

Sources: **Medieval Malta : Studies on Malta before the Knights** / ed. A.T. Luttrell. – London : The British School at Rome, 1975. [pp. 1-70]

[p.1] Approaches to medieval Malta¹

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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 Gilibertus, his agent at Malta, in about 1241.² 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 1524 before the Order accepted the islands in 1530 is now lost, but details from it are preserved.³ The earliest description available, running to some 4,000 words, is that of the Hospitaller Jean Quintin, written in Malta in 1533 and first published at Lyons three years later.⁴ 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

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: 1925-1969,' 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 lists of printed books and mss. in *Archivio Storico di Malta* [= *ASM*], 13 vols. (1929-1942), *passim*, especially T. Guarnaschelli-E. Valenziani, 'Saggio di una Bibliografia di Malta ...,' *ASM*, ix (1937/8).

² C. Dessoulavy, 'Malta in the Middle Ages,' *Journal of the Malta University Literary Society*, ii nos. 10-12 (1937), discusses a number of texts, including that of Ludolph von Sudheim (ca. 1340); for those of ca.1241 and of Niccole de Martoni (1394), *infra*, 36 n. 208, 46 n. 248.

³ The Latin original, now lost, was summarized *in ristretto, et in sostanza* in G. Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Illustrissima Militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano*, iii (1st ed: Rome, 1602), 39-31; Bosio had access to the Hospitallers' archives. The purported summary in L. de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta*, ii (London, 1804), 15-17, does not altogether concord with Bosio's version.

⁴ Quintin's *Insulae Melitae Descriptio* was completed *Melitae xx die Ianuarij, ... M.D.XXXIII* [possibly 1534]. E. Leopardi, 'The First Printed Description of Malta, Lyons 1536,' *Scientia* [Malta], xv (1949), 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. Graevius, *Thesaurus Antiquitatum et Historiarum Siciliae*, xv (Leyden, 1725) [owing to its brevity, references below are not annotated].

has yet to be systematically exploited as a source of information about Malta's medieval past.⁵

The first and in some ways still the most coherent attempt to cover the whole history of medieval Malta appeared in the *Descrittione di 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, [p.2] place-names, archaeology, folk-lore and natural history, has justifiably 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' *Thesaurus Antiquitatum et Historiarum Siciliae*, and it was re-edited at Malta, in two volumes entitled *Malta Illustrata*, by Giovannantonio Ciantar. Ciantar went blind 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.⁶ Born in 1582, Abela was very much a man of his times, educated in the university at Bologna and much interested in classical remains and pseudo-philological speculation. His work was written in Italian and conceived in the encyclopaedic manner, being subdivided into *libri* and *notitie*. For the earlier medieval period Abela used published chronicles and histories such as those of the historians of Sicily Rocco Pirri and Tommaso Fazello, 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.⁷ 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 observation, for his lively intelligence 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 patrician Maltese 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 trails over the whole island like a mad paper-chase,'⁸

⁵ To the references and bibliographies in Mizzi, add J. Galea, *Bibliography of the Great Siege of Malta: 1565-1965* (Malta, [1965]). For some details on Maltese customs, see C. Dessoulavy, 'Visitors to Malta from the 15th to the 18th Century,' *The Sundial: The Journal of the Royal University of Malta Literary Society*, iii nos. 4-8 (1940). Bosio's own description of Malta (iii. 90-96) includes information not drawn from Quintin or from the 1524 report.

⁶ G.-F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano* (Malta, 1647) [the edition cited through-out]; cf. C. Clair, *The Spread of Printing – Eastern Hemisphere: 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, 1961); see also E. Sipione, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, i (Rome, 1960), 45-46.

⁷ For some examples, see the analyses of Abela's treatment of the Norman period (*infra*, 29-34, 96-100) and of his uncritical use of Pirri (B. Fiorini, in *Abela Essays*, 82-87).

⁸ N. Dennis, *An Essay on Malta* (London, 1972), 6 *et passim*, containing a perceptive if somewhat debatable appreciation of Abela's work. On his ambiente and contemporaries, G. Mangion, 'La letteratura barocca a Malta (con testi inediti),' *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, iv no. 4 (1971).

but it is a tribute to his powers and talents that so many of the errors he 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 ‘ancestral traditions’ were of his own invention. Some of these traditions appeared in the *Descrizione dell’Isola di Malta*, written in about 1610 by a doctor from the Knights’ galleys, which awaits study.⁹ In fact, there is room for a comprehensive analysis of all the varied sources used in the medieval sections of Abela’s work.

[p.3] For two centuries or more Abela’s history continued to hold the field, and a third edition, never published, was initiated in 1842.¹⁰ 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 1746.¹¹ G. Vassallo’s *Storia di Malta*, published in 1854, was probably the most successful new work. Meanwhile the eighteenth-century Maltese priest Giuseppe Vella had produced his notorious Arabic 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 of his Italian translation of the Arabic texts upon which it was based.¹² A.A. Caruana who wrote widely on Maltese antiquities and history, especially in his 496-page ‘Fragment,’ accepted that Vella was a forger but unfortunately maintained that some of his materials were, none the less, reliable.¹³ Ecclesiastical and legal histories by A. Ferris and P. De Bono, though full of errors, constituted useful collections of references.¹⁴ A Society of Archaeology, History and Natural Sciences was founded in 1866 and planned a collective history of Malta, only to collapse a few years later.¹⁵ A more critical spirit was making itself felt. The German scholar Albert Mayr wrote well on the Roman and Byzantine period,¹⁶ and a new Historical and Scientific Society was founded which in 1910 began to publish the *Archivum Melitense*. This review contained an important series of knowledgeable, though amazingly jumbled, medieval contributions derived from the Maltese archives by Alfredo Mifsud.¹⁷

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 campaign which claimed that

⁹ Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 631. For other ‘traditions,’ see the *Relazione sopra lo stato, dazij ed altre notizie Curiose dell’Isola di Malta* of ca. 1630 (Biblioteca Ms. 5, f. 563-584); an edition by G. Wettinger is forthcoming.

¹⁰ E. Leopardi, in *Abela Essays*, 27.

¹¹ Eventually published in translation: G. Agius de Soldanis, *Għawdex bil-ġrajja tiegħu*, 2 vols. (Malta, 1936-1953), but best consulted in the Italian original (Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 145).

¹² Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, revised by C. Nallino, 3 vols. (Catania, 1933-1939), i. 6-11, has an interesting account of the Vella affair; texts in M. Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula: versione italiana*, 2 vols. (Turin–Rome, 1880-1881).

¹³ A.A. Caruana, *Frammento Critico della Storia Fenicio-Cartaginese, Greco-Romana e Bisantina, Musulmana e Normanna-Aragonese delle Isole di Malta* (Malta, 1899).

¹⁴ A. Ferris, *Descrizione storica delle chiese di Malta e Gozo* (Malta, 1866); P. De Bono, *Sommario della storia della legislazione in Malta* (Malta, 1897).

¹⁵ Cf. J. Cassar Pullicino, in *Melita Historica*, i no. 2 (1953), 122-124.

¹⁶ *Infra*, 20 n. 123, 27 n. 162.

¹⁷ These are frequently cited below; see also *infra*, 16 n. 331.

Malta was a *terra irridenta* belonging by ancient right to Italy; its chief historical weapon was the Regia Deputazione di Storia di Malta.¹⁸ The *Archivio Storico di Malta*, launched in 1929, was managed in Rome by competent professional historians torn by the demands of the regime and their own better scientific feelings, which sometimes triumphed.¹⁹ It collected scattered references, listed sources and published documents, particularly from Naples and from Malta [p.4] itself.²⁰ A history of Malta by A. Savelli, though Fascist in inspiration, undocumented and sometimes inaccurate, was based on the *Archivio* and did provide a not unreasonable outline of events.²¹ The Italians were scarcely interested in the non-Italian pre-Norman period.²² Their outstanding contributor was Roberto Valentini, whose many articles still constitute the standard point of departure for Maltese history from about 1200 onwards.²³ Valentini returned to the documents, a number of which he published; he placed Maltese history in its Sicilian context; and he made many valuable points. But he never escaped the Italian bias, the full ideological implications of which were clearly presented in a most unfortunate propaganda piece issued in collaboration with Pietro Fedele. This spoke of Mussolini and the *mare nostrum*. It exaggerated the use of the Sicilian dialect in medieval Malta. It attacked the Knights of St. John for suppressing the Italian-style *comune* and allegedly preventing Abela from giving a proper account of the ancient and natural links with Sicily, and it castigated the Spaniards both for ruining the Maltese islands and for repeatedly granting them out in an un-Italianate manner which, supposedly, was strongly resisted by the Maltese in the best traditions of *italianità*.²⁴

Subsequently, activity was encouraged by several new journals, notably *Melita Historica* published by the new Malta Historical Society set up in 1950,²⁵ and there has been progress in the margins of the subject, in folk-lore, in art and architecture, and in archaeology, with the Italians returning as archaeologists whose medieval interests have stimulated a variety of studies.²⁶ Yet the difficulties of forming a class of linguistically and paleographically prepared Maltese medievalists remain, while distinguished Maltese medieval scholars, such as Daniel Callus and Mauro Inguanez, have tended to be clerical in training and

¹⁸ See *Giornale di politica e di letteratura*, x fasc. 11-12 [Fascicolo dedicato a Malta] (1934), 513-514, 688-695.

¹⁹ Eg. F. Borlandi's deservedly savage review of L. Viviani, *Storia di Malta*, 2 vols. in 3 (Turin, [1934]), in *ASM*, vii (1935/6), 100-104.

²⁰ There also appeared *The Institute of Historical Research Malta: Bulletin*, 7 vols. (1931-1950), very little of which concerns the medieval period. This institute was set up by the Malta Government in 1931 as a branch of the Comité International des Sciences Historiques, following reports by M. Coville, E. Rossi and F. Ryan, in *Bulletin du Comité International des Sciences Historiques*, xv (1932).

²¹ A. Savelli, *Storia di Malta dai primordi ai giorni nostri* (Milan, 1943).

²² For E. Rossi as an exception, *infra*, 26 n. 159.

²³ *ASM*, v-xiii (1934-1942), and *Archivum Melitense*, ix no. 4 (1935); see Valentini's obituary in *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo*, lxxv (1953), 161-162.

²⁴ P. Fedele-R. Valentini, *Per la storia dell'italianità di Malta nel Medio Evo* (Rome, 1940).

²⁵ *Scientia* [Malta], i (1935) onwards; *Melita Historica*, i no. 1 (1952) onwards; *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, i no. 1 (1957) onwards; *Journal of Maltese Studies*, i (1961) onwards. Useful information is also contained in numerous other reviews, newspapers and pamphlets published in Malta.

²⁶ *Missione archeologica Italiana a Malta: Rapporto preliminare della Campagna 1963* [etc.], 8 vols. (Rome, 1964-1973) [cited as *Missione 1963* etc.].

interests, and to abandon the island and its historical problems. In 1962 Professor Lionel Butler gave a series of lectures which excited great interest in Malta but were not published. The geographer Brian Blouet produced an original *The Story of Malta* in 1967 though, in the absence of materials, it inevitably had little new to say on the medieval period. The *Maltese History: What Future?* symposium of 1971 and the Arab-Berber congress held in Malta in 1972, and the prompt publication of their acts, represent notable advances.²⁷ Improved accessibility to the Maltese archives has recently and significantly extended research possibilities, as demonstrated by the publications of the Maltese medievalist Godfrey Wettinger, while a fundamental obstacle, the absence of much essential [p.5] printed literature, is gradually being overcome with the expansion of the Royal University of Malta library, by xeroxes and microfilms, and through opportunities for foreign study.²⁸

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 Gilibertus' report of about 1241; 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.²⁹ For Angevin rule from 1268 until 1282, and to a lesser extent for the decades following, the destruction in 1943 of the Angevin archives at Naples is a major disaster, relieved only by the previous publication of many documents concerning Malta³⁰ and by the systematic collection of these and other Angevin sources in the reconstructed registers.³¹ For the period from 1282 to 1530 the archive sources are those for the history of Sicily plus, from about 1350, the originals and copies preserved in Malta itself. These 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 relevant information;³² so do other major archives such as those of Barcelona,³³

²⁷ *Maltese History: What Future?* (Malta, 1974); *Actes du Premier Congrès d'Études des Cultures méditerranéennes d'influence arabo-berbère* (Algiers, 1973) [cited as *Congrès arabo-berbère*]. The general history of Malta being prepared in Maltese by Professor Andrew Vella will shortly appear.

²⁸ Outside Malta, and apart from the major scholarly libraries, there are useful collections of 'Melitensia' in the Scicluna Collection at Rhodes House, Oxford, and at Rome in the libraries at Palazzo Malta and the British school at Rome.

²⁹ *Infra*, 29-40, 104-125, 130-134.

³⁰ V. Laurenza, 'Malta nei documenti angioini del R. Archivio di Napoli,' *ASM*, v (1934), publishes 66 documents (1270-1300); R. Moscati, 'Fonti per la Storia di Malta nel R. Archivio di Stato di Napoli,' *ASM*, vii (1935/36), publishes 9 *notamenti* of lost documents (1271-82) and 30 texts (1270-1287).

³¹ *I Registri della Cancelleria Angioina ricostruiti*, ed. R. Filangieri et al., i- (Naples, 1950-) [cited as *Cancelleria Angioina*]; 30 vols. reaching 1290 by 1971.

³² The standard guide to the materials and literature is now L. Boyle, *A Survey of the Vatican Archives and of its Medieval Holdings* (Toronto, 1972).

Genoa³⁴ and Venice,³⁵ while a host of lesser sources from many parts of the Mediterranean world require patient collection.³⁶

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.³⁷ The [p.6] main sources are the largely unexplored royal documents at Palermo, including the chancery registers, the *Lettere Viceregie*, the *Protonotaro del Regno*, the *Conservatorio di Registro* and other series;³⁸ the *capitoli* or petitions granted by the Crown to individual cities, which for Malta and Gozo survive from about 1409 onwards;³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ The archives of Sicilian monasteries on which Maltese religious houses and properties depended may contain relevant information.⁴¹ The *Capibrevi* and the *Liber de Secretiis* compiled by Gian Luca Barberi from the royal archives at Palermo in the early sixteenth century recorded many details of Maltese gabelles and fiefs reaching back to 1316.⁴² Transcriptions from Barberi's works and of a few dozen documents known to him were made at Palermo by the notary Leonardo Biasini in 1644 and sent to Malta.⁴³ Extensively used in Abela's work of 1647 and, more recently, by Mifsud, Valentini 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 preferred,⁴⁴ but some of these may have been lost in the destructions there in 1848.

³³ Eg. A. Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari de l'Orient català: 1301-1409* (Barcelona, 1947); see also *infra*, 42 n. 232.

³⁴ The Genoese material is difficult to manage and has scarcely been touched. F. Perroni, 'Malta nei documenti del R. Archivio di Stato di Genova,' *ASM*, xii (1941), 190-191, lists only 5 documents, all in print, for the medieval period, but see D. Abulafia *infra*.

³⁵ Eg. A. Luttrell, 'Venetians at Medieval Malta,' *Melita Historica*, iii no. 1 (1960).

³⁶ Eg. A. Luttrell, 'Malta and Dubrovnik towards the rear 1380,' *ibid.*, v no. 2 (1969) [a number of misprints in the Latin texts require correction].

³⁷ F. Natale, *Avviamento allo studio del Medio Evo siciliano* (Florence, 1959), which surveys the bibliography, the printed sources and the historiographical problems, is an indispensable handbook.

³⁸ An important group of *cancelleria* texts is published in H. Besc, 'Documents on Frederick IV of Sicily's Intervention in Malta: 1372,' *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli (1973); documents from the other series are utilized by H. Besc *infra*.

³⁹ *Capitoli* are published in *Capitoli inediti delle città demaniali di Sicilia*, i, ed. S. Giambruno-L. Genuardi, (Palermo, 1918), 323-338 (Gozo), 375-444 (Malta), and by R. Valentini, in *ASM*, viii-x (1936-1939). G. la Mantia, 'Capitoli e statuti amministrativi dell'Isola di Malta approvati dal Re o Vicere di Sicilia: 1130-1530,' *ASM*, viii (1936/7), publishes no texts. The systematic publication of the *capitoli* for the period 1466 to 1530 is desirable.

⁴⁰ Eg. *infra*, 58 n. 306, 149 n. 150; cf. Natale, 131-138.

⁴¹ Eg. *infra*, 63 n. 348.

⁴² *I Capibrevi di Giovanni Luca Barberi*, ed. G. Silvestri, iii (Palermo, 1888), 415-455; J. Luca de Barberiis, *Liber de Secretiis*, ed. E. Mazzaresse Fardella (Milan, 1966), 72-89. Barberi is discussed *infra*, 126-127.

⁴³ See especially Royal Malta Library, Università Ms. 206 (*olim* Biblioteca Ms. 870).

⁴⁴ Except where the originals or early copies from the originals survive.

In Malta itself, many more documents are available for study than in 1914 when Mifsud published his notes on the archives.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ In the Royal Malta Library, Università Mss. 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 1397 onwards which were confirmed by the Hospitallers in 1530; 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 *universitas*, while post-1530 transcripts of medieval ecclesiastical documents are scattered through a number of inadequately-indexed manuscript miscellanies. Some of these texts were published by Mifsud and Valentini. Most important of all is Università Ms. 11, a 600-folio collection containing [p.7] records of the *consiglio* and various other municipal documents for 1450, 1460-1464, 1468-1483 and 1498-1499; in addition, Ms. 13 includes 38 misplaced folios for 1467-1468 and Ms. 12 covers 1512-1531. These documents are written in a difficult mélange of Latin and Sicilian, they are often scarcely legible, and their interior organization and binding is chronologically confused; only brief and scattered extracts have so far been published.⁴⁷

The archives now in the Cathedral Museum at Mdina have recently been re-organized and made more readily available. For some reason they include a section of the *universitas* documentation. Ms. 33 contains some 130 early originals of *capitoli* and of royal or viceregal acts, a few of which have been published. Ms. 34, rich in *capitoli* and other texts, is an immensely thick manuscript, unsystematically arranged and unindexed. Ms. 36 contains numerous orders of payment on the incomes of the *universitas* between 1473 and 1530, with details about hospitals, doctors and plagues, wall-building and guards, schoolmasters, sermons, bell-ringers and so forth, while Ms. 37 includes a few other relatively unimportant pre-1530 documents. A section of *Quaderni diversi* comprises 16 administrative items of major importance, including *angara* or corvée lists, militia rolls, lists of families at Rabat around 1483, payments of fines for absence from services due, and the accounts for Birgu castle running from about 1502 to 1525 and for the Hospital of Santo Spirito at Rabat for 1494 and 1518.⁴⁸ Pre-1530 materials in the cathedral archives proper include a few bulls and prebendary records, various *Mandati diversi*, and sundry entries, some in later copies, in a register of *Acta Capitularia*. There is also a large collection of transcripts and summaries of public and ecclesiastical documents, a few as early as the fourteenth century. Many of these

⁴⁵ A. Mifsud, 'Appunti sugli archivi di Malta,' *Archivum Melitense*, ii nos. 13-16 (1912/13); this article is still useful despite its confusing presentation. Extracts and summaries of *universitas* documents dating back to 1351 and preserved 'in a leaden chest' at Mdina were published in W. Eton, *Authentic Materials for a History of the People of Malta*, 3 parts (2nd ed: London, 1803-1807), part 3, 108-129.

⁴⁶ Details in G. Wettinger, 'Our Medieval Historical Archives and their Care,' and other contributions in *Maltese History: What Future?*

⁴⁷ Notably by E. Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii nos. 2-4 (1957-1959); a number of other documents are scattered through the literature. The publication of the transcript of these *consiglio* records prepared by Dr. Godfrey Wettinger is a major *desideratum* in late medieval Maltese studies. Ms. 11 contains a list of royal privileges and other writings which in 1471 were *intra la caxa di la Universitati*: text in Leopardi, ii. 259-261. For a reference of 1488 to the *Archiuium Dni. Capitanei Ciuitatis Melite*, see Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 737, f. 203 (modern copy).

⁴⁸ For use of these lists by G. Wettinger, see *infra*, 53 n. 270, 68 n. 374, 184-187.

require careful use, since dates are often lacking and the copying may be erroneous; the source is seldom apparent; and the numbering, pagination and indexing of volumes is sometimes confusing. The equivalent of nine volumes of pre-1530 material consisting of the acts of the court of the bishop or of his vicar-general has recently been discovered in great confusion and sorted under the title *Curia Episcopalis Melitae*. These documents should vastly increase knowledge of fifteenth-century social developments, particularly on Gozo where all records surviving were destroyed in 1551.⁴⁹ The later medieval history of Gozo will have to be reconstructed above all from Sicilian archives.

Though no register earlier than 1467 remains in the Notarial Archives, the pre-1530 notarial deeds, in some 25 volumes, constitute a tremendously valuable fund of information about many aspects of Maltese life.⁵⁰ No more than a few fragments of [p.8] the records of the civil courts and tribunals survive, but there could be original materials or transcripts still in the Archiepiscopal Curia at Valletta. There are some pre-1530 notarial deeds, in original and copy, at the Dominican house at Rabat. A number of medieval documents certainly remain in family hands;⁵¹ these should be saved from damage or dispersal 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. John⁵² 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 Visitation of 1575, already much used by historians of art and architecture, as well as by ecclesiastical historians and others, is particularly important.⁵³ 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

⁴⁹ M. Inguanez, 'The Archives of the Università del Gozo: a Classified List,' *Melita Historica*, ii no. 1 (1956). E. Leopardi, 'The Island of Gozo: 1432-1453,' *ibid.*, iii no. 3 (1962); iv no. 1 (1964), depended entirely on the capitoli in Giambruno-Genuardi, i. 323-338. See also the pamphlet by B. Blouet, *Gozo* (Malta, 1965).

⁵⁰ This point is admirably made by the detailed use of notarial records in G. Wettinger-M. Fsadni, *Peter Caxaro's Cantilena: a Poem in Medieval Maltese* (Malta, 1968); the poem itself was found, in copy, in the Notarial Archives. Pre-1467 references may be gleaned indirectly, eg. *infra*, 62.

⁵¹ A few are published in Anon., *Memoirs of the Family of Inguanez* (Malta, 1888).

⁵² See A. Zammit Gabarretta, J. Mizzi *et al.*, *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the Royal Malta Library*, i- (1964-).

⁵³ V. Borg, 'The Ecclesiastical Archives of the Maltese Islands,' in *Maltese History: What Future?* Visitation documents are published in G. Marchi, 'Ricerche storiche negli archivi di Malta,' in *Missione 1964*. J. Cassar Pullicino, 'Malta in 1575: Social Aspects of an Apostolic Visit,' *Melita Historica*, ii no. 1 (1956), makes excellent use of Dusina's acts, providing information of interest to the medievalist; see also M. Buhagiar *infra*. The call for an edition (*ibid.*, i no. 2 [1953], 67) has unfortunately remained unheeded. It should be based on the original in Archivio Vaticano, S. Congregatio Concilii, Visite Apostoliche, 39: Malta 1575 (ff. 477, some blank; unbound but clearly legible). The various copies available in Malta, some of them relatively late ones, are apparently not altogether reliable. Dusina's *Discorso di Malta*, with useful statistics, is published in A. Vella, 'La missione di Pietro Dusina a Malta nel 1574,' *Melita Historica*, v no. 2 (1969).

careful attention, as does the production of a detailed guide to Malta's archives.⁵⁴ 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-1397.

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 1962.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ The miraculous appearance of St. Paul at the defence of Mdina in 1429, represented in the seventeenth-century painting by Mattia Preti in 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 [p.9] Baroness of Malta* by S. Frendo de' Mannarino, published in Maltese in 1893 and in English in 1953, or a play such as A. Cremona's *The Ransom of the Peasants*, which is set around the crisis of 1427 to 1429 and was produced in Malta in 1970.⁵⁷ Folklore merges into cultural anthropology, and the sociological analysis of modern Maltese society may also throw indirect light on village conditions and popular mentalities,⁵⁸ 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 1647. 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 forefathers, but it is often impossible to establish an earlier origin for tales which are in some cases either demonstrably false or inherently improbable.⁵⁹ 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

⁵⁴ The inventories drawn up following the reports of Professor I. Evans in 1951/2 were never published: cf. [S. Zarb], 'The Archives of Malta,' *Scientia* [Malta], xxii (1956), 107-110.

⁵⁵ For a complete bibliography and an invaluable theme-index of Cassar Pullicino's work, see G. Mifsud-Chircop, *Guze Cassar Pullicino: Folklorista* (unpublished B.A. thesis: Royal University of Malta, 1972).

⁵⁶ Eg. J. Cassar Pullicino, 'Pirates and Turks in Maltese Tradition,' *Scientia* [Malta], xiv (1948). That traces of Punic folklore could well have reached Malta after 1530 is effectively demonstrated in idem, 'Some Considerations in Determining the Semitic Element in Maltese Folklore,' in *Congrès arabo-berbère*.

⁵⁷ English version in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, i no. 4 (1960); ii no. 2 (1962); iv no. 1 (1969); iv nos. 3-4 (1971). Roger the Norman legends reappear in N. Monsarrat's novel *The Kappillan of Malta* (London, 1973), 213-222.

⁵⁸ See J. Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta* (London 1965); idem, *Hal-Farrug: a Village in Malta* (New York, 1969).

⁵⁹ *Infra*, 29-34, 96-103.

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 datable stylistically, and the study of military, domestic and ecclesiastical architecture is especially important.⁶⁰ 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, costumes⁶¹ 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 Pitré Museum at Palermo should be formed rapidly before the bulk of such materials is lost for ever.⁶² 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.⁶³ Byzantine coins [p.10] were being discovered in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century,⁶⁴ and Byzantine and Arab coins have subsequently been found, particularly at Mdina where a notable hoard of gold and copper monies came to light in 1698.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷ They constitute a useful starting point for the further investigation of settlements, properties and fiefs, though few toponyms can be documented before 1372. In the absence of other materials, controversy concerning the Maltese language has turned above all on the interpretation and antiquity of

⁶⁰ Discussion and references *infra*, 55, 58-59, 64-66.

⁶¹ J. Cassar Pollicino, ‘Notes for a History of Maltese Costume,’ *Maltese Folklore Review*, i no. 3 (1966), with medieval and early modern texts.

⁶² Cf. *idem*, ‘Ethnographic Exhibition,’ in *Congrès arabo-berbère*, with plates, and ‘Background Material for the Study of Folk Arts and Crafts,’ *Maltese Folklore Review*, i no. 4 (1973), and notes *ibid.*, 348-354.

⁶³ E. Coleiro, ‘Ricerche numismatiche,’ in *Missione 1964*; *idem*, ‘Maltese Coins of the Roman Period,’ *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 7 ser., xi (1971).

⁶⁴ *Infra*, 11, 136.

⁶⁵ Abela, 248-249; G.-F. Abela-G. Ciantar, *Malta Illustrata*, 2 vols. (Malta, 1772-1780), i. 692-693.

⁶⁶ *Infra*, 21-23. Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii 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 was current in later medieval Malta, yet Mifsud produces a number of references to *pecunia e moneta Malte*, to *pecunia e moneta gaudisii*, etc.; he documents both a shortage of small coin in Malta and attempts to prevent its exportation. There was some sort of *moneta Malte que computatur ad rationem de septem pro una de moneta Sicilie* (*infra*, 127 n. 4). Possibly this was a money of account; perhaps the Maltese used a Muslim coinage, or made their own small coin. This puzzle is discussed, but not solved, in M. Sant, *Coinage Problems Facing the Order of St. John in Malta* (unpublished M.A. thesis; Royal University of Malta, 1967), 23-28. Meanwhile it is impossible to make use of much available 15th-century statistical information given in *moneta Malte*.

⁶⁷ *Infra*, 205-216 *et passim*.

the toponymic evidence.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ Names indicating ruins, marshes or waste-lands sometimes suggest the site of abandoned villages or settlements on marginal land,⁷⁰ but other evidence can be ambiguous; a name such as ‘the spring of the olives’ 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. Abela published lists of Maltese trees and plants in 1647, but he also said that most of the trees had gone.⁷¹

Early charts and portolans, such as Idrīsī's map completed in Sicily in 1154, 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.⁷² The most interesting old portolan, *Lo Compasso de Navegare*, 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 prevailing winds and other nautical conditions; it was probably Pisan in origin and [p.11] was first composed in the mid-thirteenth century.⁷³ The wealth of accurate detail it provides, compared with the information given a century earlier by Idrīsī, suggests that the invention of the compass had almost literally put Malta on the map for long-distance shipping. The Turkish sea-atlas of Piri Reis, completed by 1527, gave the outline of Malta but almost no useful internal information.⁷⁴ 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 *Marsa Hortus* 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, *casali* 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 1536 to that of Abela in 1647 suggests that few of the details are of much utility to the medieval historian; Lafreri's map of circa 1551 is the most

⁶⁸ J. Aquilina, ‘A Brief Survey of Maltese Place-Names,’ in his *Papers in Maltese Linguistics* (2nd ed: Malta, 1970); P. Saydon, ‘Die Ortsnamen der maltesischen Inseln,’ *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, ns. xvi-xvii (1966-1967); and references *infra*, 24 n. 143, 25 n. 150.

⁶⁹ As demonstrated *infra*, 97-99.

⁷⁰ Eg. *infra*, 54, 181-204.

⁷¹ G. Lanfranco. ‘The Natural History of Malta as presented by Abela in 1647.’ in *Abela Essays*.

⁷² M. Amari–C. Schiaparelli, ‘L’Italia descritta nel Libro del Re Ruggero compilato da Edrisi,’ *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, cclxxiv = 2 ser., viii (1876/7), 21-22 and frontispiece.

⁷³ Text in B. Motzo, *Il Compasso da Navigare: opera italiana della metà del secolo XIII* (Cagliari, 1947), 79-80, 111-113; a later version reproduced in *ASM*, vii (1935/6), 389-390, was mistakenly supposed to be earlier than that published by Motzo. For later texts and a now outdated list of appearances of the Maltese isles and place-names in the portolans, K. Kretschmer, *Die italienischen Portolane des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1909), 308, 476-478, 617; the Greek portolan texts reproduced in *Missione 1968*, 24-25, require some revision.

⁷⁴ Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, Inv. No. H 642, in *Order of St. John in Malta*, 312 and end-cover; cf. maps and texts in M. Agius-Vadala, *Piri Reis Map of the Maltese Islands* (Malta, 1966).

interesting, particularly as it shows roads linking the villages.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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 *pichulilli* who found a hoard of 248 Byzantine gold pieces in 1458/9.⁷⁷ There was a lawsuit *de inventione thesauri* in 1461, and in 1526 a case was brought against a goldsmith named Giovanni Scarpa who had purchased part of a hoard of late Roman coins *di la monita di S. Elena*; in 1530 Luca d'Armenia and Antonio Callus even received a licence to seek ancient treasure of gold and silver.⁷⁸ [p.12] Interest however has been fixed mainly on the prehistoric and classical. The Muslim tombs uncovered in 1881 and between 1920 and 1925 during the excavations of the Roman house just outside Mdina were not published.⁷⁹ The major exception to the general absence of medieval archaeological activity has been the sustained campaigns of the Italian Mission at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi. The final reports have 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.⁸⁰ Few other zones offer such rewarding opportunities since the islands are small and the modern urban sprawl severely limits the

⁷⁵ R. Almagià, *Monumenta Italiae Cartographica* (Florence, 1929), 23-24, 32-33, 63, 74-75; tavole xxv 2-5, xxxvi 3-4, lxiii 2. A further census is desirable; preliminary survey in E. Hutten Czapski, 'Les cartes géographiques de Malte du XVI siècle,' *Annales de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire de Malte*, xxiv (1966), based on R. Tooley, 'Maps in Italian Atlases of the Sixteenth Century,' *Imago Mundi*, iii (1939), 36-37. A selection of early maps is displayed in the Valletta Armoury; and there are others in the Royal Malta Library. See also Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, *The True Depiction of the Investment ... of Malta*, ed. D. Calnan (Malta, 1965), and Q. Hughes, *Fortress: Architecture and Military History in Malta* (London, 1969).

⁷⁶ Details in *Museum Report 1970*, 8-9; [the annual reports of the National Museum at Valletta, which have appeared under a number of varying titles since 1904, are cited in this form throughout.]

⁷⁷ *Infra*, 136.

⁷⁸ References given by Valentini, in *Archivum Melitense*, ix. 175.

⁷⁹ *Infra*, 21-22.

⁸⁰ The medieval results are summarized by M. Cagiano de Azevedo *infra*; see also the *Missione, passim*, and general interpretations by S. Moscati and M. Cagiano de Azevedo, in *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia: Rendiconti*, xxxvi-xxxix (1963/4-1966/7). Professoressa Antonia Ciasca most kindly showed the author the site and materials at Tas-Silġ. It should be emphasized that more definitive judgements concerning these excavations must await the publication of final reports.

possibilities, but well-placed excavations, for example within the walls of Mdina or of the citadel on Gozo (plate 4a), 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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.⁸³ Underwater archaeology may also produce medieval information, especially where used in conjunction with aerial photography.⁸⁴

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 dumping of inorganic town refuse; in Gozo the soil lies deeper but the destructions of the sixteenth century were much more widespread.⁸⁵ Such obstacles greatly increase the difficulties of interpreting aerial photographs and they impede surface surveying. The soft and easily-worked [p.13] 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.⁸⁶ Much material from the excavations at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi also awaits study; a preliminary catalogue of the glazed wares has already appeared.⁸⁷ Though the cruder wares were doubtless produced on the islands, there is as yet no evidence for pottery kilns. In 1647 *vasi delicati* were still being made at Zurrieq without a wheel.⁸⁸ If all glazed wares had to be imported that would account for their apparent rarity,

⁸¹ It cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that unless such excavations are properly conducted on a reasonably large scale, and then satisfactorily published, they are likely to do more harm than good; finance, experience and preliminary study designed to elucidate the problems and possibilities are essential to this sort of medieval excavation.

⁸² See G. Wettinger's appeal for excavations and, in particular, his list of place-names mentioning ruins, *infra*, 195-199, 213-216; the modern maps are listed *infra*, 189 n. 25, 205.

⁸³ For a well dated to 1511, see *Missione 1968*, 89.

⁸⁴ See the under-water archaeological map of Malta (containing a reference to medieval pottery found) in *Missione 1964*, fig. 1. Add a 'mediaeval Arab pot': H. Frost, *The Mortar Wreck in Mellieha Bay* (London, 1969), 22. Cf. G. Schmiedt, *Contributo della foto-interpretazione alla ricostruzione della situazione geografico-topografica dei porti antichi in Italia* (Florence, 1964). Collections of aerial photographs of Malta and Gozo are held in the Royal University of Malta Library and by the Royal Air Force.

⁸⁵ D. Lang, *Soils of Malta and Gozo* (London, 1960), 16-21, discusses soil disturbance, provides chemical analyses and a detailed soil-map, and rejects the idea that soil was imported from Sicily.

⁸⁶ 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 into early modern times.

⁸⁷ F. d'Andria, 'Nota sulla ceramica invetriata: Catalogo,' in *Missione 1968*, with tavole 16-17. other materials are recorded in *Missione, passim*.

⁸⁸ Abela, 102.

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 established⁸⁹ and where the pottery has received considerable preliminary study.⁹⁰ However, even if 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,⁹¹ 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.⁹² 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,⁹³ partly perhaps because sherds were systematically collected to be ground down for the *deffun* used to waterproof roofs. In any case the constant shifting of soil would frequently invalidate deductions from such 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 [p.14] these lacunae by adducing analogies, particularly from Sicily. It is essential that the historian of Malta should be well grounded in Sicilian and Italian history; ideally, he should be equally expert in North African studies; and he would have much to learn from the overlapping of Christians, Muslims and Jews in the Iberian peninsula. The comparative study of such Mediterranean islands as Pantelleria, Menorca, Rhodes or Chios, isolated, precarious and restricted, can throw light on developments on Malta and Gozo, as indeed can the 'geohistorical' realities of the entire Mediterranean world. Unfortunately the notion of Malta as a Mediterranean microcosm is not always helpful, and the procedure by analogy is most likely to be applied precisely where it is least reliable, that is where there is little or no

⁸⁹ See *GRAM: Notiziario del Gruppo Recherche Archeologia Medievale–Palermo* (1971 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 Brucato; preliminary notices in F. d'Angelo, 'Brucato,' *Sicilia Archeologica*, no. 9 (1970). Professor Jean-Marie Pesez and his associates kindly showed the writer the site they are excavating.

⁹⁰ For recent work, see F. d'Angelo, 'La ceramica nell'archeologia medievale siciliana,' *GRAM: Notiziario ...* (Aug. 1971); *idem*, 'Recenti ritrovamenti di ceramiche a Palermo,' *Faenza*, lviii (1972); *idem*, 'La ceramica normanna in Sicilia,' *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia Normanna* (Palermo, 1973); see in addition A. Ragona, 'Echi del Vespro nella ceramica siciliana del sec. XIV,' *Faenza*, lviii (1972).

⁹¹ R. Berger et al., *Scientific Methods in Medieval Archaeology* (Berkeley, Cal., 1970).

⁹² Cf. A. Luttrell, 'La datazione della ceramica medioevale,' *Atti: V Convegno Internazionale della Ceramica* (Albisola, 1973).

⁹³ Preliminary surface surveying has produced disappointingly few recognizably medieval sherds. A trial investigation of the general area of *Raħal* or *Casale Spital* (Has Saptan), documented at ca. 560662 by Wettinger (*infra*, 188-189, 191, 211) as containing a late medieval settlement, revealed a hitherto unknown prehistoric promontory site [560660] 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 considerable quantities of painted 'Arab tradition' pottery lie just below ground nearby [562666] with the *casale* itself probably at 562664.

evidence. A striking example of this occurred when Alberto Stilon repeatedly attempted to show, on the basis of an exposition of developments in Sicily, that Malta had an Italian-style *comune* in the Norman and Hohenstaufen periods. Quite apart from the debatable nature of the argument about Sicily, there is no real evidence with regard to Malta and, as Alfredo Mifsud intervened to point out after Stilon had read his second paper, the only truly relevant document actually stated that in about 1241 the Maltese and Gozitans had their own customs—*uiuunt alijs moribus et constitucionibus quam alij homines Regni nostri Sicilie*, and furthermore that the Emperor Frederick II accepted this fact.⁹⁴ Malta was attached to Sicily for many centuries, but it was also a small and barren island off the African coast, situated further south than Tunis. Malta was influenced by Spain and Byzantium as well as from Sicily and Italy, and the persistence of its fundamentally non-European language is only the most striking pointer to the unreality of many Sicilian parallels. One prehistorian has, in fact, become so suspicious of alleged internal Mediterranean ‘influences’ and ‘diffusions’ as to seek illumination of Maltese problems from Pacific islands rather than ‘continental’ Sicily or Aegean Greece.⁹⁵ Maltese institutions changed slowly, often lagging well behind the developments of those who ruled them from afar. Parallels and analogies with other lands or with other epochs of Maltese history may be extremely illuminating, but where there is no evidence they tend to be arbitrary and unsound; where they are useful is in the interpretation of such firm evidence as can be found.⁹⁶

The tendency to view Malta’s history in terms of foreign developments has largely determined approaches to the problem of chronological divisions. Periods have no historical reality of their own, and periodization is in the last resort a historian’s tool, a matter of convenience. Though control of the archipelago has occasionally changed rather suddenly, institutional and social changes have tended to drag slowly behind dramatic political changes. Island life is notoriously archaic, and in Malta even the towns have been isolated from the main stream of continental progress, while the predominantly agrarian character of North-west Malta and above all of Gozo, which is cut off even from Malta, has left the peasants working their lands in time-worn ways, to some extent immune from change. This time-lag runs right through [p.15] 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 dominion 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 1224 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,

⁹⁴ A. Stilon, ‘Della Esistenza dei Comuni durante la Dominazione Normanna,’ *Archivum Melitense*, nos. 8-10 (1911/2), and ‘L’Imperatore Federico II di Svevia ed i Comuni del Regno di Sicilia,’ *ibid.*, ii no. i (1917); Cf. A. Mifsud, *ibid.*, iii. 20, and *infra*, 60.

⁹⁵ Cf. C. Renfrew, *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe* (London, 1973) 147-166 *et passim*.

⁹⁶ This fundamental belief lies behind the construction of this book. Non-Maltese evidence has not been altogether neglected but 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.

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; serfs and *latifundia* 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.⁹⁷ 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 *universitas* 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 [p.16] 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.⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁷ The generally accepted notion of a 'Castilian' period leads to absurd errors; eg. that the 'souverains de Castille' governed Malta after 1410: J. Godechot, *Histoire de Malte* (2nd ed: Paris, 1970), 26. The abandonment of the 'Castilian' period of the text-books is advocated *infra*, 49.

⁹⁸ That 1565 was a turning-point is evident architecturally, for example: *infra*, 217-223. The elements of continuity are well emphasized in L. Butler, 'The Maltese People and the Order of St. John in the Sixteenth Century,' *Annales de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire de Malte*, xxiii-xxiv (196-1966).

⁹⁹ See J. Vicens Vives, *Aproximación a la Historia de España* (2nd ed: Barcelona, 1960) [English translation: *Approaches to the History of Spain* (Berkeley, Cal., 1970)], who deals lucidly with such theories of 'race' and 'nation.'

argument for continuity was sustained, for example, by Sir Themistocles Zammit who held that modern Maltese have skulls 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.’¹⁰⁰ It has, indeed, often been argued that there is a ‘Maltese race’ which survived above all in 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 classed as: Bronze Age; Romano-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.¹⁰¹ 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 Romano-Maltese times onwards’¹⁰² might be explained 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.¹⁰³

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 [p.17] 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 10,000,¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ T. Zammit, ‘The Inhabitants of the Maltese Islands,’ *Archivum Melitense*, i nos. 11-12 (1911/2), 242 *et passim*, but historical inaccuracies weaken his case.

¹⁰¹ L. Dudley Buxton, ‘The Ethnology of Malta and Gozo,’ *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, lii (1922). *Idem*, ‘Malta: an Anthropogeographical Study,’ *Geographical Review*, xiv (1924), adds little, but emphasizes (pp. 81-83) the continuation from the Bronze Age into modern times of Eastern ‘Armenoid’ as opposed to ‘Mediterranean’ characteristics.

¹⁰² Dudley Buxton (1922), 178.

¹⁰³ R. Bradley, *Malta and the Mediterranean Race* (London, 1912), contains some curious theories. The most recent approach, in R. Gayre of Gayre, ‘The Ethnology of the Maltese Islands,’ *Scientia* [Malta], xxxiii (1970), advances hypotheses which many medievalists would be unlikely to accept.

¹⁰⁴ Statistics *infra*, 53.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. J. Aquilina, ‘Race and Language in Malta,’ in his *Papers*; though the medievalist would wish to revise certain details, this sensible paper separates the issues of ‘race’ and language, pointing to the prejudices which have bedevilled many issues involved.

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.¹⁰⁶ Basic studies concerning the geology, 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;¹⁰⁷ 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.¹⁰⁸ The difficulty is to integrate such knowledge with the limited medieval information available.¹⁰⁹ British Admiralty marine charts could be compared with the medieval *Lo Compasso de Navegare*¹¹⁰ and with information about shipping-routes and shipwrecks, to produce a nautical history of medieval Malta, bearing in mind probable constants, such as winds and currents, and the considerable changes in the sea-level, which may have significant effects on small islands and deserve further study.¹¹¹ Roughly at the [p.18] 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,¹¹² 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.¹¹³ 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 text-book repetition of assertions concerning its role as a 'strategic cross-roads' do not really apply to the medieval period.

¹⁰⁶ F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (2nd ed: Paris, 1966) [English translation, 2 vols. (London, 1972-1973)].

¹⁰⁷ H. Bowen-Jones, J. Dewdney, W. Fisher, *Malta: Background for Development* (Durham, 1961), with numerous maps, plans, tables and photos; unfortunately, the oft-repeated medieval population figures at pp. 133, 135 are either fictitious or unreliable. See also H. Hyde, *The Geology of the Maltese Islands with special reference to Water Supply ...* (Malta, 1957); B. Nehring, *Die Maltesischen Inseln* (Tübingen, 1966). The best approach is through the carefully explained plans, models, photographs and specimens in the geology section of the Museum of Natural History at Mdina.

¹⁰⁸ J. Houston, *The Western Mediterranean World: an Introduction to its Regional Landscapes* (London, 1964), 639-643 *et passim*.

¹⁰⁹ B. Blouet, *The Story of Malta* (London, 1967), which provides an excellent introduction to the historical geography by a geographer, manages only 9 pages (pp. 40-48) on the medieval period.

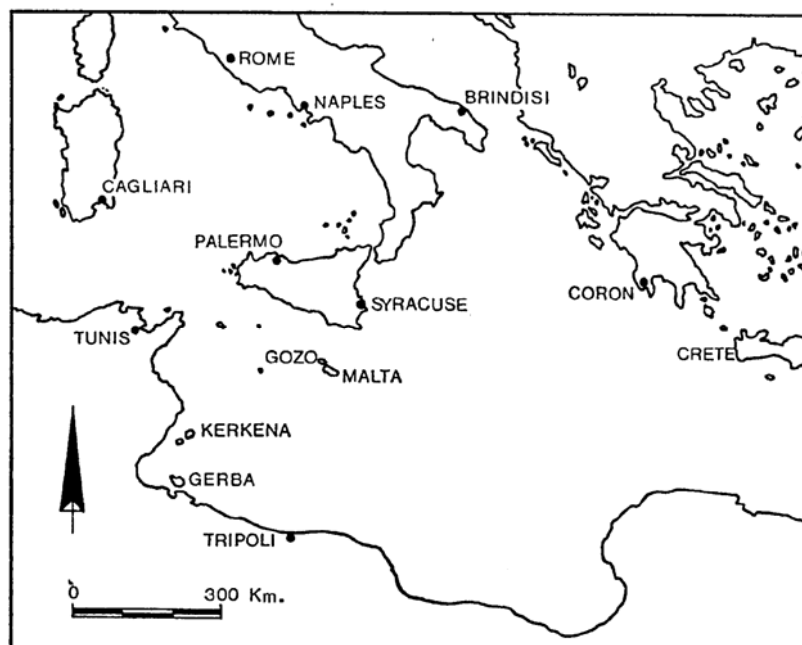
¹¹⁰ Cf. *supra*, 10-11.

¹¹¹ A. Gunther, 'Re-Drawing the Coast Line of Southern Italy: a Survey of Shifting Sea-Levels from Gaeta to Malta, with reference to Paestum,' *Illustrated London News*, 244 (1964), 86-89; his chart is reproduced in *Missione 1963*, fig. 1 (2).

¹¹² Cf. Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, iii. 74-78.

¹¹³ St. Paul and many others would have disagreed with Godechot, 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, ...'

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 30 inhabitants per square kilometre, assuming a population of 10,000, 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 37 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 *wieds* 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.¹¹⁴ 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 *xlokk* 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 58 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 tucti li seminati su suchj*.¹¹⁵ Much of the island was always bare, rocky and windswept, 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.¹¹⁶ Quintin stated in 1533 that the water was brackish, that the springs [p.19]



¹¹⁴ Cf. *infra*, 181 and n. 3.

¹¹⁵ Text of 1473 in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 255.

¹¹⁶ Bosio, iii. 30.

Fig. I. Malta in the Central Mediterranean

often dried up in summer, and that drinking water came from tanks and ditches; he also remarked that the summer dust had a bad effect on the eyes.

The evidence of prehistoric occupation in the form of giant temples and strange ‘cart-tracks’ in the bare rock must have been visible in various parts of the islands, and many medieval place-names referred to ancient ruins and Roman towers,¹¹⁷ but otherwise its lively prehistoric and ancient past can have impinged little on Malta’s medieval inhabitants.¹¹⁸ By about 1000 BC the vegetation was already much as it is today, with grass, weeds, some shrubs and a very little pine and olive; Malta had few trees.¹¹⁹ The scrub was important since, in the absence of wood, twigs and thistles were collected for fuel.¹²⁰ The Phoenicians arrived in about the ninth century BC and used Malta’s harbours as part of a network of Mediterranean trade. Malta subsequently became a colony of Carthage and, in the third century, of Rome. For hundreds of years the islands were a base for pirates, who often wintered there.¹²¹ [p.20] Roman Malta produced olive oil and textiles,¹²² while temples, baths, villas, fortifications, tombs, inscriptions, coins and wrecks all bear witness to a discreet 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.¹²³ 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 medieval *casali* were situated 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.¹²⁴ The extensive catacombs, many of them probably of the

¹¹⁷ Examples *infra*, 195-199; on Roman towers, see also M. Cagiano de Azevedo, in *Missione 1963*, 20-22.

¹¹⁸ The prehistory has attracted extensive attention; the standard work is J. Evans, *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: a Survey* (London, 1971). D. Trump, *Malta: An Archaeological Guide* (London, 1972), provides an excellent, well-illustrated introduction to pre-medieval Malta.

¹¹⁹ Pollen analysis from an excavation in water-logged clay: *Museum Report 1961*, 8.

¹²⁰ Texts in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 495-496 (1450) ; Bosio, iii. 30 (1524).

¹²¹ J. Busuttil, ‘Maltese Harbours in Antiquity,’ and ‘Pirates in Malta,’ both in *Melita Historica*, v no. 4 (1971).

¹²² M. Rossignani, ‘Note sui pressoi,’ in *Missione 1965*. Analysis of specimens shows that Roman textiles were of flax, not cotton: J. Busuttil, ‘The Maltese Textile Industry in Antiquity,’ *Melita Historica*, iv no. 3 (1966).

¹²³ The standard general works are still A. Mayr, *Die Insel Malta im Altertum* (Munich, 1909), and T. Ashby, ‘Roman Malta,’ *Journal of Roman Studies*, v (1915), to be supplemented by excavation and museum reports, and by the *Missione ... a Malta, passim*. The Biblical, classical and patristic texts are collected by E. Coleiro, ‘Malta nelle letterature classiche,’ in *Missione 1963*, and ‘Fonti patristiche,’ in *Missione 1966*; on the coins, *supra*, 9 n. 63.

¹²⁴ M. Cagiano de Azevedo, *Testimonianze archeologiche della tradizione paolina a Malta* (Rome, 1966). The medieval commentators on the biblical text recording Paul’s

late fourth and fifth centuries, provide Christian, Jewish and pagan inscriptions and symbols; some of the Jews were Greek-speaking.¹²⁵

[p.21] 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 352-360. Some were struck at Rome, but the rest all seem to 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.¹²⁶ 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,¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸ 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

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 buildings and rebuildings at S. Pawl provides rather strong evidence (summarized *infra*, 93-95) for an early-medieval tradition, broken ca. 870 but revived after ca. 1200. The reacting and interpretation of the S. Pawl graffiti and their iconography is highly controversial; see M. Guarducci and M. Cagianò de Azevedo, in *Archeologia classica*, xviii (1966), 144-151, 305-306; xix (1967), 177-183; and in *Aevum*, xi (1966), 565-566. Written evidence for the tradition, possibly fostered by the religious orders which mostly reached Malta in the 15th century (*infra*, 63-64), is late: correct the erroneous details in *Missione 1963*, 141. *Beniarrad* is first found as *Benerandu* in 1400: Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cancelleria 38, f. 64v-65v. The church is first documented, and that in a late copy, as in *contrata sancti Pauli tal Bincichi* in 1448 (later as *Bindichi*), and as *ad Milchi* (Maltese *Milghqi*) only in 1616: texts in Marchi, in *Missione 1964*, 29-32. The Pauline dedication of the cathedral is documented in 1299: text in course of publication by H. Bress. An image of St. Paul was reported to be stamped on a bell at Mdina cathedral made in Venice in 1370: text of 1645 in A. Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, ii (1917/8), 76-77. A cemetery at Rabat had been dedicated to St. Paul by 1372: text in H. Bress, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli, doc. 36. Only 58 out of some 1600 Maltese Christians in the 1419/20 militia list were named Paulu; none was named Publius: G. Wettinger, in *Melita Historica*, v. 86. Only 11 of the island's 411 churches were dedicated to St. Paul in 1575: M. Buhagiar, in *Scientia* [Malta], xxxv (1972), 27.

¹²⁵ E. Becker, *Malta Sotterranea: Studien zur altchristlichen und jüdischen Sepulchralkunst* (Strassburg, 1913); see also A. Ferrua, 'Antichità cristiane: le catacombe di Malta,' *Civiltà Cattolica*, iii quaderno 2381 (3 Sept. 1949); G. Agnello, 'Le catacombe di Sicilia e di Malta e le loro caratteristiche strutturali,' *Atti del XV Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura* (Rome, 1970); see also Trump, 77-78, 87-89, 114-117, 132. The problems of the catacombs, and their design, decoration and iconography, are bedevilled by the loss of various inscriptions and uncertainty as to the provenance of others. Further study of the catacombs, their typology, inscriptions and lamps, seems essential for early medieval Maltese history.

¹²⁶ *Museum Report 1961*, 8-10; Mr. Terence Volk kindly advised on the situation of the major Roman mints in this period.

¹²⁷ *Infra*, 71-72.

¹²⁸ Details in *Museum Report 196/57*, 8-10.

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 533 on his way to campaign against the Vandals in Africa, and the Byzantines conquered Sicily in 535. A number of North African Christians, fleeing before the Berbers, 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 *dux*; and a seventh- or eighth-century seal shows that there was also a *droungarios* 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 756 or soon after.¹²⁹

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 300, while the site of another, at Ta’ Cieda, was later used for numerous Muslim burials.¹³⁰ Some of the Muslim graves uncovered at Rabat rested directly on Roman floors and pavements (fig. 2; plate 6b), and the excavations at Tas-Silġ 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 stratification at San Pawl gives a picture of gradual decline [p.22] interrupted finally by the Muslim catastrophe, at which point a layer of ash and burnt materials covered the Byzantine pottery.¹³¹ 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.¹³² A great deal of Byzantine pottery was scattered across the sites at San Pawl Milqi and Tas-Silġ;¹³³ this material awaits detailed study, in which recent advances in the dating of late Roman pottery and lamps should make greater precision possible.¹³⁴ Other materials include the

¹²⁹ The best treatment of the Byzantine period was that in Mayr, while J. Busuttill, ‘Fonti greche per la storia delle Isole Maltesi,’ in *Missione 1968*, collects, without comment, many of the written sources; see now T. Brown *infra*.

¹³⁰ Details in *Museum Report 1960*, 6-7 and plates I-IV; *Missione 1963*, 21-22; Trump, *Malta*, 87, 89-91, 121, 128; *infra*, 183-184.

¹³¹ In addition to M. Cagiano de Azevedo, *infra*, 88-95, see *Missione 1964*, 133-134; on the Rabat graves, see *Museum Report 1921/22*, 5; and for coin evidence of similar continuity at the Marsa, see Ashby, 28-29.

¹³² *Infra*, 89-93, 163-170; for details of a possible Byzantine church at Tad-Dejr, see also *Museum Report 1926/27*, p. ix; 1933/34, p. ix; and *infra* plate 5a.

¹³³ On S. Pawl, *Missione 1964*, 134, 150-154; 1966, 72, 75; on Tas-Silġ, T. Martinelli Coco, ‘Ceramica romana e bizantina ...,’ *Missione 1969*, and *Missione, passim*. On a fragment apparently comparable with Roman ‘Forum Ware’ and possibly datable to the 7th-9th centuries, see *Missione 1968*, 83; fig. 6 (3); tavola 17 (3). On such wares and their Mediterranean distribution, which includes Syracuse, see O. Mazzucato, *La Ceramica a vetrina pesante* (Rome, 1972), 47, 69 *et passim*.

¹³⁴ 134. Cf. J. Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery* (London, 1972), studying African ‘Red Slip Ware’ until ca. 700; the Maltese material is discussed and placed in context.

Byzantine coins in the islands' [p.23] museums.¹³⁵ The San Pawl villa was presumably occupied until

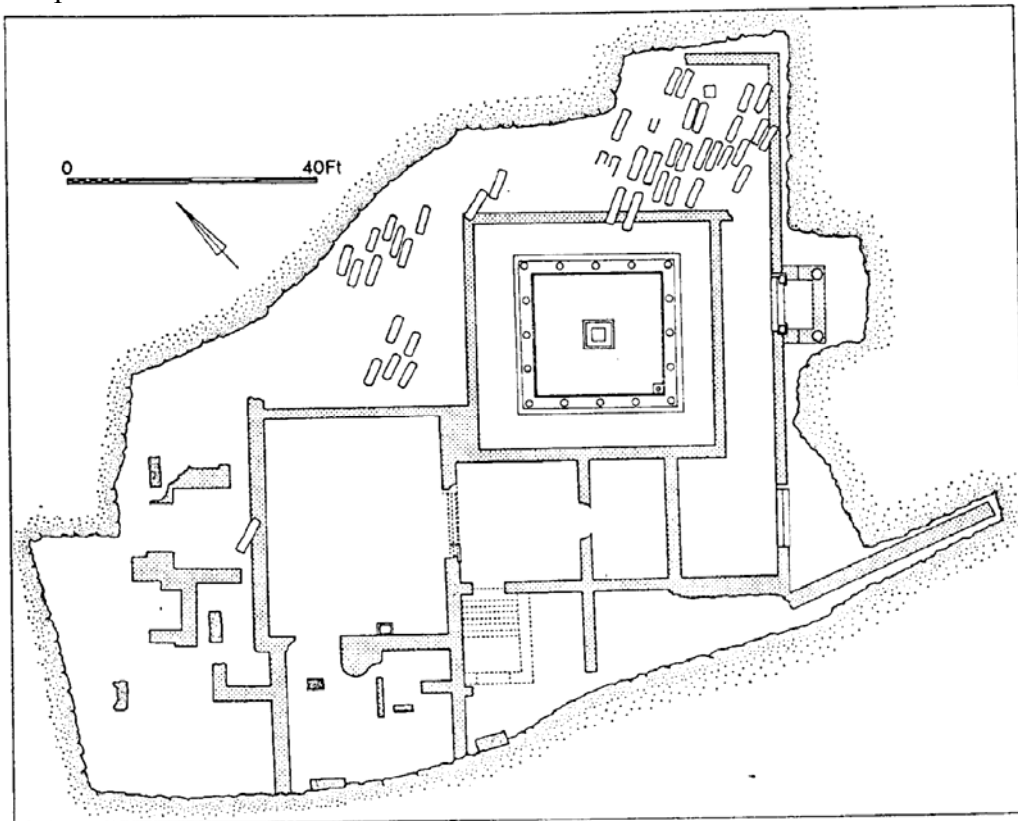


Fig. 2. The Muslim Cemetery outside Mdina showing Muslim Graves resting directly on the Foundations of a Roman House
(Redrawn from E.L. Galizia's excavation plan of 1881; compare with plate 6b)

the late ninth century, and it was fortified. There was no church there, but the very controversial graffiti which were found may point to Christian occupation, though they can only be dated on hypothetical iconographic grounds. One seems to show a ship, possibly meant to be that of St. Paul, attributable from the style of its rigging to the sixth century onwards. Another may represent St. Paul holding a stick which, iconographically, suggests an origin in an Egyptian monastery at some point in or after the fifth century; this motif could have reached Malta as the result of one of a succession of emigrations from Africa.¹³⁶

To the archaeological evidence and the graffiti are to be added a number of hypotheses. It has been suggested that the 'Siculo-Byzantine' church of San Ciro, allegedly

¹³⁵ The provisional classification at the Cathedral Museum in Mdina should now be revised in the light of P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, ii part i (Washington, 1968); the provenance of these coins is uncertain and they await proper study. The Byzantine coins in the Gozo Museum do not come from Gozo. The Byzantine lead seal found in Gozo (*Museum Report 1960*, 13) is edited *infra*, 87 and in plate 5b and c.

¹³⁶ In addition to references *supra*, 20 n. 124, see *Missione 1965*, 120-121; *1968*, 112-113. Events at S. Pawl may seem less obscure when the pottery has been studied in detail.

datable to the immediate post-Muslim period, was built on pre-Muslim foundations;¹³⁷ that certain paintings can be dated to before 870;¹³⁸ that the name of the Gozitan fishing port of Xlendi derives from the Byzantine *xelandion* or long-ship;¹³⁹ that Maltese building techniques were influenced from Syria and Anatolia;¹⁴⁰ that certain Maltese churches were dedicated to Egyptian or Oriental saints such as Ciro and Catherine;¹⁴¹ and that the survival of six Greek liturgical terms in modern Maltese shows that the Greek rite was used in Maltese churches from the fourth century onwards.¹⁴² Some of these suggestions are not inherently improbable. The difficulty is that while many of them have been used to support each other, none of them can actually be proved. There is one notice of Africans fleeing ‘to the islands,’ which probably included Malta, and it seems plausible that there were contacts with Cirenaica or Tunisia, but there is no decisive evidence to support theories concerning the immigration of colonists from Egypt or Syria. Very few dedications of Maltese churches can be documented before the fifteenth century, while Maltese rural building styles could have come from Tunisia rather than the Levant, and in any case they were determined by the materials locally available. San Ciro could have been built on top of an earlier, Byzantine, church; the style of Maltese rock-cut churches could indirectly have been influenced from Anatolia by way of Southern Italy; Xlendi could derive from *xelandion*, though it might have come from the Italian *scialando* which also [p.24] means 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 *Ghawdex*, or Gozo, and only four other toponyms, including Skala and Pwales allegedly derived from *scala* a harbour and *palus* a swamp;¹⁴³ this argument has found little acceptance. As against Saydon’s six Maltese liturgical or ecclesiastical terms of Greek origin, which include *Lapsi* for Ascension, and *miru*

¹³⁷ V. Bonello, ‘La chiesa bizantina di S. Ciro a Malta,’ *Brutium*, xvii no. 1 (1938) [and, as ‘La chiesa siculo-bizantina ...,’ in *Malta*, no. 15, 225 (18 Dec. 1937)].

¹³⁸ R. Bonnici Cali, ‘Saint Luke’s Madonnas in Malta,’ *Scientia* [Malta], xv (1949); his unconvincing hypotheses are based on ‘traditions’ such as that of the African Augustinians who fled from the Vandals and inscribed Greek letters on an ikon at Mellieha in Malta.

¹³⁹ Aquilina, *Papers*, 234.

¹⁴⁰ See *infra*, 55 n. 290.

¹⁴¹ Eg. Bonello, in *Brutium*, xvii no. 1, 6; M. Buhagiar, ‘The Cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Malta,’ *Scientia* [Malta], xxxv (1972), 25-26.

¹⁴² P. Saydon, ‘Traces of the Byzantine Rite in the Church of Malta,’ *Melita Theologica*, vii (1954), 47-48. G. Lupi, ‘Il rito greco a Malta,’ in *La chiesa greca in Italia dall’VIII al XVI secolo* (Padua, 1973), summarizes usefully much of the varied evidence for Oriental influences.

¹⁴³ P. Saydon, ‘The Pre-Arabic Latin Element in Maltese Toponymy,’ *Orbis*, v (1956). J. Busuttil, ‘Marsa,’ *Orbis*, xxi (1972), argues that four names composed of *Marsa* (Arabic: harbour) plus an earlier toponym (eg. Marsamxett) are basically pre-Arabic. Its intrinsic merits apart, this argument is based on texts of 1442, 1465, 1551 etc., whereas earlier forms are available from the immediately post-Muslim period, eg. *Marza Mosecto* in 1296 (*Compasso da Navigare*, 112).

for chrism or confirmation, Aquilina presented other Maltese liturgical words, such as *knisja* for church and *qassis* for priest, which he held must be of ‘Christian Arabic,’ possibly Maronite, derivation.¹⁴⁴ 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.¹⁴⁵ Abela noted traces of Greek in the Maltese language in 1647,¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷ One place-name, Wied-ir-Rum meaning the Valley of the Christians, is documented in 1467 as *guedirrum*,¹⁴⁸ and references of both 1472 and 1476 to *la porta di li grechi* or *porta grecorum*, through which rubbish was being conveyed at Mdina, might also suggest a Greek presence, but they neither prove nor date it.¹⁴⁹

The absence of contemporary texts on which to base philological hypotheses concerning what language was spoken on pre-Muslim Malta inevitably makes this discussion a most unsatisfactory one. It is important, therefore, to publish all the 500 or more surnames and nicknames and the more than 3,200 place-names, practically all of which have been drawn from notarial and other documents dating before 1545. These names reflect a strong Arab, and particularly Berber or Tunisian, influence surviving well into the fifteenth century. They include *qā'id*, *sharīf* and other words [p.25] for governing officials; the name for new Muslims of non-Arabic extraction; and so forth.¹⁵⁰ 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 *Randan*, from the Arabic *Ramaḍān*, used in Christian Maltese for ‘Lent’—which are now found in the religious parlance of the modern Maltese, is simply that such phrases remained in the language when the islands’ 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 Christians 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,¹⁵¹ which might

¹⁴⁴ J. Aquilina, ‘Maltese Christian Words of Arabic Origin,’ in *Congrès arabo-berbere*.

¹⁴⁵ W. Vycichl, ‘Les études chamito-sémitiques,’ in *Congrès arabo-berbere*, 132-133.

¹⁴⁶ J. Cassar Pullicino, ‘G.F. Abela and the Maltese Language,’ in *Abela Essays*, 33.

¹⁴⁷ See Dusina’s examinations of Greek priests and their rites: Visitation (discussed *supra*, 8 n. 53) at f. 251-256.

¹⁴⁸ *Infra*, 99 n. 14; whether *Rum* referred specifically to Greeks or more generally to Christians is debatable.

¹⁴⁹ Texts in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 191-192 (1472), 194 (1476).

¹⁵⁰ G. Wettinger, ‘Arabo-Berber Influences in Malta: Onomastic Evidence,’ in *Congrès arabo-berbere*; cf. his other articles *infra* and elsewhere (*infra*, 53 n. 270, 68 n. 374).

¹⁵¹ Punic and neo-Punic finds, especially those from Tas-Silġ, still await study. It is doubtful if any inscription can yet be dated later than ca. 100 AD at the latest: cf. V. Borg—B. Rocco, ‘L’ipogeo di Tac-Caghki a Malta,’ *Sicilia Archeologica*, v (1972). Other proposed evidence for later Punic survivals is debatable; see Cassar Pullicino, in *Congrès arabo-berbere*, and P. Grech, ‘Are there any Traces of Punic in Maltese?’ *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, i (1961).

account for the ease 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 Hebrew¹⁵² should not have been current as well. Malta has almost always been a place where several languages were spoken.

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 Mahgrib and in Spain.¹⁵³ Later, when the Aghlabid rulers of Tunisia began their overseas conquests, Malta presumably came increasingly 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 836 by Abu [p.26] al-Aghlab, who took 'great booty.' Almost certainly the conquest of Malta 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 1038 the Byzantine general George Maniaces attempted to recapture Sicily and, probably soon afterwards, there was a Byzantine attack on Malta which, according to the Arabic writer al-Qazwīnī, the Muslims beat back with the help of the servile population.¹⁵⁴ 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.

¹⁵² In addition to Jewish inscriptions (*supra*, 20), the toponyms *Malta*, *Goder* and *Għuxa* might be Hebrew in derivation, according to Aquilina, *Papers*, 195-197; but only Malta is documented in the early period.

¹⁵³ The African background to medieval Malta requires expert study not provided in this volume, but see especially M. Talbi, *L'Émirat aghlabide 184-296/800-909: Histoire politique* (Paris, 1966); H. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirīdes: Xe-XIIIe siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1959); H. Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsidés des origines à la fin du XVe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1940-1947); see also E. Rossi, *Storia di Tripoli e della Tripolitania dalla conquista araba al 1911* (Rome, 1968). For recent summaries, consult *Cambridge History of Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1970); for general Mediterranean developments, including the important works of A. Lewis, H. Ahrweiler and E. Eickhoff, see T. Brown *infra*.

¹⁵⁴ T. Brown, *infra*, 84-85, with translation and discussion of al-Qazwīnī; Amari's version (*Biblioteca*, 240-241) falsified the issue by giving 'Maltese' where the text has 'slaves.' The Byzantine attack, dated to 1049/50 by al-Qazwīnī, probably took place a decade earlier.

Muslim rule is almost as sparsely documented as that of the Byzantine dominion it replaced. A few Arabic texts provide a little information;¹⁵⁵ there is no useful evidence in Greek,¹⁵⁶ and the Hebrew sources have so far proved disappointing.¹⁵⁷ Further researches 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 870.¹⁵⁸ The known Maltese inscriptions, some in Kufic script, provide little than few names, dates Koranic quotations, and they cannot profitably be studied philologically, though the style of the lettering and the decoration would repay investigation.¹⁵⁹ 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-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi both testify, in a somewhat uncertain way, to destructions and rebuildings which fit [p.27] 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 baptistery at Tas-Silġ, while the Arabs destroyed the villa at San Pawl Milqi and installed themselves in the ruins where they constructed crude fortifications, leaving fragments of glazed pottery and amphora.¹⁶⁰ 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 Muslim 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 sawing 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

¹⁵⁵ Texts scattered through Amari, *Biblioteca*; many are reproduced, at least in part, with the original Arabic text in P. Minganti, ‘Fonti storiche arabe,’ in *Missione 1964*. Another collection, based on other editions and mss., appears in French translation only in M. Redjala, ‘L’archipel maltais dans la littérature historico-géographique d’expression arabe à l’époque médiévale,’ in *Congrès arabo-berbère*. 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 mss. and accompanied by accurate literal translations, is a *desideratum*.

¹⁵⁶ T. Brown, *infra*, 81-82, 86.

¹⁵⁷ 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*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, Cal., 1967-1971); these documents provide plentiful evidence for Mediterranean contacts from the 10th to 13th centuries.

¹⁵⁸ *Infra*, 83-84.

¹⁵⁹ 18 inscriptions mostly from Rabat, published with photographs and translations in E. Rossi, ‘Le lapidi sepolcrali arabo-musulmane di Malta,’ *Rivista degli studi orientali*, xii (1929/30). Rossi, 431 n. 1, denies the existence of the inscription, cited by Caruana, *Frammento*, 458, concerning a *hakim* or Muslim governor supposedly found at Saqqajja (Rabat) in 1881 which allegedly read: ‘piange l’infedeltà della popolazione di Malta.’ Yet this supposition is still being repeated, eg. in A. Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, i (Malta, 1967), 59, as a proof for the assertion that ‘the greater part of the Maltese remained loyal to their old Faith.’

¹⁶⁰ *Infra*, 88-95; Cagiano de Azevedo, *Testimonianze*, 54-56; *Missione 1964*, 151, 183; 1965. 162; 1966, 120; 1968, 84-85, 113; 1969, 134; 1970, 99-100; *et passim*.

found was a solid silver ring inscribed *Rabbī Allāh wāḥid*—‘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.¹⁶¹

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 878 and 1156. Mayr 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 1090 were certainly not indigenous Maltese; and that the island remained Muslim during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹⁶² The general rule of Muslim tolerance, as 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 869/70 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-Silġ 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 [p.28] captive Christians from other lands, just as there were many Christian captives at Malta in 1090. There is no hint that Roger the Norman found any indigenous Christians to welcome or collaborate with him in 1090; Malta was described as being inhabited by Saracens in 1175, and the report of about 1241, probably made after the ‘expulsion’ of the Muslims, showed that there were still at least 836 Muslim families on the two islands.¹⁶³ It seems, therefore, most unlikely that any significant community of Christians survived through some three centuries or more of Muslim predominance which is not however to deny the possibility of an underground and undocumented persistence of a Christian element which cherished its traditions in the way the Pauline cult, or some memory of it, was apparently kept alive at San Pawl Milqi. In North Africa, the indigenous Christians were much reduced in numbers, more by isolation than by persecution, but they did survive into the eleventh and twelfth centuries

¹⁶¹ T. Zammit, ‘Excavations at Rabat, Malta,’ *Antiquaries Journal*, iii (1923), 219, and *idem*, ‘Saracenic Remains in Malta,’ *Melita*, v (1925), 1-2, contain only the most summary accounts; see also *Museum Report 1921/22*, 5; *1924/25*, p. iv; *1925/26*, p. v; *1956/57*, 7; *1957/58*, 9 (seven tombs: plates V, VI, VII); *1959/60*, 6 (near Marsaxlokk); *1960*, 6 (Ta’ Cieda). A very similar grave is illustrated in J. Lacam, *Les sarrazins dans le haut moyen-âge français: histoire et archéologie* (Paris, 1965), 76-77. Fig. 2 is based on the map of 1881 in A.A. Caruana, *Recent Discoveries at Notabile* (Malta, 1881); it does not record T. Zammit’s discoveries of 1920-1925, 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 Mallia, and the Curator, Mr. Tancred Gouder, 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 (Sant, 17-20), though a group is known to have been found at Mdina in 1698 (details in Abela-Ciantar, i. 692-693; ii. 96-97).

¹⁶² A. Mayr, ‘Zur Geschichte der älteren christlichen Kirche von Malta,’ *Historisches Jahrbuch*, xvii (1896), 486-496.

¹⁶³ *Infra*, 30-34, 38-40, 82-85.

as tributaries paying the *jizya* or capitation tax.¹⁶⁴ In Malta such Christians would presumably have followed the Byzantine rite, as in Sicily, but what language they would have spoken it is impossible to say; speech, religion and ‘race’ did not necessarily coincide. Malta was very much smaller than Sicily, so that sweeping changes are more likely on Malta; and, in the absence of real evidence, the Sicilian analogy may be misleading. Other island patterns are possible, such as those on Crete, where a Greek population was ruled by independent Muslim emirs; or Cyprus, which was neutralized and demilitarized; or Mallorca, which remained strongly Muslim and Jewish into the thirteenth century.

At Malta there was a governor, the *qā'id* or *kaid*, and a group of leading Muslim citizens; in about 1050 the servile class apparently outnumbered the free men.¹⁶⁵ Agriculture is likely to have flourished, and it is possible that the Muslims introduced irrigation techniques, cotton and citrus fruits.¹⁶⁶ Malta lay on trade-routes between Sicily and Africa, and there was a Muslim community at Mdina with its cemetery just outside the town. Arab writers dedicated little space to Malta. Their comments are laconic, and some were clearly describing the wrong island; others mention its prosperity, its single town, its harbours, pastures, fruits and honey.¹⁶⁷ Two Arabic poets of Malta, Abū-al-Qāsim-ibn-Ramaḍān and As-Samīfī, and the Maltese artisan whom they jointly celebrated for having built a marvellous mechanical clock, probably lived in the mid-eleventh century in the time of *kaid* Yaḥyā, Lord of Malta. Abū-al-Qāsim was apparently the Maltese poet who moved to Palermo and was there refused permission by Count Roger to return to Malta. Another Arabic poet, ‘Abd-ar-Raḥmān-ibn- Ramaḍān known as Ibn-as-Sūsī, was born and raised in Malta, possibly in the twelfth century. This small class of educated Maltese evidently moved in a cosmopolitan world. Thus the Maltese Ibn-as-Sūsī, who also [p.29] emigrated from Malta to Palermo, belonged to a family which may have originated from Susa in Africa, and which was also mentioned on an inscription found at Sannat in Gozo.¹⁶⁸ This was carved on a piece of re-used Roman marble which became the beautiful tomb-stone of Maimūna, who died on Thursday 21 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.*¹⁶⁹

This is the tomb of Maimūna, daughter of Hassān, son of Ali 'al-Hudāli called Ibn as-Sūsī; she died, may the mercy of God be with her, on the fifth day, the sixteenth of the month

¹⁶⁴ Brunschvig, i. 430; W. Seston, ‘Sur les derniers temps du Christianisme en Afrique,’ *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire*, liii (1936); C.-E. Dufourcq, *L’Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), 105-106.

¹⁶⁵ *Infra*, 30, 84-85.

¹⁶⁶ According to Blouet, *Malta*, 41, but without evidence. Roman Malta had flax (*supra*, 20 n. 122); cotton is first mentioned in 1164 and then ca. 1320 (*infra*, 53). J. Galea-E. Bonnici, ‘Leprosy in Malta,’ *Leprosy Review*, xxviii (1957), 140, suggest that the Arabs introduced leprosy; the Maltese word for the disease derives from the Arabic.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. texts and comment in Redjala, 203-207.

¹⁶⁸ Texts in Amari, *Biblioteca*, i. 241-242; ii. 433, 446-447; see also *Storia*, ii. 485 n. I; iii. 218, 702-703, 773-774, 784-785. A certain confusion still surrounds these poets and their dates. On *kaid* Yaḥyā, see C. Seybold, ‘Analecta arabo-italica, 4: Malta e Galita in Jāqūt,’ *Centenario della Nascita di Michele Amari*, ii (Palermo, 1910), 210.

¹⁶⁹ *Koran*, xxxiii. 21.

of Sha‘ban of the year 569, witnessing that there is no God but the only God, who has no equal.

Look around 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 doors 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 decayed 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.¹⁷⁰

Muslim predominance 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 1939 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 grounded in the prestigious work of Abela who contributed only errors to the history of ‘Norman’ Malta. Abela turned the Christian slaves present in Malta in 1090 into indigenous Maltese; 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 Fazello 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. Furthermore Abela alleged that Roger’s siege of Mdina lasted three days; that he was aided by indigenous [p.30] Christians; that he expelled some of the Muslim inhabitants from the island; that he left a garrison in Malta and Gozo; and that he settled ‘nuovi coloni’ in the islands and distributed lands to them. Abela also repeated a ‘traditione da’ nostri Antenati’ that Count Roger chased the Muslims out of Mdina to a place named *Kalaa tal Bahria*, and he mistakenly dated the expulsion of the Muslims from Malta to 1127, connecting it with a ‘tradition’ concerning a Muslim plot.¹⁷³ None of this can be proved and most of it is clearly wrong.

Many of these ‘traditions’ have acquired a place in Maltese folklore and legend. It is still maintained that the ‘Christian’ Maltese were liberated by Roger the Norman, who settled the archipelago and introduced various Latin institutions from Sicily. The Normans probably became popular precisely because they never attempted to settle the islands and became so

¹⁷⁰ This translation for which thanks are due to Dr. David Marshall, is based on the text in Rossi, 433; the last section is somewhat obscure.

¹⁷¹ R. Valentini, ‘Il comune demaniale di Malta dall’origine alla crisi sveva,’ *ASM*, x (1939).

¹⁷² Useful syntheses in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia Normanna* (Palermo, 1973). Much of what is said here appears, in preliminary form here somewhat amended, in A. Luttrell, ‘Malta nel periodo normanno,’ *ibid.* A. Vella, ‘I Normanni a Malta,’ *ibid.*, published after the present work had gone to press, provides a more detailed, more traditional approach; Professor Vella’s interpretation will be elaborated, in Maltese, in his forthcoming history of Malta.

¹⁷³ Abela, 67, 80-81, 260-269, 302, 388.

remote as no longer to be resented. These fables derived from the misinterpretation of place-names, from politically-inspired fabrications, or from learned antiquarian myth-making. Unfortunately, the whole process of maintaining a Maltese 'national' consciousness in the face of centuries of foreign rulers has encouraged the development of the unspoken assumption that there was always a race of Maltese and Gozitans, indigenous and Christian, who differed in some fundamental way from all those who came to exploit or settle the islands. These beliefs largely turn on the Norman period.¹⁷⁴

The Norman attack of 1090 followed a major change in the Mediterranean balance of power in which Western naval superiority was decisive; the Latins were to capture Jerusalem in 1099. The successful expedition to the great pirate base at Mahdia in Tunisia in 1087 must greatly have weakened the Muslim position on Malta and Gozo, and the Norman conquest of Sicily was completed in 1090. The Normans, already conquerors in France, England and Italy, were aware of Malta's strategic value both as a base from which the Muslims could threaten Sicily and as one from which the Latins themselves would be able to strike at North Africa. A Norman assault on the islands was always likely, and as early as 1071, when the Normans were attacking Catania, they were able to pretend that their real objective was Malta: *fingens se Maltam debellatum ire*. Knowledge of the Norman raid of 1090 depends almost exclusively on the evidently partisan account given by Count Roger's own scribe and chronicler, the French monk Geoffroi or Goffredo Malaterra. Roger made preparations to assemble a fleet, and in July he landed on Malta. His small force overcame the feeble resistance of the inhabitants, the *incolarum multitudo*; he then plundered the island, and advanced on the town at Mdina. The *kaid* and the *cives*, who were unpractised in arms, submitted. They surrendered horses, mules, arms and *infinita pecunia*, and swore according to their own religion to become *confoederati* and pay an annual tribute. The Latins were welcomed by a great multitude of *captivi christiani* whom they actually transported away from Malta towards their homes in various kingdoms. There must have been many fewer Christians in Malta after Roger's invasion than before it. Roger seems to have left Malta almost at once, devastating the island of Gozo, which he also reduced to tributary status, on his way back. Malaterra provided no evidence that there were [p.31] indigenous Christians in the islands, that a Latin garrison was left or that any kind of colonization was attempted.¹⁷⁵ It

¹⁷⁴ Cf. J. Cassar Pullicino *infra*.

¹⁷⁵ Gaufredus Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii ...*, ed. E. Pontieri, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ns. v part 1 (Bologna, 1927), 94-96. The translation of this passage made by Simone da Lentini in 1358 is more or less faithful, but it omits the conquest of Gozo, stating that the Gozitans *si arrinderu a lu Conti pachificamenti, senza dapnu*: text in *La Conquista di Sicilia fatta per li Normandi translata per frati Simuni da Lentini*, ed. G. Rossi-Taibbi (Palermo, 1954), 134-140. Capitulations similar to that at Malta were made in Sicily, at Rametta for example: see Malaterra, 33, and *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, ed. V. de Bartholomaeis (Rome, 1935), 238. The first to confuse the *captivi christiani* of Malaterra with indigenous Maltese seems to have been Abela, 262. Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 191-192, maintains unconvincingly: 'Se tanta gente conservò nella captività la propria fede, trovò certamente assistenza spirituale e conforti in quella parte del popolo maltese che, in attesa di un liberatore, non aveva abiurato.' The conquest of Malta followed that of Noto, which took place in Feb. 1090 according to Malaterra, 93. Other writers date the two conquests to 1091, as suggested by certain Arab sources (Amari, *Storia*, iii. 133 n. 1, 180 n. 1); this date is not impossible. On the incident of 1071, see Malaterra, 52; Simone da Lentini deformed this passage thus: *Lu Conti volia andari a Malta a conquistarila et munstrava di non si curari nenti di Palermu* (ed. Rossi-Taibbi, 72).

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 1127,¹⁷⁶ and the Arab writers Ibn-al-Athīr and an-Nuwayrī both ascribe the conquest of Malta to Roger II.¹⁷⁷ 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 Sicilians 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 Idrīsī 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 1164.¹⁷⁸ Piracy doubtless flourished. In about 1184 a Pisan captain seized a Tunisian ship at Malta with the goods aboard it, and threw the crew into the sea.¹⁷⁹ The Sicilian Crown presumably sought fiscal advantages from this general situation, but the evidence is entirely wanting; nothing is known of fortifications, enfeoffments, taxation or a royal *demanium*. Probably there was some sort of local council based on [p.32] Muslim practice, perhaps similar to that for Pantelleria where, in 1221, the Sicilian Crown accepted 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.¹⁸⁰ 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 florin and ducat emerged.¹⁸¹

There is no explicit evidence that Latins of any sort were established in Malta before the close of the Norman period in 1194. The Norman rulers repeatedly encouraged the

¹⁷⁶ *Invaserat enim ac alias Insulas, quarum una Malta vocabatur, cumque ad alias iterum occupandas Insulas, terrasque attonitus persisteret, repente audivit praefatum Ducem Guilielmum ab hac luce Salerni discedisse, qui doluit valde, quod se ignorante defunctus sit, quodque se, ut sibi vivens statuerat, si filium non haberet, haeredem non fecisset. Unde moram non patitur, sed praeparato navali itinere, quattoctyus Salernum tetendit.* This text, in Alessandro Telesino, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Siciliae Regis*, ed. L. Muratori, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, v (Milan, 1724), 617, has been slightly corrected on the basis of the Barcelona ms. (information kindly supplied by Miss Dione Clementi). Duke Guglielmo died on 26 June 1127. The passage in the anonymous *Chronicon Siciliae*, in *ibid.*, x (1727), 813, which says that Count Roger conquered Malta but had to leave the island on account of his brothers' deaths, makes no sense and must be a conflation of Malaterra and Telesino.

¹⁷⁷ Texts in Amari, *Biblioteca*, i. 450; ii. 146; Minganti, 19, fails to make it clear that it was Roger II who was involved.

¹⁷⁸ D. Abulafia, *infra*, 106-108.

¹⁷⁹ Text in M. Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino* (Florence, 1863), 271-272.

¹⁸⁰ Text (with incorrect date) in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Leges, sectio IV, ii* (Hanover, 1896), 187-189. H. Bresc, 'Pantelleria entre l'Islam et la Chrétienté,' *Cahiers de Tunisie*, xix (1971), contains important comparisons with Malta.

¹⁸¹ The few Norman coins in the Cathedral Museum at Mdina lack provenance.

Benedictines to settle the islands of Lipari and Patti as part of a general policy of increasing the productivity of their domains, but the Aeolian 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 lingue latine*.¹⁸² It was not Norman policy to demand the conversion of Muslims in Sicily,¹⁸³ 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 Idrīsī: *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.* Idrīsī also reported that shipping reached Sicily from Malta and, inaccurately perhaps, that Gozo had a safe harbour.¹⁸⁴ 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 1168.¹⁸⁵ Burchard Bishop of Strassburg, who probably touched at the island on his way to Egypt in 1175, recorded Malta as *a Sarracenis inhabitata, et est sub dominio regis Sicilie*.¹⁸⁶ 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 canonries and 'benefices,' and dictated ecclesiastical legislation is a modern [p.33] invention.¹⁸⁸ The alleged Norman Bishops of Malta from 1089 onwards who appear in the often-repeated list of Pirri were apparently Bishops of Mileto or *Militensis* in Calabria; in any case, none of them is documented as being in Malta. The post-Muslim Bishopric of Malta is first reliably mentioned in 1156, when it was a suffragan of Palermo, and a certain Johannes Bishop of Malta was active in Sicily from 1168 to 1212.¹⁸⁹ Once again, therefore, Malta had a bishop;

¹⁸² C. Garufi, 'Per la storia dei secoli XI e XII,' *Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale*, ix (1912); L. White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), 84-86.

¹⁸³ Texts in Amari, *Biblioteca*, i. 450; ii. 146.

¹⁸⁴ Text *ibid.*, i. 53, 75. Idrīsī said that ships reached Scicli in Sicily 'from Calabria, Africa, Malta and many other places.' Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 195, claimed, without justification: 'apprendiamo da Edrisi che le navi di Malta frequentavano quella costa meridionale della Sicilia ...'

¹⁸⁵ *Infra*, 33 n. 189.

¹⁸⁶ Text in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores*, xxi (Hanover, 1869), 236.

¹⁸⁷ R. Pirri, *Notitiae siciliensium ecclesiarum*, ii part 2 (1st ed.: Palermo, [1641]), 592-593, citing a document then already lost! Pirri's pretences were repeated by Abela, 261-262, 266, 302.

¹⁸⁸ De Bono, 112-127, provides a crude account of Norman legislation in Sicily without giving the slightest evidence for its application in Malta; he states that Roger introduced feudalism to Malta in 1090 and even claims that Malaterra, 94-96, distinguished between feudal service (*servilis exactio*) and tribute (*data*)!

¹⁸⁹ As convincingly shown in 1896 by Mayr, in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, xvii. 488-492, with documentation and discussion. Bishop Johannes was mentioned in 1168 in the chronicle of Ugo Falcando and in a Greek diploma of June 1186 (text in Busutil, in *Missione* 1968, 23). He subscribed a Greek charter in Latin in 1177: text in P. Collura,

he may have visited the island, but there is no evidence that he did so. It is possible that in post-Muslim times a number of pre-Muslim churches were brought back into use;¹⁹⁰ clear evidence is lacking while the archaeological materials provide no precise date for the construction or reconstruction of churches.¹⁹¹

More could be done to follow up available clues. For example, in 1647 Abela wrote that a Benedictine named Costantino Gaetano had provided him with an extract from the Benedictine martyrology of Pulsano recording a notice which suggested a monastic foundation in Malta around 1130 at a place associated by Abela with the place known as *Abbatija tad-Dejr*; this story is still accepted. The text given by Abela reads:

Pridie Kal. Martii, Sancti Iordani Abbatis, discipuli Sancti Ioannis Pulsanensis Abbatis, qui ipsum suscitavit a mortuis in Monasterio Pulsanensi, postea misit ipsum in Melitam Insulam Abbatem, illic vitam haeremiticam duxit, et virtutibus coruscavit.¹⁹²

It was not 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 Pulsano, as Abbot of Pulsano. The passage from the martyrology, which had in fact been transcribed by Giovanni Francesco de Blasiis in 1609, actually opened: *Pridie Kal. Martii. Eodem die Joannis abbatis, discipuli s. Joannis ...*¹⁹³ 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 *Melita Insula* was the Dalmatian island of Melida which lies across the Adriatic from Pulsano. The *ecclesia sancti [p.34] Michaelis in Meleta* was confirmed to the Benedictines of Pulsano in 1177;¹⁹⁴ the monks had already been granted the whole island, on which they had founded a monastery, in 1151.¹⁹⁵

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

Le più antiche carte dell'archivio capitolare di Agrigento: 1092–1282 (Palermo, 1961), 72. The pretended bishop of 1113 appears as *Johannes Militensis episcopus* in a 14th-century ms.: Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional: Ordenes militares, cod. 649B, f. 78 (kindly communicated by Dr. Rudolf Hiestand). Many of the alleged Bishops of Mileto were, in any case, found in false or dubious diplomas; the best list is in L.-R. Ménager, 'L'abbaye bénédictine de la Trinité de Mileto, en Calabre, à l'époque normande,' *Bullettino dell'Archivio Paleografico Italiano*, ns. iv–v (1958/9), 65/66 n. 4.

¹⁹⁰ Detailed claims in A.A. Caruana, *Monografia critica della Cattedrale Apostolica di Malta restaurata dal Conte Ruggero il Normanno l'anno 1090* (2nd ed.: Malta, 1899). *Infra* 89–95, 163–169.

¹⁹¹ *Infra* 89–95, 163–169.

¹⁹² Abela, 388–389.

¹⁹³ Text and ms. tradition in *Vita S. Joannis a Mathera Abbatis Pulsanensis Congregationis Fundatoris*, ed. [A. Pecci] (Putignano, 1938), 76–77; further references in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vi (Rome, 1965), 633–634, 825–828.

¹⁹⁴ G. Mittarelli–A. Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, iv (Venice, 1759), appendices, 64–66.

¹⁹⁵ References in V. Novak, 'La paleografia Latina e i rapporti dell'Italia meridionale con la Dalmazia,' *Archivio storico pugliese*, xiv (1961), 152.

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.¹⁹⁶ In fact, no building in Malta can be dated securely to the Norman period; nor can the few surviving ‘Romanesque’ capitals.¹⁹⁷ The Latins may have maintained defences at Mdina,¹⁹⁸ but there is no evidence that the castle in the Grand Harbour was built by the Muslims¹⁹⁹ or that the Normans had a stronghold there, though the port was perhaps fortified in some crude way.²⁰⁰ 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-words²⁰¹ did reach Malta it is unlikely to have been before about 1200. Even in Sicily the Normans had difficulty in imposing their rule and customs; to what extent the Normans introduced ‘feudalism’ into Sicily is still hotly debated, but there was much strife and the Muslim, Greek and Jewish sections of the population were by no means eliminated. Malta’s integration into the Sicilian realm most likely began with Frederick II’s reorganization of the kingdom after about 1220, but before that there was an interlude during which Malta was largely [p.35] 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 of Brindisi, who became a Sicilian royal Admiral, acquired the title of Count of Malta.²⁰² 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 *demanium* by granting it out to non-Maltese Counts was, though initiated by the last Norman ruler of Sicily, essentially a post-Norman phenomenon.

¹⁹⁶ M. Cagiano de Azevedo *infra*; see also *Missione* 1968, 89; 1969, 134; *et passim*. On the pottery, *supra*, 13; but even if the pottery could be dated to the Norman period, that would still not constitute proof of Latin settlement in Malta.

¹⁹⁷ *Infra*, 164 n. 6.

¹⁹⁸ T. Fazello, *De rebus siculis* (Palermo 1558), 438, wrote *Capta Melita, et arce munita* ..., but without documentation; a detailed survey of the earliest remaining portions of the walls of Mdina might throw light on this question.

¹⁹⁹ As claimed in Abela, 263, followed in *Missione* 1960, 30.

²⁰⁰ There was a *castrum maris* by ca. 1241 (*infra*, 36).

²⁰¹ A. Bliss, ‘A Possible Norman loanword in Maltese,’ *Scientia* [Malta], xxii (1956), admits that Maltese *kwejru* (razor-strop) from Norman *queir* and Siculo-Norman *queiru* (leather), may—like the razor-strop itself have reached Malta long after the 12th century.

²⁰² Little is known about Margarito; references and discussion in L.-R. Ménager, *Amiratus-’Αμνράς: L’Émirat et les origines de l’Amirauté (XIe-XIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1960), 96-103.

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 verged 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 resentments there, for in 1198 Henry's Norman wife, Costanza of Sicily, granted the Maltese a charter incorporating the islands perpetually to the royal *demanium*, 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 'Pescatore.' 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 pirateered in the Levant and, reaching Tripoli in Syria with 300 *iuvenes Maltenses* 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 1222. He was soon back in imperial favour, though he seems to have lost real power at Malta; by May 1232 his son Nicoloso held the title of Count, and Henry was presumably dead.²⁰³

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 [p.36] to Sicily in 1220 and the Genoese lost their favoured position there.²⁰⁴ After about 1222 Henry retained the title of *comes* of Malta, presumably with certain accompanying incomes, but the *castrum* passed under royal command, while Frederick probably renewed Costanza's privilege of 1198 to the inhabitants of Malta.²⁰⁵ Henry's son Nicoloso never exercised power there. In 1224 Frederick apparently expelled many Muslims and colonized the islands from Italy. In 1239 and 1240 Frederick's proctor in the islands, Paolino de Malta, was sending the incomes of the royal *curia* to Naples, provisioning the castles and their garrisons, and guarding prisoners exiled in Malta. Paolino was also concerned with the imperial menagerie. He had to send eight camels and two

²⁰³ Details in D. Abulafia *infra*, using Genoese notarial documents as well as Genoese and Venetian chronicles, but they provide no direct information on Henry's rule in Malta or the island's internal history.

²⁰⁴ Cf. T. van Cleve, *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen: Immutator Mundi* (Oxford, 1972).

²⁰⁵ The text of 1283 referred to *privilegia Imperatricis Constancie et Imperatoris Frederici*, probably two separate privileges, as presumed *infra*, 109, but possibly a joint charter issued very late in 1197 or before 28 Nov. 1198: R. Ries, 'Regesten der Kaiserin Constanze ...,' *Quellen and Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, xviii (1926), 73, 99-100. The *castrum* mentioned here may have been either that at Mdina, or the *castrum maris*, first mentioned in ca. 1241 (*infra*, 58), but probably existing earlier.

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 falconers Frederick was sending to Malta.²⁰⁶ 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.²⁰⁷

By this time the Sicilian administration was in full control. The *dohana* with its gabelles and taxes functioned in Malta and Gozo; there were two castles in Malta, that at Mdina and the *castrum maris*; the garrison numbered some 150 men plus 70 wives, and this included 25 seamen. The emperor was concerned that his agent Gilibertus should institute a proper inquest to recover any lands or rights lost from the royal *demanium*. 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.²⁰⁸ The Maltese, and probably the Gozitans 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.²⁰⁹ Gilibertus' report to [p.37] Frederick indicated an economy based on the royal estates, cereal-producing *latifundia* worked by slaves and servile labourers, the *villani*. There were also 60 *servi* and *ancille*, male and female slaves used by the *curia* for building and other work in the three royal castles; 84 *servi* from Gerba, 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.²¹⁰ Part of the population was apparently exported; a Florentine sold a ten-year-old white Maltese girl named Maimuna, presumably a Muslim, as a slave at Genoa in 1248,²¹¹ and there were

²⁰⁶ Three documents in J. Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, v parts 1-2 (Paris, 1857-1859), 525, 931-932, 969-971. During 1235 Frederick II granted Paolino the *Casalem Stafende situm in pertinentiis Spaccafurni* in Sicily: the present author will publish this text shortly. The generic sense of *malta* to mean 'prison,' as in Dante, Jacopone and others might conceivably have resulted from Malta's use as a place of exile: further references and examples in Huillard-Bréholles, vi part 2 (1861), 917-919; Valentini, in *ASM*, vii. 423-424 (with references muddled); P. Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary* (rev. ed.: Oxford, 1968), 416; *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, iii (Rome, 1971), 796.

²⁰⁷ Many editions, eg. Fridericus II, *De Arte Penandi cum Avibus*, ed. C. Willemsen (Graz, 1969).

²⁰⁸ Details from a document of fundamental importance in Maltese history, Frederick II's reply to Gilibertus' report of ca. 1241: text in E. Winkelmann, *Acta Imperii Inedita seculi XIII*. (Innsbruck, 1880), 713-715. The document survives in a copy of ca. 1300, and discrepancies in the statistics indicate corrupt ons. The date is also uncertain, while Winkelmann's text requires a number of corrections; the present author will publish a revised text. The financial aspect is discussed in detail *infra*, 129-136, and by Valentini, in *ASM*, xiii. 4-6.

²⁰⁹ Valentini, in *ASM*, x, certainly demonstrated the existence of some sort of local government, but in seeking to prove that it was an Italian-type *comune* he undervalued (p. 221 n. 90) the statement, accepted by Frederick II in ca. 1241, that Malta's *constituciones* were not like those of Sicily (*supra*, 14) ; see also *infra*, 60 n. 328.

²¹⁰ Text in Winkelmann, 713-715; cf. H. Bresc, *infra*, 131.

²¹¹ Text in R. Lopez, 'La vendita d'una schiava di Malta a Genova nel 1248,' *ASM*, vii (1935/6), 391; somewhat unusually, the girl gave her consent to her own sale.

others.²¹² The *homines insularum* who had their own constitutions and whose *consilium* Gilibertus 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 *quondam Sarraceni* who had been expelled from the islands, their lands devolving to the curia.²¹³

A possible date for the expulsion of the Muslims is provided by Riccardo de San Germano whose chronicle stated that in May 1224 the population of Celano in the Abruzzi was sent to Malta:

Henricus de Morra iussu imperiali Celanenses reuocat ubique disperses, ut ad propria redeant, et redeuntes capit et in Siciliam mittit, quos apud Maltam dirigit Imperator.²¹⁴

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; 1223 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 1223.²¹⁵ All this points to 1224 for the expulsion of the Muslims from Malta. The fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldūn reported:

The tyrant 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.²¹⁶

Ibn Khaldūn placed these events after 1249 but, as far as is known, Frederick II never went to Malta, and in 1250 he died. Presumably Ibn Khaldūn was actually giving a [p.38] partially accurate description of the events of 1224 when Frederick was in Sicily and crushed the Sicilian Muslims, many of whom were then sent to Lucera.²¹⁷ 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 1241, have normally been accepted.²¹⁸ The number of families in the islands is given as follows:

²¹² R. Balard, 'Remarques sur les esclaves à Gênes dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle,' *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, lxxx (1968), 668-669.

²¹³ Text in *Cancellaria Angioina*, vi. 213.

²¹⁴ *Ryccardi de Sancto Germano notarii Chronica*, ed. C. Garufi, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ns. vii part 2 (Bologna, 1938), 112-113; that the final phrase mentioning Malta appears only in the second version of the chronicle need not cast doubt on its veracity. Note the *sarracenus* named *Dallesium Maltesium* at Altamura in 1301: text in P. Egidio, *Codice Diplomatico dei Saraceni di Lucera* (Naples, 1917), 222-224.

²¹⁵ Details in Amari, *Storia*, iii. 613-619; *supra*, 32; *infra*, 121-122.

²¹⁶ Text in Amari, *Biblioteca*, ii. 212-213; Minganti, 20.

²¹⁷ Amari, *Storia*, iii. 609-617; E. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite: Ergänzungsband* (Berlin, 1931), 46.

²¹⁸ Eg. in Wettinger-Fsadni, 33.

<i>Families</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	47	681	25	753
Gozo	203	155	8	366
Total	250	836	33	1,119

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 only just begun around 1241; 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, 836 families out of a total of 1,119. 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 *castrum*; and the *fideles* and others whose counsel Abbot Gilibertus was instructed to receive and who may have paid other taxes for which Gilibertus did not account.

The report mentioned the incomes from the *villani curie* who paid 2,516 *tarini* in Malta, where they surely amounted to more than 47 families, and 584 *tarini* in Gozo. It also spoke of the *villani curie sarraceni* who owed a fourth part of their produce in kind. If the *villani curie* were really distinct from the *villani curie sarraceni* and were Latins,²¹⁹ it would be strange that while there were 47 Christian families in Malta and 203 in Gozo, the *villani curie* of Malta paid 2516 *tarini* as against 584 *tarini* from those of Gozo; and the origin and status of these Christian *villani* would still remain unexplained. This interpretation also assumes that these hypothetical Christian *villani*, who could conceivably have been converted Muslims, would have paid taxes in cash, while the *villani sarraceni* 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 *villani*, but only Muslim *villani curie*, also called [p.39] *villani curie sarraceni*, who paid taxes both in cash and kind. It is notable that the ratio of *tarini* paid by *villani curie* in Malta to *tarini* paid by *villani curie* in Gozo, that is 2,516 to 584 or 4.3, is almost precisely that of Muslim families in Malta to Muslim families in Gozo, that is 681 to 155 or 4.4.²²⁰ This suggests that the figures for Muslim families are correct, and that all Muslims remaining on Malta, or alternatively all those counted by Gilibertus, were *villani curie*. It might follow that, at the moment of their ‘expulsion,’ the Muslims had divided into various groups: those who actually left the islands and whose lands devolved to the *curia*; those who were converted and were counted as Christians, which again would bring the number of Christian families to more than 47; those who remained on Malta unconverted, becoming *villani curie* and paying taxes in both cash and kind; and a few who were sold as slaves. This, however, remains a hypothesis.

Furthermore, this hypothetical interpretation leaves unexplained the low figure of 47 Christian families. The text of Gilibertus’ report as it survives is the result of successive copying and recopying, and at least some of the income figures do not add up correctly and

²¹⁹ As supposed by Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 224, who holds that the document makes the distinction clear. There were many Christian *villani* in twelfth-century Sicily, but this can scarcely have been the case in Malta; the Sicilian *villani* disappeared rapidly after ca. 1200: I. Peri, *Il villanaggio in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1965).

²²⁰ A point never before noted, but evidently of some significance.

must be incorrect.²²¹ The figures could be amended in various ways; perhaps 47 should read 147 or 547, or even 2,047. The most feasible suggestion is that an ‘m’ or *mille* was lost between the contraction of *christianoru[m]* and the beginning of the number — *quadraginta septem* — which followed,²²² in which case the situation would have been:

<i>Families</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	1,047	681	25	1,753
Gozo	203	155	8	366
Total	1,250	836	33	2,119

This emendation gives a similar proportion of Muslim to Christian families throughout the islands; produces a reasonable total population of some 10,000;²²³ and reduces the proportion of Gozitan families, both Christian and Muslim, to less than a fourth. It suggests a situation in which the islands had been Christianized, leaving a minority of unconverted Muslims working the royal lands as *villani*; and it provides the Christians alluded to in Gilibertus’ report. These new suggestions provide an arguable hypothesis, though they do involve numerous assumptions. If it is true [p.40] that there was little or no Latin settlement in the twelfth century,²²⁴ then either a considerable wave of Christian immigrants arrived in the years immediately prior to about 1241, conceivably from Celano; 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 836 families of unconverted Muslims with another 1,250 families, all or most of them converted ‘Christians,’ 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

²²¹ Winkelmann, 713-715.

²²² This suggestion advanced, without the supporting arguments adduced here, in K. Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, i (Berlin, 1937), 164-165, and Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 222-225, has hitherto received almost no support. Those authors buttress the argument with the fact that in Jan. 1277 Malta was to pay 350 *uncie* out of a *generalis subventio* of 7500 for the whole kingdom (text in *ASM*, v. 142), but it is not clear what this might prove. In July 1277 a royal document stated: *cum proventus dicte insule Malte consueverint valere olim dominis regni Sicilie precessoribus nostris annuatim unc. auri M et plus* (text in *Cancellaria Angioina*, xvi. 104).

²²³ Renfrew guesses, reasonably, that in prehistoric times the islands’ physical resources could have supported a maximum of 11,000, which fits with medieval indications for the period before the population, and foodstuff imports, increased in the 15th century (*infra*, 53, 184-186). Renfrew’s ‘statistics’ in *Before Civilization*, 153-155, 161, and in *World Archaeology*, ii (1970), 208, are based on multipliers derived from South Iran, Naxos and Easter Island (in 1722), and these produce a minimum population of 500 arbitrarily raised to a maximum of 11,000; a maximum of 18,000 reduced to 10,000 or less; and an estimate of ca. 7000!

²²⁴ As argued *supra*, 29-34.

Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus and was himself ousted from Sicily in 1282 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 1300 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 Nicoloso. Then in 1257 Manfred and the Genoese came to terms according to which Nicoloso was to have all his father's lands, privileges and incomes on Malta and Gozo, while Manfred was to retain control of the castles; Nicoloso could, if he wished, exchange these Maltese lands for others in Sicily, Calabria or Apulia. This agreement had to be renewed in 1259, and again in 1261. 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.²²⁵

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.²²⁶ Once again an efficient Sicilian administration sought to control, cultivate and exploit the royal *demanium*. A Captain or Castellan commanded a garrison of 150 *ultramontani* or *servientes gallici boni*, that is [p.41] trusty French troops; there was an armed *sagittia* for naval defence, and other shipping to provision the *castrum maris* from Gozo; the *castrum maris* had an interior and an exterior section, and detailed inventories were kept of its armaments, which included 100 *salme* of wood. Other officials collected taxes and managed the *servi* on the royal *massarie*; some land was *inculte* and had to be leased. In 1277 the king claimed that his predecessors had received more than 1000 gold *uncie* a year from Malta. The *curia* was also concerned with pigs, falcons and leopards, and in 1270 the king commanded 7,000 or 8,000 chickens to be sent to Syracuse.²²⁷ Oaths of fealty were exacted; there were petitions to the king *ex parte universorum hominum insularum* against official misappropriations, and considerable resistance to royal taxation. A notary public served the two islands, and the Angevin officials, who included two *Judices civitatis Malte*, quarrelled over jurisdictions with the Maltese Church.²²⁸ Much of this was doubtless merely the restoration of the Hohenstaufen administrative tradition, but for the first time a European, Latin, Christian style of government and society is clearly visible on Malta and Gozo, which were entering a more cosmopolitan context; in 1277 the royal officials were instructed to sell surplus victuals at Malta in Tunis, Acre, Greece, Venice or elsewhere. The islands suffered from the Angevins' quarrels. Two Genoese ships were seized at Malta in 1272; in revenge the

²²⁵ Details and references in Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 226-229, amended by Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, iii. 74-75; this period in Maltese history deserves to be thoroughly reworked. Nicoloso was still alive in 1271: text in *Cancellaria Angioina*, vi. 174.

²²⁶ The Angevin registers 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. Galea, 'Malta under the Angevins: 1266-83,' *Scientia* [Malta], xvii (1951), 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. 1260 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.

²²⁷ Texts in *Cancellaria Angioina*, v. 61-62 (1270); xvi. 104 (1277); *et passim*.

²²⁸ For the Maltese Church, *infra*, 60-64.

Genoese sacked Gozo in 1274—*Gaudium depopulavit*.²²⁹ Charles of Anjou's ambitions in Byzantium provoked the catastrophe of 1282, the revolt of the Vespers and the Aragonese conquest of Sicily which were naturally reflected in Malta, but it is possible that harsh Angevin government produced popular enthusiasm for the change in Malta and Gozo.

In 1282 Sicily, and Malta with it, passed into a new Western Mediterranean sphere of interest, that of the confederation of the Aragonese Crown, within which it remained until long after 1530.²³⁰ From Abela onwards, Malta's historians have looked to Italy,²³¹ while Roberto Valentini, the leading modern writer on medieval Malta, was an Italian preoccupied with anti-Aragonese notions of the *italianità* of the Maltese past; furthermore, Spanish books and languages scarcely penetrated to Malta, and medieval Malta has not been properly understood in the context of Sicily's Hispanic connections. The spectacular advances made since about 1950 in the study of the Aragonese Crown and its Mediterranean expansion have yet to be [p.42] synthesized in satisfactory standard works. The extensive bibliography has far out-run the consensus of agreed opinions, but some understanding of this background is essential to an appreciation of Maltese history after 1282.²³²

²²⁹ *Annali Genovesi*, ed. C. Imperiali di Sant'Angelo, iv (Rome, 1926), 168.

²³⁰ One difficulty is that while Aragon proper covered only a small part of the Iberian peninsula, its kings ruled in Catalunya, Valencia, Mallorca, Sicily and elsewhere. The term 'Aragonese' scarcely conveys this fact; 'Catalano-Siculo-Aragonese' is clumsy and still insufficient. It seems best to refer to the 'Aragonese Crown' and its 'lands'—*los paisés de la corona de Aragón*. The following two paragraphs partly repeat A. Luttrell, 'Malta and the Aragonese Crown: 1282-1530,' *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: The Royal University of Malta*, iii no. 1 (1965). Details and references for *infra*, 42-48, are contained in *idem*, 'The House of Aragon and Malta: 1282-1412,' *ibid.*, iv no. 2 (1970), here partly paraphrased; this article is a slightly revised translation from the Catalan of 'La casa de Catalunya-Aragó i Malta: 1282-1412,' in *Estudis d'Historia Medieval*, i = *Estudis Ferran Soldevila*, i (Barcelona, 1969). Further details are contained in the articles by Valentini but much of the story remains obscure; for the Sicilian background, see in particular V. d'Alessandro, *Politica e società nella Sicilia aragonese* (Palermo, 1963).

²³¹ P. de Jové y Hevia, *Indagaciones acerca de la dominación de España en Malta de 1285 a 1530* (Madrid, 1863), remained an exception, rare, outdated and ignored by Maltese historiography.

²³² The standard political history is F. Soldevila, *Història de Catalunya*, i-ii (2nd ed: Barcelona, 1962). The more modern ideas outlined here largely derive from the many works of J. Vicens Vives, who was responsible for a historiographical revolution in Iberian and Mediterranean studies; see also F. Giunta, *Aragonesi e Catalani nel Mediterraneo*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1953-1959), and M. del Treppo, *I mercanti catalani e l'espansione della Corona d'Aragona nel secolo XV* (Naples, 1972). Two books not in Castilian or Catalan which summarize much new work are P. Vilar, *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, i (Paris, 1962), and J. Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* (London, 1963). The *Indice Histórico Español*, i- (Barcelona, 1953-), provides a complete annual bibliography; for recent syntheses, see the numerous papers on 'La investigación de la historia hispánica del siglo XIV: problemas y cuestiones,' *Anuario de estudios medievales*, vii (1970/1). The outline and bibliography given here are entirely incomplete and inevitably unsatisfactory; they can take no account of the varying interpretations of the catalaniste and other schools.

The Kings of Catalunya-Aragon ruled in barren and mountainous Aragon, where the Christian conquerors lived alongside Muslim and Jewish communities, and in the Catalan 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 Catalan Companies seized Thebes and Athens; Sardinia was conquered in 1324; and subsequently the Aragonese Crown repeatedly fought the Angevins and Genoese in defence of Sicily and Sardinia. Catalan, Valencian and Mallorquin traders, slavers and sailors 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 importance 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 Straits 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.²³³ Of 109 vessels recorded as leaving Candia in Crete between July 1339 and June 1360 just one was bound for Malta.²³⁴ Genoese and Venetian interest in Malta was never long sustained during this period; Venice was often allied to Aragon, and the 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 Tunis. In any case, the Aragonese Crown was only marginally interested in Levantine 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.²³⁵

[p.43] Soon after 1300 the visionary Mallorquin Ramon Lull suggested that Malta should be used as a crusading base from which Christian merchants could be prevented from trading illegally with the Muslims,²³⁶ but the Aragonese rulers were realists for whom Malta was merely a frontier station on the eastern margin of their Western Mediterranean sphere of influence; their chief concern was that it should not fall into enemy hands.

Behind the Sicilian uprising of March 1282 lay some kind of collusion between Pedro III of Aragon, who had Sicilian and North African objectives, and the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII, whom the Angevins were planning to overthrow. A later fabrication, *Lu Rebellamentu di Sichilia*, described how Giovanni de Procida attempted to subvert certain Sicilians with Byzantine gold at Trapani in 1280, and stated that the talks were moved to Malta to escape Angevin control, a story which, though suspect, may have reflected a state of discontent on Malta.²³⁷ Partly because of Angevin oppression and partly because Malta

²³³ In addition to Dufourcq, see details on trading-routes in Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, iii. 74-76.

²³⁴ K. Mertzios, 'É Nautiliake Kinesis tou Kandakos kata ta ete 1359-1360' [in Greek], *Acts of II International Congress of Cretological Studies*, iii (Athens, 1968), 174.

²³⁵ This thesis is argued in A. Luttrell, 'La Corona de Aragón y la Grecia catalana: 1379-1394,' *Anuario de estudios medievales*, vi (1969).

²³⁶ Text in A. Gottron, *Ramon Lulls Kreuzzugsideen* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1912), 86.

²³⁷ *Lu Rebellamentu di Sichilia*, ed. E. Sicardi, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ns. xxxiv part 1 (Bologna, 1935), 14, 54, 70, 112. Giovanni de Procida and a Lombard knight named Accardo are said to have met Palmiere Abbate and other Sicilian barons. The whole question of Giovanni de Procida and the *Rebellamentu* has been endlessly

depended on Sicilian grain, the populace and the Angevin governor, Dionigi da Barba, had gone over to the new rulers of Sicily by December 1282. Pedro III nominated Manfredi Lancia as Captain of Malta; granted facilities for grain to be sent from Sicily; and confirmed the privileges by which Costanza and Frederick II had incorporated Malta and Gozo into the royal *demanium*. The *castrum maris*, considered impregnable, held out and in mid-1283 a large Angevin fleet from Marseilles arrived at Malta, threatening the whole Aragonese position in Sicily and its African supply-lines. The danger vanished a few days later when the Aragonese Admiral, Ruggiero Lauria, won a decisive battle in the Grand Harbour at Malta on 8 July 1283, his men fighting to the cry *Arago! Arago! via sus! via sus!* The inhabitants received Lauria with money, jewels and provisions, and he left behind 300 Catalan soldiers to hold the islands since, without siege-engines, he was unable to take the *castrum maris*, which was revictualled by sea and resisted at least until February 1284.²³⁸

The Aragonese certainly appreciated Malta's strategic significance, and the chronicler Ramon Muntaner described their joyful reception in 1283 of rumours that the *castrum maris* had fallen; he wrote 'the castle is most royal and fine, and the castle and the island stand well to the island of Sicily as the stone suits the ring.'²³⁹ The conquest of Malta was completed by Manfredi Lancia; Lancia's kinsman, Ruggiero Lauria, captured and acquired titles to the islands of Gerba and Kerkena, thus establishing a semi-independent maritime principality between Sicily and Africa. In 1287 an Angevin fleet briefly recaptured the *castrum* at Malta, and then attacked Augusta in Sicily. On 16 June 1290 Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, hoping perhaps for support from Genoa, recognized the ancient claims to the County of Malta of [p.44] a Genoese named Andreolo, who declared himself ready to attack the island;²⁴⁰ but Andreolo soon went over to Jaime of Aragon, King of Sicily, who by October 1292 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 fonduk at Tunis. 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 2 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 Rogeró, but his rule at Gerba was ineffective and short-lived. Malta remained in Sicilian hands.

The urban patriciates of Catalunya, with their ports and industries, were responsible for the emergence of a single economic and strategic unit, a Western Mediterranean common

debated; see, most recently, C. Tsirpantis, 'The Involvement of Michael VIII Palaeologus in the Sicilian Vespers: 1279-1282,' *Byzantina*, iv (1972).

²³⁸ See especially *Chronik des edlen En Ramon Muntaner*, ed. K. Lanz (Stuttgart, 1884), 138-146.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁴⁰ This seems to have been a sea-captain named Andreolo de Mari, who was apparently connected to Henry Pescatore's clan; the lands he claimed in Sicily, which were said to have been confirmed by Henry VI, by Costanza and by Frederick II, included a *domus Guillelmi Crassi quam habuit in Messana*: text of 1290 in Laurenza, in *ASM*, v. 168-169. Grasso was Pescatore's father-in-law (*infra*, 110-111).

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 *cortes*, receiving homages and raising taxes. Between 1296 and 1377, 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 *castrum* 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 1349 at the latest, Malta passed to his eldest son Pietro Federigo d'Aragona, who was Lord of Salona in Greece where he resided; he had lost the County by 7 October 1350 when, at their inhabitants' request, Malta and Gozo were [p.45] returned to the royal *demanium* 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 *demanium*; the Crown conceded this request in perpetuity, but subsequently in a moment of weakness granted out the County once again. The Counts enjoyed certain rights, such as the nomination of Captains and Justiciars or the exercise of the *jurisdictio criminalis* and the *merum et mixtum 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 Acciaiuoli, with the County of Malta and Gozo.²⁴¹ The Neapolitans were soon expelled from Sicily and the Acciaiuoli claim was never made good, yet the threat had been real enough; the Acciaiuoli 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 1360, 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.

²⁴¹

Every year Acciaiuoli was to provide 'the service of one black slave, dressed in crimson cloth and bathed the night before ...' His son Angelo Acciaiuoli was still using the title in 1391. There is no evidence that the Acciaiuoli actually controlled Malta, as is often alleged. [Count] Zeininger de Borja, 'Counts of Malta in Greece,' *Scientia* [Malta], xxxv (1959), is unreliable. The Acciaiuoli were bankers. Another Florentine banking house, the Bardi, had a *fondaco* at Malta in 1314, according to R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, iv part 2 (Florence, 1965), 826, citing *Frammenti in possesso del principe Andrea Corsini*, f. 1, but this notice requires confirmation.

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 Sicily *usque ad acquisitionem insularum Meliveti et Gauditii*. Royal power in Sicily had collapsed in the face of baronial intransigence; the enfeoffment of 1366 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.²⁴² Malta's subsequent rebellion remains obscure. The royal Captain of Malta, Giacomo de Pellegrino of Messina, was married to a royal kinswoman, Margherita d'Aragona. Pellegrino may, over-ambitiously, have hoped to establish an independent lordship of his own; perhaps he offended the Chiaramonte; probably he had made 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 royalists recaptured the *castrum maris*; and Pellegrino was banished. The king appointed new officials and [p.46] 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 Federigo d'Aragona, as Captain of Malta provoked a new revolt in which the faithful royalist of 1372, the notary Lancia Gatto, took a leading part.²⁴³

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 Martín of Aragon whose father, Martín Duke of Montblanch, was Pedro IV's son. Pedro's claims to Sicily were transferred to the young couple, but the *quattro vicari*, Manfredi Chiaramonte, Artale Alagona, Francesco Ventimiglia and Guglielmo Peralta, divided the kingdom into spheres of influence and presided over a regulated anarchy. Manfredi Chiaramonte, 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

²⁴² In 1366 also Giovanni Chiaramonte was named Captain of Gerba and Kerkena, which he had conquered: F. Giunta, 'Sicilia e Tunisi nei secoli XIV e XV,' in his *Medioevo Mediterraneo: saggi storici* (Palermo, 1954), 157.

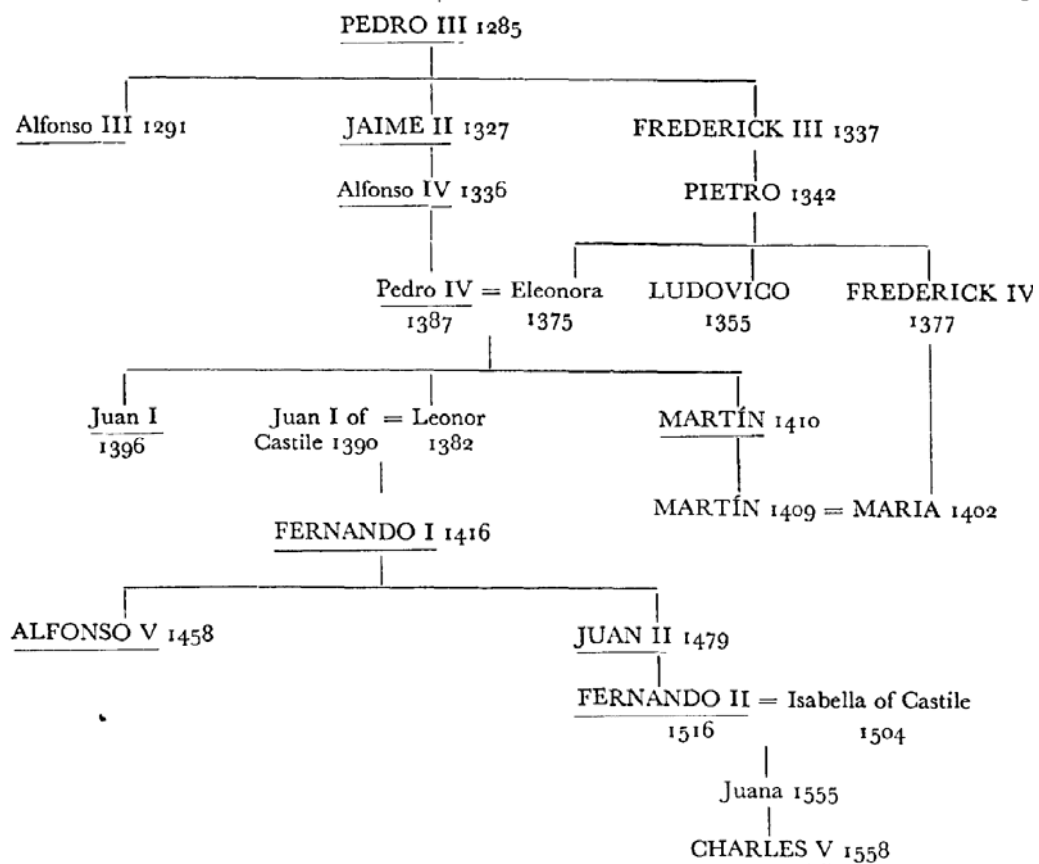
²⁴³ On this period, important aspects of which remain obscure, see texts and references in Valentini, in *ASM*, v. 10-13, 34-36; Bresc, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli, *passim*. Abela, 421-422, misinterpreted Frederick's visit of 1372 as an attempt to restore the situation following a Genoese attack on Malta.

²⁴⁴ In 1380 Pedro confirmed the claims of Ludovico Federigo d'Aragona, Count of Salona, whose support in Greece he was anxious to ensure. Ludovico Federigo, a nephew of the Pietro Federigo dispossessed of the County in 1350, remained in Greece where he died in 1382, his Greek claims and titles passing to his wife Helena Cantacuzena; he had no influence upon events in Malta, and neither his widow, nor their daughter Maria claimed the islands.

²⁴⁵ On the Hafsid attack, Brunschwig, i. 198.

Chiaramonte 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 *cocca* 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 *comitatus* of Malta and the *insula* of Gozo to pass to his daughter Elisabetta Chiaramonte, Wife of Niccolò Peralta, but in March 1392 Martín Duke of Montblanch arrived in Sicily and [p.47] launched a five-year struggle to



Simplified genealogy of the House of Aragon (rulers of Sicily in capitals; Kings of Aragon underlined; the dates given are those of death). Pedro III's wife, Costanza of Hohenstaufen, was the daughter of Frederick II's son Manfred. Jaime II became King of Sicily in 1285 and of Aragon in 1291, but relinquished Sicily to Frederick III in 1296. Pedro IV had claims to Sicily in and after 1377, but subsequently they were transferred to the younger Martín; the latter was succeeded by his father Martín in 1409, at which point Aragon and Sicily were reunited.

²⁴⁶ Texts in Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, v. 159-164.

²⁴⁷ Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, iii. 77-80.

²⁴⁸ L. le Grand, 'Relation du pèlerinage à Jérusalem de Nicolas de Martoni, notaire italien: 1394-1395,' *Revue de l'Orient latin*, iii (1895) 578-579.

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. Martín 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 Artale Alagona in 1393. After 1393 Artale 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 13 December 1396 as a marquisate to Guglielmo Raimondo 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, [p.48] following decades of oppression and exploitation by tyrannous or rebellious Counts, the *universitates* of Malta and Gozo petitioned for their return to the royal *demanium*, to direct dependence on the Crown. Some Maltese had in fact resisted the rebel Counts, and on 16 November 1397 the islands were reincorporated in perpetuity into the *demanium*; in February 1398 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 1399 they were revoked. Martín the Elder succeeded his brother Juan as King of Aragon in 1396 and his son Martín as King of Sicily in 1409, 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 Martín died in 1410, the Sicilian regency was disputed between Queen Bianca, the widow of the younger Martín, 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 1411 she gave him permission to reduce Gozo to obedience *per la inclita casa di Aragona*; his chief opponent in Gozo, Antonio la Barba, 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 Martíns, when Malta was *reducta a la sou naturali signuri, zo esti a la sacra 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 1381; in 1412 the Aragonese and Valencians imposed a semi-Castilian dynasty on the Catalans; and soon after, Alfonso V moved the centre of the confederation away from his peninsular domains towards Italy. The doctrine of *pactisme*, 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 Catalunya. When in 1410 there was no direct male heir to the throne, the Catalans insisted on a peaceful and strictly legal settlement of the crisis. The constitutional formulae followed in 1412, when representatives of the estates of Aragon, Valencia and Catalunya chose one of six candidates, helped to maintain the union by enabling the Catalans to accept Fernando de Antequera, to whom they were strongly opposed; he was also accepted by the Mallorquins and Sicilians who were not represented in the election. While recognizing the special problems of their various domains, the kings often thought of their peoples in a general way as their subjects or *naturales*, rather than as 'Aragonese,' 'Catalans' or 'Sicilians.' Often it would have been difficult to do otherwise. Many Sicilian barons, for example, were Aragonese or Catalan by name and origin, with family ties and

²⁴⁹ The Genoese were again involved, and at one point four Genoese galleys carried Alagona to Malta: text of 26 July 1398 in D. Girona Llagostera, 'Itinerari del Rey en Martí: 1396-1402,' *Anuari del Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, iv (1911/2), 122. The events of 1377-1397 in Sicily and Malta are too confusing to be sununarized adequately here.

possessions in various lands; they understood a variety of languages, and lived in palaces in Palermo or Syracuse built in much the same style as those of Barcelona or Gerona. Politically, economically and culturally, this was a Western Mediterranean community to which the Maltese were conscious that, willingly or otherwise, they belonged.²⁵⁰

[p.49] Maltese protestations of attachment to Aragon had other, more practical meanings. The *universitas* and its council persistently resisted alienation from the royal *demanium*, 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;²⁵¹ in this respect, the fifteenth century differed from the fourteenth. Maltese historiography has traditionally regarded the election of Fernando de Antequera in 1412 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 Gonsalvo de Monroy in 1428, a much misunderstood episode long seen as a turning-point in a struggle for liberty; in and after 1524 the *universitas* was to rest its opposition to a new royal enfeoffment of the islands, by Charles V to the Knights Hospitallers, on the royal privilege of 1428.²⁵² The period between 1412 and 1458 is covered by the articles of Roberto Valentini, whose treatment is marred by his Italianate anxiety to prove that the Aragonese connection was ruinous in every way.²⁵³ The period from 1458 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 Castellan of the Birgu castle could sell exemptions from guard-duty. But Alfonso V, who succeeded in 1416 and spent only 12 out of

²⁵⁰ Valentini, of course, saw Malta’s ‘integrationism’ in a different light: ‘la sua fedeltà alla corona aragonese e castigliana non è devozione ad un re straniero: è bisogno della Sicilia e niente altro’ (*ASM*, vii. 69). But that was only a part of the truth.

²⁵¹ The Monroy grant was made by contract but was not—as often claimed—an enfeoffment; Alfonso V ... *pignoraverit seu cum carta gracie alienauerit, vendiderit et concessit* (text in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 307).

²⁵² References and texts in Valentini, in *Archivum Melitense*, ix. 145-146, 168-171, 183-184, 224-226. The Maltese *Memorial* of 1801 to the British Government misleadingly interpreted the 1428 privilege, which it misdated to 1397, as Malta’s *Magna Carta*; text of 1801 in Eton, part 1 (1802), 21-37.

²⁵³ Eg. R. Valentini, ‘Ribellione di Malta e spedizione alla Gerba come conseguenze dell’inefficienza della flotta aragonese nel Mediterraneo,’ *ASM*, viii (1936/7); ‘L’espansionismo aragonese nel Mediterraneo come causa della decadenza di Malta,’ *ASM*, xii (1941).

42 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 [p.50] pawned 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 pawning, to Gonsalvo de Monroy, produced immediate protests. Viceroy Guglielmo Moncada went to Malta in person and was insulted; Monroy'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, Niccolò 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 *secrezia* 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 *manu forte* any further attempted alienation. Meanwhile Gonsalvo 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 Busco and Simone de Mazzara, men whose interests were threatened by the Cardonas and Monroys, men who aspired to control the *secrezia* and the *castellania* of the castle, to rent the gabelles, to occupy the fiefs, 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 Busco held both Castellannies and the two *secrezie* of Malta and Gozo, and a number of fiefs 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 though they served as galley-captains and held fiefs in return for military service, 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.²⁵⁴

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 Hafsids of Tunisia. Alfonso's [p.51] 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 riposted with an expedition to Kerkena in 1424; the Hafsids then raided Sicily,

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Valentini, in *ASM*, xiii. 23-27; H. Bresc, *infra*, 141-151.

and in 1429 a large fleet ravaged Malta for three days, all but capturing Mdina and carrying off 3,000 captives or more. Finally Guttierrez 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;²⁵⁵ the resultant truces at least produced an end to major Hafsid 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 Kastellorizzo between Rhodes and Cyprus. Alfonso can have had 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.²⁵⁶ 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.²⁵⁷

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 oomplaints and requests sent to the king or viceroy. In 1439 the Gozitans spoke of 13 *uncie* paid out in taxes *li quali, teste Deo, extrahirimu quasi di intra li ossa nostri*,²⁵⁸ while in 1466 the Maltese complained: *quista insola e quasi unu parvulu scoglectu situatu in mezu mari, remotu undique da omni succursu et rifrigeriu ...*²⁵⁹ The *capitoli* lamented the thousands of Maltese seized by Hafsid raiders but they also bemoaned the cost of ransoming them back again.²⁶⁰ 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 [p.52] 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.²⁶¹ In Malta, evidence for a state of crisis has to be set 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

²⁵⁵ F. Cerone, 'A proposito di alcuni documenti sulla seconda spedizione di Alfonso V contro l'isola Gerba,' *Anuari del Institut d'Estudis Calalans*, iii (1909/10); see also C. Trasselli, *Sicilia, Levante e Tunisia nei secoli XIV e XV* (Trapani, 1952). Alfonso's visit to Malta is, apparently, not documented.

²⁵⁶ On the Montesa project, Valentini, in *Archivum Melitense*, ix. 145-146; explanation of this incident requires further study of Montesa's maritime interests.

²⁵⁷ Text in Valentini, in *ASM*, ix. 110-123.

²⁵⁸ Text in Giambruno-Genuardi, i. 330-331.

²⁵⁹ Text in Valentini, in *ASM*, x. 70.

²⁶⁰ *Infra*, 133, 191-193.

²⁶¹ Del Treppo, 582-605 *et passim*, discusses this paradox; his work provides an essential background to the 15th-century period.

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.²⁶²

After 1458 Malta was still a minor shipping centre; at one point in 1479, for example, three Catalan vessels were in port.²⁶³ 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 viceroys and captains did take measures to secure its defence.²⁶⁴ In general Malta remained within its Siculo-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 *reconquista*. Turkish expansion into North Africa after 1516, 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 America, resulted in a widening of the struggle. 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; Mosta was sacked in 1526.²⁶⁵ Charles V opted for an inexpensive way of defending both Malta and Tripoli when he granted them to the Order of St. John in 1530, 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.²⁶⁶

From about 1270 onwards the surviving materials permit the construction of a reasonably detailed if notably uneven outline of events at Malta. Such *histoire événementielle* 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 [p.53] developments which now form the centre of historians' interests, and without which the course of events itself can scarcely be understood. The overwhelming bulk of 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 Valentini is now being written,²⁶⁷ but it will always be difficult to trace the origins and development of fifteenth-century institutions in the partial obscurity of the preceding centuries; 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.²⁶⁸

The fundamental question of the islands' population is a difficult one. It can scarcely have been more than 10,000 in about 1241, and may have been considerably less; it was estimated, presumably with some exaggeration, at 4,400 hearths, perhaps 20,000 people, in

²⁶² *Infra*, 53 n. 270.

²⁶³ Text in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 132-133.

²⁶⁴ L. Suárez Fernández, *Política internacional de Isabel la Católica*, ii (Valladolid, 1966), 146-147.

²⁶⁵ Abela, 432-434, 438, 442 *et passim*.

²⁶⁶ According to the anonymous writer of ca. 1630, it was predicted after the coming of the Knights *che la Religione non starà più in Malta di anni cento in circa, mà che da Malta anderà in Sardegna, oue finalmenta si risoluerà da se stesa in fumo ...*: Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 5, f. 569.

²⁶⁷ The various articles of G. Wettinger prelude a forthcoming major publication.

²⁶⁸ H. Bresc and G. Wettinger (*infra*) are severely handicapped by this lack of materials.

1394.²⁶⁹ Early fifteenth-century figures suggest a total of some 10,000, which decreased slightly after 1420 but increased after 1480 to about 20,000 in 1530.²⁷⁰ 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,²⁷¹ 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.²⁷² Grain and wine were seldom exported thereafter, 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 *villani* presumably reflected the end of the great royal estates, agriculturally unprofitable and increasingly alienated.²⁷³ 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 *biduini* or 'bedouins' as they were known²⁷⁴—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 [p.54] or were fleeing from raiders. Quintin in 1533 and Abela in 1647 were still remarking on the deserted lands, yet the fifteenth-century *capitoli* repeatedly complained that Mdina was small and partly uninhabited, that the town dwellers were moving out to the *casali*. The meaning of the word *casale* was itself obscure. It was interchangeable with *raħal* and may have signified a farmstead, estate or village;²⁷⁵ it also defined an administrative

²⁶⁹ *Supra*, 39, 46.

²⁷⁰ G. Wettinger, 'The Militia List of 1419-20: a New Starting Point for the Study of Malta's Population,' *Melita Historica*, v no. 2 (1969), 83 and *infra*, 184-186. C. Trasselli, ('Ricerca su la popolazione della Sicilia nel XV secolo,' *Atti dell'Accademia di Scienze Lettere ed Arti di Palermo*, 4 ser., xv part 2 1954/5), 226-227, 244, 269, produces totals for both islands of ca. 5000 in 1464 and 1478; these seem too low, perhaps because they are derived from taxation records. Quintin calculated over 20,000 inhabitants in 1533. For what it is worth, Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 182, mentions a copy of an affirmation of various old men, made in 1531, that the population had doubled in the previous 100 years. For later figures, Beloch, i. 165-168.

²⁷¹ H. Bresc, *infra*, 131-132, and *idem*, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli, 186, 188 n. 41 *et passim*. On Maltese cotton in 1164 *infra*, 106. Sugar from *Marta* was mentioned by Marino Sanuto, ca. 1306-1321: J. Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, ii (Hanover, 1611), 24. *Bambagio di Malta* and *cotone mapputo*, cotton and cotton wool, were apparently circulating ca. 1340: Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, *La Practica della Mercatura*, ed. A. Evans (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 293, 367. See also Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 191-192, 228-229; A. Vella, 'The Cotton Textile Industry in Malta,' *Melita Historica*, iv no. 3 (1966), 210.

²⁷² Del Treppo, 159-161, 167-168, 174-176, 551 *et passim*.

²⁷³ *Infra*, 131.

²⁷⁴ Late-medieval reference to *lj persunj sunnu tenutj ad habitarij ala chitatj et dilj bidujnj*: Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 670, f. 22v.

²⁷⁵ G. Wettinger (*infra*) provides discussion and bibliography on the problems of *casali* and abandoned sites.

district usually producing from 20 to 100 men for militia service.²⁷⁶ Little is known about the typical Maltese *casale*; 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 *mezzadria* 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.²⁷⁷

The commissioners' report of 1524 and Quintin's *Descriptio* of 1533 emphasized the harshness of life, the lack of wood, the heat, wind and dust, the fevers, the brackish drinking water, the stoniness of the fields, the descents of corsairs. 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 1350 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 manure 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 harrow 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 not 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 ...²⁷⁸

It may be possible to use medieval place-names to trace marshlands and marginal areas, as has been done for the early modern period.²⁷⁹ Certain districts, notably in [p.55] north-west Malta, were not settled but farmers may have walked or ridden considerable distances in order

²⁷⁶ Text in Wettinger, in *Melita Historica*, v. 88-106; some *casali* produced considerably less than 20. A document of 1479 referred to *dicto casali et eius conturii*: text in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 252.

²⁷⁷ H. Bresc-P. d'Angelo, 'Structure et évolution de l'habitat dans la région de Termini Imerese: XIIe-XVe siècles,' *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen Age-Temps Modernes*, lxxxiv (1972). M. Aymard-H. Bresc, 'Problemi di storia dell'insediamento nella Sicilia medievale e moderno: 1100-1800,' *Quaderni storici*, xxiv (1973), constitutes the essential background, while G. Wettinger and A. Luttrell cover Maltese aspects and plans for a topographical survey in *Les habitats médiévaux en Méditerranée Occidentale: les rapports de l'archéologie et de l'histoire* [forthcoming].

²⁷⁸ 1524 report in Bosio, iii. 30-31; on Quintin, *supra*, 1. Quintin's crop yields seem exaggeratedly high.

²⁷⁹ B. Blouet, 'The Distribution of Marshland in Malta during the Seventeenth Century,' and 'Some Observations on the Distribution of Xaghra Place Names in Malta,' *Journal of Maltese Studies*, ii and iv (1964 and 1967); cf. *idem*, 'Rural Settlement in Malta,' *Geography*, lvi (1971).

to work them. It is difficult to gauge how far marginal lands were exploited in the late middle ages, but uncultivated areas were used for grazing and hunting.²⁸⁰ There were also gardens and closed orchards.²⁸¹ To what extent the countryside had been terraced or turned into small fields is also uncertain. Unmortared stone walls and two-faced rubble-filled walls were already being constructed, at least in buildings, in prehistoric times.²⁸² Such walls used up loose stones, broke the wind, contained valuable soil and marked boundaries.²⁸³ They also shut in animals²⁸⁴ or, elsewhere, excluded them.²⁸⁵ Some at least of the peasants lived in natural or rock-cut caves, as described by Quintin: *Trogloditae in ea multi: specus excavant: hae illis domus.*²⁸⁶ Quintin also said that even the Birgu houses were unmortared. Despite its scarcity, some wood may have been used in houses,²⁸⁷ particularly in view of the frequent shifting or abandonment of sites. The *casale* itself 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 1566/7.²⁸⁸ Many sixteenth-century houses still had reed roofs, which were sometimes blown away.²⁸⁹ Datable evidence is, however, scarce and domestic buildings can seldom be dated on stylistic grounds.²⁹⁰

Town life was largely limited to Mdina, though there were communities outside the castle at Birgu and in the Gozo Castello. At Gozo, as at Mdina, the Muslim and post-Muslim

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- 280 A. Mifsud, 'Sulla caccia in Malta nel passato,' *Archivum Melitense*, iii nos. 3-4 (1918), 118-119.
- 281 *Infra*, 129 n. 11.
- 282 D. Trump, *Skorba* (London-Malta, 1966), with plates and excavation plans; note that mud-bricks and timber were used in prehistoric buildings.
- 283 Text in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 133 (1479).
- 284 Text of 1365 in Catania, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Benedettini Ms. 159 f, 121v-123v (late copy): *quedam pecciuncula terre muro circumdata deputata pro includendis animalibus sita in quodam spacio communi Casalis uocati Rachal kjber*
- 285 Text *infra*, 57.
- 286 Cf. *infra*, 188 n. 24. A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus*, ii (3rd ed: Amsterdam, 1678), 119-120, fascinatingly described the troglodytic community at Ghar il-Kbir, and another on Gozo, in 1637.
- 287 Cf. H. Bresc, 'Case di Legno in Sicilia,' *Gruppo Ricerche Archeologica Medievale-Palermo* (20 Aug. 1971).
- 288 Quoted, in translation, in Hughes, *Fortress*, 31-32; see also *idem*, *Building*, 196-198. This technique was also mentioned by Quintin in 1533.
- 289 References in Dessoulavy, in *The Sundial*, iii nos. 4-8, 98-99.
- 290 For the analogy with the present: A. Harrison-R. Hubbard, 'Maltese Vernacular,' *Architectural Review*, cv (1949); cf. Q. Hughes *et al.*, 'Malta,' *ibid.*, cxlvi (1969). For analogies with surrounding lands: G. Valussi, *La casa rurale nella Sicilia Occidentale* (Florence, 1968); cf. F. Bonasera, *Studi sulle isole minori pertinenti alla Sicilia: indagini sulla forma della casa rurale-Guida integrativa all'indagine diretta (sopraluogo)* (Faenza, 1967). M. King, *Housing in the Maltese Islands: an Analysis of Influences on Built Form* (unpublished M. Arch. thesis: Royal University of Malta, 1971), argues interestingly for Syrian and other Oriental influences, using philological evidence of the type discussed *supra*, 23-25, but Tunisian or Sicilian influences seem more probable. Though its historical assumptions are debatable, this thesis contains useful information on troglodytic settlements, construction techniques and building terminology. See also P. Cassar, 'The Corbelled Stone Huts of the Maltese Islands,' *Man*, lxi (1961).

urban area was so contracted that it occupied only the most defensible, fortified fraction of the Roman town.²⁹¹ 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 234 militiamen [p.56] as against 132 from Mdina.²⁹² 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.²⁹³ 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 *aljama* and dependent on the Jewry 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 so much property that it was difficult to sell it all when they were expelled in 1492.²⁹⁴ 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 *universitas*.²⁹⁵ 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 1523 Birgu was cut off by a cordon of guards.²⁹⁶

In addition to the military command with its own officials and garrison under the Castellan at Birgu castle, and to the *secreto* and other representatives of the Sicilian *curia* who administered the taxes, gabelles and royal estates, a local government, the *universitas* at Mdina, was headed by its Captain, known in Maltese as the *hakem*. In 1372 the king nominated Guglielmo Murina as Captain, with Lancea Gatto and Paolo Maniavacca 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 ‘fief.’ Most Maltese must have been unsure of the technical difference between a *raħal*, a *casale*, a *feudum* or *fegho*, a *tenimentum terrarum* held at *census*, a *tenimentum burgensaticum* which was allodial land not held in feudal tenure, and so forth.²⁹⁷ A text of about 1400 confusingly described one holding as:

²⁹¹ Trump, *Malta*, 104-117 (with plan of Roman Rabat), 148-153.

²⁹² *Infra*, 186; these incomplete figures ignore the Mdina Jews and others.

²⁹³ Eg. text of 1472 in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 125; *infra*, 135.

²⁹⁴ C. Roth, ‘The Jews of Malta,’ *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, xii (1931), a work derived largely from Sicilian documents; Dr. Godfrey Wettinger plans to publish a more detailed study based on the Maltese archives. On Jews active in foreign commerce ca. 1380, see texts in Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, v. 161-164.

²⁹⁵ A. Mifsud, ‘I nostri Consoli e le Arti ed i Mestieri,’ *Archivum Melitense*, iii no. 1 (1917), 37 n. 3 *et passim*.

²⁹⁶ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta* (London, 1964), 11-17, 23-24, 153, 157, 164-165. There seems to be no clear evidence that the great plague, the Black Death, reached Malta in 1347/8.

²⁹⁷ On officials, land-tenures and their confusions, see H. Bresc and G. Wettinger *infra*, and details and texts in Bresc, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli. Bresc wrote without seeing C. Galea Scannura, ‘The Office of the Secrezia of Malta ...,’

Tenuta altra di terrj uocata lu fegu di rachalniculosu in lu casalj di rachalbibir alu locu dictu haiar lym, diuisa in diuersi pezi cum spazij, cum casi et cum mandrj siti in lu dictu fegu ...

[p.57] An item from the *capitoli* of 1475 illustrated similar uncertainties:

Item suplica la Uniuersitati preditta alo prefato Ill. signuri che la pena la quali e solita per via di bandu publicu imponirisi de mandato alicuius magistratus a quilli che trasinu et mettinu apaxiri loru animali inferendu damnu in li possessioni di autrui non si poza Imponiri ultra di unczi quattu pecunie meliueti alu officiu di la capitania et unu agustali alu bagliu di malta et che tali pena haia locu solum quantu pertangi ali possessioni circumdati et Inclusi di mura et In li feghi et etiam tenimenti di terri burgensatichi appellati et nominati In lingua dicte Insule per casam quod in lingua latina Importat feghi et non in haltri terreni aperti In liquali solum si haya hauirj considerationi di li damnj ut s[upra] comu sempri ex antiquo si havi obseruato per tollirj tutti nouitati et noui extorsioni: *Placet dno. Viceregi.*²⁹⁸

Evidently the distinction between *feghi* and *tenimenti di terri burgensatichi* was blurred in the Maltese term *casam* or *qasam* 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 Desguanes. 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 house-hold and was captain of two galleys when, in 1465, the king granted him 200 gold florins annually out of the Crown’s *rentas*; later the viceroy changed these, first into an income from the Maltese *secrezia*, 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.²⁹⁹ This was one way in which the royal patrimony was dissipated. In 1530 the Grand Master of the Hospitallers complained to Charles V that nothing, not even the castle, was left: *non ce un palmo di terra che non sia dato o Impegnato Infino al Castello medemo.*³⁰⁰

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.³⁰¹ Land tenure involved military service, and absentee holders of property—*tantu pheudali quantu*

Melita Historica, vi no. 2 (1973), which covers the period 1450-1530 not studied by Bresc; it is essential to consult Galea Scannura’s *addenda* in *ibid*, vi no. 3 (1974), 324.

²⁹⁸ Text of ca. 1400 in Catania, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Benedettini Ms. 153, f. 505; 1475 text in Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 34, f. 392. A text of 1523 described the *cusaim di rahal birabar quod latine sonat feudulum casalis birabar (infra, 206).*

²⁹⁹ Barberi, *Capibrevi*, iii. 453-455; Royal Malta Library, Università Ms. 7, f. 158-159.

³⁰⁰ Text in Valentini, in *Archivum Melitense*, ix. 228-231.

³⁰¹ Details *infra*, 138-139; cf. A. Mifsud, ‘La Milizia e le Torri antiche di Malta,’ *Archivum Melitense*, iv no. 2 (1920), an important article.

burgensatici—were supposed to provide men and horses.³⁰² A local militia numbered at least 1,667 in 1419,³⁰³ and in 1499 King Fernando, exaggeratedly no doubt, claimed that eight parishes around Mdina could provide 4,000 armed fighting men—*hombres de pelea*.³⁰⁴ The royal fleet was a distant comfort in [p.58] critical moments, so that naval defence depended largely on local shipping; Francesco Gatto, *miles* and *civis Meliveti*, was appointed by the king to command Malta's galley or galliot in 1398.³⁰⁵ There was no exploitation of the harbour as a major base before 1530, but 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 1407/8 showed that 19 Maltese vessels carried almost all the grain exported to Malta; 295 *salme* from Vindicari, 58 from Syracuse, 48 from Agrigento and 81—of which 44 went to Gozo—from Terranova.³⁰⁶ 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 1376.³⁰⁷ Spectacular profits came from piracy and from the more official *guerra di corso* 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 1409 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 1449 both Maltese and foreigners were forbidden to arm ships for the *corso* at Malta. In 1460 there were Maltese protests against 'friendly' corsairs and against the forcible recruitment of oarsmen by the Aragonese.³⁰⁸ The island's most famous pirate, Michele de Malta, operated around Cyprus and Rhodes in the 1460's.³⁰⁹ In 1525 and 1526 Maltese pirates based on Tripoli were active in the Aegean, provoking protests from the government of Crete.³¹⁰

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 Benwarrad,

³⁰² Text of 1450 in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 495; other details in Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 272-277, and Bresc, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli, docs. 4, 28, 32 (1372).

³⁰³ *Infra*, 186; there were also coastguard obligations.

³⁰⁴ Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 737, f. 225-228 (modern copy).

³⁰⁵ Text in *Memoirs of the Family of Inguaeuz*, 23-25 [with incorrect date]; on Pedro de Busco and the guard-galley in 1443, *infra*, 146.

³⁰⁶ C. Trasselli, 'Sulla esportazione di cereali dalla Sicilia nel 1407-08,' *Atti della Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Palermo*, 4 ser., xv part 2 (1954/5), 336, 354, 365; tables I, IIIa. On Maltese shipping arrested in 1427, text in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 292.

³⁰⁷ Text in Luttrell, in *Melita Historica*, v. 161-162.

³⁰⁸ Texts in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 75, 482, 492-493; x. 62-63.

³⁰⁹ P. Cassar, 'The Maltese Corsairs and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem,' *Scientia* [Malta], xxix (1963), 28-30 [also in *Catholic Historical Review*, xlvi (1960), 139-141]; the whole subject demands much further attention, but see H. Brese, 'Course et piraterie en Sicile: 1250-1450,' *I Congresso Internazionale de Historia Mediterranea* [forthcoming]. A. Cremona, 'La Marina Maltese dal Medio Evo all'Epoca Moderna ...,' *Journal of Maltese Studies*, ii (1964), provides little medieval information.

³¹⁰ N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, vi (Bucarest, 1916), 111-112, 117, 135-136; cf. F. B[orlandi], 'Corsari maltesi a Ragusa nel Quattro e nel Cinquecento,' *ASM*, vii (1934/5), 243-245.

where shipping was accustomed to shelter, needed repair in 1494.³¹¹ Even the Gozo *castello* was in ruins in 1442.³¹² The defence of Malta depended essentially on the *castrum maris* at Birgu which existed by 1241 at the latest,³¹³ and in [p.59] Angevin times it was provided with effective munitions³¹⁴ which made it hard to take.³¹⁵ By 1274 there was an inner and an outer castrum,³¹⁶ and in 1533 Quintin described a fortress with the *borgo* at its foot. The development of artillery³¹⁷ and the appearance of the Turks must have accentuated the problems of its defence. The 1524 commissioners found the castle in a ruined state with few armaments, and they realized that in an age of gunpowder it not only failed to control the harbour, but 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 *castrum maris* and its cannon did not even control the Grand Harbour,³¹⁸ and the villagers, those of Żeitun for example, were supposed to take shelter up at Mdina.³¹⁹ Mdina stood on the site of that part of the Roman town which evidently became the Byzantine *kastron* and then the Arab capital, and it must have undergone a succession of repairs and rebuildings.³²⁰ In 1454 the *universitas* was petitioning to be allowed to rent out space within the ruined *castrum* at Mdina in the hope of attracting the population back from the *casali* to defend the town and to provide an income with which to repair the walls. The *universitas* claimed, falsely perhaps, that before 1377 the *castrum maris* had sufficed to defend the island, and that the castle and the internal wall at Mdina had been built by the tyrannous Chiaramonte merely to oppress the populace. The *torre mastra* above the gate was said to be in ruins, and permission was given to use the stone from the wall dividing the *castrum* from the town in order to repair the outer gate and walls.³²¹ In 1473 the *universitas* was considering the purchase of six bombards to defend the city.³²² Yet,

³¹¹ Details in Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iv. 67-70; to what extent pre-medieval buildings were used and how far the surviving remains date before 1530 is yet to be established. A tower on the site of the later Fort Sant'Elmo was projected in 1488, but probably not built.

³¹² *Infra*, 136 n. 62.

³¹³ Text in Winkelmann, 713-715.

³¹⁴ Inventories are published in Laurenza, in *ASM*, v. 132-136 (1274) and *infra*, 158-160 (April, 1429).

³¹⁵ Eg. from 1282 to 1284 (*supra*, 43).

³¹⁶ Text of 1274 in Laurenza, in *ASM*, v. 132-136.

³¹⁷ There were bombards at Birgu by 1429 (texts *infra*, 158-160). For an iron cannon or bombard some 65 cm. long, probably early 15th-century in date and found in Malta, G. Laking, *A Catalogue of the Armour and Arms in the Armoury of the Knights ...* (London, n.d), 44 and plate XXXII.

³¹⁸ Bosio, 30-31, 89; cf. J. McPartlin, 'The Defences of Malta,' *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, iii no. 1 (1965), 11-12.

³¹⁹ Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 34, f. 110 v (1494).

³²⁰ *Supra*, 30, 34,55.

³²¹ Texts, showing Mdina in almost perpetual ruin, in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 465 (1432), 476-477 (1438?), 495 (1450); ix. 102-103 (1454); see also Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 404-405; iv. 68-70. Mdina's medieval topography awaits detailed study; the ambiguities of the term *castrum* require attention.

³²² Text in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 257.

despite constant repairs and expenses, Mdina's defences were in a hopeless state in 1524 when it was reported that only twenty of its houses could be put into reasonable repair.³²³

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,³²⁴ and they nominated the consuls who protected Maltese and Gozitans in [p.60] Sicilian ports; the Sicilians had their consuls with jurisdiction in Malta.³²⁵ 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.³²⁶ In moments of crisis representatives could be summoned from the clergy and from the countryside: in 1450 each *capella* or district was to produce at least four men; in 1462 six delegates from each *casale* were to intervene along with the clergy and with Gozitan representatives; and in 1474 the *capillani* were to bring their *parrochiani* to a *parlamentu generali*.³²⁷ 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 *demanium*, and Gilibertus' report of about 1241 referred to an advisory body, but Valentini exaggerated in his attempts to demonstrate that this was a *comune* in the Italian style.³²⁸ 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

³²³ Bosio, iii. 30.

³²⁴ A. Mifsud, 'L'approvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle passate Dominazioni,' *Archivum Melitense*, iii no. 5 (1918).

³²⁵ Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 57-60, 78-79. Maltese representatives do not seem to have attended assemblies in Sicily. Valentini's claim (*ASM*, vii. 45) that the Maltese had a right to send their bishop is based on the presence of Bishop Nicolaus, who may never have been to Malta, at a special *colloquium generale* held at Terranova in 1314 to deal with the question of a duel between the Kings of Sicily and Naples: text in H. Finke, *Arta Aragonensia*, iii (Berlin, 1922), 257-258.

³²⁶ On the sporadic publication of the *universitas* records, *supra*, 6-7.

³²⁷ A. Mifsud, in *La Diocesi: Bollettino ufficiale ecclesiastico di Malta*, ii (1917/8), 40-42, 305.

³²⁸ See especially *ASM*, vii. 44-63; X. 199-200, 205-213, 217. Valentini had ideological motives for seeking to date the *universitas* as early as possible. His idea (*ASM*, viii. 126) that it was a Norman innovation is surely unjustified (cf. *supra*, 36) as is the notion that it was copied directly from Sicily (*supra*, 14). It can really only be traced clearly from 1409 (texts in *ASM*, viii. 74-79) onwards. Valentini used a phrase in a text of 1450—*la dicta universita ab annis tricentis et ultra* (*ASM*, viii. 496)—to take the *universitas* back to before 1150, but probably *tricentis* meant 'trecento,' ie. 14th-century. Valentini argued for 'comune' when the document of 1208 clearly meant 'comite' (*infra*, 116). Again (*ASM*, vii. 44-63), he used a series of papal bulls from 1304 onwards to prove that the *universitas* existed and was recognized by the Church. But inspection of the papal registers shows that phrases such as *universis cassallis ecclesie Melivetane* or *Universitatem vestram* were simply common-form addresses regularly found in bulls addressed to dioceses, abbeys 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 1375 Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cancelleria 13, f. 150v.

confirmed annually by the viceroy.³²⁹ The *magnifici* and *nobiles* generally dominated proceedings and there were attempts to exclude the artisan element, yet when necessary the *universitas* effectively mobilized 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.³³⁰

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 [p.61] standard survey.³³¹ The earliest known post-Muslim bishop dates to 1168,³³² but bishops rarely resided in or even visited the islands. However, by about 1270 there was an organized Roman diocese with canons, an archdeacon and a cantor; it functioned as a suffragan of Palermo, paying its tenths and contesting jurisdictions with the civil courts.³³³ There were disputes and confusions which derived in part from the ancient claims of the Sicilian Crown to rights in the presentation of candidates to episcopal sees, a position further complicated by papal quarrels with the Crown. In May 1267 the pope instructed his legate to provide a bishop,³³⁴ when that bishop died, the legate replaced him with a *normandus* named Johannes, who by November 1268 had in turn resigned the see to the pope; the see then remained vacant, though in 1272/3 a Franciscan, Jacobus de Malta, was said to be bishop.³³⁵ The new Angevin regime seems to have opposed these papal nominations; in 1270 the king instructed the Maltese clergy *ut non soluant in collectis*, and in 1272 he ordered the Castellan of Malta to protect the procurator of

³²⁹ Viceregal text of 1478 in Leopardi, in *Melita Historica*, ii. 135-136. On taxes, corvées (*angharie*) and gabelles, see Leopardi, *passim*, and Mifsud, in *Archivum Melitense*, iii. 404-413, 429-430.

³³⁰ Text in Wettinger-Fsadni, 48-49.

³³¹ A. Mifsud scattered useful information and documents through *La Diocesi: Bollettino ufficiale ecclesiastico di Malta*, i-iv (1916-1920). Bonnici (*Church in Malta*) surveys the older work without attempting new research and, in general, much of what is derived from Ferris and Abela requires control or revision; on these works and the ecclesiastical archives, *supra*, 2-3, 7-8. Many topics await detailed attention.

³³² On the Maltese Church and its dubious bishops before 1168, *supra*, 33. The best episcopal list, from 1253 onwards, that of Fiorini, in *Abela Essays*, 94-96, provides important information and corrections, but still requires much amendment. A *Ioannes Zafrana* was a *Maltensis canonicus* in 1214: text in Collura, 129-130.

³³³ Texts of 1275/80, 1308/10 and 1370 (with serious errors of transcription) in P. Sella, *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV: Sicilia* (Vatican, 1944), 25-26, 136; cf. *Cancellaria Angioina*, iv. 168-169. See also J. Glénisson, 'Documenti dell'Archivio Vaticano relativi alla collectoria di Sicilia: 1372-1375,' *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, ii (1948), 250, 256.

³³⁴ K. Kanzer, *Papsttum und Bistumsbesetzungen in der Zeit von Gregor IX. bis Bonifaz VIII.* (Cologne, 1968). 276/7 n. 24.

³³⁵ A text from Viterbo of 1272/3 listed Malta as a vacant see in the Archbishopric of Palermo: *Malten. hoc modo mortuo ipsius ecclesie episcopo per legatione proviso, idem legatus de quodam normando Iohanne nomine, providit eidem ecclesie, qui post exitum legati de regno renuntiavit in mano domni Clementis, in quo quidam frater minor nomine Iacobus de Malta et quidam alius hospitalarius de facto dicuntur electi. Valere dicitur ultra C uncias.* This text, published by F. Orioli, in *Giornale Arcadico di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, cxxviii (1852), 189-190, with corrections *ibid.*, cxxxvii (1854), 196, will be dated and republished in vol. iii of N. Kamp, *Kirche und Monarchie im Stauffischen Königreich Sizilien*, i- (Munich, 1973-).

the allegedly vacant diocese.³³⁶ Jacobus was eventually accepted as bishop, but died in about 1278.³³⁷ For a century after 1282 the situation was further bedevilled by papal recognition of Angevin, as opposed to Aragonese, claims in Sicily.³³⁸ From 1393 onwards the Aragonese were again attempting to install their own candidates, a process complicated by the schism in the Roman church; the Crown followed the pope of Avignon, Pedro de Luna, who was himself Aragonese, but the Romanist clergy in Sicily supported the anti-Aragonese baronial rebels. The king's nominees, often royal chaplains or confessors, were mainly Sicilians who were chiefly interested in the lands of the Maltese [p.62] diocese in Sicily, where they resided; when King Martín unsuccessfully proposed his confessor Giovanni de Pino in 1393, 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, *veents que la esgleya de Malta, per tal com era destituïda de idoneu pastor, era mal servida*.³³⁹ 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.³⁴⁰

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.³⁴¹ The number of churches in Malta documented before 1350 is minimal,³⁴² yet by 1575 there were about 430, 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.³⁴³ 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 di Manfredo Xeberras est in actis Notarij Luce de Sillato 20 Januarij 1449 in quo fecit heredem uniuersalem Leonardum Xeberras eius filium, et fecit quoddam pium legatum in favorem ecclesie ss.me Annunciationis per eum constructe in Casale Bircacara.³⁴⁴

³³⁶ Texts in *Cancellaria Angioina*, iv. 169 (1270); Moscati, in *ASM*, vii. 480 (1272).

³³⁷ Text in Sella, 25. M.-H. Laurent, 'Contributo alla storia dei Vescovi del Regno di Sicilia: 1274-1280,' *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, ii (1948), 377, wrongly identified *Jacobus* with Giacomo da Mileto, nominated Bishop of Mileto on 27 May 1259; he may have been mistaken in rejecting two subsequent Bishops of Malta: N. (from 1266 on) and Andreas Bancherini, OP (ca. 1270).

³³⁸ This is not the occasion for the construction of a new list of bishops but, in addition to Fiorini, see details and references in Valentini in *ASM*, vii. 44-68.

³³⁹ Fiorini, 90-91, 95, 106-109; Luttrell, in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, iv. 167.

³⁴⁰ Valentini in *ASM*, viii. 256-257.

³⁴¹ Text of 1481 in Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, iii. 203-205; see also Wettinger-Fsadni, 25-26.

³⁴² Apart from Mdina cathedral and a group of churches stylistically or archaeologically datable from their material remains (*supra*, 32-34; *infra*, 85-89, 163-171), there are only the two churches in the *castrum maris*, S. Maria and S. Angelo, in 1274 (*infra*, 164) and S. Maria on Comino (*Compasso da Navigare*, 111); there must have been others, including at least one on Gozo.

³⁴³ *Infra*, 179, 212 n. 73.

³⁴⁴ Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 280, f. 179.

Little is known of the quality and organization of the clergy before 1436 when the bishop, from Sicily, ordered a *quinterniolus pro concordia taxarum* which listed the incomes of 144 benefices in the islands, including 79 *animagii*, 37 *benefitii*, various *prebende*, *cappelle* and so on, many of them endowments for the celebration of masses; in numerous cases the patronage, the *iuspatronatus*, remained in the hands of the founding family. In 1436 the cathedral had an archdeacon, deacon, cantor, treasurer and twelve others all given as *donnus* and presumably canons; another thirteen were each given as *presbiter*; and there was a *Frater Benedictus*, and a Henrico Fabiano Zamit who held the benefice of Santa Maria on the rock of Filfla. 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 *pieve*, where baptisms, marriages and other sacraments were administered, and on which [p.63] the scattered chapels depended.³⁴⁵ There were protests from the inhabitants of the *casali* against the exactions of the *cappellani* or rural archpriests, who had their tithes to collect,³⁴⁶ and in 1481 against the extortions of the powerful Archdeacon of Mdina, Lancea Desguanes.³⁴⁷

There is no evidence concerning the actual process of conversion and Christianization in the islands; in fact, somewhat inexplicably, the religious orders came to Malta relatively late. In 1364, the Benedictines of San Nicolò d’Arena at Catania, who had been bequeathed lands in Malta, declined to found a house there, alleging the distance and dangers, and the difficulties of pastoral work in an unknown language. By 1371, however, they had secured control of these Maltese lands, and they continued to receive further donations in the

³⁴⁵ Cf. R. Brentano, *Two Churches: England and Italy in the Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, 1968), 67-76. The 1436 text, the so-called *rollo* of Bishop Senatore de Mello, survives in 16/17th-century copy in Royal Malta Library, Biblioteca Ms. 721, f. 2-4v; it was clumsily published, without the incomes, in Abela, 313-316. Abela, 360, assumed that the places mentioned as *cappelle* were ‘parishes’; the identifications and dedications he gives for each ‘parish’ (*ibid.*, 360) do not appear in the text and cannot all be documented as early as 1436. There is no evidence for the generally-accepted idea that the bishop organized or reorganized a parish system, or established 10 new parishes in 1436; Ferris, 70, even states that Pope Eugenius IV instituted 10 parishes. The *cappelle* mentioned in 1436 had incomes varying from 25 *uncie* at Rabat (*S. Paulu di fora*) to only 2 *uncie* at Birgu, Mellieħa and S. Domenica (ie. Tartarni). In 1419 this last ‘casale’ appeared as *Capella sancta dominica tartarni et dinkili* with 40 names on the militia list (*infra*, 186-212); later in the century came a reference to *totam parrochiam seu capellam de casali dragu* (cited *infra*, 187 n. 22). In 1450 an exceptional meeting of the *consilium universale* was supposed to include *quatuor ad minus de qualibet capella*, while in 1474 eight *cappillani* were to bring their *parrochani* to a *parlamentu generali* (text of 1474 and other details in Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, ii. 42, 305.) In 1533 Quintin stated that there were eight parishes outside the city. In 1574 Dusina gave: *Cappelle, ò vogliamo dire Parrocchie Regale no. 8* (text in Vella, in *Melita Historica*, v. 183). For the text of 1436 and lists of late medieval benefices, founders and holders, and on the papal indult of 1521 restricting benefices primarily to Maltese, see V. Borg, *Important Canonical Enactments on the Ecclesiastical Benefices of the Maltese Islands* (unpublished D. Theol. thesis: Royal University of Malta, 1960).

³⁴⁶ Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 28, f. 256-259 (ca. 1510: modern copy).

³⁴⁷ Texts in Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, ii. 20-21.

island.³⁴⁸ The Franciscans had reached Malta by 1372, when Nicola Papalla was nominated rector of their hospital at Rabat; a new apse to their church there was being paid for by Giovanni de Nava in 1480.³⁴⁹ The Augustinians had a convent in Malta by 1413;³⁵⁰ Carmelites and Benedictine nuns came as well.³⁵¹ By 1452 there were one Maltese and two Sicilian Dominicans at Rabat, where their order subsequently acquired the church of Santa Maria della Grotta. In 1473 the Maltese Dominicans were formally recognized as constituting a priory; they built a new church at Rabat in 1505, and in 1527 they were granted a house at Birgu.³⁵² The friars, who sometimes studied abroad, [p.64] brought a new, educated element into Maltese society, and their churches and paintings bear witness to a certain prosperity among the orders.³⁵³ The Maltese Church had numerous practical problems, such as its relations with the *universitas* and its obligations to help maintain the walls of Mdina.³⁵⁴ The islands lay exposed on the frontiers of Christendom, and in 1533 Quintin paid tribute to the fervour of their Christian belief and their devotion to St. Paul. Other saints, such as St. Catherine³⁵⁵ and St. George,³⁵⁶ were also highly venerated.

The civil and religious architecture of medieval Malta has now received considerable attention,³⁵⁷ 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 Sicily³⁵⁸ 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

³⁴⁸ D. la Ferlita, 'I possedimenti dei benedettini di Catania a Malta,' *ASM*, vii (1935/6), using documents from Catania, Archivio di Stato: Fondo Benedettini; the present author will publish these important texts, with various corrections.

³⁴⁹ B. Fiorini, 'Il Convento di S. Francesco in Rabat (Malta) dei frati minori conventuali,' *Melita Historica*, iii no. 3 (1962), 3-5, 16-17; the text there published (p. 32) as of 1370 is actually that of 1372, republished in Bresc, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xli, doc. 36. The myth that St. Francis visited Malta was invented in 1882.

³⁵⁰ Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cancelleria 48, f. 165; the previously accepted date was 1440.

³⁵¹ The best general survey, in Bonnici, i. 100-105, requires careful revision, especially with regard to the chronology. For texts illustrating early-modern traditions concerning late-medieval hermits, see Marchi, in *Missione 1961*, 26-29, 34-35.

³⁵² M. Fsadni, *Il-Miġja u l-Hidma ta' l-Ewwel Dumnikani f'Malta: 1450-1512* (Malta, 1965), gives an excellent idea of the variety of sources available for this sort of study, and a continuation volume is forth-coming; see also S. Forte, in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xxxiv (1964), 277-279.

³⁵³ *Infra*, 65-66.

³⁵⁴ Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, i-iv *passim*.

³⁵⁵ *Supra*, 23 n. 141.

³⁵⁶ J. Bezzina, 'San Ġorġ Dejjem Harisna: Studju Storiku-Folkloristiku,' in *Il-Hajja* (19 and 23 July 1971) [and apart (Malta, 1971)], relates St. George, patron of Catalunya, to guard-towers and watch-sites around the coast; the difficulty lies in dating towers and chapels, place-names and dedications.

³⁵⁷ M. Buhagiar and J. Ward-Perkins *infra*, with bibliography. Hughes, *Building*, 41-50, 125-127 *et passim*, requires some revision, especially on points of medieval chronology; it provides further bibliography—see also *supra*, 55 n. 290.

³⁵⁸ G. Spatrisano, *Lo Steri di Palermo e l'architettura siciliana del trecento* (Palermo, 1972).

possibly pre-fabricated and imported directly from Catalunya or Valencia.³⁵⁹ Individual architects such as Matteo Coglitori, who was *mastru marammeri* or prefect of building at Mdina by 1523³⁶⁰ and who carried out important work for the Knights in Birgu after 1530,³⁶¹ 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,³⁶² 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 1487.³⁶³ A font for the cathedral at Mdina came from the Sicilian work-shop of Domenico Gagini around the end of the fifteenth century,³⁶⁴ while the [p.65] cathedral's *intarsia* choir stalls were originally commissioned in 1482, for the Dominicans at Rabat, from Parisio and Pierantonio Calachura, *carpinterij* of Catania (plate 18a, b),³⁶⁵ 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 tombstones at Rabat with the sculptures in St. Agatha at Rabat and the carved doors dated 1520 in Mdina cathedral.³⁶⁶

A tentative preliminary study of the wall-paintings in these medieval churches suggests the possibility of a local school of painters strongly influenced from Sicily and, to a lesser extent, from Catalunya; but much remains to be investigated. A Byzantine fresco of a Madonna, conceivably fourteenth-century, has recently been uncovered in a rock-cut sanctuary at Mellieħa. The painted apse in the Abbatija tad-Dejr (plate 14a) possibly dates

³⁵⁹ B. Gilman Proske, 'Spanish Details in the Gothic Architecture of Sicily,' *Notes Hispanic*, iv (1944), 23, discusses Catalan exports, though without documenting them conclusively. The 'exposition throne,' the *intarsia* choir panels, and other items at Mdina (*infra*, 178-179) deserve more detailed study. On the 'Romanesque' capitals from Mdina, *infra*, 164 n. 6, and plate 18c, d.

³⁶⁰ Mdina, Cathedral Archives Ms. 36, f. 193 *et passim*; on the *marammeri* or *sopramarammeri*, see Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 138-139.

³⁶¹ Hughes, *Building*, 208 (but the claim that Coglitori probably taught Tommaso Dingli, who was born in 1591, seems scarcely credible).

³⁶² Eg. in St. Cecilia, Gozo, illustrated in Hughes, *Fortress*, 168, remarkably well preserved, and apparently the oldest surviving church in Gozo. This system of arches and slabs is not found in Sicily where wood is available.

³⁶³ Valentini, in *ASM*, v. 23 n. 74.

³⁶⁴ H. Kruft, *Domenico Gagini and seine Werkstatt* (Munich, 1972), 55, 244; plates 221-233. The traditional date of 1495, which Kruft accepts, is merely the year of election of Bishop Valguarnera (1495-1501) whose arms are said to be those on the font, which could have been made even after the bishop's death. It is not known when the sculpture of a Madonna and Child by Antonello Gagini, signed and dated 1504 and now in Rabat, reached Malta; it was probably also a workshop piece: V. Bonello-J. Cauchi, *L'arte sacra a Malta* (Malta, 1960), 103-104. The base of this carving is in the National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta.

³⁶⁵ The contract survives in the archives of the Dominican house at Rabat (partial facsimile in Fsadni, 68; cf. *infra*, 179).

³⁶⁶ Cf. *infra*, 178, and R. Bourouiba, 'L'influence de l'art sanhadjien du Maghrib sur l'art des Normands de Sicile,' in *Congrès arabo-berbère*; A. Florensa, 'L'architettura di Spagna a Malta,' *Atti del XI Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura* (Rome, 1970), figs. 1-4.

between 1270 and about 1412; the frescoes now restored at Hal Millieri, which include numerous frontal pictures of saints (plate 16a, b), were probably done *circa* 1450; while the murals in the rock-cut church of St. Agatha at Rabat (plate 15a, b) are datable around 1510.³⁶⁷ 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 retable 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.³⁶⁸ 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.³⁶⁹ On 20 February 1505 at Messina the Dominican Guglielmo de Chilia contracted on behalf of the nuns of San Pietro at Mdina for Giovanni Salvo di Antonio, another nephew of the great Antonello, to [p.66] paint in oils a large polyptych, parts of which survived in the San Pietro convent.³⁷⁰ Again, these works emphasize the predominance of the Sicilian connection.

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 *Cantilena*, no written medieval Maltese is known. Though written in Latin script, the *Cantilena*, only recently

³⁶⁷ M. Buhagiar *infra*, and G. Mathew, ‘Schools of Painting in Medieval Malta,’ *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: Royal University of Malta*, vi no. 1 (1974); cf. E. Sammut, ‘A Handlist of writings on Art in Malta,’ *Melita Historica*, iv no. 1 (1964). Though written before the uncovering of the fresco and repeating innumerable ‘traditions,’ R. Bonnici Calì, *Our Lady of Mellieha*, Malta, (Malta, 1952), contains useful references and information. There was a Byzantine fresco of a ‘Blessing Christ’ in the apse at S. Ciro: Bonello 5. Other works may yet be revealed elsewhere. Restorations at Hal Millieri will be followed by publication of studies on the church and its paintings.

³⁶⁸ S. Bottari, *La pittura del quattrocento in Sicilia* (Florence, 1954), 43 n. 3 (wrongly describing it as John the Evangelist).

³⁶⁹ C. Kauffmann, ‘Notes on Two Paintings,’ *Victoria and Albert Museum Yearbook*, i (1969), 49; cf. Bottari, fig. 163.

³⁷⁰ The contract was for a Madonna and Child or ‘Scordia,’ flanked by Saints Peter and Benedict, surmounted by a Crucifixion with Mary and St. 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 Blandano and Peter Martyr. Details in G. di Marzo, *Di Antonello da Messina e dei suoi congiunti: studi e documenti* (Palermo, 1903), 94 [where for ‘Mileto in Calabria’ read ‘Malta’], from a document at Messina which was destroyed in 1943; Chilia (or Chumi) was clearly Maltese (Fsadni, 75, 78 and n. 200). 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 Saluu de a[...]i de messanensis me pinsit 510* (Bottari, figs. 183-188); 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 1505 contract, except that St. James takes the place of St. Benedict (Bottari, fig. 182); this polyptych is attributed to Giovanni Salvo’s workshop.

discovered in a copy made in or just after 1533, 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 *universitas* 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 illiteracy, even among the clergy, and any Maltese who knew no other language had to rely on an interpreter for official or legal business.³⁷¹ There were some notably well-educated exceptions among the clergy and lawyers; the medical men were almost all Jews. The old legal tag *quod omnes tangit debet ab omnibus approbari* opened a clause in the *capitoli* of 1419; yet, curiously, it heralded not a theory of taxation by consent, but the demand that the Gozitans should contribute to the cost of a tower on Comino.³⁷² The humanist notary who dabbled 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 kinsmen, he was active as judge, envoy to Sicily, cathedral proctor and spokesman in the island's council; he died in 1485. Probably wifeless and childless, his private affairs seem to have provoked the following *Cantilena* or lament.³⁷³

Aliquantulum exhilaratus memorans cantilenam diu compositam quondam mei maioris Petri de Caxaro philosophi poete et oratoris cui aliquando dictum fuit confla precor calamum Caxaro clara propago: te cupiant ninphe te tua musa ... quam lingua melitea hic subicio.

[p.67]

Xideu il cada ye gireni tale nichadithicum
 Mensab fil gueri uele nisab fo homorcom
 Calb mehandihe chakim soltan ui le mule
 Bir imgamic rimitine betiragin mucsule
 fen hayran al garca nenzel fi tirag minzeli
 Nitila vy nargia ninzil deyem fil bachar il hali.

Huakit hi mirammiti lili zimen nibni
 Mectatilix mihallimin me chitali tafal morchi
 fen timayt insib il gebel sib tafal morchi
 vackit hi mirammiti.

Huakit hy mirammiti Nizlit hi li sisen
 Mectatilix il mihallimin ma kitatili li gebel
 fen tumayt insib il gebel sib tafal morchi

³⁷¹ In addition to the numerous details and documents, many drawn from the 15th-century notarial records, in Wettinger–Fsadni (*Peter Caxaro's Cantilena*), see on the schools, *Valentini*, in *ASM*, viii (1936/7), 18-20; on the philological problems, the works by Aquilina and others cited *supra*, 10-24; and for a notion of the language, A. Arberry, *A Maltese Anthology* (Oxford, 1960). Parallel survivals occurred; Palermo Jews spoke Arabic in 1479: H. Bresc–S. Goitein, 'Un inventaire dotale des juifs siciliens: 1479,' *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, lxxxii (1970).

³⁷² Text in Valentini, in *ASM*, viii. 82.

³⁷³ Text and translation from Wettinger–Fsadni, 36-38; the authors most generously permitted reproduction. Previously, the earliest known passage in Maltese of more than a couple of lines was a late 17th-century poem.

Huakit thi mirammiti lili zimen nibni
Huec ucakit hi mirammiti vargia ibnie
biddilihe inte il miken illi yeutihe
Min ibidill il miken ibidil il vintura
halex liradi 'al col xebir sura
hemme ard bayda v hemme ard seude et hamyra
Hactar min hedann heme tred minne tamara.

Somewhat enlivened in recalling a song composed long ago by my late ancestor, Peter de Caxaro, philosopher, poet and orator, of whom it was once said: 'Manufacture a pen for Caxaro, I entreat you, O noble progeny: let the nymphs seek thee; let thy muse ... invite thee,' I write it down here in the Maltese language.

A recital of my misfortunes, O my neighbours, the following I shall tell you,
Such as has not been found either in the past or in your lifetime.
An ungoverned, kingless, and lordless heart
Has thrown me into a deep well without a way up
Into which, desiring death by drowning, I descend by the steps of my downfall,
Rising and falling always in the stormy sea.

My house, it has fallen down, the one I have long been a-building.
The workmen themselves were not to blame, but it was the loose clay that gave way.
I found loose clay where I had hoped to find rock;
My house! It has fallen down!

My house! It has pushed down its foundations.
The workmen were not to blame, but the rock gave way.
I found loose clay where I had hoped to find rock;
The house I had long been a-building has collapsed!
And that's how my house fell down! Build it up again!
Change for it the place that harms it.
He who changes his neighbourhood changes his fortune;
For there is a difference of kind in every span of land:
Some land there is which is white, some black, some red.
More than this. There should you ...

Language must have been a significant matter by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when Sicilian immigration was considerable and doubtless resented. If the place-names remained largely Semitic, nicknames and surnames suggest Sicilian influence on the language and population, but care should be taken in making deductions from them. Votaries tended to romancify or translate surnames, while slaves [p.68] might take the name of their master.³⁷⁴ The Sicilian connection was the most permanent and prominent one, though the Angevins 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 Marserio was travelling from Sicily to

³⁷⁴ G. Wettinger, 'The Distribution of Surnames in Malta in 1419 and the 1480's,' and 'Late Medieval Maltese Nicknames,' *Journal of Maltese Studies*, v (1968) and vi (1971).

reside in Malta and to conduct business on the island of Lampedusa; and in 1362 Francesco Ros planned to travel from Sardinia to Malta to receive three pieces of cloth from Arnaldo Cicera, an inhabitant of Malta. Arnau Gerau of Barcelona was granted a fief in Malta in 1398, but he may not have resided there. The Gerau Desguanes whom King Martín sent to collect taxes in Malta in 1403, and who was appointed Castellan of Birgu castle, had possibly come directly from Catalunya to settle in Malta; the family did not appear in Malta before about 1400, but *Antonius de Isguanes* held a fief there in 1448. The Desguanes do not seem to have been settled in Sicily, but other Maltese notables with Catalan names belonged to families long established there.³⁷⁵ Alfonso V brought in a number of Castilian captains, officials and favourites, such as Guttierrez de Nava³⁷⁶ and Diego de Guevara,³⁷⁷ yet in 1452 Pedro Gonzalvo de la Rua, *regni Castelle oriundus et in regno illo degens*, was declared ineligible to inherit a fief in Malta on the grounds that he was not an *incola* nor a *fidelis aut subditus* of Alfonso V.³⁷⁸

The nature of everyday life on a Maltese *casale* 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.³⁷⁹ After 1397 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.³⁸⁰ Offices and their profits were disputed between the established notables and foreign captains and placemen. Some of these 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 [p.69] *universitas*, and to resist further royal nominees. 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 apartness of the islands and their language, there developed a certain ‘proto-national’ sentiment. Quarrels and factions, particularly after about 1416, must be explained partly in terms of the conflicting interests within this hybrid group, and a detailed prosopographical study of the leading families, their

³⁷⁵ References in Luttrell, in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, iv. 166-167. Without much more detailed work, it is impossible to decide whether settlers with Spanish names came directly from the Iberian peninsula or belonged to families long established in Sicily. For example the *Jaymucio Catalano* who held lands in Gozo before 1372 may have been a Sicilian and not (as Valentini, in *ASM*, xiii. 13 n. 44, claims) a ‘prova della espansione catalana in queste isole.’

³⁷⁶ A Castilian, according to Soldevila, ii. 652; the de Nava were strongly established at Syracuse (Del Treppo, 499-500).

³⁷⁷ A Castilian, according to Soldevila, ii. 671-672; for other Castilians, *infra*, 144-155.

³⁷⁸ Text in Barberi, *Liber de Secretiis*, 81, 83. In 1481 Carlos de Guevara sought Maltese citizenship after marrying a Maltese: text in Mifsud, in *La Diocesi*, iv. 35.

³⁷⁹ This central problem is defined and approached, at least in a preliminary way, by H. Bresc *infra*, 144-151; much, inevitably, remains to be done.

³⁸⁰ The comments of Mazzaresse Fardella, in *Liber de Secretiis*, 89 n. 78, on the disastrous manner in which the Crown allowed a corrupt bureaucracy to alienate royal incomes are expanded in detail by H. Bresc *infra*.

origins, lands, connections and assimilation into Maltese society seems essential.³⁸¹ 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 the licensed piracy of the *corso* 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.³⁸²

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.³⁸³ In 1533 Jean Quintin 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 430 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 *azagaglie* or axes, and dressed in bullet-resistant, arrow-proof lengths of quilted cotton.³⁸⁴ 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 [p.70] the 'Italian state' in such a way as to include in it the Kingdom of Naples.³⁸⁵ The contemporary inscription on the Castelnuovo at Naples described Alfonso V as Rex Hispanus, Siculus, ItahCus. Malta and Gozo formed a distant and special part of the Sicilian kingdom, within which they preserved many of their own ways of life and speech and thought; they were neither Spanish nor Italian.

³⁸¹ Wettinger-Fsadni, *Peter Caxaro's Cantilena*, shows how family interests can be reconstructed in minute detail.

³⁸² This ambience is brilliantly portrayed in Del Treppo's book.

³⁸³ Eg. in the reaction of Gozo's *universitas* to the Knights' arrival: Valentini, in *Archivum Melitense*, ix. 170 n. 4.

³⁸⁴ Bosio, iii. 89.

³⁸⁵ F. Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance* (London, 1958), 71-76 *et passim*; see also D. Hay, 'The Italian View of Renaissance Italy,' *Florilegium Historiale: Essays presented to Wallace K. Fergusson* (Toronto, 1971).

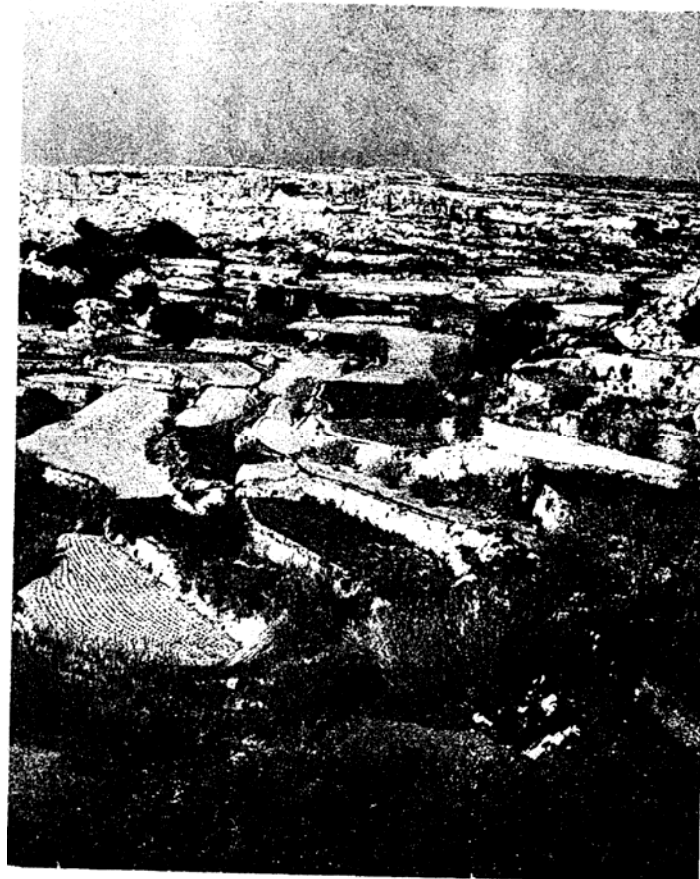
[Plates 1-6]

PLATE 1



Aerial View of Malta

PLATE 2



Terracing in Modern Maltese Countryside

PLATE 3



Sea and Rock showing Marginal Cultivation

PLATE 4



a Old Houses in Gozo Citadel



b Ramla Bay, Gozo

PLATE 5



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



b and c Byzantine Lead Seal of Theophylact *Archon* found in Gozo
(enlarged: actual diameter 2.8 cm.)
b: obverse, with monogram, to left
c: reverse, with inscription, to right

PLATE 6



a Maimūna's Tombstone of 1174 from Gozo



b Muslim Grave from Roman House at Rabat, resting directly on Roman Pavement