MEDIEVAL MALTA
STUDIES ON MALTA BEFORE THE KNIGHTS

Edited by
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EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE history of medieval Malta and Gozo has yet to be written. No satisfactory major work has ever been devoted to the subject, and much of what has been published is now inadequate, out-dated and often almost inaccessible. The past requires continuous reinterpretation, for the absence of scientific research and scholarly criticism leaves a dangerous vacuum in which myth and legend may remain unchallenged, sometimes with regrettable consequences. The papers produced for a conference entitled Maltese History: What Future? which was held in 1971 by the Department of History at the Royal University of Malta, showed Maltese scholars to be keenly aware of such dangers; the Professor of History declared many histories to be ‘antiquated’, ‘national’, ‘insufficient’ or ‘exaggerated’. Other participants pointed to the deficiencies of existing works at every level from the school text-book upwards, and they emphasized the varied opportunities for future research, particularly in view of the progressive opening of the island’s own archives. The time is not yet ripe for a balanced general history of medieval Malta. That remains a task for a Maltese scholar who instinctively understands his own countrymen and language, and who can devote himself to the subject over many years. The articles published here represent partial and preliminary approximations which are certain to be corrected and revised in due course but which should prepare the way for a more definitive account of the medieval history of two small islands whose general interest is beyond all proportion to their size. It is hoped that the presentation of these researches in a single volume will constitute a coherent and permanent achievement on which scholars can build in a cumulative way, for in the past many contributions to Maltese history have virtually been lost in obscure or unobtainable journals and pamphlets.

In choosing and securing the papers published in this volume the editor faced many dilemmas. The fascination of prehistoric and archaeological Malta has diverted interest from other aspects of its history. Scholars working outside Malta find it hard to consult the specialist books and articles, let alone the archives; those on the island are often handicapped by the absence of general works. The pool of those with special interest in medieval Malta is not great, and it has not been possible to include articles from all possible contributors. For one reason or another, many topics—the Arabs, the Angevins, the Church and the religious orders, the history of the language, the development of the countryside, the functioning of local government, to name a few—have been wholly or largely neglected, though the introductory essay does something to fill some of the gaps. It is especially unfortunate that the destruction of its medieval archives means that Gozo’s history must await further research before it can be reconstructed in any detail. An attempt has been made to secure contributions both from Malta and from outside the island, and all articles appear in English as the language most likely to be understood inside and outside Malta. Efforts have been made to indicate the sources available, but it has not been possible to publish more than a handful of texts. Other approaches, through
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architecture, topography, archaeology and folklore, have been introduced, partly to fill the gaps in early medieval Maltese history which result from the drastic dearth of sources, and partly to draw attention to the need to study and preserve not only the written records but also the material remains of the medieval past. In this respect, the activities of Malta's preservation society, Din l-Art Helwa, and of all those concerned with Malta's ancient buildings and countryside are of vital importance. Each contributor is naturally responsible for his own views. If some of the theories advanced run contrary to accepted views, it should be remembered that a measure of revision and dialogue is a healthy and inevitable aspect of the historiographical process in every society; and where ancient notions can be shown to derive from mistaken interpretations of the sources, it is unreasonable to assert that such traditional views are so well established as no longer to require proof.

The editor wishes to thank all those who have contributed to this project, and who have allowed him to mutilate or manipulate their manuscripts. He is grateful to the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters of the British School at Rome, which has sustained this work in the tradition of Thomas Ashby, David Trump and other students of Maltese history connected with the School; this group, incidentally, includes four of the contributors to the present volume. The actual publication of this volume owes much to the persistence of the Faculty's Publications Committee and its chairman, Professor Donald Bullough, and of the Faculty's Secretary, Mrs. Kathleen Stedman. The British Academy most kindly made a grant towards the cost of editorial work and travel. The Librarians and their staff at the Royal Malta Library and the Royal University of Malta provided every possible assistance, as did the Directors and Curators at the National Museum at Valletta and the Cathedral Museum and Archives at Mdina. These scholars and their assistants, and indeed many other individuals in Malta, have most generously provided information and materials without which this publication would certainly be much the poorer. Fr. Andrew Vella, Professor of History at the Royal University of Malta, and the University authorities in general have encouraged the publication of these studies in a number of ways. Two Maltese historians, Dr. Godfrey Wettiger and Mr. Mario Buigar, went far beyond their task as contributors in giving extensive practical help and advice in Malta itself. The figures were drawn or re-drawn by Mr. Colin Peacocke, Mr. Dennis de Lucca and Miss Sue Bird, to each of whom the editor is most grateful. In addition to individual contributors, photographs were generously provided by the Malta Government Tourist Board, the National Museum at Valletta and the Royal Air Force; plates 5b and c were kindly taken by Miss Amanda Claridge. If the quality of certain plates is uneven, it should be remembered that in some cases they constitute a unique surviving record of their subject. Above all, Miss Miranda Buchanan patiently saw the volume through the press and did much else besides, while a great deal of typing and checking was undertaken by my wife Margaret. Each of these persons and bodies has made a very real contribution to what inevitably became a rather complex undertaking, and I am most grateful to them all.

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APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL MALTA

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MEDIEVAL Malta had no chronicler of its own, and it is unlikely that any contemporary attempt was made to write its history; certainly no such work has survived. There are references to Malta and Gozo in a number of Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew writings, but most of these are extremely brief and general, or they deal with particular incidents. The most important account is contained in the letter sent by the Emperor Frederick II in reply to Gilbertus, his agent at Malta, in about 1241. The earliest real descriptions of Malta and Gozo result from their connection with the Knights of St John; the report made by the Knights' commissioners in 1544 before the Order accepted the islands in 1555 is now lost, but details from it are preserved. The earliest description available, running to some 4,000 words, is that of the Hospitalier Jean Quintin, written in Malta in 1533 and first published at Lyons three years later. In the classicizing style then in vogue, Quintin concentrated on the island's ancient history and remains, so that his utility to the medieval historian is limited. Interest in the struggle with the Turks, which culminated in the dramatic siege of Malta in 1565, ran high during the sixteenth century and led to much writing and publication, though this literature has yet to be systematically exploited as a source of information about Malta's medieval past.

The first and in some ways still the most coherent attempt to cover the whole history of medieval Malta appeared in the Descriptio of Malta, published in 1647 by a notable scholar, antiquarian and collector, the Maltese Gian Francesco Abela, Vice-Chancellor of the Order of St John. Abela, who was interested in language,

1 No attempt can be made in this introductory, and inevitably somewhat dense and indigestible, article to do more than outline achievements, problems and possibilities, and that in an uneven fashion designed partially to compensate for gaps not filled below. A comprehensive bibliography of works on medieval Malta remains a desideratum. J. Mizzi, 'A Bibliography of the Order of St John of Jerusalem: 1099-1798', in The Order of St John in Malta [ed. Council of Europe] (Malta, 1970), is useful, especially because it lists the other bibliographies; see also the list of printed books and ms. in Archivio Storico di Malta (ASM), 13 vols. (1969-72); for the period 1821-88, especially T. Guzzacottelli-E. Varanaziani, 'Saggio di una Bibliografia di Malta', ASM, iv (1927); C. Desouclaux, 'Malta in the Middle Ages', Journal of the Malta University Literary Society, ii, nos. 10-11 (1927), discusses a number of texts, including that of Ludolph von Sutheim (ca. 1549); for those of ca. 1540 and of Nicolo de Martino (1594), 1676, 36 nos. 800, 818, 946.

2 The Latin original, now lost, was summarized in outline, et in substance, in G. Bosio, Dall'istoria delle Sante Religiose e Illustrative Militiae di San Giovanni Gerosolimitani, iii (1st ed. Rome, 1604), 50-51; Bosio had access to the Hospitaliers' archives. The purported summary in L. de Boniello, Antico e Moderno Malta, ii (London, 1604), 12-17, does not altogether accord with Bosio's version.

3 Quintin's Avita Maltese Descriptio was completed Malta and is included... M.O.XXXIII (possibly 1554). E. Leopardi, 'The First Printed Description of Malta, Lyons 1566', Scienza (Malta), xv (1950), provides a useful study, reproducing the frontispiece and the map of Malta; there is a copy of the rare first edition in the Gozo Public Library and the British Museum has another, but it was several times reprinted, notably in J. Grevinio, Thesaurus Antiquissimis at Historieae Scriptis, xv (Leyden, 1753) [owing to its brevity, references below are not annotated].

4 To the references and bibliographies in Mizzi, add J. G. Galen, Bibliography of the Great Siege of Malta: 1565-1566 (Malta, 1936). For some details on Maltese customs, see C. Desouclaux, 'Visitare a Malta from the 13th to the 18th Century', The swirl: The Journal of the Royal University of Malta Literary Society, iii, nos. 4-6 (1938). Bosio's own description of Malta (iii, 50-51, 96) includes information not drawn from Quintin or from the 1554 report.
place-names, archaeology, folk-lore and natural history, has justly been called
the "Father of Maltese Historiography" and the 'Founder of the Malta Museum'.
His history, one of the very first books printed in Malta, was reprinted in Latin in
1725 in the fifteenth volume of Johannes Graevius' Theaurus Antiquitatum et Histori-
arum Sicliet, and it was re-edited at Malta, in two volumes entitled Malta illustrata, by
Giovannantonio Gjansar. Gjansar went before the publication of the first
volume in 1771 and died before that of the second in 1780, so that the revised edition
probably contained more errors than the first.4 Born in 1582, Abela was very much
a man of his times, educated in the university at Bologna and much interested in
clerical remains and pseudo-philological speculation. His work was written in
Italian and conceived in the encyclopaedic manner, being subdivided into libri and
notitiae. For the earlier medieval period Abela used published chronicles and his-
tories such as those of the historians of Sicily Rocco Pirri and Tommaso Fasello,
often copying their errors uncritically and without always naming his source. For
the post-1350 period he employed documents found on the island and transcripts
from Palermo already available in Malta, publishing lists of place-names, churches,
convents, bishops, officials and notable families.
Abela utilized unreliable materials and he introduced into his work an extensive
mythology, a good deal of which survives both as popular folk-lore and, unfortunately,
in learned works whose authors still tend to regard him as quasi-infallible.5 The
most recent treatment reflects the unavoidable ambivalence of the scholar torn
between admiration for Abela's very considerable achievements, for the accuracy
and elegance of some of his observations, for his lively independence and his deep
knowledge of Malta, and frustration at Abela's readiness to repeat all manner of legends
and to misinterpret documents in order to sustain those beliefs, natural to a patriarch Mal-
tese cleric, according to which Malta was essentially European and Christian rather
than African and Muslim. Abela is, to some extent, to blame if a litter of discarded
theories trills over the whole island like a mad paper-chase,6 but it is a tribute to his
powers and talents that so many of his errors be perpetuated still survive. Probably
he has suffered just because he was the first major historian of Malta to appear in
print, and only a detailed investigation of the unpublished writings of the predecessors
and contemporaries on whom Abela must have relied can establish to
what extent they misled him, and how far what he called 'ancient traditions'
was of his own invention. Some of these traditions appeared in the Descrizione dell'Isla
di Malta, written in about 1610 by a doctor from the Knights' galley, which awaits
study.7 In fact, there is room for a comprehensive analysis of all the varied sources
used in the medieval sections of Abela's work.

4 G.F. Abela, Della Descrizione di Malta isola nel Mar Siciliano (Malta, 1641) [the edition cited through-
out]; C. Cloissot, The Spread of Printing—Eastern Horizons: Malta (Amsterdam, 1969), 8-12. For Abela,
and for many details concerning subsequent antiquarian and scholarly activity in Malta, see Gian Francesco
Abela: Essays in his Honour by Members of the 'Malta Historical Society'... (Malta, 1972) ; see also E. Sipiones, in
5 For some examples, see the analysis of Abela's treatment of the Norman period (1096, 29-34, 96-100)
and of his uncritical use of Fera (B. Floriot, in Abela Essays, 87-97).
6 N. Dennis, Ad Esse in Malta (London, 1972), 6-8 passim, containing a perceptive if somewhat debat-
able appreciation of Abela's work. On his ambition and contemporaries, C. Mangion, 'La letteratura
barocca a Malta (con testi inediti)', Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta, vol. 6 (1971),
Royal Malta Library, Bibliotheca No. 651. For other 'traditions', see the Rezensione su se stesso,
del suo elio notizie Carattere dell'Isla di Malta e ca. 1650 (Biblioteca No. 3, 5-29-29); an edition by G.
Wettenger is forthcoming.

7 For two centuries or more Abela's history continued to hold the field, and a third edition was published, was initiated in 1842.8 A considerable volume of work did appear, but most of it repeated extant errors without adding much of value to
medieval Maltese history. The Gozitan scholar Agius de Soldanis wrote a history of
Gozo in 1741, and G. Vassalo's Storia di Malta, published in 1584, was probably the most
the successful new work. Meanwhile the eighteenth-century Maltese priest
Giuseppe Vella had produced some notable Arabian forgeries which, though soon
exploded, continued to influence the historiography of Muslim Malta even after the
publication of Michele Amari's great work on Muslim Sicily and its influence on
Italian translation of the Arabic texts upon which it was based.9 A. A. Caruana who wrote widely
on Maltese antiquities and history, especially in his 460-page 'Fragment', accepted that
Vella was a forger but unfortunately maintained that some of his materials were,
one the less, reliable.10 Ecclesiastical and legal histories by A. Ferris and P. De
Bono, though full of errors, constituted useful collections of references.11 A Society of
Archaeology, History and Natural Sciences was founded in 1856 and planned a
collective history of Malta, only to collapse a few years later.12 A more critical
spirit was making itself felt. The German scholar Albert Mayr wrote well on the
Roman and Byzantine period,13 and a new Historical and Scientific Society was
founded which in 1910 began to publish the Archivum Maltesum. This review con-
tained an important series of knowledgeable, though amazingly jumbled, medieval
contributions derived from the Maltese archives by Alfredo Mifsud.14
The emergence of a more scientific approach coincided with an era of political
passion in which the 'imperialists' argued for a Punic origin of Maltese and imposed
English in the schools, while the 'nationalists' sought to demonstrate the Italian
origin of Maltese institutions. The Italian Fascist government initiated a cultural
programme which claimed that Malta was a terra irredenta belonging by ancient right
to Italy; its chief historical weapon was the Regia Deputazione di Storia di Malta.15
The Archivio Storico di Malta, launched in 1920, was managed in Rome by competent
professional historians to bring to the demands of the regime and their own better
scientific feelings, which sometimes triumphed.16 It collected scattered references, lists
of published sources, particularly from Naples and from Malta.

8 E. Leopoldi, in Abela Essays, 47.
9 Eventually published in translation: G. Agius de Soldanis, Ghvandu biqieq inglese, 9 vols. (Malta, 1930-1939),
but best consulted in the Italian original (Royal Malta Library, Bibliotheca No. 147).
10 M. Amari, Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia, revised by C. Nallion, 3 vols. (Catania, 1939-1950), 6-11, has
an interesting account of the Vella affair; text in M. Amari, Bibliotheca arabo-italiana: serie italiana, 4 vols.
(Turin, 1850-1881).
11 A. A. Caruana, Panorama Critico della Storia Fenicio-Cartaginea, Greco-Romana e Bizantina, Musulmana
e Normanna-Drugenese delle Isole di Malta (Malta, 1896).
12 A. Ferris, Descrizione storica dei villi di Malta e Gozo (Malta, 1906); P. De Bono, Storiche storia della
Regazione italiana in Malte (Malta, 1897).
13 Cf. J. Casam Pullicino, in Malta Historia, 1 no. 2 (1953), 129-134.
14 Infra, no. 193, 37, 169.
15 These are frequently cited below; see also infra, 16 no. 931.
16 For a broad outline of politics and of literature, see 112-122 [Fascicolo dedicato a Malta] (1943), 313-342;
688-695.
17 See F. Bertrand's deservedly savage review of L. Viviani, Storia di Malta, 2 vols. in 3 (Turin, 1924),
in ASM, vi (1932-33), 100-104.
An approach to medieval Malta

4

Anthony T. Luttrell

Printed literature is gradually becoming obsolete with the expansion of the Royal University of Malta, by xeroxes and microfilms, and through opportunities for foreign study.

Turning from past problems to future possibilities, the limiting factor is that of the sources. Down to the end of the Norman period in 1194 the written sources are strictly limited, and there is no evident probability of adding significantly to them; further information may become available on the Arabic side and the existing evidence certainly requires further study, but only archaeological techniques promise any considerable increase in knowledge. From 1194 to about 1270, materials are still meagre. For the years of Frederick II's minority, the age of the Genoese Counts of Malta, there is a mélange of royal charters, chronicle references, notarial documents from Genoa and elsewhere, and even a Provençal troubadour. For Frederick II and his Hohenstaufen successors there survive a few imperial letters and privileges, and in particular Ghiberti's report of about 1421; together with certain Latin and Arab chronicles and a few other references, these permit the construction of an outline of the Sicilian administration in Malta. For Angervile rule from 1268 until 1282, and to a lesser extent for the decades following, the destruction in 1435 of the Angevin archives at Naples is a major disaster, relieved only by the previous publication of many documents concerning Malta and by the systematic collection of these and other Angevin sources in the reconstructed registers. For the period from 1282 to 1350 the archive sources are those for the history of Sicily plus, from about 1350, the originals and copies preserved in Malta itself. Some sources must always be supplemented by many kinds of notices and texts, published and unpublished, in a variety of chronicles and collections. The Vatican archives undoubtedly contain much more information; so do other major archives such as those of Barcelona, Genoa and Venice, while a host of lesser sources from many parts of the Mediterranean world require patient collection.

Malta and Gozo formed part of the Kingdom of Sicily, and materials concerning them are to be found throughout the whole body of Sicilian documentation. The

28 Genoa and Malta, and apart from the major scholarly libraries, there are useful collections of ‘Mellittia’ in the Sciacca Collection at Rhodes House, Oxford, and at Rome in the libraries at Palazzo Malta and the British School at Rome.

References

3. The standard guide to the materials and literature is now L. Boyle, A Survey of the Vatican Archives and of its Medieval Holdings (Tavarnelli, 1972).


7. The standard guide to the materials and literature is now L. Boyle, A Survey of the Vatican Archives and of its Medieval Holdings (Tavarnelli, 1972).

main sources are the largely unexplored royal documents at Palermo, including the chancery registers, the Lettre Vicariale, the Prepositura del Regno, the Conservatorio di Registro and other series; the capitoli or petitions granted by the Crown to individual cities, which for Malta and Gozo survive from about 1409 onwards; and a series of largely unpublished notarial and private acts from Palermo and other Sicilian towns, notably Trapani and Syracuse, which throw vital statistical light on such matters as Maltese trade and shipping. The archives of Sicilian monasteries on which Maltese religious houses and properties depended may contain relevant information. The Capitoli and the Liber di Secretitia compiled by Gian Luca Barbiere from the royal archives at Palermo in the early sixteenth century recorded many details of Maltese gabelles and fees reaching back to 1168. Transcriptions from Barbiere’s works and of a few dozen documents known to him were made at Palermo by the notary Leonardo Baisini in 1644 and sent to Malta. Extensively used in Abela’s work of 1647 and, more recently, by Mifsud, Valentinii and others, they constitute the bulk of the pre-1400 documentation now available in Maltese archives. The texts in the Palermo registers should in theory be prefered, but some of these may have been lost in the destructions there in 1686.

In Malta itself, many more documents are available for study than in 1914 when Mifsud published his notes on the archives. The main repositories of pre-1530 documents are the Università and Biblioteca sections of the Royal Malta Library at Valletta, the Cathedral Museum at Mdina, and the Notarial Archives deposited in Valletta. In the Royal Malta Library, Università Ms. 3, 4, and 10 consist of original documents on parchment and paper, mostly dating after 1421. Università Ms. 7, formerly Biblioteca Ms. 858, contains royal and viceregal grants from 1537 onwards, which were confirmed by the Hospitallers in 1535; the few copies made from original privileges then presented in Malta may provide a better text than careless entries in the royal registers at Palermo. Biblioteca Ms. 670 contains some pre-1530 materials once in the archives of the università, while post-1530 transcriptions of medieval ecclesiastical documents are scattered through a number of inadequately-indexed manuscrupt miscellanies. Some of these texts were published by Mifsud and Valentinii. Most important of all in Università Ms. 11, a 600-folio collection containing the important group of annals documents is published in H. Brou, Documents on Frederick IV of Sicily’s Intervention in Malta: 1276, Papers of the British School at Rome, xii (1957) documents from the other series are collected by H. Brou, Documents on Frederick IV of Sicily’s Intervention in Malta: 1276, Papers of the British School at Rome, xii (1957).
the records of the civil courts and tribunals survive, but there could be original materials or transcripts still in the Archivioapàol Curia at Valletta. There are some pre-1550 notarial deeds, in original and copy, at the Dominican house at Rabat. A number of medieval documents certainly remain in family hands; these should be saved from damage or disposal since some of them, particularly the wills, contain interesting details concerning properties in Mdina, in the country or even in Sicily, or illustrate family relationships, children, servants and slaves, and so forth. The post-1530 archives both of the universitas and of the Order of St. John contain copies of medieval documents as well as other materials which throw considerable light on medieval conditions. The parish registers begin in the mid-sixteenth century, and Pietro Dusina's Apostolic Visitations of 1575, already much used by historians of art and architecture, as well as by ecclesiastical historians and others, is particularly important. Some of this Maltese material is in a seriously deteriorated condition, and proposals for the care of public records and for their improved accessibility to the public naturally deserve careful attention, as does the production of a detailed guide to Malta's archives. It should be emphasized that, apart from the copies or copies of copies derived from Palermo, almost all the documentation preserved in Malta is post-1530.

In addition to the conventional written sources of the archives, there are other approaches to Maltese history. With one brief exception, no medieval literature survives, but Malta's rich folklore has been extensively studied and recorded, especially through J. Cassar Pullicino and his Maltese Folklore Review first published in 1962. The medievalist's difficulty with folklore material is that while stories of pirates and Turkish raiders provide vivid detail and a picturesque insight into local conditions, it is difficult to show that they refer to the medieval period, and often they contain traditional motifs found on islands and coastlines around much of the Mediterranean. The miraculous appearance of St. Paul at the defence of Mdina in 1429, represented in the seventeenth-century painting by Mattia Preti at the cathedral there, is an example of a different kind of tradition. The myth-making process is also conditioned by historical novels on medieval themes, such as A

84 A few are published in Anton, Ministry of the Family of Agnus (Malta, 1658).
87 J. Babuargu info. The call for an edition (ibid. I no. 4 (1983), 67) has unfortunately remained unheeded. It should be noted that in the original edition (ibid. V, Congregatio Rerum Bibliographicarum, 9, 1575) ff. 477, some blank; unbound but hardly legible. The various copies available in Malta, some of them relatively late ones, are apparently not altogether reliable. Dusina's Dic Naturae, with useful statistics, is published in A. Vella, 'La missione di Pietro Dusina a Malta nel 1574', Maltese Historia, no. 2 (1956).
88 The inventories drawn up following the reports of Professor E. Evans in 1951/2 were never published: cf. M. Zoe, 'The Archives of Malta', Science (Malta), xxi (1953), 197-99.
90 E.g., J. Cassar Pullicino, 'Pirates and Turks in Maltese Traditions', Scientia (Malta), xvi (1948). That traces of this folklore could have reached Malta after 1550 is effectively demonstrated in, 'Some Considerations in Determining the Semitic Element in Maltese Folklore', in Congres arabo-barbès.

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Barbarus of Malta by S. Frendo de' Mannarino, published in Malta in 1593 and in English in 1595, or a play such as A. Cremona's The Barbarus of the Peoples, which is set around the crisis of 1427 to 1429 and was produced in Malta in 1790. Folklore merges into cultural anthropology, and the sociological analysis of modern Maltese society. It also throws indirect light on village conditions and popular mentalities, though the medievalist has to treat such material with great care.

When traditional folk memories concentrate around a particular incident, such as Roger the Norman's Maltese expedition of 1090, they have usually become legend, and while the techniques of the folklore specialist can demonstrate how such stories acquire popularity and how they may be evaluated, it is difficult to be sure that the popular traditions are not the results of a 'feed-back' from antiquarian myth-makers. Most of the legends concerning Count Roger can be traced back no further than Abela's publication of 1457. Certain of these myths were taken from other historians, some of whom wrote only slightly earlier than Abela himself. He and his fellow-Maltese Domenico Magri referred to the ancient 'traditions' of their forebears, but it is often impossible to establish an earlier origin for tales which are in some cases either demonstrably false or inherently improbable. Such legends deserve to be recorded and studied in their own right, while it is important to clarify their origins and to distinguish clearly between fact and tradition, tradition and myth, especially when some historians, faced with the demolition of the evidence for certain assertions, simply maintain them as 'strong traditions', much as Abela did. Except possibly in the case of the Pauline memories, there is little or no evidence to suggest that these traditions were continuous.

Paintings and buildings are to some extent databable stylistically, and the study of military, domestic and ecclesiastical architecture is especially important. Certain types of material object are of interest to the medievalist. The collection, recording and study of mills and presses, agricultural instruments, domestic utensils, saddles, costumes and so on, may repay unexpected dividends, especially if excavation or the uncovering of unknown frescoes should suddenly produce similar items, or pictures of them, in a datable context. The projected national collection of cultural anthropology or traditional arts along the lines of the Pirre Museum at Palermo should be formed rapidly before the bulk of such materials is lost for ever. The Gozo Museum does already display a small selection of implements. Particularly useful, because datable, are coins, which survive in some quantity in museums and private hands. Only the classical coinage has received study. Byzantine coins
were being discovered in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, 56 and Byzantine and Arab coins have subsequently been found, particularly at Mdina where a notable hoard of gold and copper coins came to light in 1606. 57 Unfortunately, it is impossible to make more than limited scientific use of the coins in the Cathedral Museum at Mdina and in other collections, since they mostly lack any properly recorded archaeological provenance. 46

There is much still to discover about the islands’ medieval topography. The lists elaborated by Wettinger, which make an excellent start in the precisely dated recording of place-names in their exact contemporary form, will reinvigorate the subject. 58 They constitute a useful starting point for the further investigation of settlements, properties and sites, though few toponyms can be documented before 1372. 59 In the absence of other materials, controversy concerning the Maltese language has turned above all on the interpretation and antiquity of the toponymic evidence. 48 There may be philological reasons for considering certain place-names to be much older than the dates at which they are first securely documented, but the historian should take great care. The misinterpretation of toponyms may lead to the invention and perpetuation of legends. 59 Names indicating ruins, marshes or wastelands sometimes suggest the site of abandoned villages or settlements on marginal land, 60 but other evidence can be ambiguous; a name such as ‘the spring of the oligers’ may mean not that the island was covered with olives, but that olives were so rare that the presence of one or two of them distinguished the spring. Aboda published lists of Maltese trees and plants in 1847, but he also said that most of the trees had gone. 61

Early charts and portolans, such as Idriš’s map completed in Sicily in 1534, show that the rest of the world had some idea where Malta and Gozo were and of their distances from major Mediterranean ports, but they give little or no information about the islands themselves. 62 The most interesting old portolan, Lo Composto di Navigare, contained a description of distances from Malta to other ports accompanied by a seaman’s view of the islands and their harbours, with special reference to the principal towns and other nautical conditions; it was probably Pisano in origin and

56 Ista, 113. 57 Ista, 105-106. 58 G-F. Abela- G. Gianatt- Mola Illustrata, 2 vols. (Malta, 1772-1796), 1: 693-693. 59 Ista, 127-128. 60 ‘Mefid, in dictioni Moliensi, ii no. 5 (1918), 207-208, argues that there was a Maltese coinage in the Byzantine and Muslim periods; this seems unlikely and no such coins are known. Sicilian money current in later medieval Malta, yet Mefid produces a number of references to pecuni a mali, to pecuni a mali genusdi, etc.; he documents both a shortage of small coins in Malta and attempts to prevent its exportation. There was some sort of maliis pecuniarum of reatum de orre, uno de monte Sicilia (Ista, 127 n. 4). Possibly this was a money of account; perhaps the Maltese used a Muslim coinage, or made their own small coins. This puzzle is discussed, but not solved, in M. San, Colleget Problems Facing the Order of St. John in Malta (unpublished M.A. thesis, Royal University of Malta, 1967), 29-30. Meanwhile it is impossible to make use of much available 19th-century statistical information given in Maltese. 61 Ista, 105-116 and passim. 17 For a description of the Maltese Place-Names, in his Paper in Malta Linguistics (and ed: Malta, 1970), P. Sayd, ‘Die Ortsnamen der maltesischen Insulan’, Analeo dell’Instituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, no. 21-22 (1966-1967), and references Ista, 24 n. 143, 95 n. 150. 18 As demonstrated Ista, 97-99. 19 Supra, infra, 43-54, 155-156. 20 G. Lauffray, ‘L’Histoire naturelle de Malte comme récrite par Abela en 1643', in Abela Essays. 21 M. Amari- C. Schiaparelli, L’Italia descritta nel Libro de’ Regni compilato da Idriš, Atti della Real Academia dei Lincei, collettivo = 2 terza, viii (1927-1951), 21-22 and frontispiece.

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was first composed in the mid-thirteenth century. 51 The wealth of accurate detail it provides, compared with the information given a century earlier by Idriš, suggests that the invention of the compass had almost literally put Malta on the map for long-distance shipping. The Turkish sea-atlas of Pir Reis, completed by 1527, gave the outline of Malta but almost no useful internal information. 52 Quintin published a map in 1536 which bore little relation to his text but did show Mdina as a fortified town though without its church, and the Gozo citadel as lacking walls; it also showed the Maria Hatur and a number of crude houses. Thenceforth, and particularly after 1565, there was a stream of pictures, prints, maps, and similar materials; many of them show houses, churches, castles and other features, but most of these seem to be mere conventional drawings of dubious value as a guide to real building positions and types. A published corpus of seven maps from that of Quintin in 1556 to that of Abela in 1647 suggests that few of the details are of much utility to the medieval historian; Lafrey’s map of circa 1551 is the most interesting, particularly as it shows roads linking the villages. 53 Invaluable in this respect, though unfortunately limited in scope, is the intensive building-by-building inventory and photography of selected villages being carried out at the National Museum under the auspices of the Council of Europe. 54 It is vitally important, in a period of expansion, development and road building, to record all available topographical information as rapidly and accurately as possible. It should eventually be feasible by combining archival and topographical data, to produce a detailed, documented map of fifteenth-century Malta and its road-system, an invaluable preliminary to the study of abandoned sites, population shifts and other problems. Much of the urban topography of Mdina, Rabat and Birgu could also be reconstructed.

Malta has been an archaeological hunting-ground for many centuries. People have always sought hidden treasure and sometimes it has been discovered by accident, as in the case of the little picchuli1 who found a hoard of 248 Byzantine gold pieces in 1458/9. 57 There was a lawsuit de inventione tessauri in 1451, and in 1546 a case was brought against a goldsmith named Giovanni Scapa who had purchased part of a hoard of late Roman coins—di la moneta di S. Elena; in 1590 Luca d’Armenia and Antonio Callus even received a licence to seek ancient treasure of gold and silver. 58

51 Text in B. Matteo, El Composto de Navigare: opera italina della notizia del mondo XIII (Cagliari, 1947), 79-80, 111-113; a later version reproduced in ASEM, vii (1933-1934), 299-300, was mistakenly supposed to be earlier than that published by Matteo. For later texts and a now outdated list of appearances of the Maltese islands and place-names in the portolans, K. Kutscher, Die italienischen Portolane des Mittelalters (Berlin, 1905), 508, 516-517; the Greek portolan texts reproduced in Mielke, 24-25, require some revision.


54 Details in Mielke Report 1957-5-9 (the annual reports of the National Museum at Valletta, which have been issued under a variety of titles since 1906, are cited in this form throughout).

55 Supra, infra, 126.

56 References given by Valenti, in Archivio Maltese, iv, 127.
Interest however has been fixed mainly on the prehistoric and classical. The Mediterranean world has yet to be published, but the lavish and prompt preliminary accounts make it clear that large-scale excavation, in what may be called the traditional style, can produce valuable information concerning the period before 1200 for which the sources are otherwise so meagre; they also suggest that it is futile to demand first-class stratigraphy from thin soil disturbed by generations of Maltese farmers. These excavations point to a comparatively flourishing Byzantine period, a violent Muslim conquest followed by Muslim occupation, and a subsequent period of Latin reconstruction. Few other zones offer such rewarding opportunities since the islands are small and the modern urban sprawl severely limits the possibilities, but well-placed excavations, for example within the walls of Mdina or of the citadel on Gozo (plate 42), should repay even limited digging with the emphasis on stratification and the study of the pottery and small finds; the results might well be spectacular. Both the documents, and the wells, walls and lanes which are marked on the 1 : 2,500 maps of ca. 1909 and which frequently remain visible, should permit the identification of certain abandoned settlements where excavation might also be profitable. It may prove possible to date the styles and types of the round and square well-heads, and of the numerous surviving wells and cisterns, rock-cut or stone-built, arched or pillared, plastered or unlined. Underwater archaeology may also produce valuable information, especially where used in conjunction with aerial photography. The problems of medieval archaeology are considerable. In such small islands with a largely artificial landscape and a very thin soil covering, traces of settlement have often been largely or totally eliminated by intensive land use or erosion, by carting, quarrying, terracing, manuring and the ditching of inorganic town refuse; in Gozo the soil lies deeper but the destructions of the sixteenth century were much more widespread. Such obstacles greatly increase the difficulties of interpreting aerial photographs and they impede surface surveying. The soft and easily-worked

12 Idem, 71-72.

13 The medieval results are summarized by M. Cagian de Acquella in the Miscene, 1960, and general interpretations by S. Mocasai and M. Cagian de Acquella, in Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologica, Bandoni, vvii-xx (1960) 76; Professoress Antonia Gessa was kindley showed the author the site and materials at Taso-Silh. It should be emphasized that more definite judgments concerning these excavations must await the publication of final reports.

14 So it cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that unless such excavations are properly conducted on a reasonable large scale, and then satisfactorily published, they are likely to do more harm than good; final experience and prompted study design to substantiate the problems and results (especially in this period of medieval excavation.

15 See G. Weitzinger's appeal for excavations and, in particular, his list of place-chambs containing ruins, in Idem, 193-199, 195-196; the modern maps are listed ibid., 197 no. 25, 295.

16 See the underwater-archaeological map of Malta (containing a reference to medieval pottery found) in Idem, 195-196, 196-197.

17 See the underwater-archaeological map of Malta (containing a reference to medieval pottery found) in Idem, 195-196, 196-197.

18 Maltese stone is also almost undatable. The chief datable element should be the pottery, collections of which are in the Valletta, Rabat and Gozo Museums. These include considerable quantities of Islamic pottery painted in red and white with 'narrow-line' decoration. Much material from the excavations at Taso-Silh and San Pawl Milqi also awaits study; a preliminary catalogue of the glazed wares has already appeared. Though the crudish wares were doubtless produced on the islands, there is as yet no evidence for pottery kilns. In 1647 ari delicato were still being made at Zurrieq without a wheel. If all glazed wares had to be imported that would account for their apparent rarity, and the pottery found in Malta must be studied in terms of that produced in Sicily, in North Africa, in Byzantium and in Spain. The most important source was probably Sicily, where medieval archaeology is now established and where the pottery has received considerable preliminary study. However, if ever pottery and glass found in properly stratified excavations can be dated, and there are now scientific methods of effecting this with some degree of accuracy, such precision is only relative. Old styles and techniques may remain in use long after new wares have been introduced, and pots may survive for generations before being broken; their presence would not, in any case, necessarily imply the political domination in Malta of the rulers of the area where the pots were made. Where dated pottery is more useful is when significant quantities of it can be plotted over reasonably wide areas, for then it may well indicate patterns of settlement; glazed and datable medieval sherds are, however, only rarely to be found on the surface, partly perhaps because sherds were systematically collected to be ground down for the defus used to waterproof roofs. In any case the constant shifting of soil would frequently invalidate deductions from sporadic finds.

Even when such marginal or auxiliary evidence has been considered, enormous gaps will remain in the islands' medieval history. The temptation is to try to fill

19 E. Whitehouse, 'Medieval Painted Pottery in South and Central Italy', Medieval Archaeology, X (1966), 43. The difficulty with the red and white painted 'Arab tradition' wares is that they apparently continued to be made at least to early modern times.

20 D'Andria, 'Nota sulla ceramica inedita', in Miscene, 1962, with tavole 16-17; other materials are recorded in Miscene, 1962.

21 Abela, 196.

22 See GDAF: Notizie del Gruppo Archeologico Medievali—Palermo (1951 onwards), with discussions of rock-cut, thatched and wood-built dwellings, pottery and kilns, and so on. Particularly important is the excavation of the abandoned medieval settlement at Brucalle, preliminary notice in F. d'Angelo, 'Brucalle, Siculo Archeologia, no. 9 (1970). Professor Jean-Marie Prouz and his associates kindly showed the writer the site they are excavating.

23 For recent work, see F. d'Angelo, 'La ceramica nell'archeologia medievale siciliana', GRAM: Notizie, 13 (Aug. 1971), and 'Rendiconti sinottici di ceramica a Palermo', Pansa, li (1972); idem, 'La ceramica sannitica in Sicilia', Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sannitica Normanna (Palermo, 1973); see in addition A. Ragosta, 'Iscritti del Papa nella ceramica siciliana del secolo XIV', Pansa, liii (1975).


26 Preliminary surface surveying has produced disappointingly few recognizably medieval sherds. A trial investigation of the general area of Rabat or Castle (St John) was attempted, documented at ca. 56066 by Westminster (1967) 19-20; no significant late medieval settlement was evident, although a hint at a possible prehistoric promontory site (56066) with remains of ancient walls and a variety of prehistoric sherds (kindly identified by Dr David Trump) but no surface sign of medieval occupation whatsoever. Yet even in such limited excavations of painted 'Arab tradition' pottery lie just below ground near (56066) with the castle itself probably at 56064.
Maltese history. The Romans ended Carthaginian control of the islands in the third century BC, yet traces of Punic survival are found centuries later. Throughout the Roman period Malta was a marginally flourishing minor provincial outpost, frequented by those who were wrecked or exiled there and by pirates. Christianity came and at a certain stage the ultimate domination was transferred to Constantinople, but life on the villas continued; of barbarians and Vandals there is no direct evidence. It is hard to see any real turning-point in Roman Malta until the Muslim conquest in 870, and any attempt to fix a precise starting date for the middle ages in Malta is even more arbitrary than elsewhere. Roger the Norman conquered the islands temporarily in 1090, but Arab culture was possibly at its strongest there in the twelfth century and the Muslims were not "expelled" until 1242 or later. When the Norman dynasty came to an end in 1194, Malta was scarcely Latin in any real sense at all, but thereafter it was firmly within a Northern and Western Mediterranean framework, and in strictly political terms it was dominated by the nordic Franco-German dynasties, Hohenstaufen and Angevin, which secured control of the Sicilian Crown. The Sicilian Vespers did mark an important change, because while Malta continued after 1282 to depend on Sicily it was a Sicily which, together with Malta, formed part of a West Mediterranean and North African community dominated politically, economically and culturally from the Iberian heartlands of the Aragonese Crown. In theory some non-political or non-religious criteria could be utilized, but in practice so little is known about significant economic or social changes that any periodization based on them would tend to be imprecise and unhelpful. The introduction of the compass in the thirteenth century may have opened up Malta to shipping in an altogether new way. There was a moment in the fourteenth century when Malta ceased to export grain, and its economy came to depend on the exportation of cotton and the importation of wine and, above all, grain; serbs and Latins disappeared, and Malta became more than ever dependent on Sicily for its food. In the end, however, medieval Maltese history can most conveniently be divided into three main periods: a late Roman or Byzantine era which was in effect a continuation of the classical period; a Muslim period running from 870 to about 1200; and three centuries of Western European predominance resulting from Latin control of the seas. In all these periods Malta and Gozo depended in the last resort upon Sicily. From 1282 until the coming of the Knights of St. John in 1530 what mattered was not whether the King of Sicily was Aragonese or whether he was half-Castilian, but whether Malta was being ruled by a king, a viceroy or a count, whether the centre of power and decision was in Palermo, Barcelona, Naples, Valladolid or Brussels, or in Malta itself. After 1530 the situation changed rapidly. Malta’s rulers were in Malta itself; they had non-Sicilian sources of income and they converted the island into a fortress defended by its own fleet, while the centre of affairs shifted from Mdina to Birgu and the Sickirig and other institutions went into eclipse. Naturally, there were elements of continuity. As the Turks showed in 1565, Malta was scarcely defensible and desperately reliant on Sicilian assistance. Only thereafter were the Knights fully committed to a permanent presence on the


This fundamental belief lies behind the construction of this book. Non-Maltese evidence has not been so much neglected as the primary task is, as far as possible, to establish the facts concerning the islands; these facts can receive interpretation in successive stages of study.

41 The generally accepted notion of a "Castillian" period leads to absurd errors, e.g. that the "souviens de Castill" governed Malta after 1470. J. Godeheu, Historie de Malte (Civ ed Paris, 1970), 26. The abandonment of the "Castillan" period of the text-books is advocated ibid, 49.
islands. It was then that Valletta was built, that Malta really emerged from its medieval poverty and backwardness; and it was then that it became retrospectively clear that 1530 had, in fact, been a decisive moment in Malta's history. In addition to the inconveniences resulting from an over-rigid periodization, other ambiguities have been created by those who have read their history backwards, who have assumed, often unconsciously, that Malta was destined to be Latin and Christian. For some writers, both Maltese and foreign, there had to be Maltese Christians waiting to be liberated by Roger the Norman, and if they had not been Christian they would not have been 'Maltese'. This is a familiar historiographical phenomenon: perhaps the nearest parallel is the *homo hispanicus* of certain Spanish historians, the archetypal Castilian who retained his identity through centuries of invasion and occupation by Romans, Visigoths and Africans. The argument for continuity was sustained, for example, by Sir Themistocles Zammit who held that modern Maltese have skills like prehistoric ones, that there was no sign of colonization by the Romans, and that the population remained Punic: 'The Maltese continued to till their fields, as they had quietly done during the Phoenician, the Roman and the Moorish governments... No ethnographic changes are expected in the people who received laws, rules and corn from Sicily but no colonists.'

It has, indeed, often been argued that there is a 'Maltese race' which survived all of the backward and isolated agricultural areas, but it seems hard to reconcile such theories with the known facts of medieval Malta. The only serious ethnological investigation so far attempted involved the measurement of bones and bodies classified as: Bronze Age; Roman-Maltese; 'Late Medieval'; and modern, the modern measurements being taken in Valletta, in the Maltese countryside and in Gozo. Unfortunately, the 'Late Medieval' bones were actually seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ones. It should yet be possible to obtain enough truly medieval bodies to fit into the picture. Meanwhile the fact that, for instance, 'the head breadth is remarkably consistent from Roman-Maltese times onwards' might be expected by a series of immigrations from the same place or by similar peoples; such statistics do not prove the existence of a 'Maltese race', while philological arguments from surnames and place-names illustrate rather than demonstrate ethnological theory.

In the later medieval period at least, it must have been reasonably clear who was Maltese; wherever his immediate ancestors came from, if a man had been born in

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Malta, if he felt he was Maltese and was accepted as such, and above all if he spoke Maltese, then he was Maltese. Despite the immigrations of rulers, garrisons, merchants, sailors, slaves and captives, despite consecutive expulsions of Christians, Muslims and Jews, and despite repeated razzias, plagues and other forms of depopulation which for long kept the total population probably well under 10,000, there was presumably continuity of a sort. Even in the depths of the countryside, where foreign serfs and slaves were used to farm the land and where the population was so exposed to corsair raids that part of the country was deserted in the later medieval period, this continuity can scarcely have been a predominantly racial one. Those who lived in the archipelago were not unlike their Mediterranean neighbours, whether they were Muslim, Christian or Jewish, or had changed from one of these religions to another. Whatever it was, apart from language, which distinguished those who were accepted as Maltese, those qualities must surely have been acquired by assimilation and influence, by environment rather than heredity. No historian is now likely to write a major work on Malta without being influenced by the notions concerning the geohistorical unities of the whole Mediterranean region advanced in Fernand Braudel's classic book. Braudel says little about Malta, and that in a post-medieval context, though he has stimulating ideas about islands in general. Basic studies concerning the geography, relief, water-supply, soil, climate, crops, land-use and so on are now available, and the modern statistics supplied open up stimulating lines of speculation for the medievalist; a chapter on Malta and other islands in an excellent and historically-minded geographical study of the Western Mediterranean places these data in their wider context. The difficulty is to integrate such knowledge with the limited medieval information available.

British Admiralty marine charts could be compared with the medieval *Lo Compasso de Navegare* and with information about shipping-routes and shipwrecks, to produce a nautical history of medieval Malta, bearing in mind probable constant winds and currents, and the considerable changes in the sea-level, which may have significant effects on small islands and deserve further study. Roughly at the
centre of the long east-west axis of the Mediterranean, Malta lies to one side of the narrow channel between Sicily and Tunisia which divides the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, and only if fortified does it effectively control Mediterranean shipping. Gozo is 80 kilometres south of the nearest landfall in Sicily, and Malta is some 380 kilometres from Tunis, so that the islands are close to both Sicilian and African harbours; but they were not an essential port-of-call on any major route, and in fact, despite Malta's excellent deep-water harbours and the shelter they could offer, much medieval shipping probably sought to avoid shipwreck or pirates there. The compass presumably made Malta not only easier to find but also easier to avoid. Through most of the middle ages Malta was controlled from Sicily, and what the rulers of Sicily ultimately feared was that it would fall into enemy hands; the textbook repetition of assertions concerning its role as a 'strategic cross-roads' do not really apply to the medieval period.

Set in one of the great 'liquid plains' of the inland sea, at approximately 36° North and 14° East, Malta and Gozo cover 243 and 69 square kilometres respectively. The islets of Comino, Cominotto and Filfla were normally uninhabited. Containing roughly 50 inhabitants per square kilometre, assuming a population of 16,000, the islands were formed of various types of soft limestone rock which is easy to quarry and build with; it also decays into fertile natural soil. A layer of impermeable blue clay regulates the water supply; the mineral resources are negligible. Malta is 57 kilometres in length and slopes down from the high cliffs which face south-west to the coastlines facing east, where the cracks and ridges that run across the island form inlets which often make good harbours but are hard to defend. There, to the east, lay the Grand Harbour with its medieval port at Birgu. Malta is far from being flat, and the ancient town of Mdina, with its suburb known as Rabat, is set on a ridge to the west overlooking much of the island; the highest point is 258 metres above sea-level. In the south and south-east is a plateau with soft undulating hills crossed by winds or water-courses, while the much hillier north-western part of the island, isolated by a cliff known as the Great Fault, tended to be thinly populated. Gozo, separated from Malta by some five kilometres of sea, lacks good harbours but its clay is deeper and therefore more fertile; it has a number of strangely flat-topped hills and, unlike Malta, the modern villages tend to be built along ridges. The summer can be extremely hot and enervatingly humid, especially when the sihkh or scirocco blows in from the Sahara. Really cold weather and frosts are rare. The winter is variable, bringing most of the rain at an average annual precipitation of 38 centimetres which can, however, fall catastrophically low. In 1473 the population was threatening to flee as the crops would not grow for lack of rain: ex quo non pluit et tuci li seminarii tuisci. Much of the island was always bare, rocky and wind-swept, and deforestation had undoubtedly encouraged the erosion of precious earth and affected the water-supply. There were a number of springs, and at Mdina water was stored in cisterns. Quintin stated in 1533 that the water was brackish, that the springs

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133 Anthony T. Luttrell, in Melis Historix, ii. 54-58.
134 St. Paul and many others would have disagreed with Godichet, 7: 'pendant des siècles, tout navigateur a eu la certitude de trouver dans l'île un refuge assuré contre la tempête ou contre le pirate...'
135 Cf. infra, 181 and n. 5.
136 Text of 1473 in Leopardi, in Melis Historix, ii. 375.
137 Bonzo, iii. 37.
Roman Malta produced olive oil and textiles,125 while temples, baths, villas, fortifications, toms, inscriptions, coins and wrecks all bear witness to a discernible level of prosperity and culture. Malta possessed an active port with harbour-works and warehouses, and Malta and Gozo each had a municipium, but they remained provincial outposts. The apparent continuity of late Roman life into the early medieval period naturally causes the medieval historian to regret the lack of an up-to-date synthesis of the evidence available.126 A number of Roman villa sites, set back from the sea on ridges overlooking flatter agricultural lands which run down to the coast, seem to have been occupied in Muslim and later times, but the extent to which such medieval cemeteries were operated on Roman villas remains a matter for study. The absence of an archaeological map of Roman Malta showing villas, roads and other remains, and of collections of datable late Roman pottery from such sites, is a serious handicap to the study of early medieval settlement in the islands. Christianity apparently reached Malta with St Paul, and the late medieval Pauline tradition has now been reinforced by the archaeological evidence from San Pawl Milqi.127 The extensive catacombs, many of them probably of the fourth and fifth centuries, provide Christian, Jewish and pagan inscriptions and symbols; some of the Jews were Greek-speaking.128


126 The standard general works are still A. Mayr, Die Insel Malte im Altertum (Munich, 1905), and T. Ashby, ‘Roman Malta’, Journal of Roman Studies i, 1911, 1–24; the most comprehensive survey of Malta’s material culture is that of E. Coletti, ‘Malta nelle letterature classiche’, in Miscelenea 1965, and ‘Trenti passaggi’ in Miscelenea 1966; and on the inscriptions, the catalogue of inscriptions, 1969 (Suppl. 1975). The bibliography of the inscriptions of Malta is listed in the appendix of P. A. M. Simons and I. J. de Subl, Corpus Inscriptionum, 1959–60.

127 M. Cassino de Aravillo, Tentativazioni archeologiche della civiltà giudaica a Malta (Rome, 1966). The medieval commentaries on the biblical text recording Paul’s Maltese visit (Acts xxvii–xxviii) apparently showed little interest in Malta, but detailed researches in the commentaries might conceivably throw light on the cult’s establishment. The excavation of the basilica at Gżira has provided rather strong evidence (summarized infra, pp. 93–98) for an early-medieval tradition, broken off there without renewal. The reading and interpretation of the S. Paul graffiti and their iconography is highly controversial; see A. Garbuzco and M. Cassino de Aravillo, in Archeologia etolica, xvii (1977), 145–197, 201–205, 216–217, 221–227, and in Arcetum, xvi (1967), 256–264. Written evidence for the tradition, possibly favored by the religious orders which mostly reached Malta in the 12th century (infra, ixi, 63–64), is later: correct the erroneous details in Miscelenea 1975, 264. Summarized in first found as Rebounds de utroque Paterbon, Annuaria de Stati, Cencellsia, yr 5, 610–640. The church is first documented, and that in a late copy, in an inedita Paudi ad Rovetta in 1448 (rather than Rovetta), and as di Malti (Maltensi Abbascoli) only in such texts as Marchi, in Miscelenea 1975, 27–31. The Pauline dedication of the cathedral is documented in 1002 in a text cited by Horace, in Papers of the British School at Rome, xii, doc. 36. Only 35 out of some 1400 Maltese Christians in the 1479/80 militia list were named Paulus; none was named Paulus Brandt, in Memorie di Malta, viii, 1961, 161. Only 17 of the island’s 417 churches were dedicated to St Paul in 1975. M. Muharner, in Sinece (Malta), xvii (1976), 27.


APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL MALTA

Even the outline of Malta’s post-Roman history remains extremely hypothetical. Sixty-five bronze coins found in a hoard at Rabat in 1961 date, with one marginal exception, to the years 350–360. Some were struck at Rome, but the rest all seem to have come from Eastern mints; this may suggest administrative as opposed to economic connections with the East, since bronze coins were used locally for small change rather than in international commerce.125 Malta may have been conquered from Africa by the Vandals who invaded Sicily and held it for a while in the mid-fifth century. There is only one piece of written evidence indicating a possible Vandal presence but it does not explicitly mention Malta,129 and the excavations so far conducted suggest no abrupt changes; five Vandal and eleven Ostrogothic coins in the National Museum date to the fifth and sixth centuries, but their provenance is uncertain.130 It seems probable that towards the end of the fifth century, as Roman dominion itself evaporated, Malta came under the distant control of the Ostrogothic rulers who succeeded the Vandals in Italy, and that it then passed into the Byzantine sphere of influence. The Byzantine general Belisarius possibly ‘touched’ the island in 553 on his way to campaign against the Vandals in Africa, and the Byzantines conquered Sicily in 554. A number of North African Christians, fleeing before the Bebras, possibly reached Malta in 544; probably by 553 and certainly by 592 Malta had a bishop. Ecclesiastical organization was connected with Sicily and controlled from Rome; there may have been monasteries on Malta and a papal estate on Gozo. The Sicilian connection is clear, and both Sicily and much of Italy belonged to a world which was being extensively Hellenized under Byzantine control. Early in the seventh century Malta and Gozo figured in a list of Sicilian towns; by 637 Malta had a diacon and a seventh- or eighth-century seal shows that there was also a deaconess and archon, perhaps some sort of military or naval commander. Byzantine Malta was a place of exile, and possibly a minor naval base; it was strong enough to hold out against the Muslims until 870. Its bishops were attached to the province of Sicily which itself passed under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Constantinople, probably in 796 or soon after.130

The written sources give no picture of life in Byzantine Malta. There was a system of heavy round towers, built in Roman times, which seem to have been both defensive and, since they were inter-visible, to have acted as look-out and signalling stations, but they are difficult to date. That at Ta’ Gawhar was probably destroyed in an accidental fire around the year 900, while the site of another, at Ta’ Cieda, was later used for numerous Muslim burials.131 Some of the Muslim graves uncovered at Rabat rested directly on Roman floors and pavements (fig. 2; plate iii), and the excavations at Tas-Siqlig and San Pawl Milqi also suggest a continuity of occupation on late Roman sites which remained largely undisturbed until the Arab incursions of the ninth century; the stratication at San Pawl gives a picture of gradual decline.

125 Miscelenea Report 1966, 8–10. Mr. Terrance V. W. Clark kindly advised us on the situation of the major Roman sites in this period.

126 Miscelenea Report 1965, 11–12.


interrupted finally by the Muslim catastrophe, at which point a layer of ash and burnt materials covered the Byzantine pottery.\textsuperscript{181} There was apparently a basilica, possibly with baptistry, at Tas-Silġ, and presumably there were other Byzantine churches elsewhere, including some of the rock-cut churches associated with early Christian catacombs.\textsuperscript{182} A great deal of Byzantine pottery was scattered across the sites at San Pawl Mliqi and Tas-Silġ;\textsuperscript{183} this material awaits detailed study, in which recent advances in the dating of late Roman pottery and lamps should make greater precision possible.\textsuperscript{184} Other materials include the Byzantine coins in the islands.'
mean ship; and the six Greek liturgical terms could have been in the language before 870. But even if these hypotheses were correct they would only indicate a Byzantine presence, not Oriental colonization; they involve assumptions concerning the uncertain continuity of Christian life during several hundred years of Muslim predominance; and, in fact, they remain unproved.

Behind many of these assumptions and hypotheses lies a lengthy and inconclusive philological debate. The general absence of pre-Arabic place-names suggests a decisive break in and after 870. The theory, advanced by P. Saydon, that a corrupt form of Latin was used in Malta before 870 is based largely on the names Malta and Ghasda, or Gozo, and only four other toponyms, including Skala and Pwales allegedly derived from scala a harbour and pala a swamp; this argument has found little acceptance. As against Saydon's six Maltese liturgical or ecclesiastical terms of Greek origin, which include λειτυ for Ascension, and were for chiasm or confirmation, Aquilina presented other Maltese liturgical words, such as knisja for church and qaszi for priest, which he held must be of 'Christian Arabic', possibly Maltese, derivation. This might be correct, but none of the liturgical terms under discussion is documented for the early period and such words could have arrived in a number of ways; variations of knisja, for example, could have come directly from Berber Arabic. Abela noted traces of Greek in the Maltese language in 1647, but all these words are really known in modern or early modern rather than medieval Maltese, and their earliest appearance is not documented. Much the same is true of the place-name evidence. Greek influences might have come in various ways, from Sicily after 1090 or from the numerous Greeks in Malta from 1530 onwards; in 1575 there was a Greek priest in Malta who had been ordained in Cairo. One place-name, Wind-in-Ram meaning the Valley of the Christians, is documented in 1467 as gueduriram, and references of both 1472 and 1476 to la porta di li grechi or porta greccum, through which rubbish was being conveyed at Mdina, might also suggest a Greek presence, but they neither prove nor disprove it. The list of contemporaneous texts on which to base philological hypotheses concerning what language was spoken on pre-Maltese Malta inevitably makes this discussion a most unsatisfactory one. It is important, therefore, to publish all the 500 or more manuscripts and nicknames and the more than 3,200 place-names, practically all of which have been drawn from notarial and other documents dating before 1555. These names reflect a strong Arab, and particularly Berber or Tunisian, influence surviving well into the fifteenth century. They include qutli, shariff and other words

The rise of Islam and the consequent shifts in the balance of Mediterranean power naturally affected Malta and Gozo which, with Sicily, moved into an African sphere of influence. The Maltese evidence must be interpreted against events in Africa, where Christian Roman provinces were overrun by Arab conquerors whose empires were, however, far from monolithic; Berbers resisted Arabs, and dynasty fought dynasty. Islam took to the sea in the seventh century, but Greek fire and superior naval techniques enabled the Byzantines to defend their vital sea-lanes and to control Sicily and the Central Mediterranean. The Muslims were raiding Sicily before 700, in which year they took Pantelleria and built a naval base at Tunis, but then they were diverted by conquests in the Maghrib and in Spain. Later, when the Aglabid rulers of Tunisia began their overseas conquests, Malta presumably came increasing under pressure; yet it held out. The Muslims captured Palermo in 831, and there is a reference to a raid on 'the islands near Sicily' in 898 by Abu

143 P. Saydon, 'The Pre-Arabic Latin Element in Maltese Toponymy', Orbit, vi (1960). J. Banister, 'Marra', Orbit, xxx (1971), argues that four names composed of Marra (Arabic: harbour) plus an earlier toponym (eg. Marma) are basically pre-Arabic. In intrinsic Latin script, this argument is based on texts of 1645, 1655, 1553 etc., whereas earlier forms are available from the immediately post-Maltese period, eg. Memra Mano in 1358 (Corpus de Neologii, 111).

144 J. Aquilina, 'Maltese Christian Words of Arabic Origin', in Cogito erek-biekri-.


147 See Dulina's examinations of Greek priests and their rites: Vurzneq (discussed supra, II n. 33) at f. 81v-81r.

148 Ibid., 99 n. 141; whether Rue referred specifically to Greeks or more generally to Christians is debatable.

149 Texts in Leopoldi, in Mélia Historica, ii, 191-192 (1472), 194 (1476).

150 For governing officials; the name for new Muslims of non-Arabic extraction; and so forth.

151 With such material, each word documented and dated, the philological discussions could be renewed on ground much closer to the subject of debate. Meanwhile, to the historian, the most probable explanation for the various terms derived from Islamic religious practice—such as Qamdim, from the Arabic Qamdim, used in Christian Maltese for 'fert'—which are now found in the religious parlance of the modern Maltese, is simply that such phrases remained in the language when the island's inhabitants abandoned Islam, but not their Semitic tongue, in the thirteenth century. Greek, Hebrew or Punic elements may have infiltrated the language in comparatively modern times; alternatively they may already have been established in the islanders' speech or have been preserved among minority groups of Muslims or Jews, though positive evidence for the survival of such groups during the Muslim period is almost completely lacking. It has been argued that in 870 there was still a strong sub-foundation of Punic, which might account for the case with which Arabic was, presumably, assimilated and for the strength which Maltese has shown by its subsequent survival as a fundamentally Semitic language; there were Greek-speaking elements, at least in ecclesiastical and in administrative circles; and there is no reason why Latin and Hebrew should not have been current as well. Malta has almost always been a place where several languages were spoken.

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al-Aghlab, who took 'great booty'. Almost certainly the Maltese did not take place until 870, and then it came from Sicily and met notable resistance. The sources are somewhat confused, but they suggest a Muslim occupation or siege in 869 which may have failed to take a citadel, perhaps at Mdina; a Byzantine attempt at relief or reconquest, which received the support of the Christian population; and a definitive Muslim conquest in 870 by the Aghlabid governor of Muslim Sicily, with subsequent retaliations against the inhabitants. The tenth century is an almost complete blank. In 939 the Byzantine general George Maniates attempted to recapture Sicily and, probably soon afterwards, there was a Byzantine attack on Malta which, according to the Arabic writer al-Qazwini, the Maltese beat back with the help of the servile population.144 Forty years later, however, resistance to the Norman Count Roger was very feeble, and Muslim Malta and Gozo entered a period of subjection to the Christian rulers of Sicily which lasted until the Latin colonization of the islands and the expulsion or conversion of many Muslims in the thirteenth century.

Muslim rule is almost as sparsely documented as that of the Byzantine dominion it replaced. A few Arabic texts provide a little information;145 there is no useful evidence in Greek;146 and the Hebrew sources have so far proved disappointing.147 Further research in Arab archives and libraries may produce more information, as in the case of the text concerning the marble columns exported to Tunisia from Malta after 870.148 The known Maltese inscriptions, some in Kufic script, provide little more than a few dates, names and Koranic quotations, and they cannot profitably be studied philologically, though the style of the lettering and the decoration would require investigation.149 Furthermore, a good part of this material relates to the period after the Norman 'conquest' of 1090. The archaeological evidence, which could be increased considerably, must be used to confirm and expand the picture derived from the written sources. The excavations at Tas-Silg and San Pawl Milqi both testify, in a somewhat uncertain way, to destructions and rebuildings which fit with a period of several decades of Arab raids previous to a definite conquest in 870. A mosque may have been constructed in the Byzantine baptistry at Tas-Silg, while the Arabs destroyed the villa at San Pawl Milqi and installed themselves in the ruins where they constructed crude structures, leaving fragments of glazed pottery and amphoras.150 The older excavations were never scientifically published. The investigations of Roman buildings just outside Mdina were begun in 1881 and continued in and after 1920. They revealed a Christian cemetery with numerous graves, many of them built directly on top of Roman floors (fig. 2; plate 6b). The tombs were usually made of small roughly-squared stones and were covered by sawn stone slabs. The saving technique was never Maltese and suggests foreign workmanship, while the contrast between the grander and poorer graves points to considerable social divisions. There were apparently some wooden coffins held together by iron clamps, and fragments of pottery; the bodies were buried east-west lying on their side with the head at the west, facing south. Apart from the inscriptions, the only other object found was a solid silver ring inscribed Rabīḥ Allah waliḥ – 'My Lord is one God'; the fifty skulls preserved for anthropological investigations seem not to have survived World War II. A number of other Muslim tombs have subsequently been uncovered at Rabat, the suburb of Mdina, and elsewhere.151

The question of Christian survival during the Muslim period is as tricky as it is important. Christians are not mentioned in the surviving evidence, and no Bishop of Malta is known between 870 and 1156. May argued long ago that the slaves who resisted the Byzantines in or around 1049/50 were presumably not Christians; that the Christians described by the chronicler Malaterra as being at Malta in 1069 were certainly not indigenous Maltese; and that the island remained Muslim during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.152 The general rule of Christian civilization was not exercised in Sicily for example, may not have been followed in Malta. The island seems to have resisted invasion for a long period, and a Christian revolt in 865/60 could well have provoked a harsh Muslim reaction; the Bishop of Malta was in chains at Palermo in 878, and there is the archaeological evidence for destructions at Tas-Silg and San Pawl Milqi. The curious story according to which the numerous slaves of the Muslim regime joined with their rulers to resist the Byzantines in about 1050 and were given a measure of freedom as a result, suggests that they may not have been predominantly Christian, but it does seem likely that some at least were

144 T. Brown, infra, 83-84, with translation and discussion of al-Qazwini; Amani's version (Bibliotheca, 1:400-411) falsified the issue by giving 'Maltese' where the text has 'slaves'. The Byzantine attack, dated to 879/80 by al-Qazwini, probably took place a decade earlier.
145 Texts scattered through Amani, Bibliotheca; many are reproduced, at least in part, with the original Arabic text in P. Mangini, Faustina archeo-biblica, in Miscellanea romanica, 1 (1932), xiii. A further collection, based on other editions and ms., appears in French translation only in M. Reddyle, L'archipel maltais dans la litterature historiographique et pioigraphique arabe de l'Epoque omeyyade, in Corpus arabo-historia. A group of texts describing Malta as inhabited only by sheep and donkeys apparently results from a confusion, and should be ignored. A new corpus, based on the ms. and accompanied by accurate literal translations, is a priority.
146 T. Brown, infra, 81-82, 86.
147 Malta is not mentioned in S. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish Communities of the Arab World as portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, vol. I (Berkeley, Calif., 1967-1973). These documents provide plausible evidence for Mediterranean contacts from the 6th to 13th centuries.
148 Infra, 83-84.
149 Infra, 83-84.
150 For inscriptions mostly from Rabat, published with photographs and translations in E. Roni, Le lapidi arabo-musulmani di Malta, Rivista degli studi orientali, xi (1939-40). Roni, 432 n. 1, denies the existence of the inscription, cited by Caruso, Francesco, 436, concerning a bishop of Malta, governor supposedly found at Sasqija (Rabat) in 1181 which allegedly read: 'piaze l'indole della popolazione di Malta'. Yet this supposition is still being repeated, e.g. in A. Bonomo, History of the Church in Malta, i (Malta, 1967), 59, for a proof that 'the greater part of the Maltese remained loyal to their old Faith'.
151 T. Zammit, 'Excavations at Rabat, Malta', Antiquaries Journal, iii (1935), 229, and idem, 'Zarzoani Remainus in Malta', Maltese, v (1955), 1-7, contains only the most summary account, and the mention of 'Andrea, Bishop of Malta' in the map of this in T. Zammit, Maltese, v (1955), 211, is evidently a mistake. See also J. D. Lees, "Les sculptures dans le haut moyen-age franc"s" histoire et archéologie (Paris, 1963), 76-77. Fig. 9 is based on the map of this in A. A. Caruana, Saint Dianius et Notabilis (Malta, 1964); it does not record T. Zammit's discoveries of 1900-1903, but these are now being partially reconstructed from Zammit's notebooks and photographs preserved in the National Museum at Valletta, where the Director, Mr. Francis Meli, and the Keeper, Mr. T. Coudron, generously provided every assistance. A study of the pottery, now in the Roman Villa Museum at Rabat, is also planned. The Arabic coins in the National Museum at Valletta lack secure provenance (Bent, 195-196), though a group is known to have been found at Mdina in 1965 (details in Abela – Clautier, i, 696-697; ii, 699-700).
emigrated from Malta to Palermo, belonged to a family which may have originated from Sfax in Africa, and which was also mentioned on an inscription found at Summer in Gozo.186 This was carved on a piece of re-used Roman marble which became the beautiful tomb-stone of Maimuna, who died on Thursday 27 March 1174 (plate 6a):

In the name of God the Compassionate and Merciful. God look kindly upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family, and grant them eternal well-being. 'To God belongs power and everlasting life, and his creatures are destined for death: And you have a fine example in the Prophet of God.'

This is the tomb of Maimuna, daughter of Hanan, son of Ali al-Mudallal called Ibn as-Sāri; she died, may the mercy of God be with her, on the fifth day, the sixteenth of the month of Sha'ban of the year 569, witnessing that there is no God but the God who has no equal. Look around you with your eyes. Is there anything in the world which can stay or repel death, or cast a spell upon it? Death took me away from my palace and, alas, neither does nor bars could save me from it. I have become a pledge, carrying my past deeds with me for my redemption, and that which I have achieved remains. You who look upon this grave. I am already denied within it; the dust has covered the lids and sockets of my eyes. In my resting place and in my position in death there is a warning, and at my resurrection when I shall come before my Creator. Oh brother, be excellent and repent.187

Muslim predomiance at Malta was interrupted by the Norman attack of 1090. The difficulty with the historiography of Malta in the Norman period is, once again, the lack of information. The standard account, based on the traditional sources, is still the article published in 1935 by Roberto Valentini, who considered the post-1090 period as one of Latinization.171 There is little new material, but notice should be taken of subsequent developments in the whole field of Central Mediterranean history which have altered the general context within which particular events at Malta must be interpreted.172 The first task is the dismantling of myth and legend, much of it groundless in the prestigious work of Abela who contributed only errors to the history of the 'Norman' Malta. Abela turned the Christian slave present in Malta in 1090 into a Muslim slave; he provided a bogus list of Norman bishops of Malta lifted uncritically from the Sicilian historian Rocco Pirri; he repeated the story given by Tommaso Fazzello that Count Roger built a castle at Mdina; he wrote that Roger fortified a castle by the sea built by the Arabs, and that he restored the 'cathedral' in Malta; he stated that Count Roger personally appointed a bishop, who was then consecrated by the pope; and he produced erroneous evidence for the establishment of a Benedictine community in Malta around 1130.
indigenous Christians in the islands, that a Latin garrison was left or that any kind of colonization had been attempted. It seems likely that Roger never intended to conquer Malta; he was making a reconnaissance in force, a razzia designed to demonstrate his strength, to secure booty and to prevent Malta being used as a Muslim base, a frontier operation which reduced the Muslims of Malta to tributary status. After 1090 Malta disappears from the documents; presumably it relapsed into the African sphere of influence during the troubles resulting from the minority which followed Count Roger's death in 1101 and the consequent resurgence of Muslim power. Malta had to be conquered again by Roger II in 1124, and the Arab writers Ibn-al-Athir and an-Nuwairiy both ascribe the conquest of Malta to Roger II.

This more definitive conquest of 1127 must be understood in terms of the general revival of commerce in the twelfth century, and of Latin expansion across the whole Mediterranean. After the Sicilans had destroyed the Muslim pirate base on the Tunisian island of Gerba in 1135, Malta acquired, or maintained, a commercial importance of its own as a staging point between Africa and Sicily, as the Siculo-Muslim geographer Idriši recognized. The Pisans and, in particular, the Genoese played a leading role in this maritime expansion. Documents on a Genoese presence at Malta are lacking, perhaps because it was too small to be cited explicitly in notarial contracts; however, there was a quantity of Maltese cotton at Genoa in 1164, and as the Thirteenth Century opened piracy flourished. In about 1164 a Pisan captain seized a Tunisian ship at Malta with the goods aboard it, and threw the crew into the sea. The Sicilian Crown presumably sought fiscal advantages from this general situation, but the evidence is entirely wanting; nothing is known of fortifications, enforcements, taxation or a royal dominium. Probably there was some sort of local council based on

113 Gualterion Malaterra, De rebus gestis Rogerii..., ed. E. Pontieri, in Rerum Italicarum scriptores, n.s. vol. vii, part 2 (Bologna, 1969), 34-45. The translation of this passage made by Simon de Lellis in 1518 is more or less faithful, but it omits the conquest of Gozo, stating that the Genoese arrived on a Certi navigando, nonno digito: text in Lo Ceppo di Scuola detta per lo Normanni insediate per fruitt Sienesi de Lidonia di Liberato, in Scritti e Studi (Palermo, 1954), 134-140. The Genoese occupied it on a Certi navigando, nonno digito: text in Scritti e Studi (Palermo, 1954), 134-140. The Genoese occupied it.


Muslim practice, perhaps similar to that for Pantelleria where, in 1211, the Sicilian Comune managed an arrangement by which half the tribute was to go to Tunis and all jurisdiction over Muslims was to be in the hands of a Muslim. African coinage, and the Sicilian coins which were based upon it, probably circulated in Malta at least until the mid-thirteenth century, when the Latin form and ducat emerged.184

There is no explicit evidence that Latins of any sort were settled in Malta before the close of the Norman period in 1194. The Norman rulers repeatedly encouraged the Benedictines to settle the islands of Lipari and Patti as part of a general policy of increasing the productivity of their domains, but the Aronian islands were uninhabited and uncultivated, and they were not on the African frontier; in any case, the settlement of Lipari was not restricted to homines lingus latinae.185 It was not Norman policy to demand the conversion of Muslims in Sicily,186 and there is no evidence that they did so in Malta which was far from being a desert island. The chief contemporary account is that of Roger II's Muslim geographer Idrisid: Malta, a large island with a safe harbour which opens to the east. Malta has a city. It abounds in pasture, flocks, fruit and, above all, honey. Idrisid also reported that shipping reached Sicily from Malta and, inaccurately perhaps, that Gozo had a safe harbour.187 Apart from the Norman expeditions of 1090 and 1127, the first clear reference to a Latin presence in Malta comes with the Pisan visit of about 1184, while the earliest mention of a particular Bishop of Malta, even outside Malta, dates to 1168.188 Burchard Bishop of Strassburg, who probably touched at the island on his way to Egypt in 1175, recorded Malta as a Saracenic inhabita, et est sub dominio regis Sicilie.189 Latin sailors and merchants presumably visited the islands, and there may have been a garrison and perhaps some clergy, but there is no evidence of Latin colonization. The situation changed rapidly after 1194, but at that date the bulk of the population probably remained non-Latin in speech, religion and culture. Malta was never really Norman at all.

Many myths concerning the church in 'Norman' Malta are still repeated as 'traditions'. The story that Count Roger restored the cathedral and bishopric, and that he endowed the episcopal see and elected a bishop who was consecrated by the pope apparently began with the Sicilian Rocco Pirri.187 The idea that Roger founded canonsries and 'benefices', and dictated ecclesiastical legislation is a modern invention.189 The alleged Norman Bishops of Malta from 1089 onwards who appear in the often-repeated list of Pirri were apparently Bishops of Mileto or Milletus in Calabria; in any case, none of them is documented as being in Malta. The post-Millennial bishopric of Malta is first reliably mentioned in 1176, when it was a suffragan of Palermo, and a certain Johannes Bishop of Malta was active in Sicily from 1168 to 1212.190 Once again, therefore, Malta had a bishop; he may have visited the island, but there is no evidence that he did so. It is possible that in post-Millennial times a number of pre-Millennial churches were brought back into use;191 clear evidence is lacking while the archaeological materials provide no precise date for the construction or reconstruction of churches.192 More could be done to follow up available clues. For example, in 1647 Abela wrote that a Benedictine named Costantino Caetano had provided him with an extract from the Benedictine martyrology of Puliano recording a notice which suggested a monastic foundation in Malta around 1130 at a place associated by Abela with the place known as Abbatesi ta'Depr; this story is still accepted. The test given by Abela reads:

Frideric Cal Murti, Sancti Ioanni Abbatii, discipuli Sancti Ioannis Pulianus Pulianus, qui ipse sanctuarii a monachi in Monasterio Pulianensi, postea minni ipse in Melitam Isulam Abbas, ille vitam heremeticam duuxit, et virtutibus coruscat.193

It was implausible that at the moment of conquest in 1127 Roger II should have turned to a vigorous new Benedictine congregation to establish a Christian presence in Malta. However, it is known that in 1139 Giordano succeeded San Giovanni de' Matera, the founder of the congregation of Puliano, as Abbot of Puliano. The passage from the martyrology, which had in fact been transcribed by Giovanni Francesco de' Piantis in 1609, actually opened: Frideric Cal Murti, Estimius de' Ioannis abbatiis, discipuli s. Ioannis ...194 The remainder of Abela's quotation is correct. The substitution of Giordano for the other Giovanni, also a saint, was not however so fundamental a matter as the near certainty that the Matita Insula was the Dalmatian island of Melita which lies across the Adriatic from Puliano. The ecclesia sanc...
Michail in Malta was confirmed to the Benedictines of Polzano in 1772; the monks had already been granted the whole island, on which they had founded a monastery, in 1151.

Trial trenches in selected churches or excavations elsewhere offer the best chances of discovering more about twelfth-century Malta. Evidence or memories of an earlier Christian presence presumably survived at Tas-Silġ. The probable Byzantine basilica there having apparently been occupied and profaned by the Muslims, the Latins seem to have built a crude apsed church, and possibly even a monastic foundation, close by the earlier basilica; a number of tombs and a scattering of glazed and other pottery were found. At San Pawl Milqi a tradition associating the ancient cistern with the Apostle Paul seemingly survived into post-Muslim times, when a church was built there. However, there are no archaeological grounds for dating the tombs, the pottery or the two churches themselves to the twelfth rather than the thirteenth century, and the general absence of a Latin or Christian presence in twelfth-century Malta makes a later date more probable. In fact, no building in Malta can be dated securely to the Norman period; nor can the few surviving Romanesque capitals. The Latins may have maintained defences at Mdina, but there is no evidence that the castle in the Grand Harbour was built by the Muslims or that the Normans had a stronghold there, though the port was perhaps fortified in some crude way. Naturally enough there is no sign of grandiose Norman palaces or mosaic-covered churches, and the cultural flowering of Norman Sicily can scarcely have reached Malta.

If Malta was never really Norman, then parallels drawn from Norman Sicily are largely irrelevant; developments on the other islands, Lampedusa or Pantelleria, are more likely to illuminate twelfth-century Malta. If Norman institutions, settlers, building styles or loan-words did reach Malta it is unlikely to have been before about 1098, when the Normans in Sicily the Normans had conquered the Muslims on land; on his return to Malta from this crusading venture he was acclaimed by the islanders and by a Provençal troubadour. He next attempted to set up a kingdom in Crete, where he was able to maintain some sort of hold until 1212. In 1218 Henry went to Germany on an embassy to the Emperor Frederick II, who was also King of Sicily and who in 1221 appointed him as Admiral of Sicily. After arriving at Damietta with the imperial fleet too late to save from the Egyptians the crusaders besieged within the city, Henry was imprisoned and deprived of the County of Malta, probably in 1221. He was soon back in imperial favour, though he seems to have lost real power at Malta; by May 1232 his son Nicolao held the title of Count, and Henry was presumably dead.

The years during which Henry controlled Malta and used it as an independent naval base and source of income must have seen a degree of settlement and Latinization, but detailed evidence is lacking. Once Frederick II had come of age and asserted his power in his Italian and Sicilian kingdom he ensured that the island could not be used as a centre of resistance against his royal power. Frederick went controlled by a succession of foreign Counts. Norman rule in Sicily formally ended in 1194, after a brief period of struggles between the descendants of the Normans and the German pretenders. It was during this period, some time between 1192 and 1194, that the renowned pirate Margarito di Brindisi, who became a Sicilian royal Admiral, acquired the title of Count of Malta. This title probably derived from an attempt by King Tancred to secure himself reliable political support. What rights Margarito had on the island and whether he even went there is not clear, but the alienation of Malta from the royal demesne by granting it out to non-Maltese Counts was, though initiated by the last Norman ruler of Sicily, essentially a post-Norman phenomenon.

Margarito's successors were all Genoese, a fact which reflected both the importance of the Genoese establishment in Sicily and the significance of Malta as a base on the flanks of the Genoese sea-routes to their African and Levantine colonies and markets. These Counts were typically Genoese in their blend of patriotism with private initiative, of official service with piracy; their close naval, financial and diplomatic links with Genoa meant that their unofficial activities ventured on official policy. Margarito was imprisoned by the Emperor Henry VI, who had by marriage become ruler of Sicily, and he was succeeded by the corsair Guglielmo Grasso of Genoa. Guglielmo Grasso may well have gone to Malta and provoked revenges there, for in 1198 Henry's Norman wife, Costanza of Sicily, granted the Maltese a charter incorporating the islands perpetually to the royal demesne, which meant direct dependence on the Crown. However, by 1203 Guglielmo Grasso had been followed as Count of Malta by his son-in-law Henry known as ‘Peaceatore’. A powerful figure in Mediterranean waters, Henry was able in 1205 to produce four galleys and considerable funds for attacks on the Pisans in Sicily. Using Malta as his principal base, Henry then pirated on the Levant and, reaching Tripoli in Syria with 300 vessels Maltesas whose exact identity remains obscure, he fought successfully against the Muslims on land; on his return to Malta from this crusading venture he was acclaimed by the islanders and by a Provençal troubadour. He next attempted to set up a kingdom in Crete, where he was able to maintain some sort of hold until 1212. In 1218 Henry went to Germany on an embassy to the Emperor Frederick II, who was also King of Sicily and who in 1221 appointed him as Admiral of Sicily. After arriving at Damietta with the imperial fleet too late to save from the Egyptians the Crusaders besieged within the city, Henry was imprisoned and deprived of the County of Malta, probably in 1221. He was soon back in imperial favour, though he seems to have lost real power at Malta; by May 1232 his son Nicolao held the title of Count, and Henry was presumably dead.

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to Sicily in 1220 and the Genoese lost their favoured position there. After about 1222 Henry retained the title of marquess of Malta, presumably with certain accompanying incomes, but the castros passed under royal command, while Frederick probably renewed Costanza's privilege of 1196 to the inhabitants of Malta. His son Niccolo never exercised power there. In 1244 Frederick apparently expelled many Muslims and colonized the islands from Italy. In 1329 and 1340 Frederick's protector in the islands, Paulino de Malta, was sending the incomes of the royal curia to Naples, provisioning the castles and their garrisons, and guarding prisoners exiled in Malta. Paulino was also concerned with the imperial menagerie. He had to send eight camels and two leopards to Frederick; to keep camels in Malta for breeding; to buy leopards and young horses in Africa; and to pay the expenses and transport of no less than nineteen falcons Frederick was sending to Malta. The emperor was extremely interested in his animals, and above all in the falcons which gave Malta a real importance in the eyes of Sicilian monarchs.

By this time the Sicilian administration was in full control. The diplomat and taxes functioning in Malta and Gozo; there were two castles in Malta, that at Mdina and the castro maris; the garrison numbered some 150 men plus 20 wives, and this included 25 seamen. The emperor was concerned that his agent Gillibert should institute a proper Inquest to recover any lands or rights lost from the royal dominion. The customs and constitutions of Malta and Gozo were reported to be different from those of Sicily, and the emperor was prepared to accept this as long as it did not harm the curia financially.

The Maltese, and probably the Gozitan, as well, must have had some sort of representative council, possibly Muslim in origin, through which they had twice protested to earlier monarchs in order to secure their direct attachment to the Sicilian Crown; royal agents probably had to deal with it over taxation matters concerning the curia. Gillibert's report to


The text of 1289 referred to privilegium Immanuel Cesaris et Francesco Frederick, probably two separate privileges, as pervasum episcop, no, but possibly a joint charter issued very late in 1287 or before all Nov. 1290. B. Kees, 'Regesten von Kaiser Heinrich VI', Quellen und Forschungen zur italienischen Frühzeit und Bibliothek, xvi (1965), 73, 69-100. The text mentioned here may have been either that at Mdina, or of the castro maris, first mentioned in ca. 1241 (fmsa, 58), but probably existing earlier.

There documents in J. Huubrecht-Neuland, Historia Diplomatica Federici Secundi, v parts 1-2 (Paris, 1255-1283), 552, 553-553, 556-571. During 1285 Frederick II granted Paulino the Kannun Sicilien issues in possession Spaccato in Sicily; the present author will publish this text shortly. The generic sense of onia to mean 'priests', as in Dante, Jacopone and others might conceivably have resulted from Malta's use as a place of exile: further references and examples in Huubrecht-Neuland, vii parts 1-2 (1866), 917-923; Valenzioni, in ASM, vii, 429-444 (with references noted); P. Toccyghe, Dante Dictionnary (rev. edn., Oxford, 1981), 416; Encyclopaedia Britannica, iii (Boston, 1971), 795.

Many editions, eg. Fredolinus II, De Alibi Vandalum Cultu, ed. C. Willemsen (Graz, 1949).

Details from a document of fundamental importance in Maltese history, Frederick II's reply to Gillibert's report of ca. 1241: text in E. Winkelmans, Acta Imperii redit ad XIII. (Leipzig, 1839), 713-715. The document survives in a copy of ca. 1500, and discrepancies in the statutes indicate considerable later revision. The text is also uncertain, while Winkelmans's text requires a commentary, the present author will publish a revised text. The financial aspect is discussed in detail fmsa, 129-130, and by Nāmiddi, ibid., in ASM, vii, 4.4.

Valenzioni, in ASM, vii, certly demonstrated the existence of some sort of local government, but leaves to prove that it was an Italian-type city he undertook (p. 122, 123) the following: By Frederick II in ca. 1241, that Malta's constitution was not like those of Sicily (fmsa, 14); he also fmsa, 60 n. 36.

Frederick indicated an economy based on the royal estates, cereal-producing latisfandia worked by slaves and servile labourers, the sallari. There were also 60 salli and ancilli, male and female slaves used by the curia for building and other work in the three royal castles; 8 salli from Gela, presumably Muslims captured on a raid, who worked on lands of the curia; 55 cowherds, 10 shepherds, and sundry others listed along with numerous animals. Part of the population was apparently exported; a Florentine sold a ten-year-old white Maltese girl named Malimina, presumably a Muslim, as a slave at Genoa in 1248, and there were others. The luminis insularum who had their own constitutions and whose cantilium Gillibertus was instructed to take, may have been Christian Latin immigrants or indigenous Muslims who had converted to Christianity to escape expulsion. Expulsion of some sort certainly occurred; a text of 1271 referred to the possessions of quodam Saracen who had been expelled from the islands, their lands devolving to the curia. A possible date for the expulsion of the Muslims is provided by Riccardo de San Germano whose chronicle stated that in May 1242 the population of Celano in the Abruzzi was sent to Malta :

Henry de Morro surnamed Cimelus cannot dispense, ut ad proissa reditum, et rediente capit et in Sicilia mitulit, quae apud Mimpur dignitater.

Whether the population of Celano was large and whether it remained in Malta is doubtful. This transfer of Latins to Malta may have accompanied a diminution in the number of Muslims there. Henry Count of Malta lost effective control of the island in about 1222; he was, however, involved in repressing the Muslim revolt in Sicily in 1223; 1225 was also the year in which the emperor's fleet attacked Gerba and other islands, taking numerous slaves; Frederick II's arrangement concerning Pantelleria had come in 1221; and Count Henry was himself at Celano in April 1225. All this points to 1225 for the expulsion of the Muslims from Malta.

The thirteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun reported:

The tyrants of Sicily besieged the Muslims in their fortress on the hill, surrounded them, forced them to come down from their castle and sent them beyond the straits establishing them at Lucera, a populous part of that province. Then he passed to Malta and chased out the Muslims who lived there, sending them to keep company with their brethren. This tyrant ruled over Sicily and the adjacent isles, and abolished there the law of Islam, substituting that of his own infidelity.

Ibn Khaldun placed these events after 1240 but, as far as is known, Frederick II never went to Malta, and in 1250 he died. Presumably Ibn Khaldun was actually giving a

Text in Winkelmans, 733-735; cf. H. Brenn, ibid., 131.

Text in P. Lopez, La veueil de l'islama de Malta a Genova nel 1248, ASM, vii (1963), 391; somewhat unusually, the girl gave her consent to her own sale.

Ends of l'islama de Genova nel 1248, ASM, vii, 391. 392.

Text in Consolatoe Anglorum, vii, 215.

Spurato di Santo Germano scriptor Chronicus, ed. G. Canari, in Roman Italicorum Scriptorum, no. vi part 2 (Bologna, 1899), 116-135; that the final phrase mentioning Malta appears only in the second version of the chronicle need not cast doubt on its veracity. Note the sallari named Dalilata Malitana at Aldissino in 1336: text in P. Ego, Codice Diplomatico des Sarrasini et Laura (Naples, 1917), 222-223.

Details in Anni, Storia, iii, 671-672; 679, 681; 681, 682-683.

Text in Anni, Bibliotheca, ii, 216-219; Minghetti, 240.
partially accurate description of the events of 1294 when Frederick was in Sicily and crushed the Sicilian Muslims, many of whom were then sent to Lucera. It is reasonable to suppose that some at least of the Muslims of Malta were expelled and Christian rule installed there.

The available population statistics, derived from the report of about 1341, have normally been accepted. The number of families in the islands is given as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gozo</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1,117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The apparent precision of these figures suggests a genuine count, presumably for fiscal purposes, and points to an almost exclusively Muslim island affected by a minimal Christian immigration which had just begun around 1294; these statistics provide no evidence for large-scale immigration, except perhaps in Gozo, and they would demonstrate the persistence of a Muslim majority of almost exactly three in four, 896 families out of a total of 1,117. The figures for the Jews are acceptable, but it would seem odd that the Christians should be concentrated in Gozo where they outnumber the Muslims; it would also be strange that the population of Gozo should be given as almost exactly half that of Malta which is over three times its size, a phenomenon never known to recur in later times. One possibility is that the document was exclusively administrative and concerned only with taxation, and that there were numerous Christians on Malta who were not included: bachelors in the garrison who did not constitute a family; other tax-exempt residents of the castrense; and the fideles and others whose counsel Abbot Gilbertus was instructed to receive and who may have paid other taxes for which Gilbertus did not account.

The report mentioned the incomes from the silius curie who paid 2,516 terzini in Malta, where they surely amounted to more than 47 families, and 584 terzini in Gozo. It also spoke of the villani curie sarramenti who owed a fourth part of their produce in kind. If the silius curie were really distinct from the villani curie sarramenti and were Latins, it would be strange that while there were 47 Christian families in Malta and 203 in Gozo, the silius curie of Malta paid 2,516 terzini as against 584 terzini from those of Gozo; and the origin and status of these Christian silius would still remain unexplained. This interpretation also assumes that these hypothetical Christian silius, who could conceivably have been converted Muslims, would have paid taxes in cash, while the villani sarramenti paid only in kind. If this were the case, there would have been many more than 47 Christian families on Malta. An alternative interpretation is that there were no Christian silius, but only Muslim silius curie, also called

832 Baedeker, History of the Crusades, i (Berlin, 1868), 5–6, 334. 833 This suggestion advanced, without the supporting arguments adduced here, in K. Beloe, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ost maltesischen Inseln, I (Berlin, 1957), 165–68, and Valentin, in ASM, n. 242, has hitherto received almost no support. These authors buttress the argument with the fact that in Jan. 1279 Malta was to pay 350 silver lire on a general subsidy of 7000 for the whole kingdom (tax in ASM, v. 143), but it is not clear what this might prove. In July 1277 a royal document enacted: non pontius dative dialect Maltese securum scilicet sanius potius pronuntiata nutriti corona sancti Ioannis regni Siciliae securitate nostri aucti ex的动作 omni. ari M. N. ab hic (text in Consillatore Anglicus, xxv, 104).
834 See below, note 145, and on the situation in the 19th century (infra, 55, 182–196). Renfrew's 'validation' in Before Civilization, 125–135, 161, and in World Archaeology, i (1970), 208, are based on multiplier derived from South Iran, Pakistan and Eastern Island (in 1702), and these produce a minimum population of 900 seriously raised to a maximum of 1,800; a maximum of 1,800 reduced to 1,000 or less; and an estimate of ca. 7000
that there was little or no Latin settlement in the twelfth century,\[^{184}\] then either a considerable wave of Christian immigrants arrived in the years immediately prior to about 1241, conceivably from Celeno; or, more probably, there were massive conversions. In the latter case, the actual population would have changed only marginally, so that Malta and Gozo counted 86 families of unconverted Muslims with another 1,250 families, all or most of them converted 'Christianos,' which would explain the persistence of the spoken Arabo-Berber language.

Frederick II died in 1250, and his Hohenstaufen successors Manfred and Conradin were eliminated in 1266 and 1268 by Charles of Anjou who won control of Sicily. The replacement of a German by a French dynasty in Southern Italy and Sicily was of major significance in Italian and European history, but it was not really a turning-point for Malta since the Angevins followed the old policies of the Normans, of Frederick II and Manfred; they too represented a northern thrust into the Mediterranean aimed at Sicily, North Africa and the islands between them, at Syria and at the Greek lands of Romania. The French king St. Louis sailed to Tunis and died there in 1270; Charles of Anjou failed to overthrow the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus and was himself ousted from Sicily in 1268 by the Aragonese, who then followed many of the same policies, but with a different emphasis. Malta passed, with Sicily, to Aragon, but the whole period from 1250 to about 1500 was one of uncertainties which saw a renewed if sporadic interest in the islands, some of it plainly piratical, on the part of Genoese, Pisans and Venetians. After Frederick II's death, with Manfred in difficulties and the Maltese resentful of Hohenstaufen exploitation, there was some sort of rebellion on Malta fostered by a group of Genoese who were anxious to restore their position in Sicily, and who played on the old claims of Count Henry's son Niccolò. Then in 1257 Manfred and the Genoese came to terms according to which Niccolò was to have all his father's lands, privileges and incomes on Malta and Gozo, while Manfred was to retain control of the castles; Niccolò could, if he wished, exchange these Maltese lands for others in Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. This agreement had to be renewed in 1261 and again in 1267. The Genoese fought the Venetians from a base in Malta, while in June 1267 Conradin agreed to give Malta to the Pisans in return for the support of their fleet.

After Conradin's death in 1268, the Angevins restored firm government of a type that aroused dislike throughout the Sicilian kingdom; it also left its mark in the royal registers, and henceforth the documentation of Maltese history is, quantitatively speaking, of a very different order.\[^{185}\] Once again an efficient Sicilian administration sought to control, cultivate and exploit the royal demanes. A Captain or Castellan commanded a garrison of 150 ultra montis or servientes gallici bodis, that is

184 As argued supra, 25-34.
185 Details and references in Valenzani, in ABAE, v. 326-329, annotated by Lustre, in Malta Historia, iii. 7-75; this period in Maltese history deserves to be thoroughly researched. Niccolò was still alive in 1271 (text in Gesta Jergaria, viii. 174).

186 The Angevinregister destroyed in 1943 provided a number of published documents (see supra, 5) on which this paragraph is based; brief preliminary use of some of these is made in J. Gallo, 'Malta under the Angevin: 1268-1530,' Soddis (Malta), vol. 2 (1956), but there is room for a much more detailed and lengthy study of these and other sources. It should be emphasized that whereas down to ca. 1200 almost every known document referring directly to Maltese history has been utilized either in this paper or in those below, thenceforth no more than suggestive outlines and an indication of the sources can be attempted.
synthesized in satisfactory standard works. The extensive bibliography has far out
run the consensus of agreed opinions, but some unifying ruling of this background is es
sential to an appreciation of Maltese history after 1565. 30
The Kings of Castilia-Aragon ruled in barren and mountainous Aragon, where
the Christian conquerors lived alongside Muslim and Jewish communities, and in the
Castilian coastlands whose prospering mercantile classes constituted the basis of a
remarkable expansion which began with the reconquest and resettlement of Muslim
Valencia and the Balearic islands. In 1282 Pedro III of Aragon could claim Sicily
through his wife Costanza, daughter of Frederick II's son Manfred; in 1311 the
Castilian Companies seized Tibreus and Athens; Sardinia was conquered in 1554 and
subsequently the Aragonese Crown repeatedly fought the Angevins and Genoese in
defence of Sicily and Sardinia. Catalan, Valencian and Mallorquin traders, slavers and
slave traders were active in the Levant and North Africa, and many settled in
Sardinia, Sicily and Greece. Malta and Gozo fitted into this Catalan-Aragonese
community by virtue of their attachment to and dependence on Sicily. Their im-
portance to the Aragonese Crown was strategic rather than commercial. Malta was
a port-of-call for vessels trading to Tripoli, but it did not lie on any major sea-lane
since shipping bound from the Western Mediterranean towards the markets of
Egypt, Asia and Byzantium normally followed a more northerly route through the
Strait of Messina, partly perhaps to avoid African pirates; the Venetians making for
Spain, the Atlantic or North Africa also preferred to sail along the north coast of
Sicily. 31 Of 190 vessels recorded as leaving Candia in Crete between July 1539 and
June 1560 just one was bound for Malta. 32 Genoese and Venetian interest in Malta
was never long sustained during this period; Venice was often allied to Aragon,
while Genoese presumably realized that it would be hard to retain Malta while
the Aragonese controlled Sicily. Malta and Gozo were situated on the very
fringe of the Aragonese common market for, while Catalan trade in the Maghrib was
of paramount importance, the two islands lay south-east of the direct routes from
Sicily to Tripoli. 33 As we have seen, the Aragonese Crown was only marginally interested in
Levant areas such as Cyprus or Athens where it had no vital interests but could
make diplomatic and consular arrangements which ensured access to important
markets without over-extending its limited administrative and military resources. 34

30 The standard political history is S. Soldavilla, Historia de Catalunya, i-ii (Madrid: Barcelona, 1968). Some
more modern ideas outlined here largely derive from the many works of J. Vicenç Vives, who was
responsible for a historiographical revolution in Iberian and Mediterranean studies; see also P. Giunta,
Aragona e Cristianiti nel Mediterraneo, a vols. (Palermo, 1963-1965), and M. de Vittis, I nuovi ostaggi a
l'esposizione della Corona d'Aragon nel secolo XVI (Napoli, 1972). Two books not in Castilian or Catalan which
must not be missed are P. Vilar, La Catilina dans l'Espagne moderne, i (Paris, 1965), and J. Rielle, Imperial Spata: 1496-1706 (London, 1985). The Indian Historia Espolit, i-ii (Barcelona, 1955-56), pro-
vides a complete annual bibliography; for recent syntheses, see the numerous papers on 'La investigacion de
la historia historica del siglo XVI: problemas y cuestiones', Anuario de estudios medievalis, vi (1991). The
outline and bibliography given here are entirely incomplete and inevitably unsatisfactory; they can
take no account of the varying interpretations of the contemporary sources. 31 In addition to Ducourbes, see
details on trading-routes in Luttrell, in Maltesi Historian, iii, 74-76.
33 This thesis is argued in A. Luttrell, 'La Corona di Aragon y la Grecia catalana: 1279-1394', Anuario de
estudios medievais, vi (1993).

34 Text in A. Cottone, Roman Lato Kraszoggoztes (Berlin-Leipzig, 1912), 86.
35 La Restitution de Sicilia, ed. E. Siviero, in Romana Sallustiana, vii, xxiv part (Bologna, 1973), 14-21, 221; Giovanni de Procida and a Lombardi knight named Accorza are said to have met Palmieri Albane and other Sicilian barons. The whole question of Giovanni de Procida and the rehabs
 ضمن has been endlessly debated; see, most recently, C. Trapani, 'The Involvement of Michael VIII Palaeologus in the Sicilian Vespers: 1261-1282', Byzantion, iv (1970).
36 See especially Chronik des eden Ex Roman Adimiro, ed. K. Lehrs (Stuttgart, 1895), 138-145.
37 Ibid., 186.
a Genoese named Andreolo, who declared himself ready to attack the island,406 but Andreolo soon went over to Jaime of Aragon, King of Sicily, who by October 1290 had recognized his title as Count of Malta. In 1287 and again in 1290 Jaime insisted that, whatever peace conditions were agreed with the Angevins, he should retain not only Sicily but also Malta, Gozo, Pantelleria and the joint Siculo-Catalan fandon at Tunisia. In 1292, having also become King of Aragon, Jaime gave orders for the strengthening of the garrison and castle at Malta. In 1296 Jaime renounced the Sicilian Crown to his younger brother Frederick. There followed a period of antagonism between the two brothers, during which Malta was in some danger both from Jaime and from Ruggiero Lauria, who retained control of Gerba. On 25 March 1296 Frederick III appointed Lauria as Admiral of Sicily, but Lauria soon abandoned Frederick and on 4 April 1297 Jaime reappointed him Admiral of Aragon, after which Malta and Gozo were attacked and devastated by an Aragonese fleet in 1297. Lauria then passed into Angevin service, and in April 1300 Charles of Anjou invested him and his heirs with the County of Malta in perpetuity; on Ruggiero's death in January 1305 the claim passed to his son Roger, but his rule at Gerba was ineffective and short-lived. Malta remained in Sicilian hands.

The urban patriarchs of Catalanuia, with their ports and industries, were responsible for the emergence of a single economic and strategic unit, a Western Mediterranean common market in which the merchants of Valencia, Barcelona and Perpignan could buy and sell in the Balearics, Sardinia and Sicily, while at the same time controlling in those islands the safe harbours they needed along their routes to lucrative markets in North Africa and the Levant. The Catalans also needed imports, notably Sicilian grain, and this economic inter-dependence was reflected in the political structure of the union. Flexible institutions enabled the Crown to respond rapidly to pressures from its diverse subject peoples who retained their own laws and assemblies, while a network of royal governors-general and viceroys acted in the separate parts of the commonwealth, holding curia, receiving homages and raising taxes. Between 1296 and 1297, the Sicilian kingdom was ruled by a cadet branch of the house of Aragon but, despite moments of tension, Sicily remained politically and economically within the orbit of the Aragonese confederation. Malta fitted conveniently into this pattern. In 1345, for example, the Sicilian king authorized the Catalan consul at Messina to nominate a vice-consul at Malta and Gozo.

In 1300 Frederick III of Sicily considered enfeoffing the extrim at Malta to the Genoese, but Malta was eventually acquired by Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada. The king recovered the island from Moncada in exchange for lands in Sicily in 1320 and later Frederick granted Malta and Gozo to his younger son Guglielmo who, by 1330, had ceded them to his half-brother Alfonso Federigo d'Aragona. On the latter's death, by 1340 at the latest, Malta passed to his eldest son Pietro Federigo d'Aragona, who was Lord of Salona in Greece where he reigned; he had lost the County by 7 October 1350 when, at their inhabitants' request, Malta and Gozo were returned to the royal dominium by King Ludovico of Sicily. A clear pattern was emerging: the Crown conceded the islands to royal cadets or Sicilian magnates; the population, anxious to escape exploitation by rapacious and presumably absentee Counts, petitioned for reincorporation into the dominium; the Crown conceded this request in perpetuity, but subsequently in a moment of weakness granted the County once again. The Counts enjoyed certain rights, such as the nomination of Captains and Justiciars or the exercise of the jurisdictione criminalis and the munus et missum imperium, but it is not known what profits they may have derived from the islands. Malta and Gozo, however, remained part of the Kingdom of Sicily; the royal curia and the Admiral of Sicily imposed taxes and exercised certain powers; and, ecclesiastically, Malta continued to suffer from papal interdicts imposed on the Sicilian kingdom. In 1356 the troops of Jeanne of Anjou, Queen of Naples, captured Messina and Palermo. On 30 March 1357 Jeanne issued a diploma enfeoffing her powerful favourite and Grand Seneschal, the Florentine Niccolò Acciaioli, with the County of Malta and Gozo.407 The Neapolitans were soon expelled from Sicily and the Acciaioli claim was never made good, yet the threat had been real enough; the Acciaioli were no friends to the Aragonese who suffered severely from their activities in Greece, where Niccolò's son Nerio became Lord of Corinth and the greatest enemy of the Catalans of thebes and Athens. Meanwhile, on 29 December 1356, Frederick IV of Sicily granted the County of Malta and Gozo to Guido Ventimiglia, but in 1362 Guido died and the islands again reverted to the Crown.

In 1366 Frederick IV visited Malta to deal with certain problems the exact nature of which is now unknown. On his return the king fell into the power of Manfredi Chiaramonte, Admiral of Sicily, to whom on 4 May he enfeoffed Malta and Gozo in perpetuity; but Malta was apparently in revolt, since on the next day Chiaramonte was granted Terranova in Sicilia usque ad acquisitionem inuadurn Multi et Gauditi. Royal power in Sicily had collapsed in the face of baronial insurrection; the enfeoffment of 1356 was a mere formality soon revoked, but Manfredi Chiaramonte had cotton interests in Malta which, some years later, he was exploiting in collaboration with a group of Genoese merchants and financiers.408 Malta's subsequent rebellion remains obscure. The royal Captain of Malta, Giacomo de Pellegrino of Messina, was married to a royal warriorwoman, Margherita d'Aragona. Pellegrino may, on the contrary, have aligned himself with the war of the Chiaramonte, perhaps he had been given piratical attacks on the Genoese, to some of whom he owed large sums of money. In 1372 Frederick, supported by ten Genoese galleys, returned to restore order at Malta; local realists recaptured the castrum mari; and Pellegrino was banished. The king appointed new officials and

404 Every year Acciaioli was to provide 'the service of one black slave, dressed in crimson cloth and bathed the night before...'. His son Angelo Acciaioli was still using the title in 1389. There is no evidence that the Acciaioli actually controlled Malta, as is often alleged. [Cesare] Zinangher de Buja, 'County of Malta in Greece', Scienze (Malta), xxx (1952), is unreliable. The Acciaioli were bankers. Another Florentine banking house, the Bardi, had a foundation in Malta in 1314, according to R. Davidson, Storia di Firenze, in part A (Florence, 1965). Sub, citing Fragmenti in posaco del principe Andrea Ceruti, I, 1, but this notice requires confirmation.

405 In 1376 also Giovanni Chiaramonte was named Captain of Gerba and Kerkennah, which he had conquered; F. F. Giaura, Sicilia e Tunisi nel secoli XIV e XV, in his Medieval Mediterrane: saggi storici (Palermo, 1954), 157.
rewarded faithful service with grants from royal lands and those of the rebels. Some
grants were made in return for military service; others for a census paid in agricultural
produce. The Crown was diminishing its patrimony in order to secure support, yet
the appointment on 31 January 1376 of yet another royal kinsman, Giovanni
Federico d’Aragona, as Captain of Malta provoked a new revolt in which the faith-
ful royalist of 1372, the notary Lancia Gatto, took a leading part. 248
Frederick IV died on 27 July 1377, leaving his kingdom to his young daughter
Maria. Some of the magnates recognized her as Queen of Sicily, but Pedro IV of
Aragon also had claims and a protracted struggle ensued in Sicily, complicated after
1378 by the diplomatic repercussions of the interminable schism in the Roman
Church. It had already been suggested, in 1370, that Frederick might temporarily make over
to the Aragonese Crown all the incomes and rights of Malta and Gozo. Frederick
bequeathed the County of Malta to his natural son Guglielmo, but this provision had
little or no effect and in September 1380 Pedro IV asserted his sovereignty over the
County.244 Meanwhile, Maria of Sicily had been carried off to Spain and married
to Martin of Aragon whose father, Martin Duke of Montblanch, was Pedro IV’s son.
Pedro’s claims to Sicily were transferred to the young couple, but the gabelle stears,
Manfredi Chiaromonte, Artale Alagona, Francesco Ventimiglia and Guglielmo
Peralta, divided the kingdom into spheres of influence and presided over a regulated
anarchy. Manfredi Chiaromonte, the most powerful of these magnates, put into
effect his old claims as Count of Malta. In 1388 he led an expedition which seized
the Tunisian island of Gerba, possibly using Malta as a base; the response was a
Hafsid attack on Gozo in 1389.245 Chiaromonte also fostered Adriatic contacts.
In 1380 Maltese Jews and Maltese shipping were trading at Dubrovnik, and a
Dubrovnik ship carrying Dalmatian timber arrived in Malta; there was even a
proposal for a trade agreement between Dubrovnik and Malta.246 The Venetians
showed less interest, and the wrecking of a Venetian nave in the Grand Harbour in
1397 or 1398 doubtless discouraged them.247 The economic effects of these years of
trouble cannot be measured, but a visitor in 1394 found the islands in a reasonably
prosperous state; he mentioned the production of cotton, cumin, wine and meat, and
claimed that there were as many as 4,000 hearths in Malta and 400 on Gozo.248
Manfredi’s will, drawn up in 1390, provided for the estates of Malta and the
islands of Gozo to pass to his daughter Elisabetta Chiaromonte, wife of Niccolò
Peralta, but in March 1392 Martin Duke of Montblanch arrived in Sicily and

248 On this period, important aspects of which remain obscure, see texts and references in Valentini, in
ASEM, v. 1925-26, p. 45; 1926, p. 46; Bruce, in Papers of the British Academy, 1941, p. 316 passim. Akretu, 441-448,
ministered Frederick’s visit of 1372 as an attempt to restore the situation following a Genoese attack on Malta.
244 In 1380 Pedro confirmed the claims of Ludovico Federigo d’Aragona, Count of Salerno, whose
support in Greece he was anxious to ensure. Ludovico Federigo, a nephew of the Piero Federigo disposed
of the County in 1350, remained in Greece where he died in 1388, his Greek claims and titles passing
to his wife Helena Cantacuzeno; he had no influence upon events in Malta, and neither his widow nor their
daughter Maria claimed the islands.
245 On the Hafsid attack, Brunschwieg, i. 191.
246 Texts in Luttrelt, in Moriti Historia, v. 155-164.
247 Luttrelt, in Moriti Historia, iii. 77-80.
248 Le Granié, ‘Relazione del pellegrinaggio a Gerusalemme di Nicola de Martoni, notaio italiano’, 1394-1395,
Rivista de l’Orient latino, iii (1956), 538-579.

APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL MALTA

PEDRO III 1285

Allonso III 1291

JAIME II 1347

FREDERICK III 1337

Allonso IV 1356

PIETRO 1348

PEDRO IV = Eleonora

LUDOVICO FREDERICK IV

1347

1375

1355

1377

Juan I 1396

Juan I = Leonor

Castile 1392

1392

FERNANDO I 1416

1409 = MARIA 1407

ALFONSO V 1438

JUAN II 1479

FERNANDO II = Isabella de Castile

1516

1504

Juana 1555

CHARLES V 1518

Simplified genealogy of the House of Aragon (rulers of Sicily in capite); Kings of Aragon
underlined; the dates given are those of death. Pedro III’s wife, Costanza of Hohenstaufen,
was the daughter of Frederick III’s son Martin. Jaime II became King of Sicily in 1285 and
of Aragon in 1291, but relinquished Sicily to Frederick III in 1306. Pedro IV had claims to Sicily in
and after 1377, but subsequently they were transferred to the younger Martin; the latter was
succeeded by his father Martin in 1409, at which point Aragon and Sicily were reunited.
launched a five-year struggle to reverse the disintegration of royal power. Malta
remained at the mercy of the Sicilian magnates, who used it as a base for resistance to the
Aragonese Crown. Martin repeatedly sought to secure support in Sicily by
granting out the County of Malta to Giovanna Alagona in 1391, to Guglielmo
Raimondo Moncada in 1392, to Arre Alagona in 1393. After 1393 Arre Alagona
changed sides frequently, and in 1396 he attacked the Sicilian coast with two galleys
apparently armed at Malta.249 The islands were granted on 15 December 1396 as a
marquisate to Guglielmo Raimundo Moncada; in April 1397 he was sending envoys
to receive homages in Malta, by June he had received a delegation from the Maltese,
but in November he, in turn, was formally deprived of the marquisate. Then,

249 The Genealogia were again involved, and at one point four Genealogia galleys carried Alagona to Malta;
text of 9 July 1396 in D. Groova Llopistera, ‘Inscripct del Rey en Marti’, 1396-1407, Arsori del Institut d’Estudis Catalans, iv (1911-12), 222. The events of 1397-1399 in Sicily and Malta are too confusing to be summarized adequately here.
following decades of oppression and exploitation by tyrannous or rebellious Counts, the inhabitants of Malta and Gozo petitioned for their return to the royal dominium, to direct dependence on the Crown. Some Maltese had in fact resisted the rebel Counts, and on 16 November 1557 the islands were reincorporated in perpetuity into the dominium; in February 1558 they were exempted from various duties and taxes, while royal supporters were suitably rewarded. However, these exemptions and concessions so diminished royal incomes that the castles at Malta and Gozo could not be maintained, and in November 1599 they were revoked. Martin the Elder succeeded his brother Juan as King of Aragon in 1556 and his son Martin as King of Sicily in 1599, in which year the Maltese and Gozitan universitates sent him an embassy which presented their complaints but emphasized their attachment to the dynasty. When the elder Martin died in 1560, the Sicilian regency was disputed between Queen Bianca, the widow of the younger Martin, and Bernat Cabrera, the Grand Justiciar, who secured control of Gozo and threatened Malta. However, Francesco Gatto held Malta as Captain for Bianca, and on 24 June 1561 he gave him permission to reduce Gozo to obedience per la ultima casa di Aragona; his chief opponent in Gozo, Antonio la Borba, was defeated and his lands confiscated. The Maltese recognized Fernando de Antequera, the new King of Aragon and Sicily elected in 1412, and the articles they sent him in 1416 looked back to the time of the two Martins, when Malta was reducita a la su natura signoria, 20 anni a la suia casa di Aragona.

The balance of power within the domains of the Aragonese Crown did change. Barcelona faced serious decline when its banks crashed in 1581; in 1583 the Aragonese and Valencianos imposed a semi-Castilian dynasty on the Catalans; and soon after, Alfonso V moved the centre of the confederation away from the islands towards Italy. The doctrine of pacta, the notion of a contract between the ruler and the leading elements among his peoples, of allegiance to the king who respected his subjects’ rights and customs, was particularly strong in Catalonia. When in 1416 there was no direct male heir to the throne, the Catalans insisted on a prince from the house of Aragon; in 1428 and in 1468 the articles of Roberto Valenti, whose tenure is marked by his Italianate anxiety to prove that the Aragonese connection was ruinous in every way. The period from 1450 to 1530, though the most heavily documented, has received no coherent modern treatment at all.

Fernando’s viceroy in Sicily, his younger son Juan, made a number of sensible reforms in 1416, ending the disastrous practice by which the Castellans of the Burgund castle could sell exemptions from guard-duty. But Alfonso V, who succeeded in 1416 and spent only 12 out of 52 years of his reign in Spain, had ambitious policies in Italy, Africa and the Levant which outran the real resources of the Aragonese confederation and shifted its centre towards Sicily and Naples; and this altered the Crown’s attitude towards the Maltese, who suffered in particular from the king’s recurrent temptation to finance his costly wars at their expense. In 1420 Alfonso

48 The Maltese protests of attachment to Aragon had other, more practical meanings. The universitas and its council persistently resisted alienation from the royal dominium, while demanding tax-exemptions on imported Sicilian grain. From 1397 to 1530 Malta was not granted out as a County, though it was alienated in other ways. In this respect, the fifteenth century differed from the fourteenth. Maltese historiography has traditionally regarded the election of Fernando de Antequera in 1422 as inaugurating a ‘Castilian’ period. Fernando’s father, Juan of Trastámara, was King of Castile but his mother was an Aragonese princess and his grandmother a Sicilian princess, so that he had genuine claims to the Crowns of Aragon and Sicily. Under Fernando’s son Alfonso V, who was born and bred in Castile, a number of Castilian administrators reached Malta, yet it was Alfonso who abandoned both Castile and Aragon for Sicily and Italy. There were few Spaniards in fourteenth-century Malta; it was in the fifteenth century that Malta was most truly Aragonese. Even the marriage in 1469 between Fernando, King of Sicily and heir to the Crown of Aragon, and Isabella, the heiress of Castile, did not bring Malta into direct dependence on the Crown of Castile, for the subsequent union of the Aragonese and Castilian Crowns in their Burgundian grandson, Charles V, was a personal one and only very gradually led to the unification of their kingdoms. Castilian and Aragonese policies in the Mediterranean did come under common direction, yet legally, administratively and economically Aragon and Castile, and their domains, remained clearly distinct long after 1530. The notion that there was a ‘Castilian’ period in Maltese history has no real justification, and is best abandoned. For the rest, historians have concentrated on the islanders’ struggles and sacrifices to buy out the hated intruder Gonazalo de Monroy in 1428, a much misunderstood episode long seen as a turning-point in a struggle for liberty; and in 1454 the universitas was to resist its opposition to a new royal enfeoffment of the islands, by Charles V to the Knights Hospitallers, on the royal privilege of 1458. The period between 1412 and 1468 is covered by the articles of Roberto Valenti, whose tenure is marked by his Italianate anxiety to prove that the Aragonese connection was ruinous in every way. The period from 1450 to 1530, though the most heavily documented, has received no coherent modern treatment at all.

48 Valletta, of course, saw Malta’s ‘integrationism’ in a different light: la sua fedeltà alla corona aragonesa e castigliana non è diventare ad un tratto esclusi la Sicilia e sienne altre (ADM, viii. 56). But that was only a part of the truth.
pawed the royal incomes and jurisdictions in the archipelago to Viceroy Antonio Cardona for 30,000 florins of Aragon, a sum which Cardona was naturally anxious to extort from the islanders as rapidly as possible. In 1426 a renewed pawing, to Goncalvo de Monroy, produced immediate protests. Viceroy Guglielmo Moncada went to Malta in person and was insulted; Moncada's goods were pillaged at Mdina, and his wife was besieged in Birgu castle. Threats from Sicily and lack of food supplies forced the Maltese to treat; on the other hand the next viceroy, Nicolò Speciale, realized that the Crown could not afford to lose Malta. The Maltese were allowed to buy out Monroy, and actually succeeded in raising 20,000 florins, rhetorically pledging themselves to sell their own persons and their sons and daughters. The universitas was to control the incomes of the rectoris or Crown finance office for ten years and a local notable, Antoni Desguanes, became Castellan. In 1428 the king promised an amnesty and perpetual incorporation into the Crown of Sicily, while the Maltese were to have the right to resist massa forti any further attempted alienation. Meanwhile Goncalvo de Monroy died, pardoning the Maltese the 10,000 florins still owing.

Malta's wealth was strictly limited and Alfonso was, in a sense, consuming it in advance when he sold future tax incomes to foreign barons or to officials who would pay cash. The king knew that the profits of such investments would have to be squeezed from the islanders, who complained repeatedly of invasions, plagues, bad weather, depopulation, overtaxation, corrupt officials and the rest. No doubt the average Maltese disliked being detached from the Crown, partly for traditional sentimental reasons of political loyalty, partly because such action heralded baronial exploitation; and doubtless such feelings were voiced through the universitas, membership of which was broadly based. However, there was another class of Maltese or Siculo-Maltese who really dominated the universitas: these were the leading men of Malta such as Francesco Gatto and Antoni Desguanes, Pedro de Banco and Simone de Mazzara, men whose interests were threatened by the Cardonians and Monroy, men who aspired to control the seneschal and the castellania of the castle, to rent the gabelles, to occupy the feishe, to manage the cotton trade, and in general to dominate Maltese incomes themselves. In fact, a few years after the uprising against Monroy, Pedro de Banco held both Castellanas and the two seceres of Malta and Gozo, and a number of feishe as well. Often these men were really Sicilians or Spaniards; many fought as naval captains for Alfonso V, and some were also corsairs or pirates, but they did not really constitute a purely military aristocracy because their lands, their marriages and their position in the universitas all gradually assimilated them to the local notables. It suited those who held a semi-monopoly of public office to appeal in the name of liberty to ancient customs and to a certain local patriotism, and at all costs to resist the greater operators such as Monroy. Naturally, when such lesser oligarchs themselves secured royal support and grew over-powerful, as in the case of the Desguanes and their clan, the rest turned against them.\(^{244}\)

\(^{244}\)\textsuperscript{244} Malta was exposed not only to the Crown's creditors but also to its enemies, to the Genoese and above all to the growing power of the Hafids of Tunisia. Alfonso's policies provoked raids on Malta and Gozo without providing adequate defence, for though there was a foreign garrison in Birgu castle the islands were guarded largely by the islanders themselves. The Tunisians attacked Malta, apparently capturing its bishop, in 1423; Alfonso's brother Pedro rioted with an expedition to Kerkena in 1424; the Hafids then raided Sicily, and in 1429 a large fleet ravaged Malta for three days, all but capturing Mdina and carrying off 3,000 captives or more. Finally Gutierrez de Nava arrived from Sicily with reinforcements and refortified the castle, and in 1432 Alfonso himself led a somewhat unsuccessful punitive raid on Gerba, possibly visiting Malta on his return,\(^{245}\) the resultant truces at least produced an end to major Hafid attacks. In 1435, however, Alfonso was defeated at sea off Ponza by the Genoese, and Calabrian ships devastated Gozo in 1439. There was a series of Genoese incursions, while ceaseless piratical activity, in which the Maltese themselves took part, centred on the islands. The king had no positive policy; he could not risk losing Malta and had to maintain its garrison, but he did not make it an outpost for maritime operations, as he did, for example, with the small island of Kastellorizo between Rhodes and Cyprus. Alfonso could have little profit from Malta, except perhaps briefly after 1420. In 1450 he was planning to alienate the islands to the Valencian military order of Montesa, a project soon abandoned in the face of Maltese threats to invoke the charter of 1428 and resist by force.\(^{246}\) In 1458, just before his death, Alfonso finally acted both to restrain the profiteers to whom he had continued to pawn the islands' incomes, and to restore the universitas its rights. He reduced the powers of the Castellan of Birgu castle and introduced reforms concerning food supplies, military service, clerical absenteeism and elections to public office.\(^{247}\)

There was relative peace after 1432. The effects on the population and economy of foreign razzias, administrative malpractices and continual fiscal exploitation are hard to gauge, particularly as the main sources are the capítols, the eloquent but exaggerated complaints and requests sent to the king or viceroy. In 1439 the Gozitanos spoke of 1500 souls paid out in taxes li quali, teste Dios, extraheremus quasi di reteas ii osse nostris,\(^{248}\) while in 1456 the Maltese complained: quinta insola e quasi una parcella vaccheta situata in mezzo mare, remota undique da omni succursu et rifugio . . .\(^{249}\) The capítols lamented the thousands of Maltese seized by Hafid raiders but they also blamed the cost of raiding them back again.\(^{250}\) Wine and grain had to be imported from Sicily but this was not necessarily a sign of economic collapse. Piracy brought employment and profits, as well as losses. There was overtaxation, emigration to Sicily, plague, the collapse of viticulture which was said to sustain 1,000 souls, and depopulation at Mdina, but it is hard to treat such factors statistically, or to estimate the real effects on the Maltese; their sufferings were not measurable. The
problems and paradoxes of economic decadence and cultural flowering throughout the Aragonese domains, as indeed in the whole of Western Europe in the fifteenth century, remain unresolved.\footnote{383} In Malta, evidence for a state of crisis has to be seen against indications of immigration and population growth, of a certain wealth based on cotton and piracy, and of the construction of churches, convents and palaces in Mdina and Rabat. It is too simple merely to say that Alfonso’s ill-founded Italian ambitions ruined his finances and prevented him from defending Malta, and that he sacrificed the island to his greedy officials. It seems, in fact, that equally serious crises came after Alfonso’s death in 1458, with revolts and upheavals in Sicily and Catalunya, and several decades of depression in Malta itself. Then, after about 1480, came a dramatic and as yet unexplained rise in population.\footnote{382}

After 1458 Malta was still a minor shipping centre; at one point in 1479, for example, three Catalan vessels were in port.\footnote{384} The diffusion of Ottoman power into North Africa and the Western Mediterranean brought new dangers, and Turkish raiders attacked Birgu in 1488. Malta had become a serious objective for the Turks, and Fernando II of Aragon, his viceroy and captains did take measures to secure its defence.\footnote{384} In general Malta remained within its Salvo-Aragonese context. As King of Aragon, Fernando II renewed Alfonso V’s interventions in the Italian wars, while the campaigns during which his forces, with valuable Maltese help, captured Tripoli in 1510 represented a fusion of Aragonese commercial interests with an extension into Africa of the old Castilian ideal of the romanza. Turkish expansion into North Africa after 1456, and the events which led to the Hapsburg Charles V becoming not only King in Sicily, Aragon and Castile, but also emperor in Germany and ruler of a world-empire with lands in North Africa as well as in Europe and Asia, resulted in a widening of the troubles. On the southern margin of Mediterranean Christendom, Malta formed the central point of a defensive axis stretching from Tripoli to Sicily. It lay on the frontiers of a conflict between two universal powers, Ottoman Turkey and Hapsburg Spain, and it was dangerously exposed to Muslim attacks; Motta was an inexpensive way of defending both Malta and Tripoli when he granted them to the Order of St. John in 1550, but he did so as King of Sicily. Malta and Gozo again became, technically at least, a fief held from the Sicilian Crown, and the islanders’ resistance to this new enfeoffment showed how little some things had changed.\footnote{385}

From about 1570 onwards the surviving materials permit the construction of a reasonably detailed, if notably uneven, outline of events at Malta. Such \textit{storia documentale} can no longer be regarded as constituting real history but none the less it remains essential for the further study of those social, economic and cultural developments which now form the centre of historians’ interests, and without which the causes of events itself can scarcely be understood. The outline is based on a combination of available documentation and the documentation dates only from about 1410 or even later. A detailed study of fifteenth-century Malta which will replace the articles of Mifsud and Valletta is now being written,\footnote{386} but it will always be difficult to trace the origins and development of fifteenth-century institutions in the partial obscurity of the preceding century; paradoxically, the period of direct Sicilian rule in the fourteenth century, which must be studied above all at Palermo, remains dimmer than the later thirteenth century, for which Angevin and Aragonese documents are available.\footnote{387}

The fundamental question of the islands’ population is a difficult one. It can scarcely have been more than 10,000 in about 1424, and may have been considerably less; it was estimated, presumably with some exaggeration, at 4,400 hearths, perhaps 20,000 people, in 1523.\footnote{388} Early fifteenth-century figures suggest a total of some 10,000, which decreased slightly after 1420 but increased after 1460 to about 20,000 in 1530.\footnote{389} In such small islands razzias, plagues, emigrations or expulsions tended to provoke disproportionately severe demographic repercussions. More fundamentally, the economy apparently changed during the late fourteenth century. Cotton was being exported to Sicily in some quantity,\footnote{391} and the Catalans were importing raw and spun Maltese cotton, either directly from Malta or from Sicily, at least from 1404 onwards; they carried cloth, oil, sardines and dried fruits to Malta in exchange.\footnote{387} Grain and wine were seldom exported therefrom, but had to be imported, while the island’s economy probably became dangerously dependent on piracy and a single crop, cotton. Though there were still household slaves—black and white, Christian and Muslim—in the fifteenth century, the disappearance of the servi and effronzi presumably reflected the end of the great royal estates, agriculture unprofitable and increasingly alienated.\footnote{387} There is a good deal of evidence for the abandonment of settlements, but deserted sites do not necessarily imply a falling population; they may mean that the country people—the \\textit{bizzarri} or \\textit{beduini} as they were known—moved from one set of caves and mud houses to another, that they were leaving exhausted fields for more fertile lands, that they had changed their crops

\footnote{386} The various articles of G. Wettinness provide a forthcoming major publication.

\footnote{387} H. Broun and C. Wettinness (infra) are severely handicapped by this lack of materials.

\footnote{388} Infra, 39-40.

\footnote{389} G. Wettinness, \textit{The Militia List of 1419-1424: A New Starting Point for the Study of Malta’s Population}, \textit{Malta Historia}, v. no. 4 (1963), 83 and infra, 165-166. C. Traversi, (\textit{Richerche sull’ occupazione della Sicilia nel XV secolo}, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Scienza Lettere ed Arte di Palermo, v. no. 4 (1953), 257-285, 284-285, produces totals for both islands of ca. 5000 in 1454 and 1470; these seem too low, perhaps because the 1470 figures were taken from taxation records. Quintiine calculated on 10,000 inhabitants in 1435. For what it is worth, Mifsud, in \textit{Archivio Melitense}, iii, 111, mentions a copy of an affirmation of various old men, made in 1553, that the population had doubled in the previous 100 years. For later figures, Brough, i, 165-168.


\footnote{389} Infra, 131.

\footnote{387} Late-medieval reference to \textit{fieressi merci imprese ad habitatione ali stari at etii bizzarri}. Royal Malta Library, Bibliotheca Ms. 570, f. 22v.
or were fleeing from raiders. Quintin in 1533 and Abela in 1642 were still remarking on the deserted lands, yet the fifteen-year capital of Mdina remained repeatedly complained that it was small and partly uninhabited, that the town dwellers were moving out to the cassali. The meaning of the word cassali was itself obscure. It was interchangeable with rafal and may have signified a farmstead, estate or village. It also defined an administrative district usually producing from 20 to 100 men for militia service. Little is known about the typical Maltese cassali; whether it was fortified, whether it had a tower or a church, whether it corresponded to an economic unit, how it was managed, what its social structure was. In what way agricultural labourers held land, whether the workers made contracts of the nazzurru type, or what size their holdings were are other unresolved problems. Excavation might provide some illumination, and the notarial and other documents can certainly help; the Sicilian models may also be relevant.

The commissioners' report of 1524 and Quintin's Descrittio of 1533 emphasized the harshness of life, the lack of wood, the heat, wind and dust, the fewness, the precarious drinking water, the stoniness of the fields, the deserts of cisterns. Gozo seems to have been more fertile. Malta had water in places; thistles and grasses provided fuel and fodder; there were fruits and olives, honey, cotton, flax, and herbs such as cumin. What kind of agricultural revolution cotton production may have provoked after about 1536 is not clear, but Quintin described cultivation methods:

Since the sun dries it all up, I am surprised that although the earth is rather warm, the farmers mix dung in it to measure it. The ground is sown in springtime, but first it is watered; the ploughed field is then at once sown, for they hold that that makes the soil become more fertile, and then the ploughed land is covered by dragging a barrow or rake over it. At the proper time it is hoed and freed of weeds and useless grasses both by hand and by hoe; during the harvest, the rains are much feared. The inhabitants seek, if they are at all able, to sow grain more than anything else, since they draw the greatest profit from the grain, as the island is excessively fruitful in it... The trees bear fruit twice annually, and there are often two harvests a year, for when the barley has been cut, it is soon followed by the cotton, and indeed the cotton by the barley, so much so that the land never ceases to produce. Thus, where the soil is suitable, it is extremely fertile; one modius of seed may give sixteen modii or sometimes more. Over the whole island the fields normally yield a ten or twelvefold return... It may be possible to use medieval place-names to trace manlands and marginal areas, as has been done for the early modern period. Certain districts, notably in

G. Wittinger (infra) provides discussion and bibliography on the problems of cassali and abandoned sites.

Test in Wittinger, in Maltese History, v. 85-105; some cassali produced considerably less than 20. A document of 1497 referred to ditta cassali et ciascun: text in Leopardi, in Maltese History, ii. 239.


1924 report in Boiss, iii. 30-51; on Quintin, infra. 5. "Quintin's crop yields seem exaggeratedly high." B. Boccut, 'The Distribution of Manlands in Malta during the Seventeenth Century', and Some Observations on the Distribution of Nughera Place-Names in Malta', Journal of Maltese Studies, ii and iii (1964 and 1975); cf. idem, 'Rural Settlement in Malta', Geography, lv (1971).

north-west Malta were not settled but farmers may have walked or ridden considerable distances in order to work them. It is difficult to gauge how far marginal lands were exploited in the late middle ages, but unencultivated areas were used for grazing and hunting. There were also gardens and closed Orchards. To what extent the countryside had been terraced or turned into small fields is also uncertain. Uncultivated stone walls and two-faced rubble-filled walls were already being constructed, at least in buildings, in prehistoric times. Such walls used up loose stones, broke the stone, contained valuable soil and marked boundaries. They also shut in animals or, else, excluded them. Some at least of the peasants lived in natural or rock-cut caves, as described by Quintin: Trogloïtes in ea multi supus exuvias: hoc illis denuo. Quintin also said that even the Birgu houses were unmortared. Despite its scarcity, some wood may have been used in houses, particularly in view of the frequent shifting or abandonment of sites. The rare self may have had a central building or tower, rectangular and flat-roofed, built with squared stone slabs laid across internal arches and finished with a waterproof and strongly-resistant paste of lime, broken pottery and water, as described by Francesco Laparelli da Cortona in 1556.

Many sixteenth-century houses still had reed roofs, which were sometimes blown away. Datable evidence is, however, scarce and domestic buildings can seldom be dated on stylistic grounds. Town life was largely limited to Mdina, though there were communities outside the castle at Birgu and in the Gozo cassali. At Gozo, as at Mdina, the Muslim and post-Muslim urban areas were so contracted that it occupied only the most defensible, fortified fraction of the Roman town. Then in the later medieval period the suburbs spread out again within, and at Mdina beyond, the ancient Roman limits. Mdina itself was outgrown; in 1419/20 its suburb of Rabat produced 254 millinates...
as against 132 from Mdina.285 The port at Birgu was an increasingly strong centre of foreign influence. The parallel peninsula on which Senglea was later built was scarcely occupied before 1530. The universitas records provide a detailed picture of life at Mdina in the fifteenth century with decisions concerning the fountains and water-supply, the sale of fish, gambling, education and all the petty affairs of a small town. The council regulated the price of many kinds of meat—mutton, pork and beef—and of beans, honey, milk, cheese and so forth.286 The 'civic nobility' had their palaces in Mdina, and there lived the island's few judges and notaries, and its Jewish community. Perhaps 500 strong, the Jews were grouped in their aljamas and dependent on the Jews of Sicily; they had a synagogue and a cemetery, and their own notary. As well as being artisans and barbers, the Jews were active in commerce; they had to raise their own taxes, maintain men-at-arms and subsidize royal galleys.

In the fifteenth century there were repressive measures against them, yet they owned as much property that it was difficult to sell it all when they were expelled in 1492.287 Mdina and Rabat had a middling element of artisans who were organized in guilds and brotherhoods, and who had to resist efforts, in 1475 for example, to exclude them from office in the sambataras.288 Malta's doctors were almost all Jewish. There was a hospital at Rabat by 1372, and other hospitals, one of them in Gozo, were founded during the fifteenth century. Rigorous quarantine measures were taken against recurrent epidemics, and when plague arrived from Africa in 1495 Birgu was cut off by a cordon of guards.289

In addition to the military command with its own officials and garrison under the Castellan at Birgu castle, and to the secreti and other representatives of the Sicilian curia who administered the taxes, gabelle and royal estates, a local government, the universitas at Mdina, was headed by its Capitain, known in Maltese as the Balun. In 1426 the king nominated Guglielmo Murina as Castellan, with Lancea Gatto and Paolo Maniavaca as judge and notary to his court; there were parallel arrangements in Gozo. These men were among the notables of the islands, but in the fifteenth century the terms 'noble' or 'baron' were used without any evident precision, as was 'feud'. Most Maltese must have been unsure of the technical difference between a ruhal, a casale, a feudum or fegh, a tenementum terrarum held at casatus, a tenementum burgensitatis which was alloial land not held in feudal tenure, and so forth.290

A text of about 1400 confusingly described one holding as:

Tenuta alta di terzi soccora lu fego di rachaiminuso in lu casali di rachailhir du lu dicru balun ilmi, diisias in diversi pei cum spazzu, cum catt e cum mandu sit in lu dicti fego...

285 Fugio, 185; these incomplete figures ignore the Mdina Jews and others.
286 See eg. act of 1475 to Leonardi, in Melis Historia, ii. 173, 173a, 155.
287 C. Booth, 'The Jews of Malta', Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society, xii (1951), a work derived largely from Sicilian documents; Dr. Godfrey Ventriglia plans to publish a more detailed study based on the Maltese archives. On Jews active in foreign commerce ca. 1426, see texts in Lattrell, in Melis Historia, v. 161-162.
288 A. Miffou, 'I nostri Consoli e le Arbi e i Mezzi', Archivum Melitense, iii no. 1 (1917), 57 no. 3 et passim.
289 P. Cusani, Medical History of Malta (London, 1862), 217-18, 224-25, 173a, 169-170. There seems to be no clear evidence that the great plague, the Black Death, reached Malta in 1349.

On official, land-tenures and their confusion, see H. Benne and G. Ventriglia 1956, and details and terms in Briscoe, in Papers of the British School at Rome, xii. Briscoe writes without seeing G. Galca Scannoza, The Office of the Secreto of Malta... Melis Historia, vi no. 2 (1955), which covers the period 1490-1530 not studied by Briscoe; it is essential to consult Galca Scannoza's addenda in ibit, vii no. 5 (1973), 376.

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An item from the capitation of 1473 illustrated similar uncertainties:

Item applica la Universitatis predita aldo per fiato che la pena la quali e solita per via di bandu pubblico imponenti de mandato alcuna magistratura a quelli che trasano et mantengono aparsi lor animali inferendu danno in li possessori de anima non si pota Imponente ultra di uno quanta persone messederi alu officio di la espellendo e una aggraita elo bagioni di malta e che tali pena basta loco sumo quato portari agli possessori circundati e Inchi di mura e In li feghi et eisimimemorum de terri burgensitatis appellati et nominati in lingua dicto fosse per causam quod in lingua latinam Imperator feghi e non in habitaru tenenti In liquiob locum si huya lauita considerazioni di li danni fo [s]cope siempre ex antiquo si hauo eobbato per todiiu ruri novitati e suo extensio. Plant des. Vierge.291

Evidently the distinction between feghi et imineniti de terri burgensitatis was blurred in the Maltese term casatus et casum which now means simply 'estate'. Fief-holders could be relatively humble men, and those who bought or sold fiefs, or had them confiscated, cannot have felt that their status ultimately depended on fief-holding. No doubt there was a semi-urban patriciate, a recognizable establishment which included clerical figures like the bullying archdeacon Lancea Desguan. Fief-holders held lands or other properties in the Sicilian manner; some did owe military service, but the 'feudal' contract was really an economic one, the concession of an income by the Crown. Fiefs could be purchased, sold or otherwise alienated; they were all held direct from the Crown, which could if it wished replace them with a money-grant, and there were no feudal courts or jurisdictions. The case of Alvaro de Nava illustrates one aspect of the system. He was attached to the royal household and was captain of two galleys when, in 1456, the king granted him 200 gold florins annually out of the Crown's rents; later the viceroy changed these, first into an income from the Maltese senesi, and then into the incomes of the fief of Benwarrad. Subsequently in 1477 the king, having borrowed 3,000 florins from Alvaro de Nava without paying interest, granted him and his heirs the actual possession of the fief until such time as the whole sum had been repaid.292 This was one way in which the royal patrimony was dissipated. In 1530 the Grand Master of the Hospitalers complained to Charles V that nothing, not even the castles, was left: non un palmo di terra che non sia dato o Imponento Infiato al Castello medemo.293

Sicilian expenditure on Malta's defence was minimal, though there was a garrison of mercenaries at Birgu which could be used against the population if need be. Land tenure involved military service, and absence holders of property—tanta pelulora quanto burgensitatis—were supposed to provide men and horses.294 A local militia numbered at least 1,607 in 1429,295 and in 1499 King Fernando, exasperated no doubt, claimed that eight parishes around Mdina could provide 4,000 armed fighting men—ludere de bellis.296 The royal fleet was a distant comfort in

285 Fugio, 186; these incomplete figures ignore the Mdina Jews and others.
286 See eg. act of 1475 to Leonardi, in Melis Historia, ii. 173, 173a, 155.
287 C. Booth, 'The Jews of Malta', Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society, xii (1951), a work derived largely from Sicilian documents; Dr. Godfrey Ventriglia plans to publish a more detailed study based on the Maltese archives. On Jews active in foreign commerce ca. 1426, see texts in Lattrell, in Melis Historia, v. 161-162.
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290 Text of ca. 1050 in Catacina, Archivio di Stato, Fondu Benedettini Ms. 195, f. 395v; 1473 text in Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 34, f. 390. A test of 1453 described the casus di ruhal baruk quod latitare sub omnibus casulo baruk [fugio, fuga].
291 Bartoli, Capitost, iii. 433-455. Royal Malta Library, Universitas Ms. 7, f. 158v-159.
292 Text in Valentini, in Archivum Melitense, ii. 296v-297.
293 Details infra, 139-140 et al. A. Miffou, 'La Malizia e li Terri antichi di Malta', Archivum Melitense, iv no. 2 (1940), an important article.
294 Text of 1450 in Valentini, in AISM, viii. 493; other details in Miffou, in Archivum Melitense, iii. 278, 277, and Briscoe, in Papers of the British School at Rome, xxx, doss. ix, 29 (1372).
295 Fugio, 159; there were also consigned obligations.
296 Royal Malta Library, Bibliotheca Ms. 1275, f. 285v-295 (modern copy).
critical moments, so that naval defence depended largely on local shipping; Francesco Gattie, surnamed Melineti, was appointed by the Venetians to command Malta’s galleys or galilot in 1506. There was no exploitation of the harbour as a major base before 1530, many of the leading families on Malta, such as the de Nava, were galley-captains or had their own galleys. There were also fishing vessels and shipping which brought provisions from Sicily. A Sicilian port-book for the year 1507-8 showed that 19 Maltese vessels carried almost all the grain exported to Malta; 957 sailons from Vindicari, 38 from Syracuse, 48 from Agrigento and 81—of which 44 went to Gozo—from Terranova. There must have been a minor ship-building or ship-repairing industry; some timber from Dalmatia, for example, was sold or seized at Malta as early as 1576. Spectacular profits came from piracy and from the more official guerra di corsa which occupied an important place in Malta’s economy; piracy flourished during the endless warfare of the Sicilian Crown, and gave Malta a special importance. All classes could suffer as well as profit. In 1490 the Maltese complained that whereas their corsairs had once been completely free to attack Muslim shipping, they were then being made to give a fifth of their booty to the Sicilian Admiralty. Piracy, however, drew men away from the land, so that in 1440 foreign vessels were forbidden to recruit at Malta; in 1448 both Maltese and foreigners were forbidden to arm ships for the corsa at Malta. In 1540 there were Maltese protests against ‘friendly’ corsairs and against the forcible recruitment of oarsmen by the Aragonese. The island’s most famous pirate, Michele de Malta, operated around Cyprus and Rhodes in the 1460s. In 1555 and 1550 Maltese pirates based on Tripoli were active in the Aegean, provoking protests from the government of Crete.

The coastal towers, primarily look-out and signal posts, were probably difficult to defend. One was to be built on Comino in 1418 while the tower in the port of Bennwarrad, where shipping was accustomed to shelter, needed repair in 1449. Even the Gozo castello was in ruins in 1442. The defence of Malta depended essentially on the castri maris at Birgu which existed by 1319 at the latest, and in

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Angelic times it was provided with effective munitions which made it hard to take. By 1274 there was an inner and an outer castri maris described with the borgo at its foot. The development of artillery and the appearance of the Turks must have accentuated the problems of its defence. The 1534 commissioners found the castle in a ruined state with few armaments, and they realized that it was not only necessary to control the harbour, but it was itself overlooked and dominated from across the water; furthermore, it could easily be mined. There were 40 houses within the castle, which was separated by a ditch from the Birgu, a considerable settlement which was not, however, defended by a wall across the landward end of the peninsula. In case of attack the castru maris and its cannon did not even control the Grand Harbour; the villagers, those of Zeitun for example, were supposed to take shelter up at Mdina. Mdina stood on the site of that part of the Roman town which evidently became the Byzantine kanzon and then the Arab capital, and it must have undergone a succession of repairs and rebuildings. In 1545 the universitas was petitioning to be allowed to rent out space within the ruined castri maris at Mdina in the hope of attracting the population back from the castri to defend the town and to provide an income with which to repair the walls. The universitas claimed, falsely perhaps, that before 1577 the castri maris had sufficed to defend the island, and that the castle and the internal wall at Mdina had been built by the tyrannous Chiaromonte merely to oppress the populace. The latter must above the gate was said to be in ruins, and permission was given to use the stone from the wall dividing the castri from the town in order to repair the outer gate and walls. In 1573 the universitas was considering the purchase of six bombards to defend the city. Yet, despite constant repairs and expenses, Mdina’s defences were in a hopeless state in 1554 when it was reported that only twenty of its houses could be put into reasonable repair.

The universitates of both islands had numerous functions. They petitioned the king or viceroy for free grain or for exemptions from taxes on grain exported from Sicily, and they nominated the consuls who protected Maltese and Gozitan in

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**NOTES**

1 Texts are published in Laurenza, in *ASM*, v. 130-31 (1794) and *infall*, 155-86 (April, 1795).
2 Ibid. from 1790 to 1794 (1804, 31).
4 There were bombards at Birgu by 1459 (see *infall*, 135-136). For an iron cannon or bombard some 65 cm. long, probably early 14th-century in date and found in Malta, G. Laking, *A Catalogue of the Armoury and Arms in the Armoury of the Knights,* (London, n.d.), 44 and plate XXXII.
5 Ibid. iii. 103-105, 89; cf. J. McPartlin, "The Defence of Malta," *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, iii no. 1 (1953), 11-12.
6 Ibid., vol. vii, 39-40, 55.
7 Text, showing Mdina in almost perpetual ruin, in Laurenza, in *ASM*, vii. 465 (1490), 475 (1477), 485 (1495), 89 (1385) and 192 (1454); see also Mdina, in *MD*.
8 Text in L. Boffo, in *MD*, ii. 317.
9 A. Mifsud, "L’apprivoisement et l’Université de Malte nelle passate Dominazioni," *Aeum*.

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10 "Testo," in *MD*.
11 "Testo," in *MD*.
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Sicilian ports; the Sicilians had their consuls with jurisdiction in Malta.382 The extensive documentation available has yet to be used to unravel the complex problems of who was eligible for membership and office in the universitas, how elections were made, how the constitution and finances functioned.383 In moments of crisis representatives could be summoned from the clergy and from the countryside; in 1450 each capello or district was to produce at least four men; in 1476 six delegates from each castello were to intervene along with the clergy and with Guatiran representatives; and in 1474 the capellani were to bring their parrocchiani to a parlamenta generali.384 The fifteenth-century universitas was broadly similar to many town councils throughout the Mediterranean regions of the Latin West, but its earlier development remains obscure. Roberto Valentini showed that there was some sort of local council by about 1198 when the Maltese demanded incorporation in the demanum, and Gilibertus' report of about 1214 referred to an advisory body, but Valentini exaggerated in his attempts to demonstrate that this was a comune in the Italian style.385 The council of the universitas dealt with numerous items of local business. It was responsible for the walls, markets and hygiene of Mdina; it could elect its own officials, raise taxes and petition the Crown. Business was in the hands of the Captain of Mdina, four jurats, and other officials whose election was confirmed annually by the viceroy.386 The magnifici and nobili generally dominated proceedings and there were attempts to exclude the artisan element, yet when necessary the universitas effectively mobilised a wide degree of popular participation; it provided a platform for conflicting interests and gave scope for real debate. At a meeting of the consiglio in 1479 no less than 32 speakers, including judges and notaries, debated whether they should provide a grant for a Maltese Augustinian to study abroad.387

The other major institution of later medieval Malta was the Latin Church. Despite much sporadic writing, largely on the fifteenth century, there is no satisfactory

382 Mifsud, in Archivio Maltese, iii, 57-60, 78-79. Maltese representatives do not seem to have attended assemblies in Sicily. Valentini's claim (ibid., viii, 43) that the Maltese had a right to send their bishop is based on the presence of Bishop Nicholas, who may never have been in Malta, at a special synod convoked at Terracina in 1114 to deal with the question of a duel between the Kings of Sicily and Naples; text in H. Finke, Akt der Arsacianer, iii (Berlin, 1902), 257-258.

383 On the sporadic publication of the universitas records, supra, 6-7.


385 See especially ASM, vi, 44-63; x, 139-200, 205-212, 217. Valentini had ideological motives for seeking to date the universitas as early as possible. His idea (ASM, viii, 140) that it was a Norman innovation is surely unpersuaded (cf. supra, 38) as is the notion that it was copied directly from Sicily (ibid., 143). It can really only be traced clearly from 1456 (texts in ASM, viii, 74-203 onwards). Valentini used a phrase in a text of 1350-'le dette universitas che stava tranziendo et álteria (ASM, viii, 466)—to take the universitas back to before 1756, but probably wrongly meant 'transient', i.e. 14th-century. Valentini argued for 'comune' when the document of 1286 clearly meant 'universitas' (ibid., 166). Again (ASM, viii, 44-63), he used a series of papal bulls from 1304 onwards to prove that the Maltesian institution was and was recognized by the Church. But inspection of the papal registers shows that phrases such as universitas civitatis Arzutanae or Universitatem nostram were simply common-form addresses regularly found in bulls addressed to different albores and other institutions throughout Latin Christendom; they prove nothing. Much remains to be said on this topic. The earliest explicit reference to the Maltese Universitas dates to 1572: Palmero, Archivio di Stato, Cancelleria 19, f. 1709.

386 Viceroyal text of 1475 in Leopardi, in Materia Historica, ii, 155-156. On taxes, corvée (aspharia) and galerece, see Leopardi, passim, and Mifsud, in Archivio Maltese, iii, 419-413, 439-430.

387 Text in Wettinger—Fusini, 48-49.
diocese in Sicily, where they resided; when King Martin unsuccessfully proposed his confessor Giovanni de Pino in 1399, many canons of Malta were at Catania, where the election was due to take place. In 1410 the king appointed a royal confessor, the Franciscan Joan Eximeno of Mallorca, as administrator of the see of Malta, *sensu que la angela de Malte, per tal con era destinado de idem pater, era mal servida*. There may even have been an episcopal presence on the island, since in 1423 Bishop Mauro was actually carried off by Tunisian raiders, apparently from Malta itself. Despite external control by kings and bishops from Sicily or beyond, Christian life in Malta showed genuine vitality; possibly this was precisely because of the need to implant and sustain it on formerly Muslim islands. One sign of this was the repeated demand for Maltese-speaking clergy who could carry doctrine and sacraments directly to the people. The number of churches in Malta documented before 1530 is minimal, yet by 1578 there were about 450, if chapels and shrines are included; an astounding multiplicity of churches and chapels, often clustered in groups, stretched across the countryside, while some of the main 'parish' churches stood alone, as at Bir Miftuh, in the centre of the district they served rather than in the midst of a built-up area. The copies and calendars surviving in the Cathedral Archives may throw light on this process of Christian construction, as suggested by this early-modern summary of a lost notarial act:

Testamento de Manfredo Xerebra est in acta Notarior Loco de Sillano 20 Januario 1440 in qua fecit heredom universalem Leonarum Xerebram eis filiis, et fecit quoddam piam legatum in favorem ecclesiae seue Amnonianos per sui constructite in Casalle Blockaten. Little is known of the quality and organization of the clergy before 1436 when the bishop, from Sicily, ordered a printer to publish a local *liber de usitibus* which listed the incomes of 144 beneficiaries in the islands, including 79 *amittati*, 37 *benefiti*, various *prebenda*, *cappelle* and so on, many of them endowments for the celebration of masses; in numerous cases the patronage, the *imperatrix*, remained in the hands of the founding family. In 1436 the cathedral had an archdeacon, deacon, cantor, treasurer and twelve others all given as *dono* and presumably canons; another thirteen were each given as *prebenda*; and there was a *Frater Benedictus*, and a Henrico Fabiano Zanitti who held the benefice of Santa Maria on the rock of Filia. Many of their names were Maltese. The twelve *cappelle* or 'parishes', including one in Rabat and one in Birgu, each contained a church corresponding to the Italian rural *fike*, where baptisms, marriages and other sacraments were administered, and on which

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882 Valletta in *ADM*, viii, 208-209.
883 Teste di 1431 in *Milind, in La Dova*, iii, 241-242; see also Wettigne-Peardni, 25-26.
884 Apart from Molina cathedral and a group of churches stylistically or archaeologically datable from the 11th or 12th, and including earlier *opus* (e.g. 1086, 94-85, 168-171), there are only the two *parishes* (Tesic, 153) in the central district, S. Maria and S. Angelo, in 1475 (Tesic, 153) and S. Maria in Convento (*Compendio da Navigare*, 113), there must have been others, including at least one in Gżira.
885 Tesic, 170, 232 n. 72.
886 Molina, *Cathedral Archives Ms. 90*, l. 179.
brought a new, educated element into Maltese society, and their churches and paintings bear witness to a certain prosperity among the orders. The Maltese Church had numerous practical problems, such as its relations with the *universitas* and its obligations to help maintain the walls of Mdina. The islands lay exposed on the frontiers of Christendom, and in 1553 Quirinus paid tribute to the fervour of their Christian belief and their devotion to St. Paul. Other saints, such as St. Catherine and St. George, were also highly venerated.

The civil and religious architecture of medieval Malta has now received considerable attention, but more could be done to study surviving buildings, notably the ruined but important, because unrestored, houses within the citadel at Gozo. The recent demonstration of the way in which the Chiaramonte family patronized a style of palace found in many parts of Sicily might be extended to Mdina and elsewhere, for Chiaramonte influence was strong in late fourteenth-century Malta. Gothic window-frames and other decorative features were possibly pre-fabricated and imported directly from Catalonia or Valencia. Individual architects such as Matteo Caglioni, who was master mason or prefect of building at Mdina by 1539 and who carried out important work for the Knights in Birgu after 1530, deserve attention. Many churches were adapted caves or were cut out of the rock, while others were constructed with a system of arches which supported a roof of long stone slabs; and by the fifteenth century churches were being built in very considerable numbers. Giovanni de Nava, Castellan of Birgu castle, ordered a marble tomb in 1487. A font for the cathedral at Mdina came from the Sicilian workshop of Domenico Gagini around the end of the fifteenth century, while the...
PLATE 4

a Old Houses in Ganzu Citadel

b Ramla Bay, Ganzu

PLATE 5

a Traces of Post-Roman Polychrome Mosaic Pavement discovered outside Tad-Dżej Cemetery, Rabat, in 1933

b and c Byzantine Lead Seal of Thughbliat Arslee found in Ganzu (reduced: actual diameter 15 mm.)

b: obverse, with monogram, to left
c: reverse, with inscription, to right
Plate 6

a. Makindina's Tombstone of 1174 from Gowa

Plate 7

a. Tan-Silq: The Palaeochristian Basilica, showing Entrance to Prehistoric 'Ape' and Rectangular Baptismal Basin

b. Tan-Silq: The 'Norman' Church, showing South Wall and Fragment of Rounded Ape in background
APPROACHES TO MEDIEVAL MALTA

cathedral's intricae choir stalls were originally commissioned in 1482, for the Dominicans at Rabat, from Vincenzo and Francesco Calabria, carpenters of Catania (plate 19a, b). By this period the Maltese could afford to decorate some of their churches and monasteries with the products of competent artists, and they turned to Sicily when the need arose. Other work, such as stone-carving, was likely to be done in the islands. The Gozo Museum houses a carved tombstone with an unusual chalice design, and a stone relief of two saints which is difficult to date but might be thirteenth-century. There is room for a study of Maltese decorative motifs, comparing the Muslim tombs at Rabat with the sculptures in St. Agatha at Rabat and the carved doors dated 1520 in Mdina cathedral.

A tentative preliminary study of the wall-paintings in these medieval churches suggest the possibility of a local school of painters strongly influenced from Sicily and, to a lesser extent, from Catalonia; but much remains to be investigated. A Byzantine fresco of a Madonna, conceivably fourteenth-century, has recently been discovered in a rock-cut sanctuary at Melletta. The painted apei in the Abbatia tad-Dejr (plate 14a) possibly dates between 1270 and about 1412; the frescoes now restored at Hal Millieri, which include numerous frontals of pictures of saints (plate 16a, b), were probably done circa 1450; while the muraux in the rock-cut church of St. Agatha at Rabat (plate 15a, b) are datable around 1510. The Sicilian and Spanish background of the surviving panel paintings also needs to be unravelled. It is important to document the presence of these panels in Malta before 1530, and to identify their patrons and artists. The Augustinian church at Rabat possesses a fine Sicilian Madonna flanked by saints painted in the 'international Gothic' manner during the early fifteenth century. The collection in the Cathedral Museum includes the extremely large and impressive St. Paul reliquary from the cathedral (plate 17), strongly Catalan in style; a Valencian panel with three iconographically interesting scenes and strange shields, which has no secure provenance; and a painting of St. John the Baptist most recently attributed to the circle of a Southern French painter working close to Tommaso de Vigilia in Palermo. A Deposition at Rabat by Antonio de Saliba, a nephew of Antonello da Messina, is related to a crucifix in London attributed to the same artist. On 20th February 1505 at Messina the Dominican Cugelmo de Chilla contracted on behalf of San Pietro at Mdina for Giovanni Salvo di Antonio, another nephew of the great Antonello, to

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682 The contract survives in the archives of the Dominican house at Rabat (partial facsimile in Faudoi, 61; cf. infra, 173).
684 M. Buhagiar infra, and G. Mathew, 'Schools of Painting in Medieval Malta', Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Royal University of Malta, vi nos. 1-4 (1974); cf. E. Sammut, A Handbook of Writings on Art in Malta, Malta History, 13 no. 1 (1964). Though written before the uncovering of the frescoes and repeating innumerable 'traditions', R. Bonticci Calvi, Our Lady of Mellieha, Malta, (Malta, 1953), contains useful references and information. There was a Byzantine fresco of a 'Blazing Christ' in the apei at St. Cos; Bonelli, infra. Other works may yet be recalled elsewhere. Restoration at Hal Millieri will be followed by publication of studies on the church and its paintings.
685 E. Bottari, La pittura dei quadretti in Sicilia (Florence, 1945), 43 n. 9 (wrongly describing it as John the Evangelist).
paint in oils a large polyptych, parts of which survived in the San Pietro convent. Again, these works emphasize the predominance of the Sicilian confraternities.

The non-specialist interested in the problems of the late medieval Maltese language faces a confusion of controversies and theories, of proverbs, riddles, surnames, nicknames and place-names. Such evidence is important for, apart from Pietro Caxaro's Castile, no written medieval Maltese is known. Though written in Latin script, the Castile, only recently discovered in a copy made in or just after 1535, throws unique light on the still predominantly Arabic nature of the Maltese vocabulary, in its poetic form. Behind this poem lay a minor world of provincial culture. By 1471 there was a school at Mdina run by the Augustinians and the cathedral, usually with a Sicilian or Italian schoolmaster teaching at least Latin and music; further education for the friars and others meant travel to Sicily or the continent. There was much literary activity, even among the clergy, and any Maltese who knew no other language had to rely on an interpreter for official or legal business. There were some notably well-educated exceptions among the clergy and lawyers; the medical men were almost all Jews. The old legal text _quod omnes tangit_ debt to _omnibus auferunt_ opened a clause in the capitation of 1419; yet, curiously, it heralded not a theory of taxation by consent, but the demand that the Gozoitans should contribute to the cost of a tower on Comino. The humanist notion that was cultivated in classical literature was a familiar figure in Italy, and Pietro Caxaro certainly knew his Latin. A member of a leading Mdina family, with his properties, slaves and numerous kinmen, he was active as judge, envoy to Sicily, cathedral proctor and spokesman in the island's council; he died in 1585. Probably wheelless and childless, his private affairs seem to have provoked the following Castile or lament:

_Quisquis exultaverit memoriae cancertum diu compositam quendam mi consors
Pietri de Caxaro philosopho poetae et eruditui qui aliquando dictum fuit consilia praeclarum_ 
_Caxaro clara propago: te quippe nimpe te tua musa... quam lingua melius hic subiculo._

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_The contract was for a Madonna and Child or 'Scredita', flanked by Saint Peter and Benedict, surrounded by a Crucifixion with Mary and Saint John, on either side of which were to be an Annunciation and an Archangel Gabriel: below was to be a predella of Christ and Apostles, flanked by Saints Blasius and Peter Martyr. Details in G. di Marco, _Di Estinzione de Monna e dei sui oggetti: studi e documenti_ (Palermo, 1985), 54 [where for 'Mille in Calabria' read 'Malta'] from a document at Montecatini which was destroyed in 1943; Chiala (or Chorial) was clearly Maltese (Fiadini, 75, 79 and n. 100). Two panels from the Benedictine sisters of S. Pietro at Mdina, now in the Cathedral Museum there, presumably formed part of this polyptych. One is a predella of Christ and Disciples, signed _Magister Bolus de ... de noctis auris me piscis 510_ (Bottari, figs. 189-190); and the other is a comparatively large fragment with St. Peter. A smaller group of panels in the same museum, said to have come from S. Maria del Soccorso at Cospicua reproduces a scheme somewhat similar to that of the 1510 contract, except that J. James takes the place of St. Benedict (Bottari, fig. 188); this polyptych is attributed to Giovanni Salerno's workshop.

_This in addition to the numerous details and documents, many drawn from the 15th-century notarial records, in Wittigruer—Piacenti. (Four Casarao's Castile), see on the schools, Valentina, in _Am. vii_ (1986)), 10-20; on the philological problems, the works by Aulina and other cited supra, 19-24; and for a notion of the language, N. Archyee, _A Maltese Etymology_ (Oxford, 1990). Parallel survivals occurred: Palermo Jews spoke Arabico in 1797. H. Bove—S. Greco, _Un inventaire des dix juifs siciliens: 1479_ _Manuscrits d'archéologie à Palermo, lucrées_ (1970).

_The text in Valentinii, in _Am. viii_, 82_.
might take the name of their master. The Sicilian connection was the most permanent and prominent one, though the Angvenses kept a garrison of over 100 Frenchmen at Birgu and some of the 300 'Catalans' left in the islands in 1283 may have settled there. During the fourteenth century Iberian influences were limited. In 1356, however, a Catalan named Joan Marzariu was travelling from Sicily to reside in Malta and to conduct business on the island of Lampedusa; and in 1354 Francesco Ros planned to travel from Sardinia to Malta to receive three pieces of cloth from Arnaldo Ciceria, an inhabitant of Malta. Arnau Geran of Barcelona was granted a fief in Malta in 1358, but he may not have resided there. The Geras Desguanes, whom King Martin sent to collect taxes in Malta in 1405, and who was appointed Castellan of Birgu castle, had possibly come directly from Catalonia to settle in Malta; the family did not appear in Malta before about 1400, but Antoni de Llegars held a fief there in 1408. The Desguanes do not seem to have been settled in Sicily, but other Maltese notables with Catalan names belonged to families long established there. Alfonso V brought in a number of Castilian captains, officials and favourites, such as Gutierrez de Nava and Diego de Guevara, yet in 1452 Pedro Gonvaldo de la Rua, regn Castile eritandis et in regna illis degens, was declared ineligible to inherit a fief in Malta on the grounds that he was not an infante nor a fideli aut substituo of Alfonso V. The nature of everyday life on a Maltese cane or the way in which the universitas functioned are questions important not only in themselves but also because they are essential to an elucidation of one central problem of medieval Malta, that is the structure and mentality of the curious mixed society which developed there.

After 1530 Malta was never again granted out as a County, but the experiment of direct royal government collapsed in the face of the incompetence and corruption of the Sicilian bureaucracy; royal lands, offices and incomes were alienated, more or less in perpetuity, and public power fell back into private hands, as Gian Luca Barberi was to complain at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Offices and titles that had been disputed between the established nobles and foreign captives and placemen. Some of these were married into Maltese society and settled in palaces in Mdina, while others retained their Sicilian lands and connections; but all wished to insert themselves into the round of profits, to dominate and thus to exploit the universitas, and to resist further royal nominations. Many became in effect Maltese, raised their sons as natives, and then supported demands that offices and ecclesiastical benefices be given only to indigenous Maltese; repeated demands of this type demonstrated, incidentally, that the local inhabitants held clear notions as to who was or was not Maltese. Out of this intermingling, out of joint resistance to royal exploitation, and out of the very isolation and aparness of the islands and their language, there developed a certain 'proto-national' sentiment. Quarrels and factions, particularly after about 1476, must be explained partly in terms of the conflicting interests within this hybrid group, and a detailed prosopographical study of the leading families, their origins, lands, connections and assimilation into Maltese society seems essential. Such family history must be extended far beyond Malta, for that island's society mirrored the ambiguities of the broad and varied cosmopolitan world of Alfonso V and his followers, at once humanists and bureaucrats, nobles and merchants, tax-farmers, sea captains and condottieri, men with chivalric and crusading ideals who practised thelicensed piracy of the corsi but were also experts in government and business, capable of extortion and corruption both for personal gain and to further more grandiose political and commercial ambitions, such as those of the king himself.

Post-Muslim Malta looked towards the Christian, Latin Europe of the Western Mediterranean, and it was bound to Sicily by reason of its exposed position and its foodstuff requirements. Its ruling class and government officials, its garrison and clergy, were often Sicilians. Yet in some special sense its inhabitants were conscious of being Maltese; and the Gozitans, with their own universitas, remained distinctively Gozitan.

In 1553 Jean Quimmi evidently found that those who were raised in the islands and spoke the language had a character of their own; the women beautiful but so timid in their veiled seclusion that 'to have seen a woman was to have seduced her', and the men so religious in their Maltese way that they 'thought St. Paul was God'. These people kept their Semitic language, yet their Christian sentiment was so intense that by the sixteenth century there were more than 400 churches and chapels on Malta and Gozo. In 1530 the Knights were received at Mdina by bearded Maltese, some of them extremely old, who were mounted on donkeys, armed with swords, daggers and escagagra or axes, and dressed in bullet-resistant, arrow-proof lengths of quilted cotton. Malta inherited a measure of Muslim tastes and traditions; its architecture and customs were clearly influenced from Sicily, yet Sicilian fashions were themselves affected by Sicily's Iberian links and Muslim past, so that it is often almost impossible to judge the movement of trends and influences.

When Charles V granted Malta to the Order of St. John in 1530 there was still, practically speaking, no such thing as 'Spain', and even Machiavelli did not define...
BYZANTINE MALTA: A DISCUSSION OF THE SOURCES

T. S. BROWN

THIS study of Byzantine Malta has no claim to comprehensiveness. It provides no analysis of the often ambiguous evidence supplied by archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and place-name material which any definitive treatment would have to take into account. Such a study would be rewarding, provided that it complemented the rather meagre sources for the island's history with an incisive view of the wider developments to which Malta was exposed, that is of the considerable influx of Greek-speaking settlers and Hellenic culture into the Central Mediterranean, of the administrative changes introduced in Byzantine possessions such as Sicily, and of the feverish naval activity in the area which followed the rise of Islam. The present, more humble, aim is to survey the written texts and to correct certain misinterpretations in the light of more recent research and using the best available editions of the texts. The numerous Greek and Latin sources which refer to St. Paul's visit to the island, describe how it was populated by the sons of Ham; or repeat the commonplace classical allusions to Maltese dogs are, however, ignored; they have little or no bearing on the Byzantine period, and have already been diligently listed.

This study commences in 533, when Procopius supplies the first unequivocal, datable reference to medieval Malta. For the preceding century there are no specific references, and it can only be inferred from a passage of Victor Bishop of Vita in North Africa, who wrote at the end of the fifth century, that the islands were conquered by the Vandals of North Africa and later handed over to Odoacer, the barbarian King of Italy.

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1 For the archaeological and other evidence, some of which apparently points to an essential continuity of occupation on Roman sites down to the Muslim conquest, see, e.g., B. L. Paddison, 'Sicilia e l'arabo-romana della sua civiltà', in XI Sottrane di Studi di Centro Italiani di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (Spoleto, 1954), 96–110 et passim; see also P. Chambaud, 'On the Question of the Hellenisation of Sicily and Southern Italy during the Middle Ages', American Historical Review, 61 (1956).

