

**PROCEEDINGS OF HISTORY WEEK  
1999**

**ASPECTS OF MALTESE HISTORY  
DURING FRENCH RULE 1798-1800**

edited by  
WILLIAM ZAMMIT

THE MALTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MALTA  
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**EDITORIAL PREFACE**

The years 1998 to 2002 witnessed the bicentennial commemoration of a series of very eventful episodes in Maltese history, ones which to a very considerable extent determined the subsequent political, economic and social development of the Maltese Islands. The advent of French rule in June 1798, the Maltese uprising in September, the abortive Maltese plot to take over Valletta in January 1799, the start of *de facto* British administration in September 1800 and the drawing up of the Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the Islands of Malta and Gozo by the Maltese representatives in June 1802 constituted, in their totality, a very sudden and dramatic change with reverberations in practically every sphere of life. New rulers brought political philosophies diametrically opposed to those of their predecessors, philosophies which - in turn - contributed in no small way towards the assertion of nationalistic claims on the part of the Maltese.

Conscious of the deep historical significance of those events, the Malta Historical Society had, in 1999, decided to dedicate that year's History Week to the French occupation. The result was the presentation a number of original papers which as always merited publication, even though this took some time to materialise, financial considerations being the major cause. The papers being published in this volume bear testimony to the importance attached to that period of Maltese history and they will certainly enrich our understanding of it.

With the exception of one paper,<sup>1</sup> this volume contains all the 1999 History Week lectures and short communications together with additional studies by Frans Ciappara and Jean Gaillard respectively. These papers, treating the same theme, were ideally suited for this publication and were hence included.

The publication of these proceedings would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship given by Tug Malta Ltd. In so doing, the company has contributed in a concrete way towards the appreciation of our nation's past and certainly deserves the appreciation of all. Din l-Art Helwa was again generous enough to allow the use of its premises not only for History Week but also for the Historical Society's committee

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<sup>1</sup> Noel Caruana Dingli's paper, which is to be published as a part of a larger study.

meetings. A word of appreciation also goes to the President and members of the Historical Society's committee who dedicate their spare time towards the organisation of such events. Dr Joseph F. Grima, the Society's secretary for many years, took on the additional task of editing three papers of those being presented. Last but not least, thanks to the authors themselves who have dedicated time, money and effort in the often unappreciated task of revealing our nation's past.

1.ix.2002

William Zammit  
Editor

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THE MALTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**HISTORY WEEK**

19-23 JANUARY 1999

PROGRAMME

## FIRST SESSION

*Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1999 at 5.45 p.m.*

### Lecture

Dr William Zammit: Communicating a New Regime: The Maltese Printed Product during the French Occupation (1798-1800).

### Short Communication

Dr Franco Bruni: Musica alia Cattedrale e alia Concattedrale di Malta durante l'Occupazione Francese (1798-1800).

*Chairperson: Prof. Henry Frenzo*

## SECOND SESSION

*Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1999 at 5.45 p.m.*

### Lecture

Prof. Victor G. Griffiths: A Letter to Inquisitor Monsignor Carpegna comprising a "Diary" account of events of the French Occupation (1798-1800).

### Short Communications

Can. John Azzopardi: The Personal Archives of Grand Master Hompesch.

Mr Antonio Espinosa Rodriguez: Documents and Artefacts of the French Period at the Malta Maritime Museum.

*Chairperson: Dr Carmelo Testa*

## THIRD SESSION

*Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1999 at 9.45 a.m.*

### Lecture

Dr Noel Caruana-Dingli: The French Language in Malta, 1798-1800.

### Short Communications

Dr Joseph F. Grima: A Glimpse at the 1798-1800 Registers in the Qormi Parish Archives.

Mr Paul Catania: The Naxxar Parish Archives: The French Connection.

Mr Winston L. Zammit: Some Minor Figures connected with the Maltese Uprising against the French (1798-1800).

*Chairperson: Prof. Goafrey Wettinger, President of the Society, who also brought the History Week to a close.*

All sessions held at  
**Din l-Art Helwa**, 133 Melita Street, Valletta

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	Archive of the Cathedral of Malta
AIM	Archive of the Inquisition (Malta)
AOM	Archive of the Order of Malta
APGQ	Archive of the Parish of St. George, Qormi
ASN	Archivio di Stato, Napoli
ASPGR	Archive of St. Paul Grotto, Rabat
Corr.	Corrispondenza
Dep.	Depositeria
Doc.	Document
Fasc.	Fascicle
fn.	Footnote
Lib.	Library
MFA	Museum of Fine Arts (Malta)
Misc.	Miscellanea
Ms./Mss.	Manuscript/s
Mus.	Music
NAM	National Archive of Malta
NLM	National Library of Malta
PAN	Parish Archive, Naxxar
Reg. del Cap.	Registro del Capitolo
SHAT	Service historique de l'armée de terre
Univ.	Università

## THE CONTRIBUTORS

**John Azzopardi**, curator of the Cathedral and Wignacourt Museums and historian. Born at Rabat, Azzopardi was ordained priest and graduated Lic.D in 1962. He taught at the Seminary, Floriana and was installed canon of the Rabat Collegiate Chapter. He was appointed curator of the Cathedral Museum, Mdina, in 1967 and directed the Cathedral Museum Microfilm Project in conjunction with University College, Minnesota, USA (1973-88). Azzopardi has edited various exhibition catalogues and books, notably *St Paul's Grotto, Church and Museum at Rabat, Malta* (Malta, 1990). He has also published numerous studies on local art, music and history. In 2002 a *festschrift* entitled *Melitensium Amor*, containing thirty studies in honour of Azzopardi, was published.

**Franco Bruni** was educated at *La Sapienza* in Rome and in Paris, obtaining his doctorate in Musicology (1998). Bruni was active at the *Biblioteca del Conservatorio di S. Cecilia* (1987-1990) and at the *Discoteca di Stato* (1993-94). From 1991 to 1993 he was in Malta conducting research on the musical archives of Malta, particularly seventeenth-century sacred music and its Italian influences. His publications include *Musica Sagra a Malta* (1993), *The Vella Composers* (1997), *De Musica Melitensis* (1998), *Stampe musicali italiane alle Cattedrale di Malta* (1999) and various learned papers in academic journals in Malta and abroad.

**Paul Catania** is a B.Sc.(Hons.) graduate from London University with specialisation in social and economic history. He has been publishing studies on Naxxar's social history for the past twenty years. A teacher for many years in Secondary schools and at the Sixth Form, he is now a free-lance tourist guide and also manages his own company. Presently taking care of the parish archives at Naxxar he has unearthed a number of important documents, some of which were related to the establishment of the Naxxar Good Friday procession. In 1999 he published many of his studies in book form under the title *Naxxar - Titwilietfl-Istorja*. In the same year, together with Louis Scerri, he organised a series of lectures on various topics related to the town's history. These studies were published in 2000 under the title *Naxxar - A Village and its People*. On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Malta Historical Society he delivered a lecture entitled *Thirty Years in the life of a Village, 1769-1799*.

**Frans Ciappara** holds an M.A. in history from the University of Malta and a Doctorate from Durham University. He has specialised in the social history of the Maltese Islands

particularly during the eighteenth century. His publications include *Mill-Qighan ta' l-Istorja: Il-Kappillani fis-Seklu Tmintax* (Malta, 1987), *Marriage in Malta in the late Eighteenth Century* (Malta, 1988), *The Roman Inquisition in Enlightened Malta* (Malta, 2000) and *Society and the Inquisition in Early-Modern Malta* (Malta, 2001). His many papers and articles in learned journals include studies on M.A. Vassalli and Giovanni Nicolò Muscat.

**Antonio Espinosa Rodriguez** is an art historian, born in Seville (Spain) but brought up and educated in Malta. Graduated B.A. (Hons.) in history of art from London University (1980). He holds a diploma in librarianship and information studies from the University of Malta (1988). Espinosa Rodriguez joined the Museums Department in 1976 and was appointed curator of Fine Arts at the National Museum of Malta. He was awarded the *Premio Castore e Pulluce Agli Uomini del Mare* by the *Lega Nazionale Italiana*, Agrigento section, for his contribution for the setting up of the Maritime Museum of Malta and the promotion of the Mediterranean Maritime Heritage (1995). He has published *Paintings of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Malta* (1990), co-authored *Images of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Malta* (1989) and *Catalogue of the Picture Collection in St Paul's Grotto and Museum* (1990), besides various papers in academic journals.

**Jean Gaillard** was born in Epinal, France, in 1922. He embarked upon a medical career, graduating M.D. in 1947. He later graduated as a biologist and pathologist from the Faculty of medicine, University of Paris. In 1956 Gaillard became full-time pathologist at the regional hospital of Evreux. In 1976 he was appointed chief of the laboratory of histo-pathology at the *Institut Pasteur* of Paris of which he was, in 1980, appointed professor. His numerous publications of a medical nature focus particularly on germ cell tumors and experimental teratocarcinomas. Gaillard was awarded the Pelman prize of Biology and also appointed *Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite* by the Laureate Academy of Medicine. He retired in 1987, devoting his attention to the study of maritime history, and to Maltese history during the French occupation and the Second World War.

**Victor George Griffiths** is a professor of surgery. Born in Paola, Griffiths received his education at HM Dockyard School, the Lyceum and the Royal University of Malta from where he qualified Ph.C. and B.Sc. in 1939 and MD in 1942. He was awarded the government travelling scholarship in 1945 and proceeded to the UK to further his training in surgery. He was elected FRCS (England) in 1945. Griffiths returned to Malta in 1947 and was appointed consultant surgeon. He was appointed professor of anatomy at the Royal University of Malta in 1953 and lecturer in surgery in 1960. He also served an honorary lecturer in anatomy at St Bartholomew's Hospital

Medical College, London (1953-4). He was subsequently appointed professor of surgery of the Royal University of Malta and director of surgery of the health department in 1969, a post he held until 1977 when he relinquished it as a result of a trade union dispute. Griffiths was appointed consultant advisor and director of the department of surgery in 1987. A member of several societies and associations, Griffiths has published various studies of a medical and historical nature.

**Joseph F. Grima** B.A. (Hons.), M.A., Dip. Educ. (Admin & Mgt.), Ph.D (History) was born at Qormi in 1945 and educated at St. Monica School, the Lyceum and the University of Malta from where he obtained his academic qualifications. A former teacher and visiting lecturer of Maltese and European history, he is presently Head of Giovanni Curmi Higher secondary School, Naxxar and a member of the Malta Institute of Management. Grima has authored over 300 articles of a historical nature, comprising original studies published in *Melita Historica*, *Storja 78* and *Proceedings of History Week*. He has also published or edited various works including *Il-Knisja Parrokkjali ta' San Gorg*, *Hal Qormi: Erba' Sekli ta' Storja* (Malta, 1984), *Printing and Censorship in Malta 1642-1839: A General Survey* (Malta, 1991), *Proceedings of History Week 1986* (Malta, 1992), *Melita Historica 1999* (Malta, 2000) and *Mill-Istorja ta' Hal Qormi, l-ewwel volum: minn Zmien il-Qedem sal-1800 W.Kl* (Malta, 2001). Grima is currently Secretary of the Malta Historical Society, a position he has held for many years.

**William Zammit** holds a B.Ed.(Hons.) degree, a diploma in Library and Information Studies, an M.A. in history awarded with distinction and a Doctorate in the same subject. His field of specialisation is early-modern Maltese history, with particular focus on the mechanisms of the communication and dissemination of ideas. His unpublished research includes *A Bibliography of Works Printed in Malta, 1642-1798* (1988), *Printing and its Cultural Role in Malta during the Rule of the Order of St John of Jerusalem* (1996) and *The Dissemination of Unorthodoxy and New Ideas in Malta, 1700-1798*. Zammit is also the author of various published studies on Maltese history, printing and bibliography. He has carried out research in local and foreign libraries and archives, including the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*, the *Biblioteca Vaticana*, the *Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede* and the *Archivio della Propaganda Fide*. Zammit teaches history and European Studies at St Theresa Junior Lyceum, Imriehel.

**Winston L. Zammit** received his education at St. Joseph's Convent, Sliema (1955-59), St Aloysius College, Birkirkara (1959-66) and at the Junior College, Royal University of Malta (1967-68). In 1968 he enrolled as a student of the Faculty of Arts of the same University, from where he graduated B.A. (Hons.) in 1971 and M.A.

in 1975 in History. During 1975 he followed a one-year PGCE course at the Malta College of Education. Teacher of History and Social Studies within the Education Division since 1971, Zammit currently holds the post of Subject Co-Ordinator. He has published a number of books, papers and articles on Maltese history. Zammit is well-known for his publications on his native Sliema, including *Tas-Sliema fl-Imġħoddi* (1981) and *Tas-Sliema fis-Seklu XX* (2000).