises the Maltese to refrain from praising him. The artificiality of the arguments in these two letters, reader, the literary affectation of the author and the oratorical nature of the exercise, forged, an academic exercise of a second century A.D. rhetorician. 41

36. Abela, p. 196; Ciantar, p. 543. Followed by E. Colomo, "Malta nelle letterature classiche", Mist- 
37. Thucydides, VI, 2, 6.
38. Abela, pp. 164-166; Ciantar, pp. 479-482.
39. See Pauli-Wissowa, Realencyclopaedia, XIX, 2, 1918, pp. 1649-1652, s.v. 'Phalaris'.
40. Ciantar, pp. 432.
41. R. Bentley, Dissertationes upto the Epigraph of Phalaris, London 1699. See J. Bousitl, "The let-
42. Quin. 1, 44; Vella, Earliest Description, pp. 20-21, note 69.
44. Abela, pp. 183-185; Ciantar, pp. 511-515.
45. G.A. Ciantar, Dissertazione sopra alcune Antichità di Malta, N.M.L Biblioteca Ms. 166, t. 306; 
46. E. Caruana, Sull’Origine delle lingua Maltese, Studio Storico, Etnografico e Filologico, 
47. M. Boni, Il Gozo Antico e Moderno e Sacro-Profano, N.M.L Biblioteca Ms. 145. 
49. De Caruana, Maltese Antica illustrata con Monumenti e coll’istoria, Roma 1816, pp. 180-230: with previous bibliography.
reaction from his namesake, Annetto Antonio Caruana, who was then the Librarian and a well-known archaeologist.⁴⁷

A.A. Caruana had made his position very clear on the matter when, in 1882, he wrote that Malta received a Greek Ionic settlement about 700 B.C. which was joined by another group, this time Doric, a little before it was taken over by the Carthagians in 480 B.C. The Carthagians allowed the Greek inhabitants to stay and later on the Romans, after their conquest of the island, "lived in perfect accord with the natives, both of Phoenician and Greek stock".⁴⁸ In his historical critique of 1899, then, he assumed the responsibility of confronting A.E. Caruana's "peremptory" denial of the presence of ancient Greeks and the existence of a Greek autonomy in Malta.⁴⁹ Sparing no kind words in his criticism of his adversary, the archaeologist, without admitting it, betrays a markedly altered position. He rebuts the identification of Malta with the Homeric Ogygia (as well as Hyperia)⁵⁰ and lays bare the chronological confusion implied by Ovid's reference to a Maltese Battus.⁵¹ He discards Lycophron's passage by following Tzetze's identification of that Melite with the Illyrian Meleda⁵² and reiterates the falsity of the letters attributed to Phalaris.⁵³ But he still clings to the idea of a Greek colony⁵⁴ while admitting that it was of a small size (sottile)⁵⁵ and that historians had exaggerated the numerical importance of this colony.⁵⁶ He also admits that Thucydides' passage does not constitute positive evidence of a Greek settlement in the eighth century,⁵⁷ and suggests a very peaceful Greek infiltration which was concerned mostly with the establishment of small farmsteads.⁵⁸

It was thus at the end of the nineteenth century that the centuries-old 'historical' tradition of an ancient Greek domination of Malta was seriously questioned and effectively undermined. The decisive blow was delivered by A.E. Caruana who, with his convincing and well-founded arguments, dragged behind him his contemporary and rival A.A. Caruana (without the latter ever admitting it). The earliest authoritative accounts of Maltese ancient history in twentieth century, *Malta in Ancient Times* by the German Mayer⁵⁹ and *Roman Malta* by the English archaeologist Ashby,⁶⁰ both do away with this false tradition. No serious attempt has since been made to revive it.

---

⁵⁰ *Idem*, p. 61.
⁵⁸ A.A. Caruana, *Frammento Critico*, p. 129.
⁵⁹ A. Mayer, *Die Insel Malta im Altertum*, Munich 1939, pp. 65-105.
AN ANCIENT GREEK COLONY IN MALTA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Compared with that of the literary sources the discussion of the archaeological evidence is much more straightforward. The number of archaeological objects which appeared to confirm a Greek presence in Malta grew steadily from the time of Quintinus's publication to that of the heated debate between the two Caruana. Cluver, in addition to the Greek inscription and the Maltese coin mentioned by Quintinus and Fazellus, refers to ancient obieis d'art which, on Cicer's evidence, once formed part of the Maltese artistic heritage. These were the ivory Victory statuettes stolen by Verres from the temple of Juno and the silver cups once in the possession of Diodorus Melitensis, all of which according to Cluver must have been of Greek workmanship.61

By the time of the publication of his Descrittione in 1647 Abela had taken note of various other archaeological objects and remains of buildings scattered throughout the island. He acquired some of the objects for his own collection of antiquities. The items which he listed as Greek and as evidence of a Greek domination were: several coins with Greek legends;62 the temple of Juno 'in ionic architecture' which he, following Quintinus and others, placed near Castel St. Angelo;63 ancient remains of a 'Castello' at Gorgheni (Girgenti, near Rabat); certain coins then occasionally found in the Maltese countryside and called Fallari by the Maltese (perhaps in connection with the money allegedly lent to the Maltese by Phalaris);64 the Greek inscription mentioned by Quintinus, of which he reproduces also the second line;65 a clay pot with a short Greek inscription;66 the much longer Greek inscription on a bronze tablet discovered in Rome in the sixteenth century, which recorded a decree of proxenia awarded by the Maltese to a certain Demetrios from Syracuse;67 Abela does not specify his reasons for illustrating two statues found in Malta (a Mercury and a Harpocrates) in this context,68 but he ends this chapter on the Greeks in Malta by reporting another short inscription in Greek found inside the monastery of S. Pietro in Mdina.69

After Abela, with the increasing interest in Maltese antiquities, archaeological objects with a Greek content continued to augment in number. The well-known bilingual candelaabra were included in Abela's collection within forty years of the date of publication of the Descrittione.70 We find them described and illustrated in Cianfar's re-edition of Abela's work in which he repeats the original list of 'Greek' objects and inscriptions without adding any new ones even though he

---

63. Abela, pp.171; Cianfar, p.493.
64. Abela, p.185; Cianfar, pp.514. Both items are connected with the alleged friendly relations between the Maltese and Phalaris.
65. Abela, pp.185-186; Cianfar, pp.515-517.
68. Abela, pp.191-193; Cianfar, pp.533-536.
70. See A. Bonanno, Quinimum (in the press); C. Cianfar, p.527; "in 1732"; and V. Borg, "Tradizioni e documenti storici", Missione, 1963, pp.41-51: "before 1655".
claims to have seen other ‘idioletti di terra cotta con cifre Greche’ and other relics of that nation found in the island. 71 After Ciantar most of the historians and antiquarians who dedicated sections of their writings to the island’s ancient history, like Bres, De Boisgelin, Saint-Priest, Navarro and Vassallo, supported the existence of a Greek period by referring to some, or all, of the objects and monuments listed in his Malta Illustrata. Of these the French traveller Jean Houel deserves a special mention because of his beautiful plates he sometimes illustrates objects which have never been known to exist in Malta. 72 Houel also considered the square tower inside the village of Żurrieq part of a Greek house. 73 Another building labelled Greek by A.A. Caruana was the one he himself had excavated between Luqa and Mqabba in 1888. 74 Caruana gives the most extensive and exhaustive list of ‘Greek’ architectural monuments, tombs, sculpture, pottery, coins and inscriptions in his Report of 1888. 75 His contemporary A.E. Caruana justly criticizes him and Houel for their lack of sound critical judgement in distinguishing Greek from Roman antiquities. 76

In the early twentieth century, as a result of the greater sophistication of archaeological research, archaeological data started to be sorted out in ever more correct and precise chronological compartments. Mayr in 1909 made the Roman period follow immediately upon the Phoenico-Punic domination, excluding a Greek colonisation, and placed the archaeological monuments of a Greek typology in their proper historical context. 77 Ashby followed suit only a few years later. 78 After Ashby the history and archaeology of the Classical period in Malta was almost completely neglected and no comprehensive study of it has been published since then.

An analysis of the archaeological data which may, or may not, provide evidence for some sort of Greek presence in ancient Malta should start chronologically with the late Maltese Bronze Age since it is to that time (around 1200 B.C.) that three of the literary sources seem to date the plantation of a Greek colony in Malta. Although these literary allusions are the least reliable from the historical point of view they might possibly constitute a vague recollection of a real historical situation.

Prior to the Dorian migratory invasions of the twelfth century B.C. we do not normally speak of Greeks in the Aegean area, but of Mycenaean. But, mostly owing to the decipherment of the Mycenaean ‘Linear B’ script, the Mycenaean are now considered to have been proto-Greeks, of the same Indo-European stock as the later Dorians. So, it could be that the memory of a Mycenaean settlement,

71. Ciantar, pp.352-353. The three Greek inscriptions documented in pp.350-352 belonged, as Ciantar declared, to Late-Roman times.
72. Houel, pp.103-104; 107-110; pl.CCLXI.
73. Ibid., pp.97-98; pl.CCLIX; A.A. Caruana, Frammento Critico, p.222.
75. A.E. Caruana, Report, pp.77-164.
77. Mayr, Indi Malta, pp.65-105, especially pp.80-81.
78. Ashby, pp.24-27.
or trading post, in Malta survived in the oral tradition of the Homeric lays and was then transmitted to us by Hellenistic scholarly literature.

The surest archaeological evidence of a connection with the Mycenaean world comes from a fragment of a Mycenaean cup found in the Bronze Age fortified village of Borg in-Nadur. It is probably Late Helladic IIIb and dated c. 1350 B.C.\(^9\) On its own the cup to which it belonged could be merely an ordinary import, albeit of a relatively high value, which may have found its way to Malta indirectly via Sicily. With Sicily, in fact, precisely in the Borg in-Nadur phase (c. 1450-800 B.C.), Malta had strongly trading relations, and Maltese ceramic products were exported to that island.\(^8\) Even for Sicily there is a strong literary tradition of Mycenaean contacts as well as settlements, and archaeology has provided corroborative evidence to it.\(^1\)

Whether Malta was on a direct Mycenaean commercial route or whether Mycenaean products reached the island occasionally by an indirect route through Sicily, it is not yet possible to establish. What can be said for certain is that the Maltese Bronze Age had some cultural aspects in common with the Mycenaean centres. The Tarxien Cemetary people venerated discoid clay idols which occur also in Mycenaean contexts.\(^2\) The Borg in-Nadur people lived in strongly fortified villages the defence works of which were built of massive, polygonal blocks of stone forming a structure traditionally called Cyclopean which is characteristic of Mycenaean defensive works.\(^3\) It only means, however, that the island was not unaffected by this civilisation which flourished in the Aegaean area but influenced the prehistoric cultures of lands beyond.

The earliest Greek archaeological objects later than the Bronze Age found in Malta consist of a few ceramic importations none of which are cited by the upholders of the Greek theory since they have been unearthed in the twentieth century. The most remarkable of these are two Proto-Corinthish cups and an East Greek (Rhodian) 'Bird' bowl, all three of which were discovered in tombs accompanied by other pottery of typically Phoenician type.\(^4\) They are closely datable and consequently their dates are used to date the burials and their furnitures. The skyphos from Imlarfa has been dated to the middle of the seventh century B.C.\(^5\) while the kotyle and the East Greek 'Bird' bowl have been assigned


to the second half of the eighth century B.C.78 Besides these, other early Greek vessels, albeit in a fragmentary state, have come to light on other sites.79 Nevertheless the fact that these vessels occur singly in tombs among the much more numerous Phoenician pottery signifies that they were not the ordinary domestic utensils but treasured imported luxuries.

As archaeological evidence these early Greek vessels put into question the validity of Clive's argument ex silentio derived from Thucydides' passage, irrespective of the Greek historian's authority. The evidence they provide in fact proves the opposite, namely, that the Phoenician settlement in Malta can be dated to the second half of the eighth century B.C. at the earliest and that it continued to exist uninterrupted until the island was absorbed within the Carthaginian political sphere around the sixth century B.C.79

From the eighth century onwards one also notices local Maltese imitations, in shape and painted decoration, of indisputably Greek types of pottery.80 Once more these imitations occur predominantly in rock-cut tombs. Meanwhile authentic Greek imports continue to appear, thus rendering the Maltese ceramic reperoty of the period, especially the funerary ones, richer and less monotonous. These imports occur also in excavated buildings, such as the Tas-Silg sanctuary.81

Greek, or rather Hellenistic, influence on Carthaginian Malta reached its peak in the Hellenistic period (late fourth to late first century B.C.) and it can best be appraised in the architectural building programme carried out in that period at the site of Tas-Silg.82 This phenomenon, it should be remembered, was not peculiar to Malta, but is paralleled in most of the other Punic centres of the Western Mediterranean, including Carthage itself.83

The majority of Greek archaeological objects and inscriptions, however, which have been used from Quintus onwards to prove the existence of a Greek colony in Malta belong in reality to the Roman period, that is after Malta was taken over for good by the Romans in 218 B.C.

The ivory Victory and silver cups, which on Cicero's authority once formed part of Malta's artistic heritage, were indeed most likely of Greek manufacture, but historically they are assigned to the Roman period, more precisely to the first century B.C. Cliver was, consequently, in the wrong in using them to support his argument.

As to the Maltese coins with a Greek legend, it is now generally agreed that these and all the other Maltese coins were minted after 218 B.C. when Malta was already under the Romans.83 Furthermore, none of the Greek inscriptions are dated prior to the Roman conquest of 218. Without mentioning those clearly referring to Imperial hommage (first-third centuries A.D.) it should be observed that the decree of prozexia awarded to Demetrius of Syracuse by the Maltese people is dated, along with a similar decree from the people of Akragas, to the years immediately following 218 B.C., and that the bilingual inscriptions dedicated to Hercules are dated to the second century B.C.84

These and other monuments of Greek typology or character that occur within this chronological context are explained by the fact that when Malta was annexed by the Romans it was, quite logically, attached to the province of Sicily. As a result of which Malta's culture and way of life after that date was heavily influenced by the Greek element which was deeply rooted in the culture of that island due to the intensive social, cultural and commercial connections which must have existed between the two islands.85

CONCLUSION
This brief survey shows that the assertion that a period of Greek domination existed in Malta prior to the Roman conquest is untenable.

The archaeological evidence, supported by explicit statements of authoritative and reliable ancient writers, such as Pseudo-Skylax, Diodorus Siculus and, to a lesser degree, Cicero, proves an uninterrupted Phoenician colonization from the late eighth century to the late sixth century B.C. followed by the natural passage of the Maltese islands under the political hegemony of Carthage which lasted, again uninterrupted, until the Roman occupation of 218 B.C.

As to the pre-Phoenician period, there appears to be a connection with the Aegean world in Mycenaean times which is suggested by the archaeological evidence and possibly corroborated by Homer's Odyssey and Lycophron's Alexantra. But this period falls under the Prehistory of the islands and within that context this connection should be regarded as a working hypothesis which offers much scope for further research on the available evidence and other data that might turn up in further field exploration.


DR. A. BON ANNO, B.A. (Hons.), D. Litt., Ph.D., is Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Malta and author of various scholarly works.