

**PETITIONS TO THE
MAGISTRACY IN
SEVENTEENTH- AND
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
MALTA**



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Petitions to the Magistracy in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century Malta

**A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of
Malta for a degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History**

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May 2011

University of Malta

Acknowledgments

I would like to show my appreciation to those people who have helped me in the realization of this thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Mallia-Milanes for his great help, support and for his precious suggestions. I would also like to thank several of the staff at the University of Malta library, Melitensia section. Finally, I am also greatly indebted to my mum, for her support and encouragement.

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Preface

Aims of the Investigation

Much of our history has been studied and interpreted through a political lens. Political affairs have been explored to saturation. Unfortunately, not enough studies have been carried out that deal with the economic and social aspects of Malta's past. This is a great loss not only to us historians but even to the whole of the Maltese people, for we are missing an integral part of our national heritage. We have very limited social and economic historiography to evaluate.

Many of the surviving documents we have from the past were written from the upper estates- the nobility and the professional classes of Maltese society.¹ The upper classes had the financial means to afford a good education, consequently they left behind a good deal of documents, letters, and wills for us to study. On the other hand, very few sources belonging to the lower classes have been unveiled. This is because a very small percentage of the commoners would have written down any type of literature. Everyone was allowed to petition the Grand Master, regardless of their place and role in society. Indeed, petitioning was a common practice; even the elite made use of this faculty. The *suppliche* are among the few sources that give voice to the silent masses. Consequently, these petitions prove to be an extremely vital resource in social history for they throw abundant light on these areas. The *suppliche* were petitions submitted by the Maltese people to the magistracy.

Even though the *suppliche* only occasionally do refer to matters of great historical connotation, still they prove to be a very important tool in producing an analysis on a macro-level by surveying society at large. These petitions provide ample insight into the

¹ H. MacNeil, *Trusting records: legal, historical and diplomatic perspectives*, Vol., I (Springer, London, 2000).

addressee; they also help us identify the kind of ruler the Grand Master must have been; how responsible and sensible he was to his subjects and their needs. They are a great resource to assess the government's efficiency. But, certainly these petitions are even more useful for they help us delve deeper into a micro-level; to understand how the ordinary people perceived the government of the Order. The *suppliche* give us an insight into Maltese life on a daily basis, and into the type of existence petitioners conducted. These manuscripts also give us a sneak peek into the petitioners' private lives. The *suppliche* give us the names of those writing the petitions and the dates. Moreover, the request itself and the motivation behind it tell us a great deal about the petitioner's social, economic and political position. These petitions reveal the interests, attitudes and hopes of the islanders so that we can also understand the mentality of seventeenth -and eighteenth- century Maltese people.

The letter of petition as a means for the individual to express personal interest to authorities extends back to the classical world and was a regular instrument for the expression of discontent and protest in the Middle Ages and after.²

The Order of St. John ruled the Maltese dominions between 1530 and 1798 by an absolutist, and paternalistic government. And petitions were among the few effective means by which the Maltese people could make their voices heard. Thus any grievances and complaints the Maltese people might have had, they would have expressed in a petition. Indeed, the act of supplicating denotes in itself that the petitioner 'has no control over the act being requested and that its performance is completely at the whim of the reader of the letter'.³

² David Barton and Nigel Hall (eds,) *Letter writing as a Social Practice* (Amsterdam, 2000), 20.

³ Les Perelman, 'Medieval Art of Letter Writing', in *Textual Dynamics of the Professions*, C. Bazerman and J. Paradis (eds,) (University of Wisconsin Press, USA, 1991), 112.

The Methodology

The present dissertation is based essentially on the *suppliche* collection. However, the use of other literature was indispensable in checking and confirming the data collected from the petitions, vital in obtaining generics on the themes covered in the following chapters. Other primary sources like de Vilhena's and de Rohan's codes of laws have also been very useful for understanding the context of some of the petitions.

I have managed to consult about 950 petitions, found in eight different manuscript volumes at the national library of Malta in Valletta.⁴ Because of time restrictions, I found it impossible to research all the seventeen volumes of petitions that have survived. Indeed, I gathered so much information off these manuscripts that it was a very hard task to fit all the data collected in this dissertation, since I am also bound by a word limit. I started this study by thoroughly analysing the petitions. Secondly, I classified the petitions according to the nature of their request. This classification was then used to divide this dissertation into different themes, and devolving a chapter to each of these. The first three chapters in general deal with employment issues and are divided according to the type of employment. A chapter has been dedicated to the military and naval sector. This is by far the longest chapter because the army and navy absorbed a great proportion of Maltese workers. The second and third chapters cover economic aspects, such as commerce, shops, industries, crafts, and related jobs. The fourth chapter is on matters of housing and property. The last chapter is a collection of other requests, ranging from notarial matters to entertainment. These topics have been dealt with in one chapter as there were few petitions, amongst those consulted, pertinent to the matters involved to make up a chapter for each. I have then drawn-up,

⁴ AOM 1184, AOM 1186, AOM 1187, AOM 1188, AOM 1189, AOM 1191, AOM 1192, and AOM 1196.

according to the theme, some tables and charts to illustrate the fluctuations in the demands put forward. In the conclusion I set out to explain, from the insights gained, the kind of relationship that prevailed between the magistracy and the Maltese people.

Introduction

These manuscripts are preserved at the National Library of Malta. They are part and parcel of the vast anthology of the archives of the Order of St. John and they fall under the VIII section. These petitions consist of seventeen large collections from Archives 1182 up to 1199.⁵ They cover an era of two hundred years; from the early seventeenth century, more precisely 1603, down to the expulsion of the Knights of St. John from Malta, in the late eighteenth-century. Together with these petitions there are other documents, *attestati* (attestations) and the *rescritti* (rescripts).

A *supplica* was a petition addressed to the Grand Master in which a specific request or even a grievance was made. These *suppliche* were compiled by people coming from all walks of life, from the most prominent like nobles, merchants, clergy, lawyers and doctors to the humblest like soldiers, street vendors, farmers and even convicts. These petitions dealt with all kinds of matters: commerce, notary, justice, redundancy and employment, remuneration, pensions, allowances, medical and security issues, claims for pardon, housing and other trivial matters. These petitions were, in the majority of the cases, not written by the petitioner himself. Those who knew how to write may well have written it themselves. But, since a great majority of the Maltese population was illiterate they had to go to a priest or to a professional scribe⁶—the public notary. Whose function was normally to write more formal contracts.⁷ In fact, in the petitions, the phrase used to refer to the petitioner is at times *oratore*. This word makes clear the distinction between the one writing and the one petitioning. During the era in question, there were numerous persons offering writing services of all sorts, such as writing and reading letters, against a small fee. Indeed, the scribe was an important mediator. However, the rest of the population could have also resorted to make use of the service of the *cancelliere* (secretary) of the government to write their petitions. Just

⁵ A. Zammit Gabarretta [et al.], *Catalogue of the records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the National Library of Malta* Vol. VIII - Arch. 1182-1199, (Malta University Press, Msida, 1964).

⁶ L. H. van Hoss (ed.), *Petitions in Social History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001).

⁷ C. Cassar, Society, *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* (Mireva, Malta, 2000), 169.

like any other formal document, the language utilized to write down the *suppliche* was generally Italian mixed with traces of Maltese and Sicilian.

Generically, the petitions were very similar in their layout, and followed a common format of letter writing. The *supplica* started off with a praising salutation to the Grand Master, most commonly; *Eminentissimo Signore / Serenissimo Signore*. This was then followed by the name of the petitioner and by other laudatory phrases for securing good-will.⁸ The Grand Masters were referred to as *Altezza Serenissima*, this title was given to Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt by Emperor Ferdinand II in acknowledgment of his elaborate defensive projects constructed all over the island:

Giuseppe Piscopo umilissimo servo e vassallo de Vostra Altezza Serenissimo reverente espone che;⁹ *'Madalena vedova del fu Ludovico Chiccacci umilissima serva e vassalla fedelissima di V.A.S. riverente espone.*¹⁰

Subsequently, coming to the heart of the matter is; the description of the facts, the request itself and the motive behind it. Sometimes the petitions were accompanied by documents and *attestati* pertinent to the petitioner's cause to validate his request. Then the closing remarks are again a laudation to the Grand Master:

*E della grazia restera sempre obligatissimo.*¹¹; *E restera con infinita obligazione cossi lui come tutta la sua famiglia pregare il Signore per il Lungo e prospero regnare di V.A.S. Quam Deus*¹²; *Per la vita lunga e felice gobernó di V.A.S Quam Deus.*¹³

However, the most common end remark is a shorter version- *Grazia Quam Deus*.

The petitions, once submitted, were passed on to the *uditore*, auditor, and to the magistracy's referendaries competent in the issue at question. The auditor enjoyed judicial powers and was one of the chief ministers in matters involving the administration

⁸ Barton, 6 ; Les Perelman, 107.

⁹ AOM 1187, f.,36.

¹⁰ AOM 1187, f.,22.

¹¹ AOM 1187, f.,35.

¹² AOM 1187, f.,53.

¹³ AOM 1187, f.,80.

of justice in the Maltese islands, as so clearly stated in the *Codice de Vilhena*. ‘*I nostri Uditori come primi ministri in tutto cio`, che riguarda la manutenzione della nostra Giurisdizione, e la retta amministrazione della Giustizia in questo nostro Dominio*’.¹⁴ The referendaries and the *uditore* had the responsibility to consider the petitions and verify that the claims put forward by the petitioner were authentic and not false allusions. They would eventually, scribble notes on the margins and at the back of the *supplica* and at times a *summarium* was written too. These *suppliche* would be looked into by very important figures like the Prior of Messina, or the Bailiff of Brandenburg- the Hospital’s high rung officials- as can be clearly confirmed by the signatures on the *suppliche*. The former together with the Grand Master would then draw-up a *rescritto*, rescript. Attached to the petitions, sometimes, were also *attestati*. These were what we would today call, letters of reference. According to Antonio Manoel de Vilhena’s Code the *rescritto* had to be written most commonly at the back of the *supplica* itself.¹⁵

‘*Allo scrivano della Signatura d’eleggersi da noi, incombe di trascivere colla dovuta esattezza, e fedelta in dorso de’ memoriali i nostri rescritti, qauli poi saranno sottoscritti dall’ Uditore di melata*’.¹⁶

It was nominally the Grand Master, who based upon the information passed on to him by the auditor and the referendaries, would draw-up his conclusions and decided whether to approve or repeal the request.¹⁷ The outcome was put in writing on the *supplica* - the marking. If the petition was granted, then the Grand Master or the auditor would sign off; *Fiat ut petitur, concessum* or *concedimus*. A very high percentage of the petitions consulted were granted, only a few were rejected. Moreover, there were those that were granted only in part. Finally, the date of when the petition was written was generally inscribed on the document.

¹⁴ *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali. Rinuovate dal Signor Fra d. A.M. de Vilhena* (Malta, 1724), 16. Retrieved on 27 February 2011 from

<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=7ckNAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

¹⁵ See Appendix A.

¹⁶ *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali. Rinuovate dal Signor Fra d. A.M. de Vilhena* (Malta, 1724).

Retrieved on 27 February 2011 from

<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=7ckNAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

CHAPTER I:

Military-Navy Related Petitions

The garnering of a defence force in Malta was always a case of great urgency since the Maltese islands, having no land neighbour, were bound to isolation and open to any foreign attacks. Malta's vulnerability became even more pronounced, with the coming of the Knights of St. John. Here after, Malta assumed a new role; that of being on the frontier of a continuous war between the whole of Christendom and the Ottoman Turks.¹⁸ Once settled in Malta the Order of St. John took full control of the Maltese military affairs and Hospitaller captains took charge of the local militia.¹⁹

Military service during the Hospital's rule in Malta was obligatory, from the age of 17 to 60 years and only few were exempted from conscription. The tradesmen in this regard were given permission not to attend military service since their job did not permit them at all times to perform their military duties. Indeed, these tradesmen formed their own special unit called the Bolla Battalion.²⁰ The Order never allowed the Maltese people to join the institution as knights. The first Maltese regular regiment, as part of the armed forces of the island, was only created in 1776 by Grand Master de Rohan. However, here a distinction needs to be made between the militia forces and the hired army and maritime soldiers. This distinction lay primarily in the fact that the militia soldiers were not paid; only the regimental officers were given a minimum form of

¹⁸ Theresa M. Vann, 'The Militia of Malta', in *The Journal of Medieval Military History II*, Bernard S. Bachrach, Clifford J. Rogers, Kelly DeVries (eds.) Woolbrige, 2004, 146.

¹⁹ Godfrey Wettinger, 'Early Maltese Popular attitudes to the Government of the Order of St. John,' in *Melita Historica* 3 (1974), 269.

²⁰ J.M. Wismayer, *The History of the King's Own Malta Regiment, and the armed forces of the Order of St. John*, (Valletta, 1989), 50.

stipend.²¹ The militia was formed by Maltese natives many of whom were farmers and had to attend to their military duties and training only on Sundays, feasts or on any special occasion like a parade or in case of attack.²² On the other hand, the hired soldiers together with the sailors and crewmen/*ciurma* based their livelihood on such employment.

The militia in Malta was divided into the *milizia di campagna* and *Urbana*. The former was made up of 6 regiments each from a different town or village: Birkirkara, Qormi, Naxxar, Zebbug, Zejtun and Luqa. Each regiment then was made up of 12 companies. The regiments were under the surveillance of the *Siniscalco del Principe*.²³ Mdina formed another regiment under the authority of the *Capitano della Verga*, Captain of the Rod. Ultimately the latter also was under the higher directives of the *Siniscalco*. Then the major urban cities were Valletta and the three cities; these formed the *Milizia Urbana*. Forming part of the eight companies of the Valletta regiment were artisans, proletarians, and the bourgeoisie. In charge of this regiment was the *Maestro di Campo*. By 1789, there were 282 knights pertaining to the various langues and 17,000 soldiers, the majority of whom were Maltese natives.

Within the militia those officials who indeed received wages were the senior officers of each company. The senior Maltese officers leaving out the non-Maltese officials (the colone, 2 majors, and 12 captains who were recruited from within the Order) were the Lieutenant-General, the subalterns- the lieutenants and second lieutenants, sergeants and the corporals. It was only the latter who were entitled to a stipend; of course this stipend was minimal and not enough to live off. Moreover, those in possession of property or land automatically lost their right to a salary.²⁴

²¹ Paul Chetcuti, 'Direct Employment of the Maltese with the Order of St. John 1775-1798', unpublished B.A. honours dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 1968), 117.

²² Wismayer, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁴ Chetcuti.; Wismayer.

Promotions

Sixty-three percent of all the petitions consulted within the military and naval sector, dealt with matters of promotions, increase in salary and search for employment.²⁵

Promotions were generally allotted on the basis of experience and seniority, however, family ties were also quite influential in such matters. Most promotions petitioned for were for the post of sergeant. Entreaties for Lieutenant-General, lieutenants and corporals were not that frequent. In fact, I only came across 2 petitions concerning the vacancy of corporal, one by Tommaso Cuschieri from Qormi²⁶ and another from Leonardo Darmania. The former had 40 years of experience in the services. He was also corporal of the galley *Santa Maria*.²⁷ Similarly, I only found one petitioner applying for the post of lieutenant, this when in 1767 the post of lieutenant of the city of Vittoriosa had been made vacant by the passing away of Stefano Erardi and Pietro Paolo Pace Testaferrata wanted to replace him.²⁸

The post of Lieutenant-General was the highest office the Maltese could aspire to acquire, since all other senior positions were filled by knights of the Order.²⁹ He was on top of the lieutenants, sergeants and corporals in a regiment. Therefore he not only enjoyed a greater status in society, but also a higher salary. In spite of this, from the analysis done, it has been noted that through the years very few applied for this post it could be that this said office was not made vacant very often. When Andrea Magro died, his office of Lieutenant-General “*aggutante del regimento del casal Nasciaro*” was being contested by several. The first of a series of petitions regarding the said post, was dated 18 August 1710 by Giuseppe Fenech. Tommaso Musci from Zebbug was also competing to fill in that vacancy, Tommaso had already worked as a lieutenant in the same company of *casal Naxxar*. The last petition concerned with this vacancy is by

²⁵ Refer to the results at the end of the chapter.

²⁶ AOM 1186, f.,301.

²⁷ AOM 1186, f.,376.

²⁸ AOM 1191, f. ,147.

²⁹ Wismayer, 17.

Giacobino Mallia from Zebbug; the latter was in fact a corporal of Naxxar. However, in the end it was Giuseppe Fenech who was appointed and Tommaso Musci was instead appointed as second Lieutenant-General.³⁰ Around the same time the post of Lieutenant-General of *casal bircircara* was also vacant and in 1710, Antonio Ciantar petitioned to get this position. The latter had been *moschettiere* for many years and had also managed to ascend higher up the ranks to the title of corporal. However, we are later informed that his supplication was only partly granted for he was instead nominated to second Lieutenant-General together with Michele Xerri and the post of Lieutenant-General was given to Bartolomeo Gatt. Bartolomeo Gatt had submitted several petitions on numerous occasions, always in conjunction with his employment with the military. The first of a series of petitions is dated 25 March 1708. Here he requests the Grand Master to replace Giorgio Camilleri, since he longed to make a career in the military. Another petition was then sent a few months later in June, asking his job to be confirmed. Then in September of that same year he petitions once more to obtain the post of Lieutenant-General of the '*Regimento di Birchircara*', which he obtains. Bartolomeo had on numerous occasions emphasized his experience of hard work and his incessant study in the military art.

With regards to the office of sergeant it appears that during the first quarter of the eighteenth-century there was a greater demand for this post especially in the Senglea militia regiment. However, it seems that this demand had been gradually diminishing throughout the 1700s. The office of sergeant was one of the offices most accessible to the Maltese citizens, since many of the senior offices were reserved to the knights themselves. The salary attached to such a post was better off than the wages of a common soldier; yet, it did not make such a great difference in one's standard of living, it was enough for the bare minimum. Sergeants of the militia who were on part-time basis were paid 2 scudi a year.³¹ This extra money was very much appreciated by those who were lucky to enjoy it, especially at a time when Malta was stricken by extreme poverty. On the other hand, the full-time sergeants got a salary of about 25 scudi per

³⁰ AOM 1186, f.,276, f.,278.

³¹ Chetcuti, 117; Wismayer, 20.

month. Many were those applying for this post, so as to try and experience a better quality of life, and to be able to maintain, in most cases, an extended family. Such was the case of Matteo Bugeja from Gozo, who in the year 1630 was asking the Grand Master to bestow unto him the 10 francs he used to receive when initially he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. The latter was sincerely asking that his plea be acceded to as his family of 8 members were stricken with poverty.³² In 1630s both Luciano Adriano and Tommaso Scattaretici were also applying for the post of sergeant of St. Elmo and Valletta respectively.³³ Tommaso moreover, emphasized greatly that during his 18 years of service, his life had been threatened on various occasions.³⁴ This further emphasizes the element of high risk present in the routine of an army or naval officer. But, the crude reality was that they depended exclusively and solely on that same job for their own and that of their families' livelihood. Changing of jobs was not recommended when unemployment was so diffused.

Between 1690 and 1721, however, there was a greater inflow of petitions for the post of sergeant. Indeed, some of the places were even being contended among several applicants. The first of such petitions was that by Giovanni B. Grech who was applying for the post of sergeant of the city of Valletta. He was actually referring to a higher rank of sergeant such as a *sergeant-major*, since, as so well described in his letter he was already a sergeant.³⁵ In fact, the *relazione* attached to this petition, informs us that the said post was being contended between the former and the Corporal Guiseppe Piscopo. However, the *relazione* favoured Giovanni as the best pretender of such post since his credentials were better. Giovanni had much more experience in the military service; he had been *moschettiere*, corporal, and sergeant. On the other hand, Piscopo's 30 years in the services had been interrupted when he decided to go abroad. Therefore, in 1705 Giovanni was appointed sergeant. Twelve years later Valletta is mentioned again when Antonio Zammit decided to try out for a vacant position of sergeant in the Valletta Company. There were 12 companies in the Valletta regiment

³² AOM 1184, f.,13.

³³ AOM 1184, f.,4.

³⁴ AOM 1184, f.,170.

³⁵ AOM 1186, f.,225.

with 17 sergeants per regiment.³⁶ Antonio was corporal and had 11 years of uninterrupted service.³⁷ Then in 1714 Giovanni Piscopo applied once more for the post of sergeant replacing Domenico Ursolino, who was no longer fit to hold the said office since he was very old. Piscopo had a 45-year- long history of servitude with the military and had been second sergeant for 16 years- this time his prayers were heard.³⁸

Many tried to advance up the ladder and reach those offices that were entitled to a salary. Filippo Durante is one such; the former had in 1714 petitioned the magistracy to be appointed to *sotto-sergente* of the Senglea Company, since he was the most senior member of this regiment.³⁹ Two years later Durante, on the same claims of seniority, was applying for the office of sergeant, made vacant by the death of Giovanni Mula.⁴⁰ Later that year in 1716 another post of sergeant in the same Senglea regiment, was made vacant. Two in particular were applying for this position. One was Corporal Paolo Zahra, whose main occupation was that of sculptor and architect and had been at the services of the Order for 20 years. Indeed, at the time of writing he was working at the Conventual church of St. John the Baptist in Valletta in the chapel of St. George's (the chapel of Aragon). Paolo Zahra together with his son Francesco were to become very renowned artists on the Maltese islands especially for their baroque works of arts. The other supplicant was Lieutenant Girolamo di Tomaso.⁴¹ He had started off as a *spontoniero* and musketeer, and had been promoted to corporal and then to lieutenant.⁴² Despite di Tomaso's impressive years of military service, it was Paolo Zahra who was chosen. As attested in the *relazione del Governatore della Senglea*, Maestro Paolo Zahra was the favourite candidate on the basis of competency and seniority.⁴³ However, from another petition dated 1723, we get to know that Girolamo in the end was also appointed sergeant-major.⁴⁴

³⁶ Wismayer.

³⁷ AOM 1186, f. 431

³⁸ AOM 1186, f. 355

³⁹ AOM 1186, f., 356.

⁴⁰ AOM 1186, f., 408.

⁴¹ AOM 1186, f.,436.

⁴² AOM 1186, f.,438.

⁴³ AOM 1186, f.,437.

⁴⁴ AOM 1187, f., 61.

In general, among the petitions consulted, I noticed that in the period spanning the years 1765-1780s and 1785 -1790s there were very few petitions concerning the post of sergeant, three in all. The first is dated 1766 by Nicola Fiorini, who had worked with the militia in Senglea for several years; now wished to upgrade and was petitioning the Grand Master to take on the position of *sotto-sergente maggiore*, since the post was made vacant when Giovanni Antonio Durante was discharged.⁴⁵ This Antonio Durante most probably was a direct descendent of Filippo Durante who in the year 1716 had petitioned the Grand Master for the post of sergeant of the Senglea Company. Considering that jobs passed on from generation to generation, their family tie is very much likely to be so. Another *supplica* was by Natale Bugeja. The supplicant was living in a state of misery and due to his large family; he needed this job to have an upgrade in his salary.⁴⁶ Likewise can be said of the years 1775-1777 for the only petition dealing with the promotion to the office of sergeant I came across is dated 1776 by Giuseppe Scaglia.⁴⁷ Giuseppe, who had 45 years of servitude with the order as a guard, was requesting the post of sergeant at St.Elmo. In addition, a petition by Giuseppe Buongiovanni pertaining to the year 1775 informs us that very few able people were trained in the duties of a *sergente dei piazzanti*. The latter was asking permission to temporarily leave the Maltese islands, but was aware of the fact that it was very difficult to find someone else to replace him.

Positions within the lower ranks were frequently applied for especially in desperate times. Those in dire need of employment had to resort to posts of soldiers or sailors. A case in point was Gaetano Mamo, who was unemployed and very poor. To make matters worse, he had many children to take care of, and was badly in need of employment.⁴⁸ Other jobs recurrently mentioned within the petitions were those of *bandoliere*⁴⁹ a foot police and turcopoliers. Together they made up the military police whose functions were of safeguarding the Maltese islands from smugglers and also

⁴⁵ AOM 1191, f., 356-357.

⁴⁶ AOM 1196, f.,116.

⁴⁷ AOM 1192, f.,367.

⁴⁸ AOM 1187, f.,312.

⁴⁹ AOM 1187, f., 209.

looked for and arrested defectors.⁵⁰ The *turcopolier*, in addition, supervised over the coast-guards and towers.⁵¹ Indeed, Giovanni Maria Aguis from Attard was applying for the post of *turcopolo* after the late Giovanni Pace. Under his supervision were to be the coast towers of *Mgarr, Ghajn Tuffieha, Torri l'Ahmar, l'Ahrax, and Nadur*.⁵²

The job of *bombardiere* was also frequently referred to. The bombardiers were in charge of the artillery and were specialized at shooting canons. This position curtailed a certain level of responsibility. Certainly, not everyone could apply for *bombardiere*, since such post demanded that the right candidate had to be both literate and numerate.⁵³ Giovanni Francesco Bezzina must have been exceptionally talented since he was strongly encouraged by Knight Rougemont to apply for the office of '*capomastro de Bombardieri*'.⁵⁴ Rougemont backed Bezzina's petition by writing an *attestato* highlighting Giovanni Francesco Bezzina's capabilities and skills as bombardiere.⁵⁵ In 1633 Lorenzo Spiteri was also applying for *Capo dei bombardieri* of Senglea, after the late Angelo Grima. The suppliant had already 15 years of experience as bombardiere.⁵⁶ Maltese bombardiers were well-known for their tenacity and skills. Indeed, the bombardiers undertook very intensive training and every time the galleys returned to shore, the bombardiers instead of resting, had to keep practising using cannon balls made of stone. This profession was so essential during warfare that as an incentive during training whoever hit the target was given a bonus of 10 scudi.⁵⁷

Other jobs applied for included those of *alfiere* (ensign), *capomastro* on the galleys and *aguzzino* (slaves' guardians). An *alfiere* was the one responsible for holding

⁵⁰ F.W. Rowsell, 'Malta', *The Nineteenth Century : A Monthly Review* Vol. IV, James Knowles (ed.) (London, 1878), 277.

⁵¹ A. Mifsud, *La Milizia e le Torri Antiche in Malta* (Malta, 1920), 35.

⁵² AOM 1186, f., 476.

⁵³ Gio, Bacello, *Lo Studio del Maestro e Bombardiere Gio. Bacello D'Ancona*, (Ancona, 1716), 1.

⁵⁴ AOM 1186, f., 387.

⁵⁵ AOM 1186, f., 388. See Appendix A, figure 2.

⁵⁶ AOM 1184, f., 34.

⁵⁷ H.E. Zammit, 'Some aspects of demographic and social history in the second half of the 17th century with special reference to the parish of Porto Salvo, Valletta', unpublished B.A. honours dissertation, Department of History, University of Malta, 1981.

the flag.⁵⁸ The office of *capomastro* entailed a sense of responsibility, since he was accountable for those under his supervision. A Pietro Laferla apparently had lost his job as *capomastro* on the *Santa Maria*. Laferla had four unmarried daughters and two boys to support and was thus petitioning in 1726 to be reinstated as *capomastro* once more.⁵⁹ A *capomastro*'s salary added up to approximately 150 scudi.⁶⁰ The job of *argusino* or *aguzzino* was also full of hardships. One of the regulations attached to such job was that if while at work one of the slaves/ prisoners escaped and not recaptured, the *aguzzino* was to be imprisoned in their stead.⁶¹ A petition regarding this position was that by Giorgio Vassallo who informs us that his ship on which he was working as *argusino*, the *San Carlo*, had sunk and was then unemployed, he was supplicating to be reinstated as *argusino* elsewhere.⁶² We find also a series of petitions written by Giovanni Maria Romano who on a time span of 15 years petitioned 4 times always in conjunction to his post as *aguzzino* and his promotions. The first was written on 24 March 1755. Giovanni Maria Romano, a *sotto-agozzino* on the *Santa Caterina* galley, after working on the galley squadron for 42 years wanted to get an upgrade to *sotto-agozzino* on the flagship. Apparently, his request was not granted for a year and a few months later he re-petitioned this time in view of his experience asking for the post of *agozzino* on the *Santa Caterina*. The suppliant must have been very ambitious, for in 1769, after having been appointed *agozzino*, he asked to be transferred on the flagship, since he was the one in service with most years. He eventually was given the job but yet again after only several months, he re-petitioned for the vacant post of *agozzino* of the *Gran Prigione* (main prison).⁶³

Nearly all petitions were granted, but in some cases the prerequisites demanded by certain jobs were not met by the applicant. As in the case of Riggio di Giovanni from Senglea, who in 1636 was entreating for the office of consigliere on the galley Capitana.

⁵⁸ AOM 1186, f.,340.

⁵⁹ AOM 1187, f.,143.

⁶⁰ J.F. Grima 'Galley replacements in the order's squadron c.1600-1650', *Melita Historica VIII* no.1, (1983), 49.

⁶¹ Chetcuti.

⁶² AOM 1184, f., 129.

⁶³ AOM 1191, f., 292, 293, 294, 295.

Apparently, his 10 years of experience on board galleys was not enough. Especially when considering that the Capitana was the most prestigious galley of the Order's squadron and a certain level of experience and seniority was expected.⁶⁴ In fact, generally French candidates were preferred over other in important posts.

Wages

A recurring request was that for a raise in wages. Sgt, Giovanni Domenico Agius, who was stationed at the fort in Gozo, asked for an increment in his salary of 10 francs a year so as to be able to support his family.⁶⁵ Even Luca Efner's request for an augmentation of salary was granted. The supplicant worked at the slaves' prison, and was requesting an extra 4 tari on each slave.⁶⁶ Comm. Gerolamo Marulli's supplication for an increment in wages, who had petitioned twice, was also granted.⁶⁷ On the other hand, Gusmano Consalico's entreaty was not. The latter was asking for an extra 2 scudi per month, for he claimed he was living in misery and needed a raise so as to maintain his family. However, he was only allotted an increment of six tari.⁶⁸

Transfers from Sea to Land

Other petitions concerned the transfers of jobs from sea to land. Many wanted to change their place of work from on-board a galley to a post in a tower or a fort; in fact such requests amounted to 14.65% of all petitions related to the military-naval sector that have been consulted. It seems that at the first occasion presented, those on service in the galleys, would do anything to be posted back on shore. This was possibly because the sailors and galley crew would have been doing the same job for decades, and such a job required that they kept away from their families for whole months. Apart

⁶⁴ AOM 1184, f., 131.

⁶⁵ AOM 1184, f., 280.

⁶⁶ AOM 1184, f.,371.

⁶⁷ AOM 1184, f.,394, f.397.

⁶⁸ AOM 1184, f.,396.

from that, working on a galley was a very perilous job. The Order had been on the forefront in many important European maritime operations fighting the Ottoman Turks.⁶⁹ In fact, Amodei Nicola does make reference to one of such ventures. The supplicant has had an impeccable history working on board the Order's galleys he had also participated in the battle of Morea and had suffered various injuries and since he was old and could not see very clearly he wished to be transferred to land.⁷⁰ At the battle of Morea many lives were lost. According to Boiseglin, 'These last successes [sieges of Navarino, Morea and Modon] were, however, attended by the loss of nineteen knights, together with a great number of soldiers.'⁷¹ And this was not a rare event for

The order had suffered so much in the different expeditions undertaken every year, that the widows, children, and relations of the brave Maltese, who had shed their blood in the same cause as the knights were left in the most distressed circumstances.⁷²

Life aboard galleys offered no comforts, and conditions were terrible; galleys were no suitable dwelling place. The crew lived crammed in confined areas where there was barely any space left for anyone to move about. To make matters worse, the hygiene level was very low. Keeping in mind that the Order's navy and Malta's docks acted as a buffer to the rest of Europe and that the Order's squadron policed the Mediterranean basin inexorably both for Muslim offensives and Barbary corsairs; it was plausible that many sailors remained injured in battles. And even though the medical services provided were among the best around, still many remained scarred for life or even mutilated. The options were not many. In fact, the reasons commonly given behind requests for transfers concerned health reasons and family matters. In fact, nearly all of the supplicants asking to be reallocated on the Maltese islands, claimed to have been badly wounded or very sick. A case in point was Alessandro Vella, who in 1767

⁶⁹ Robert von Dauber and Antonio Spada (eds,) *La Marina del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta*, (Brescia, 1992), 111.

⁷⁰ AOM 1187 f.142.

⁷¹ P.Boiseglin, *Ancient and Modern Malta* (London, 1805), 209. Retrieved on the 15 March 2011 from http://books.google.com.mt/books?id=8Mp70Rf4c1wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=ancient+and+modern+M+alta&source=bl&ots=kALh1kkNiN&sig=virTDxyuvIFC3HXXK44Z4NJJsOsm0&hl=mt&ei=TW2-Tb2NHJDoOaa-rOsF&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CByQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=gold&f=false

⁷² *Ibid.*

petitioned the Grand Master with regards the fact that due to an injury he was no longer able to perform his duties. Therefore he wanted to be transferred to Fort Ricasoli to take over the post of the dead Nicazio Muscat. He added that he was to be under the strict care of the Fort's surgeon – Gio. Battista Zammit.⁷³ A similar request had been put forward by Andrea Farrugia who had worked on the galley squadron for 9 years and was then suffering from chest injuries and since he was no longer in a condition to perform his duties, he had to resign.⁷⁴ Paolo Vassallo, who had served for a total of 20 years on the galley squadron, similarly was also asking the Grand Master, in 1766, to allow him to be transferred to St. Elmo, due to an injury he had suffered.⁷⁵

These people had to endure many hardships, once they became physically handicapped many applied for a pension but not all the people who applied for it were given one since they could not claim as of right any pension. Thus employees had to keep on working and those wounded sailors had to be lucky enough to find a vacant post to fill in any of the forts on Malta, so as to be given a transfer. The same happened on English vessels for

Frequently former sailors appealed that they had been blinded, wounded in revolts or had suffered from leg ulcers while working on slaveships and consequently were unable to support themselves and their families anymore.⁷⁶

Not all Grand Masters were as merciless. Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena was among the most loved and cherished. Indeed, when Giovanni di Cori, *aguzzino* on board the galley Capitana, had asked to be transferred to the Valletta prison since he had not seen his family for a long while, his petition was granted.⁷⁷ A similar matter was discussed by Maria Calleja in 1722, who was a newly-wed wife of a sailor. She explained that as soon as they got married her husband entered naval service and had

⁷³ AOM 1191, f.,180.

⁷⁴ AOM 1192, f.,419.

⁷⁵ AOM 1191, f.,130.

⁷⁶ E. Christopher, *Slave ship sailors and their captive cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006), 46.

⁷⁷ AOM 1184, f.,441.

not seen his wife since. Therefore he wished to be transferred back to Malta.⁷⁸ Additionally, there were *suppliche* also dealing with transfers made from one fortress or tower to another. Fortunato Mizzi, after having been transferred from the galley squadron to Fort Ricasoli,⁷⁹ had re-petitioned to ask for yet another transfer to St Elmo.⁸⁰

Retirements and Pensions

Fourteen percent of the petitions dealing with the military and naval services are requests for retirements with pensions. Most of the supplicants had a history of 45 years of work with the Order, considering the context; one may easily assume that they spent their entire life working. Life expectancy during this time in history was very low, the average was of 35 years⁸¹ and in Malta the number of inhabitants exceeding the sixty years of age was 1 out of 20 persons.⁸² Moreover, they started employment at a very tender age. Antonio Manduca, had spent 40 years working as *bandoliere* before he asked for a *giubilazione* or pension.⁸³ Even Gianbattista Azzopardi had a record of 41 years of service as bombardier-sailor and was asking for a pension of 40 scudi per year.⁸⁴ Old age did not secure a pension; at the end of the day not everyone was lucky enough to receive one. Moreover, the pensions given, in most cases did not even cover the bare necessities. In fact, many workers deemed it better to keep working until their bodies permitted them to do so. Consequently, the majority of the supplicants, for pensions, were ill and needed care. A case in point is Pietro Zelilag a *secondo nocchiere*, on the *San Giovanni* galley, who wanted to retire due to sickness.⁸⁵ Natale Sapiano from Rabat who had been working with the Order for 45 years, had become physically very weak and was in need of great care therefore he was asking the Grand

⁷⁸ AOM 1191, f.,411.

⁷⁹ AOM 1191, f.,393.

⁸⁰ AOM 1192, f.,459. These petitions all deal with transfers: AOM 1187, f., 37-30, f.45-47.

⁸¹ Marie-Françoise Schulz-Aellen, *Aging and human longevity* (Birkhäuser, Genève, 1997), 11.

⁸² B. Blouet, *The Story of Malta*, (Valletta, 1993), 118.

⁸³ AOM 1192, f.,472.

⁸⁴ AOM 1191, f.,179.

⁸⁵ AOM 1191, f.,380.

Master to provide him with a place at the hospital.⁸⁶ Likewise, Adriano Risbe' stated in a petition that at work his life had been at risk many times. This element of peril is very recurrent.

Replacements and Successions

On many occasions, those wanting to retire made also reference in their petitions to a candidate most apt to replace them. This candidate in many of the *suppliche* consulted was in fact the pensioner's son or close relative. Needless to say, family relations were very important and influential in securing oneself a job, especially in the military-naval sector. For many times the pensioner nominated his son or a relative as his replacement, so that the office would run in the family as an inheritance bestowed on the younger generations. This was also true of other professions like the notarial one, as shall be discussed further on. Scarcity of jobs was high and poverty too, therefore heads of families made sure that their children would be in succession of a job. Once the heads of families retired; many sons took over their father's job. In conjunction to this, the petitions also relate that fathers appointed their sons as their assistants, to help them carry out their duties and to gain enough experience to eventually replace their fathers. Corporal Paolo Galea, a Gozitan with 40 years of experience, asked the Grand Master to nominate his son Liberato as his assistant. Liberato according to his father was very hard working and skilful.⁸⁷ Correspondingly, Giuseppe Calleja petitioned five times, concerning always the same matter. Giuseppe who was at that time corporal, was supplicating for the post of *sotto-sergente*, he also stated that he had on numerous occasions helped his father perform his duties as sergeant of Gozo, and for this reason he also asked that once his father passed away he would succeed him as sergeant. His petitions were also accompanied by a number of *attestati* proving his loyalty and hard work.⁸⁸ Similarly, a petition written on the 12 July

⁸⁶ AOM 1184, f.,200.

⁸⁷ AOM 1192, f.,389.

⁸⁸ AOM 1187, f.,109, f.110, f.111, f.112, f.113.

1768 informs us that with the death of Benedetto Gafa a post of guard on the bastions of the city of Cospicua had been made vacant. Thus Master Giuseppe Bonnici was asking the magistracy to give him the said post and his children after him.⁸⁹ A petition written on the 27 February of 1768 by Lazzaro Scicluna from Senglea, proves to be a wealth of information and also illustrates clearly this family element. For the latter's petition recounts that 10 years earlier a Dutch ship had entered the Maltese harbours, unfortunately, this ship was carrying a disease. In fact, out of a total of 200 crew men, 70 had already died. The former had also gotten infected, and still had not recovered by the time he was writing the *supplica*. Because of this disease he was not able to work. Therefore, he was willing to cede his position to his niece's husband, Antonio Psaila. Likewise, did Antonio Farrugia soldier at Gozo who resigned in favour of his son of 27 years Salvatore.⁹⁰ Calabro Giovanni also had 40 years of service with the military and navy. He sought to retire with a pension of 10 scudi a year; he also hoped that his office would be passed on to his son.⁹¹

A great example of a post becoming part of the family inheritance is clearly demonstrated by the Spadaro Family, who had petitioned many times throughout the 18th century. Luciano Spadaro, at the time of writing was sotto-sergente at St. Angelo; he was for this reason requesting that his post be confirmed for the coming years. However, this petition was only the first of a series. In the same period of time, 1712, Luciano petitioned again, asking for an increment in his salary so that he is *'pui a cuore servire in ditto Castello [He feels more at heart working at Fort St, Angelo]*.⁹² Four years later Spadaro is again putting forward the same request of a raise in his wages for his existing stipend was not enough to sustain such a large family, in addition, he was also petitioning to receive four loaves of bread.⁹³ In 1732, Spadaro, who had by then already 43 years of service with the Order and had been appointed to sergeant of St. Angelo, petitioned the Grand Master to give his son Guillelmo the post of soldier at Cospicua.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ AOM 1191, f., 221.

⁹⁰ AOM 1186, f.,357.

⁹¹ AOM 1184, f.,189-190.

⁹² AOM 1186, f.,279.

⁹³ AOM 1186, f.,402-403.

⁹⁴ AOM 1187, f.,330.

The same Luciano Spadaro, 23 years later, again petitioned the Grand Master on behalf of his son. He asked that his son would be nominated to the post of second sergeant; if necessary he was also prepared to keep the same salary he used to get as a soldier, to help his father who was 83 years. Luciano wanted somehow to guarantee that his son would eventually become sergeant.⁹⁵ The situation in which they lived must have been critical since Luciano renounced resignation and kept on working down to the age of 83. They most probably, as Luciano's words also prove, were living on the verge of poverty and misery. In 1775, Guillelmo Spadaro's son, Michele Spadaro- sergeant of Castel St. Angelo- petitioned the magistracy. Michele requested that his son Francesco would be appointed to second sergeant to help him perform all duties to the fullest extent. Michele is most surely the Luciano's grandson, for in his petition he informed us that both his father and grandfather were *sergente della capitana* at Fort St. Angelo.⁹⁶

However, the joys of obtaining a job where at times put off when one was obliged to pay from his salary half of his predecessor's pension, the other half was paid by the government's treasury . This was the norm during Hospitaller rule. At times arrangements were done beforehand between the pensioner and his successor as with regards the sharing of salary. Guiseppe Calleja, a soldier at the fort in Gozo, wanted to be replaced by a 25 year old Paolo Galea, this because he was no longer in good shape to perform his duties since he suffered from infectious eyes. And this not only affected his overall performance at work but also impeded him from attending night service. The salary was to be equally divided between the two.⁹⁷ Fenech Guglielmo who was *capomastro per le galere e navi* wanted to cede his position in favour of Placido Sacco and Palmo Grech, for he confided in their ability and skills to perform such job. He was also willing to cede all emoluments such position curtailed to them.⁹⁸ Portelli Stefano a Gozitan also makes reference to a similar arrangement. The supplicant was appointed assistant to Lorenzo Agius, a soldier at Gozo, to help him perform his tasks.

⁹⁵ AOM 1189, f.,290-291.

⁹⁶ AOM 1191, f.,316.

⁹⁷ AOM 1189, f.,339.

⁹⁸ AOM 1187, f.,205.

In exchange for his services Stefano was getting 6 scudi yearly off Agius's salary, to eventually get the entire salary when Agius passed away.⁹⁹

Other requests

A relatively small number of petitions dealt with trivial matters, such as permission for *congedo* or leave. A case in point was a petition by D. Rocchetti. The latter needed to leave the island for a period of one year for he had to attend to a certain matter in Milan, Italy.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, there were several supplicants asking for some time off, for some months, for they needed to rest and wanted to go on holiday such was Giuseppe Celona. Giuseppe was badly wounded in his head and arm.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Employment with the army and especially with the navy was full of hardships and many risked their lives while on service. Unfortunately, the salary attached to these jobs was just enough to procure the basic necessities; poverty and unemployment was widespread. Soldiers and sailors worked until they had no more strength left in their bodies, for the pensions did not even cover the bare minimum. Moreover, when one came to retire one had to find a good replacement otherwise retirement was out of the question, regardless of one's state of well-being. The successor, on the other hand, had to contribute to one third of his predecessors' pension. Most generally jobs were passed on from father to child. Conditions of work were indeed, terrible. However, the navy and army were the greatest source of employment in the Maltese islands, and those that indeed got employed with the former, were considered to be lucky.

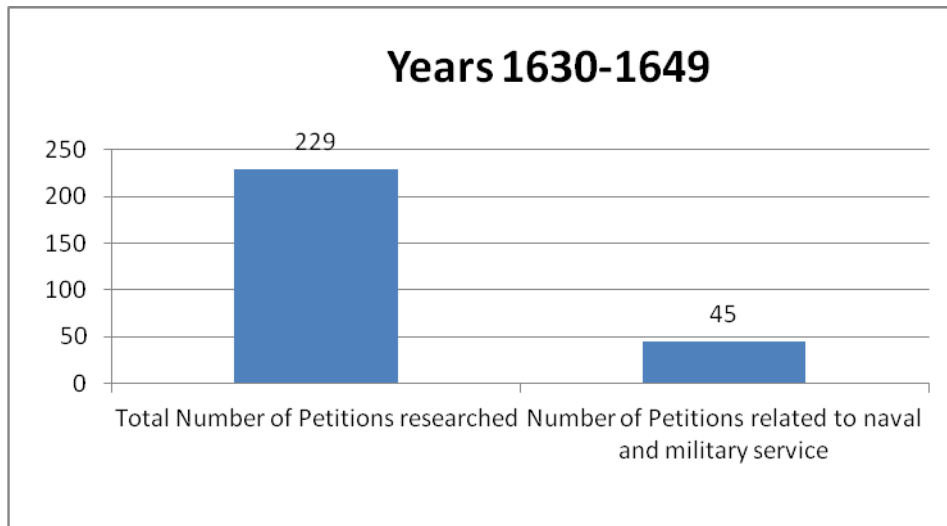
⁹⁹ AOM 1187, f.,219.

¹⁰⁰ AOM 1189, f.,358.

¹⁰¹ AOM 1186, f.,373.

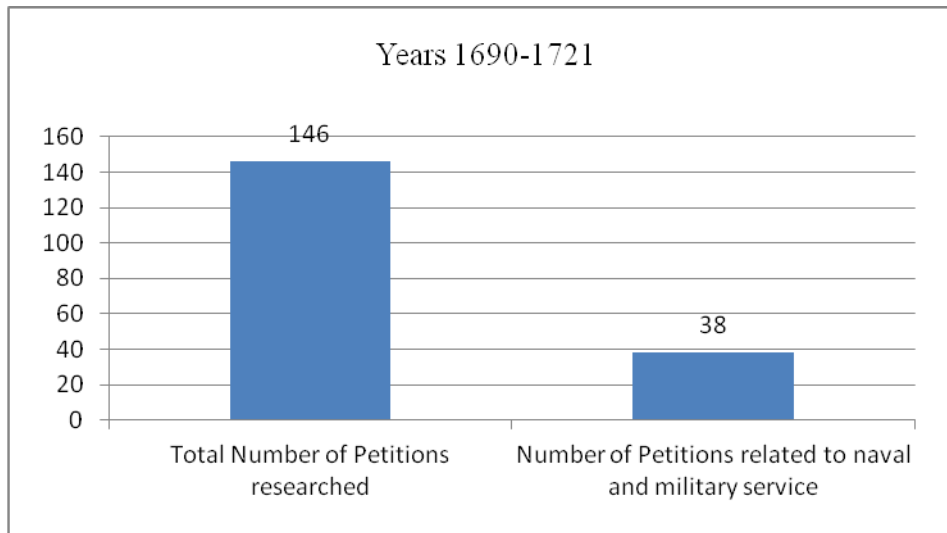
Results for Military-Navy Related Employment

Table 1.1 Military-Navy Related Employment 1630-1649



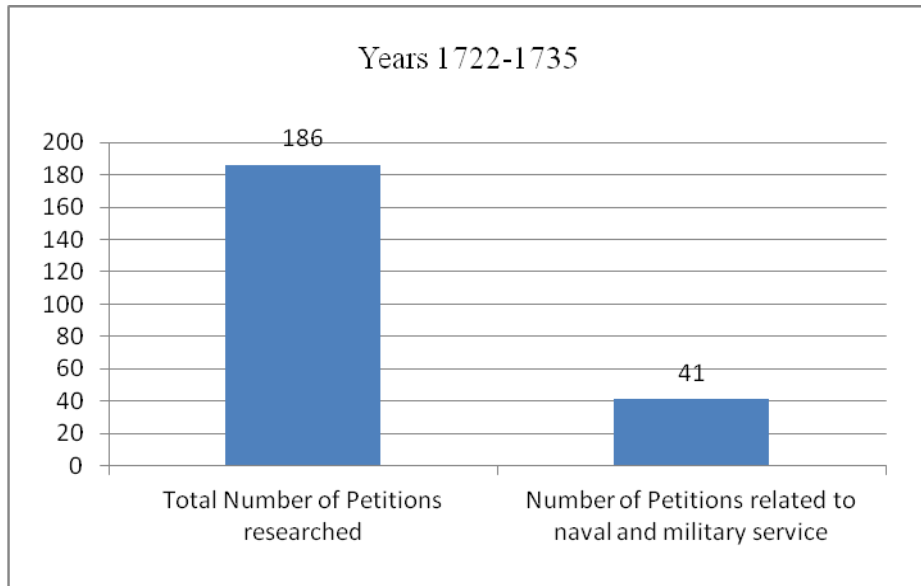
Source: AOM 1184

Table 1.2 Military-Navy Related Employment 1690-1721



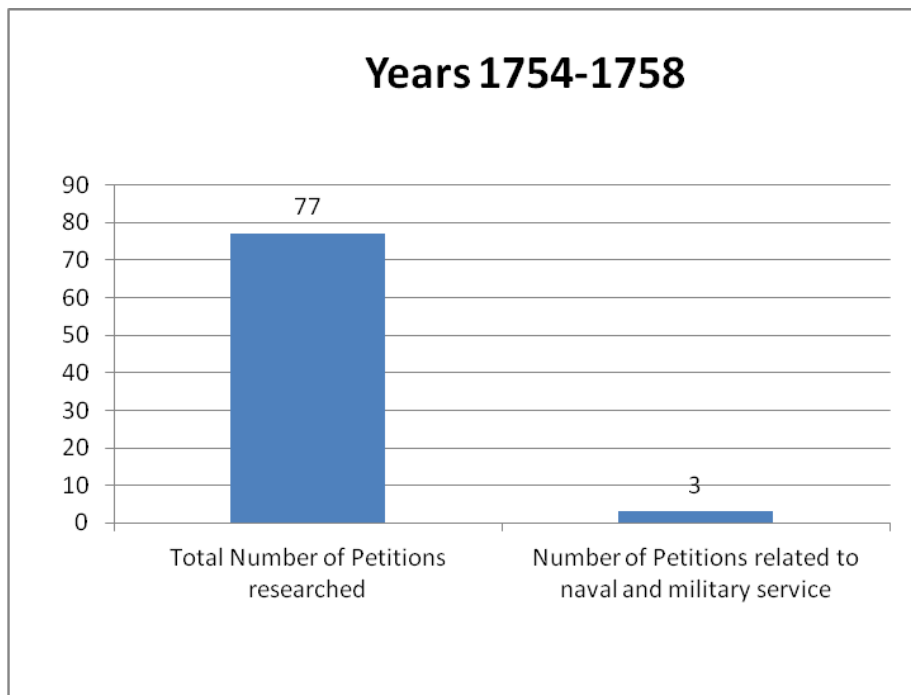
Source: AOM 1186

Table 1.3 Military-Navy Related Employment 1722-1735



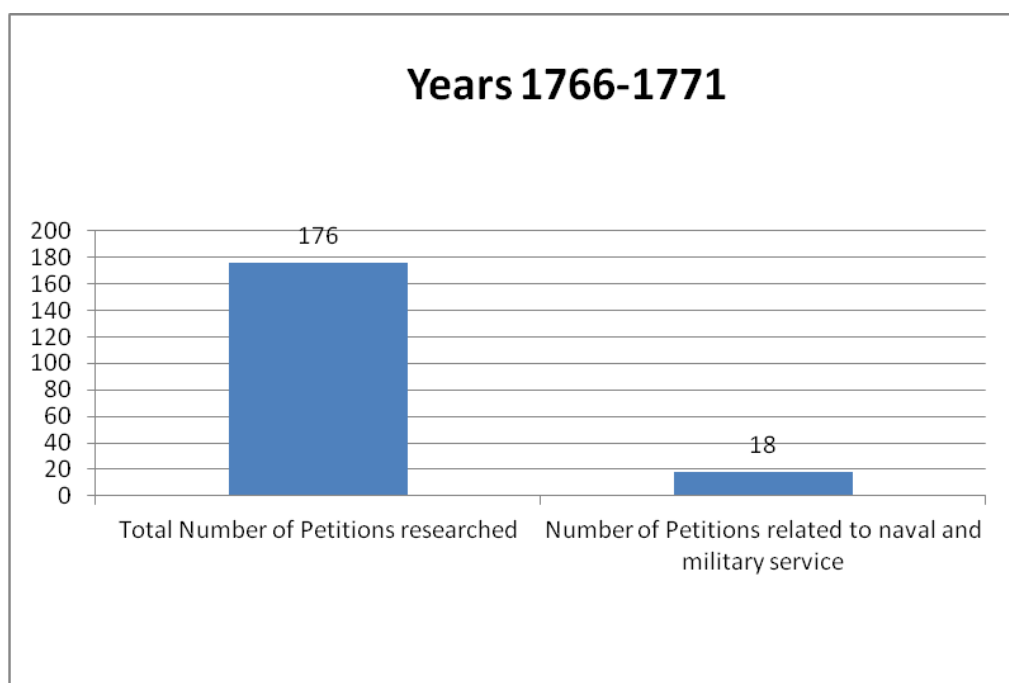
Source: AOM 1187

Table 1.4 Military-Navy Related Employment 1754-1758



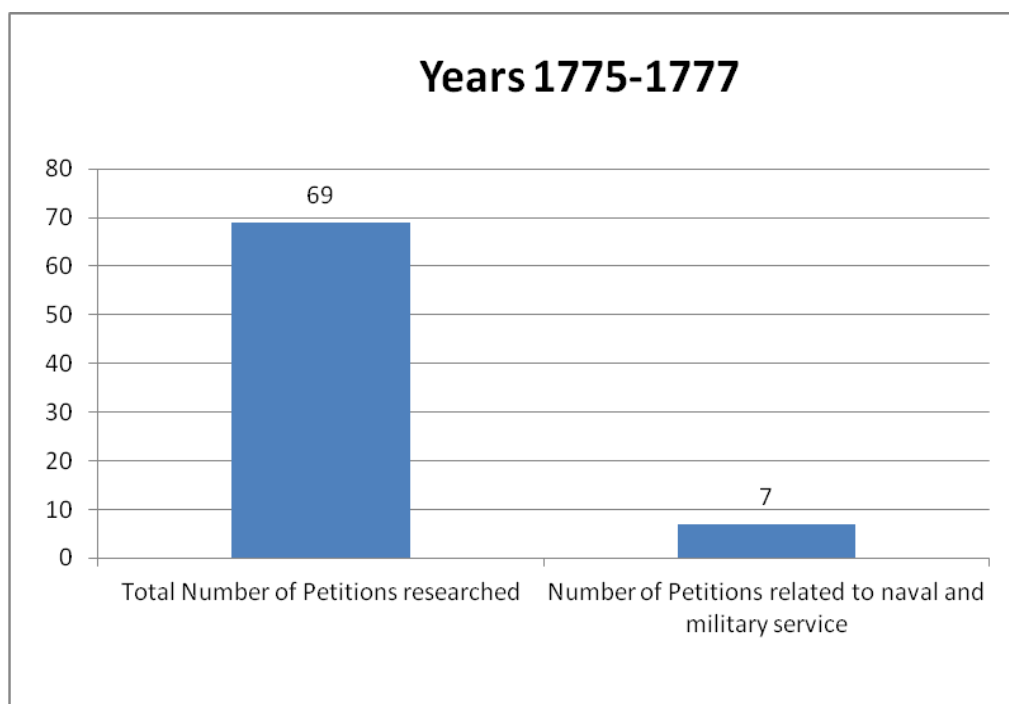
Source: AOM 1189

Table 1.5 Military-Navy Related Employment 1766-1771



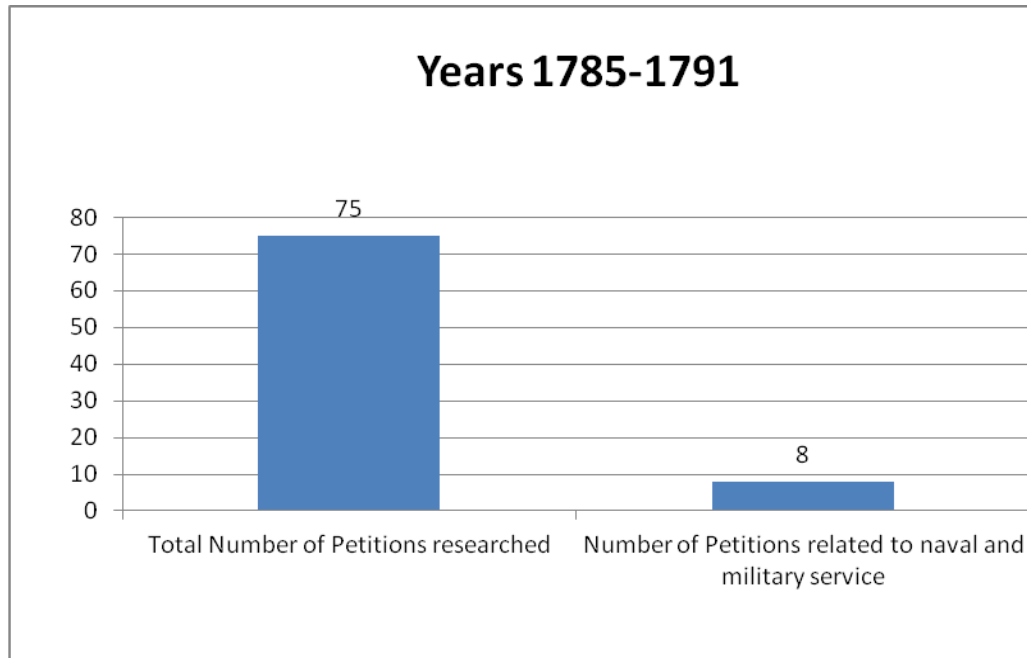
Source: AOM 1191

Table 1.6 Military-Navy Related Employment 1755-1777



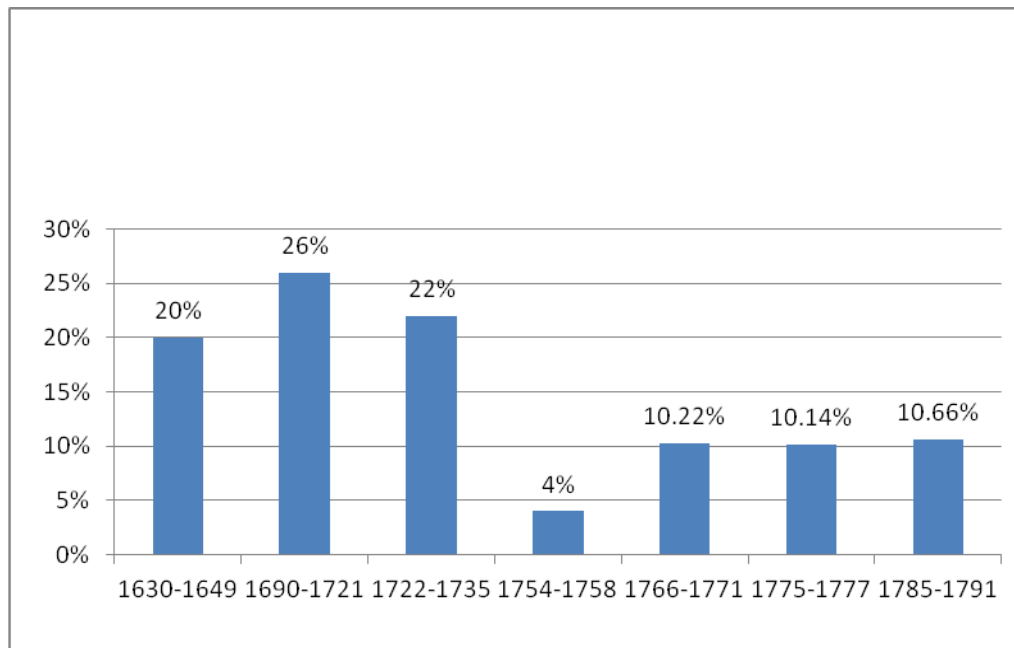
Source: AOM 119

Table 1.7 Military-Navy Related Employment 1785-1791



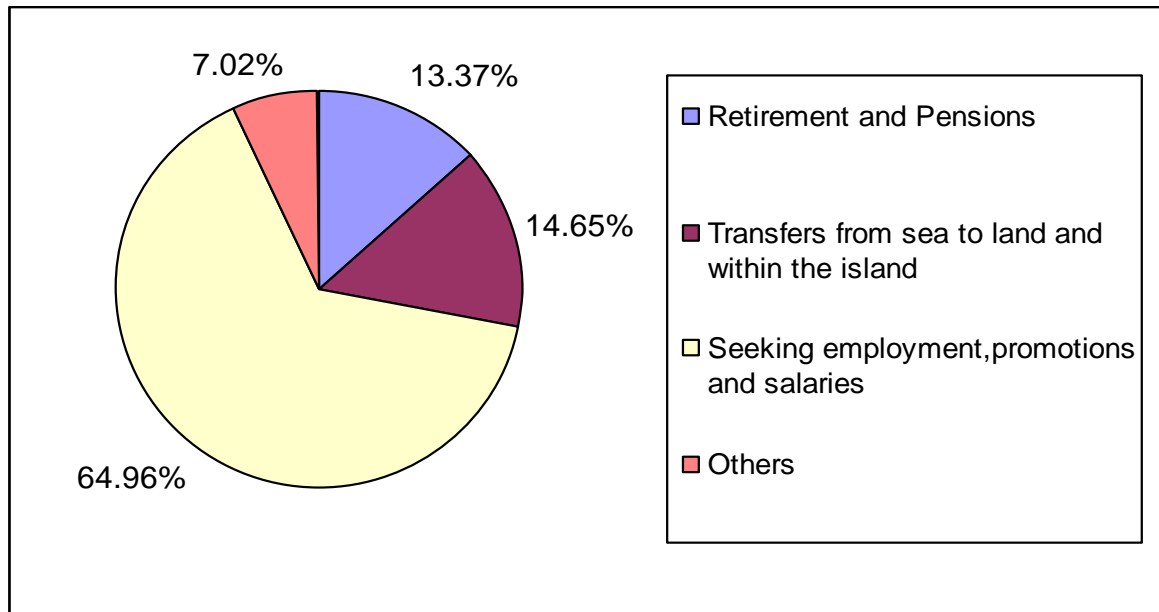
Source: AOM 1196

Table 1.8 The Percentages of the Military-Navy Related Employment (see above tables)



Source: AOM 1184, AOM 1186, AOM 1187, AOM 1189, AOM 1191, AOM 1192, and AOM 1196.

Chart 1.9 Pie Chart with the percentages of the Different Requests Submitted in Reference to Military –Navy Related Employment of all Petitions Consulted



Source: AOM 1184, AOM 1186, AOM 1187, AOM 1189, AOM 1191, AOM 1192, and AOM 1196.

Chapter II:

Trade and Commercial Outlets

With the arrival of the Order of St. John to Malta the Island commerce was revived and Malta was transformed into an international commercial hub. From the 18th century onwards, in particular, trade was given a great push forward and Malta became an entrepôt for re-export merchandise and acted as a transit base for goods coming from the Levant and then transported to European ports. In addition, Malta itself was also a very important market since much of the food stuff and luxury goods were imported to the island.¹⁰² A new market soon developed based and garnered on the needs and wants of the Order.¹⁰³ The knights were all of noble descent and their taste for luxurious goods was not unlike those of other European nobles. This led many merchants to seek base in Malta and many of the major European cities had representatives residing here. Malta became a microcosm of European civilization; a diaspora of merchants coming mainly from Sicily, Genoa, Venice, France, Greece and Spain established a base here in Malta. The latter were very crucial in the formation and spread of a market economy in Malta.¹⁰⁴ The very wealthy merchant families who thrived off this market economy soon became the elite of the country, and a new class of entrepreneurs emerged.

¹⁰² V. Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Hospitaller Malta, 1530-1798: Aspects of a relationship* (PEG, Malta, 1992), 232.

¹⁰³ S. Mercieca, 'Commerce in Eighteenth-Century Malta. The Story of the Prepaud Family', in *Consolati di Mare and Chambers of Commerce. Proceeding of a Conference held at the Foundation for International Studies* (Valletta, 1998), C. Vassallo (ed.), (Malta, 2000), 186.

¹⁰⁴ Cassar.

Consuls

Very important players in the success of Maltese commerce were the consuls. These consuls were chosen by the magistracy to represent primarily the interests of the Order and to a lesser degree that of the Maltese merchants. These consuls forged many at times impregnable commercial relations which lasted for a long time as was the case with Sicily and Spain. In the 1700s the number of consuls abroad increased greatly. To be exact 260 consuls were nominated; new trade networks were knit with Western European countries in particular Spain, France and Northern Italy.¹⁰⁵ The petition by Gregorio Desira dated 1719, testifies to the variety of Maltese trading partners, since he makes reference to his brother in law Don Lorenzo, who was consul to Spain, Naples, and Sicily.¹⁰⁶ Malta had also established some links with one of the rising commercial powers of the time, Holland. In fact, Giovanni Guerin had an impeccable 36 years' career as Maltese consul to Holland when in 1769 he put forward his resignation in favour of Lombardi Baldassare.¹⁰⁷ As can be noted from the surnames, many of these consuls were not of Maltese origin. For foreigners were often appointed consuls in a foreign post. An exception was the Maltese consul of the Turks, Giuseppe Mifsud, who was appointed consul during Grand Master Pinto's reign. Giuseppe was highly competent; he was proficient in Arabic, Greek, and the Turkish languages. The latter besides being the consul of the Turks, worked also as interpreter of oriental languages and Arabic at the Health Ministry (*sanita'*) he had previously also worked at the Magistrate of the Armaments and the Castellania.¹⁰⁸ However, from one of the many petitions he submitted, Giuseppe exclaimed that he found it too hard to juggle between jobs and in 1768 he decided to abdicate from the Health Ministry and concentrate fully on Turkish affairs.¹⁰⁹ He also asked to get an increment in his salary, sufficient enough to enable him to maintain an adequate standard of living.¹¹⁰ Giuseppe

¹⁰⁵ C. Vassallo, The consular network of XVIII century Malta, in Proceedings of History Week, 1994 (Malta, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ AOM 1186, f., 492.

¹⁰⁷ AOM 1191, f., 264.

¹⁰⁸ AOM 1191, f., 254.

¹⁰⁹ AOM 1191, f., 240, 241-242.

¹¹⁰ AOM 1191, f., 252.

remained in said office for many years, in fact, a decade later he was re-confirmed consul of the Turks and interpreter by Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan-Polduc.¹¹¹

Merchants

Malta became an international commercial centre. The numerous petitions addressed to the magistracy from foreign merchants residing in the Maltese islands attest to this. In the year 1722 a Greek merchant requested to be appointed as consul representing the Maltese islands in Greece. Demetrio dell'Arsa had been engaged in trade between Malta and Greece for the past eleven years. He wanted to secure two percent of the profits made from Greek mercantile galleys, which conducted trade in Malta under his supervision.¹¹² Five years later a Venetian merchant together with a fellow companion Pietro Zochi, asked for a license to start conducting trade in Malta. Zochi was the *Consule di Venezia*.¹¹³ In 1730 a French merchant from Marseille, Pietro Gelardin, who had been engaged in import-export for 10 years in Malta, asked to become a vassal of the Grand Master and have a share in the profits made at the customs.¹¹⁴ Likewise, a Piedmontese merchant Giacomo Domenico Vualsuano wanted to settle in the Maltese Islands and be treated as a Maltese citizen. Giacomo had imported merchandise in Malta for 7 years and had always paid the duty on all imports, therefore he sought naturalization. There were two categories of duty on imported merchandise. The Maltese and Sicilians paid a lower rate of duty compared to what foreigners were subject to. Because of this, many merchants asked for *il privilegio nazionale*, (national privilege). Once they were granted this designation they were considered as Maltese merchants and were exempted from the high custom-tariffs.¹¹⁵ The merchants that were given these privileges would settle on the Maltese islands.¹¹⁶ We also know of Tuscan merchants living in Malta who enjoyed this privilege. Indeed, in the year 1777 two merchants and tailors from Tuscany, the Giaccheri brothers, had put

¹¹¹ AOM 1192, f., 319.

¹¹² AOM 1184, f.,21.

¹¹³ AOM 1184, f.,167-168.

¹¹⁴ AOM 1184, f.,236.

¹¹⁵ Mallia-Milanes, 241.

¹¹⁶ With reference to this see petition AOM1186, f. 471 in which a French resident in Malta, for 15 years, was asking to be recognized Maltese citizenship and 'gotter tutti i privilegi'.

forward a petition with regards their business in Malta. They explained that they had already been living in Malta for 9 years and owned a shop there. Many Maltese had made a fortune in Spain, selling off cotton in local markets.¹¹⁷

However, the life of a merchant was not just a bowl of cherries. Even though, a merchant lived a very comfortable life, his journeys were very dangerous and could also be fatal. A case in point is the petition put forward in 1639 by Isacco Alsech a Jewish merchant. He explained that he frequently imported goods to sell them in the local markets in Malta. However, on one of his voyages his cargo was attacked by Berbers and his wares were stolen. Because of this incident he fell into great debts and was unable to pay out his creditors, subsequently he was prosecuted. Therefore he asked the Grand Master to give him enough time to pay out his creditors and to be spared from going to jail.¹¹⁸ In 1644 a similar fate fell on Padrone Angelo, a Venetian merchant. He had fallen into bankruptcy and was unable to pay all his debts. He requested that the Grand Master allow him to pay his debts at a monthly rate of 12 scudi. He also asked that his family be given permission to leave the Maltese islands.¹¹⁹ Similarly, but on a different note, in the year 1756, a creditor was appealing to the goodwill of the Grand Master regarding a sum of money which he lent to Count Fugger and had not been paid back as yet. Pietro Ebejer explained that he had lent money to the Count on numerous occasions. However on this occasion he had lent him 142 scudi, 3 tari, and 2 grandi. This was a great sum of money for those times. As a consequence of the unpaid debt, Ebejer had to face a lot of problems. He had to pay off third parties by giving them his land. Therefore Ebejer was requesting that a delegation of commissioners looked into the matter and forced Fugger to pay his debts and all interests incurred.¹²⁰

It was not only foreigners that left their country to come to Malta, but also a number of Maltese had left Malta's shores to conduct trade and expand their business abroad. A case in point was Claudio Amaira, a merchant. Fortunata Amaira, his wife,

¹¹⁷ AOM 1192, f.,462-463.

¹¹⁸ AOM 1184, f.,241.

¹¹⁹ AOM 1184, f.,395.

¹²⁰ AOM 1186, f. ,316-317.

had explained in a petition that her husband had for many years lived in Spain for business reasons. Fortunata was interested in developing their family business in Malta, and was asking permission to do so.¹²¹ Another example is that of Giovanni Battista Menville, who in relation to his application for the post of broker explained that he was going to Sicily on a business expedition.¹²²

Brokers/Middlemen

A considerable number of brokers petitioned mainly on matters of succession. The work of a broker commonly termed as *sensale* was a very prolific occupation. In 1766, an interesting petition concerning the said profession was submitted by a number of brokers who were complaining against a breach of law. Carlo Falzon, Michelangelo Borg and Leopoldo Grech informed the magistracy that a certain Mirabella, another broker, was thwarting the other brokers and merchants by monopolising all the merchandise required by the Calabresi and Bagnarotti merchants, so that he could control the prices.¹²³ In the year before, the same brokers submitted a petition and informed the magistracy of the extent of the damaging impact Mirabella's commercial activity had on the local market. Moreover, in 1765 the magistracy had passed an order whereby the brokers had to be divided in 3 distinct classes. The first of this class had to work within the city, whilst the other two classes, who could work only on certain days, were posted outside the city gates. Mirabella did not obey the said decree and took up other brokers' business. Therefore, the supplicants asked that the decree issued by the Grand Master would be made official.¹²⁴ The above referred to, Leopoldo Grech, was mentioned in another petition, when his son in law, Giuseppe Gafa in 1771, asked to replace him. Leopoldo had submitted his resignation in another petition.¹²⁵ Giuseppe was more than willing to work without pay until his step-father died. Giuseppe was also

¹²¹ AOM 1191, f.,410.

¹²² AOM1184, f.,20. Menville was one of 13 middlemen chosen to form a company to regulate the wine trade in the late 18th century; J. Debono, 'The Wine Trade in Malta in the eighteenth century', *Melita Historica* 9 (1984), 74-92.

¹²³ AOM 1191, f., 16. 7-18.

¹²⁴ AOM 1191, f.,16, 17-18.

¹²⁵ AOM 1191, f.,399.

going to cater for Leopoldo's daughter.¹²⁶ Even Captain Giovanni Statiplessa sought the work of a broker, in 1722. He listed his merits as having a predisposition for such a business and assured the Grand Master that he would be exact and punctual in his work. The middlemen were, in fact, mostly middle class.

The Order consolidated firmly the role of the middlemen within the Maltese economy, since all internal trade had to be administered through them.¹²⁷ The brokerage system adopted by the Order in Malta deprived the Maltese lower classes of a just price. In fact, the middlemen were not seen with a good eye by many.¹²⁸ The peasant was often incapable of dealing directly with his market and so the middlemen acted as go between the consumers and the farmer.¹²⁹ It was the middleman who sold off the produce to the retailers.¹³⁰ The *pitkali* or middleman exploited heavily the agricultural producers; as the latter sold off their crops for pittance. And then, in turn, the middlemen sold the produce at overpriced rates to make as much profit as possible. Fish was also sold at very low prices.¹³¹ Fishermen not only made very little profit but their job was quite dangerous. It seems that fishing in Malta did not hold the importance it did elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. Fish was mostly part of the poor people's diet.¹³² In 1639 several fishermen from Senglea asked for a ten year permit to fish for tuna.¹³³ Several years later Carlo Lanzon and Felice Borg asked for a reconfirmation of an agreement previously granted to them. Both these fisherman had been allowed to fish for tuna in Mellieha and Marsaxlokk.¹³⁴

An occupation very much related to the above was that of the weigh master. Not very much is known on this occupation however its role was essential in business-trade transactions. There were in total 6 petitions for the said post. There must have been a

¹²⁶ AOM 1191, f.,398 .

¹²⁷ AOM 1191, f.,70.

¹²⁸ Debono (1984).

¹²⁹ H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher, *Malta, Background for Development* (University of Durham, 1961), 333.

¹³⁰ B. W., Blouet, *Malta: a companion to the landscape* (Malta, 1963).

¹³¹ Boiseglin, 106.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ AOM 1184, f.,240.

¹³⁴ AOM 1196, f.,89.

public weigher at every market, since he had to weight the various products to then price the goods. The greatest market of all was found at the *Piazza delle Erbe* in Valletta. The public weighmaster there played a vital role in the regulation and verification of goods in relation to the prices. During Wignacourt's magistracy a tax was imposed on the production of playing cards. The Grand Master had henceforth put the public weigher of Valletta in charge of overseeing all sales of playing cards. The Valletta public weighers were exploiting the card manufacturers by demanding them a *grano* for every set of cards that was purchased. Considering that gambling was wide spread in Malta and that many playing cards must have been sold, the public weighers of Valletta must have been making a lot of profit.¹³⁵ Perhaps that is why Giovanni B. Decelis, who had been weighmaster of Zebbug for 6 years, asked to become the new weighmaster of Valletta.¹³⁶

Shops and Market Stalls

A good number of documentation is available on merchants and traders engaged in business here in Malta. However, this cannot be said of the very small businesses found locally. Although these shops were essential for the villagers and the local communities, documentation on the work of these one- man- establishments are relatively scarce. In the *suppliche* we also find some petitions made by butchers, gardeners, bakers, tailors, sandal makers, clockmakers, fisherman, smiths and vendors. Many of the petitions concerning these small enterprises come from stall owners and vendors, many of which sold fruit and vegetables. Indeed, these are the only few records we have of their activities. Recurrent demands in the petitions were requests for sites/ stalls at the markets, where to sell wares. Of course, without the approval of the magistracy they could not engage in any retail activity. Giuseppe Scicluna wanted to be given a site at the Valletta Market. He needed this occupation for he was unemployed and was living in dire poverty.¹³⁷ A similar request was also submitted by Salvatore

¹³⁵ G. Bonello, *Histories of Malta, Ventures and Adventures* Vol.6 (Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, Malta, 2005), 133.

¹³⁶ AOM 1191, f.,368.

¹³⁷ AOM 1191, f.,362.

Pace who asked for a licence to sell fruit, oil, salami etc., at the *Piazza dell' Erbaggi* (market) in Valletta.¹³⁸

Many of the petitions concerning stalls at the market revolved around matters of succession. This notion is recurrent in all types of employments. Securing a site at the local market was essential for a livelihood, as, was so well explained by the Bugeja family. The latter had petitioned five times. Rosa Bugeja's husband, a fruiterer, had become very sick, thus Rosa wanted that the site at the Valletta market would pass on her name, for that occupation was their family's only means of subsistence. Seven years later it was their son, Giacomo Bugeja who petitioned. He wanted the stall to be given to him since both his parents were no longer fit to work. The account goes on when in 1766 Giacomo was once more asking the Grand Master to concede the stall to his wife and children, for he was in poor health. The last of the Bugeja's petitions is dated 3 months later, when , Giacomo asked to occupy an empty space in the market square, to erect another stall.¹³⁹ There were many petitions similar to this.¹⁴⁰

All kinds of wares and shops could be found in Valletta, the capital city of the Order's sovereign state. Valletta had nothing to envy the other major European cities in terms of services and products.¹⁴¹ Florists were frequent like Ignazio Fenech who needed a site at the *Piazza delle Erbe* to run his flower business. Luigi on the other hand wanted to open up a jewellery shop to sell gold, silver and pearls.¹⁴² I also found reference to a *salumeria*.¹⁴³ People tried to sell anything to earn some money. In 1789 Luigi and Rose Bugeja wanted a licence to sell sugar, coffee, oil, wine, vegetables and fruits, bread, fish and even spirits in the shop they owned.¹⁴⁴ Similarly earlier in the century (1716) some merchants from Valletta asked permission to the magistracy to sell

¹³⁸ AOM 1192, f.,387.

¹³⁹ AOM 1191, f.,24/33, 25-26, 28-29, 3031, 35/48.

¹⁴⁰ AOM 1192, f.,282.

¹⁴¹ Mercieca (2000), 187.

¹⁴² AOM 1196, f.,16.

¹⁴³ AOM 1191, f.,332-333.

¹⁴⁴ AOM 1196, f.,27.

nougat, sugar, dried fruits and nuts.¹⁴⁵ All these goods were fetching very high prices on the market. Only the upper and middle classes could afford to buy them.¹⁴⁶ Many came up with new ideas to try to increase their profits. One of these was Ignazio Cauchi, a barber. His business was thriving so much that his salon had become a second home to some of the villagers. Thus he grasped the opportunity at hand and requested permission to sell sugar and coffee in his barbershop.¹⁴⁷

Among the eighteenth-century *suppliche* there were many dealing with the sale of tobacco. It appears that in the 1760s some problems had arisen regarding this matter. In fact, in 1768 Salvatore Diamantino and Giovanni Maria Busuttil petitioned concerning the tobacco they had imported from the East. They claimed that a third of the tobacco was rotten and therefore not suitable for sale. They requested that the import duty on it be reduced since a percentage of the merchandise could not be traded.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the same Giovanni Maria Busuttil two years later (1770) asked to pay 10 scudi out of the 20 scudi duty on the tobacco he had brought into Malta from Trieste. The same request, in a separate petition, was also made by Leonardo Cognidi and his mother. They both sought permission from the Grand Master to pay only half the duty on the tobacco they had imported in September 1769 and May 1770.¹⁴⁹ Another difficulty that arose among tobacco retailers was presented in a petition by tobacconist Giosue Randazzo. Giosue wrote in response to an accusation put forward by a Simone Fenech claiming that Giosue made use of a hand-reel (*mulinello a mano*) which was unlawful. Giosue asked the Grand Master to make it clear and known to all, that the use of such a tool by the tobacconists did not constitute a violation of law.¹⁵⁰

The Order tried to keep law and order (certain level of organization and rule) in both internal and external trade. As already indicated brokers could not operate all week long, fisherman could only fish at pre-established periods and trade exchanges

¹⁴⁵ AOM 1186, f.,407 .

¹⁴⁶ R. Attard and, R. Azzopardi *Daily life in 18th Century Malta* (Midseabooks, 2011, Malta).

¹⁴⁷ AOM 1196, f.,.6.

¹⁴⁸ AOM 1191, f.,237.

¹⁴⁹ AOM 1191, f.,381-382, 383-384.

¹⁵⁰ AOM 1191, f.,233-234.

could only be conducting through a middleman. The Order had a basketful of laws and regulations which were resented by many. One of whom was Giovanni Domenico Mallia and his collaborators, which were other vendors. They were complaining regarding the conditions stated in a *bando* issued in 1639 which prohibited them from purchasing fruits and foliage from the market in Valletta for the purpose of reselling. This *bando* was a great blow to them for it ruined their business and because of this they were living on the verge of poverty. These sellers were illiterate and this was the only occupation they were capable of doing. Therefore, they asked the magistracy for a license to be able to buy these wares from Valletta once again.¹⁵¹ Apparently, the so called *rivenditori* were a great pain in the neck since the government had tried to stop their activity on many occasions.¹⁵²

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Malta is just a dot in a vast sea, during Hospitaller rule, it became a significant part of European trade networks. Malta was on the forefront when it comes to trade and commerce; in fact, Malta's economic market expanded and became even more specialized, to the extent that commercial capitalism became a pillar of Maltese economy. And it remained so down to the twentieth century.

¹⁵¹ AOM 1184, f.,235.

¹⁵² Chetcuti.

Chapter III:

Industries and Crafts

Many of the industries established in Malta were primarily meant to serve the needs of the Order, a religious and military institution of which was permanently at war with the Muslim enemy. Indeed, the industries related to military and naval services, such as the armoury, that included a smithy and a foundry, were kept under the tight fist of the Order.¹⁵³ These industries offered another source of employment to the locals.

The Metallurgy Industries

Throughout the petitions researched, there were more than fifteen petitioners applying for posts in the metallurgy industry. Three of these petitions were for the post of *computista dell Magistrato degli Armamenti*. The *computista* is what we today call an accountant, he kept books and records up-to-date and notified everything that was happening in the armoury. The first supplicant to ask for said post was Nicolo Trenciante in 1715 to replace the late Arcangelo Sacco.¹⁵⁴ In 1733, the notary Carlo Seychel, also petitioned to fill in such post. He assured the magistracy that he was a very good candidate for the position of *computista*, since he had studied arithmetic and sums. His words proved to be convincing, for he was eventually given the post.¹⁵⁵ Years later in 1771, Carlo's son Saverio, a notary like his father, informs us that his father-Carlo Seychel had died. Saverio wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and was applying to replace his father as *computista*.¹⁵⁶ A very important job in the armoury was that of Master at the Magistrate of the Armaments. The later was in charge of the

¹⁵³ Blouet (1963).

¹⁵⁴ AOM 1186, f.,394.

¹⁵⁵ AOM 1187, f., 335.

¹⁵⁶ AOM 1191, f.,413-414.

running of the armoury and had to supervise over the armaments being produced. He was also ahead of the employees. In a petition dated 1711, Carlo Farrugia explained that after three years of service in the armoury he tried his luck for the post of *Capo-Mastro* (Master). This position was given to Giacomo Peron. Therefore, Carlo was asking that he be nominated assistant to the *Capo-Mastro*. Carlo wanted to teach Peron the art of making *cocci* and *stelle* for the artillery (these were types of swords). He also emphasized that he was not doing this for money, but for the possible promotion to *Capo-Mastro* in the future. The Grand Master did not oppose this.¹⁵⁷ The Order made sure that craftsmen working in its industries were well-prepared to carry out their trade; indeed, they gave a lot of significance to traineeship in all kinds of jobs.¹⁵⁸ Eight years later, in another petition, we learn that Peron had passed away and Carlo's brother, Giuseppe, asked to replace Peron. Giuseppe had been working at the Armoury for eight years assembling guns; his merits were enough to procure him the office of *sotto-armiere*. This was not the last of his petitions. In 1723 Giuseppe informs the magistracy that his brother Carlo was about to die, and Giuseppe wished to replace him as *Capo-Mastro* at the Magistral Palace which in affect he did.¹⁵⁹ However, the joys of obtaining this promotion were soon put off, because within a year Giuseppe submitted another petition, complaining that he had a lot on his shoulders with more than 70 employees to supervise. At times he also had to pay for several expenses from his own pocket. He argued that the salary he was given was not apt for a position of that responsibility. He therefore asked for an increase in his pay.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ AOM 1186, f.,299.

¹⁵⁸ J. Debono, *Art and artisans in St John's and other churches in the Maltese Islands, ca. 1650-1800* (Guttenberg Press, Malta, 2005).

¹⁵⁹ AOM 1187, f.,65.

¹⁶⁰ AOM 1187, f.,86. In conjunction to the production of armaments, was the gun powder. With reference to this, a petition submitted in 1776 by Giuseppe Pullicino, talks about a new *bando*, regulation, issued by the Grand Master, with regards the selling of gun powder. The *bando* dictated that all gunpowder sellers were bound by law to declare the amount of gun powder they were in possession and its location. Therefore Giuseppe Pullicino a pyrotechnic was informing the Grand Master the necessary details; AOM1192,f.,336-337.

Coin Minting

Just like in Rhodes, the Order made Malta their sovereign state, a state in full effects with its own monetary system. However, since Malta *de jure* still belonged to the Kingdom of Sicily, Charles V was originally very reluctant to allow the Order to have its own monetary system in Malta. After intense negotiations between Grand Master L'Isle Adam and Charles V the right of minting coins was acquired only on intervention of Pope Clement VII.¹⁶¹ Indeed, the coin mintage industry was another source of employment, although its extent is still an unknown factor and it requires further studies. In 1730 Carlo Troisi, the former Master of the Mint, owing to the fact that he had become very ill, wished to be relieved from work. His son, Pietro Paolo, therefore, petitioned to succeed his father as Master of the Mint. Pietro had seventeen years of experience in this sector, acquired not just in Malta but in various places around Europe in particular Genoa. Moreover, Pietro had acquired a new machine, one of the latest technologies of the time, to produce coins in the best way possible and refine gold in the easiest way. He also mentioned that he was in possession of a new invention that would have been a great asset in the stamping of coins.¹⁶² I did not find this last piece of information mentioned in any of the books dealing with the production of coin in Hospitaller Malta. Hospitaller Malta coins had been produced in infinite quantities, to take for example de Vilhena who had ordered the production of 200,000 coins in a matter of 5 years. Several Grand Masters to cope with the many needs that cropped up had struck too many coins debasing their value. Moreover, it has also been documented that many Maltese silversmiths were using the silver found in the coins in their artistic works. This comes to no surprise, for even though craftsmen were people of reputable status, not all enjoyed a comfortable life.

¹⁶¹ J. Restelli and J. Sammut, *The coinage of the knights in Malta* (E. Said Publishers, Malta, 1977).

¹⁶² AOM 1187, f.,226. See Appendix A, figure 4.

A case in point is Giovanni Bessiere a silversmith. He stated in a petition that they were living very hard times and the work was so scarce that he was barely making any money. Bessiere had a large family to look after thus he was asking the magistracy for a promotion to *Console dell' Argentieri* – Consul of the silversmiths. The petition is dated 1722.¹⁶³ Maltese goldsmiths and silversmiths were very talented and kept themselves informed of what were the styles in vogue in European courts.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Maltese silverware was so high in quality that it was preferred to other local ware in Sicily and Southern Italy.¹⁶⁵ Demand for silver/gold ware was not always scarce since all cutlery and plates at the *Sacra Infermeria* were made of silver. The same can be said of the knights' own dining utensils. Secondly, the Maltese ladies of the higher classes took great care in what they wore; Ciantar in his *Malta Illustrata* makes clear reference to this. And gold and silver jewellery were a very important complement to dresses; 'They [Maltese women] are extremely fond of gold and silver ornaments, and it is not uncommon to see even the peasants loaded with trinkets of those metals.'¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the shoe buckles worn by the upper classes were made of gold and silver too. It seems that gold has always been a very important part of Maltese costume, since Roman times for in a letter written by Marcus Cicero to his brother Quintus while on visit in Malta he wrote that 'The ladies wear gold and trinkets and jewellery and follow the fashion'.¹⁶⁷

The Order of St. John kept the trades in high esteem and control. Indeed the Order demanded that every trade had to have two *Capo-Mastri* and a Consul. In relation to this in the year 1775 Annetto Pulliccino was petitioning to resign from Consul for Goldsmiths. Annetto was also suggesting Giobatta Borg as a worthy replacement. Pulliccino claimed that Giobatta knew perfectly the properties of gold and silver. He was also well acquainted with the properties of diamonds and pearls.¹⁶⁸ However, in that

¹⁶³ AOM 1187, f., 19.

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas, de Piro, *The Quality of Malta, Fashion and Taste in Private Collections* (AVC Publishers, Malta, 2003), 120.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Boiseclin, 44.

¹⁶⁷ N. de Piro, *Lost Letters An Ostensibly Historical Divertimento* (Pedigree Books, London, 1986), 12.

¹⁶⁸ AOM 1192, f.,283.

same month of July of the year 1775, Master Goldsmith/Silversmith, Salvatore Grech was also applying for that same office. Salvatore had been a silver/goldsmith for more than 26 years.¹⁶⁹ The Consul for Goldsmiths had to inspect and assess all the silver and gold works done by the craftsmen. The expertise of the consul was sought also at the Monte di Pieta' in fact, the former had to examine the gold and silver, as well as, evaluate the price of the pawned precious metal bartered at the Monte di Pieta'. The pre-eminence of the consuls was only second to the Master of the Mint. The latter was the one in control of the running of the coin-mintage industry; he had to check the quality of the gold and silver being used and was also responsible for the employees. However, at times disagreements rose between the Consul for Goldsmiths and Master of the Mint. A case in point is the petition submitted by Carlo Troisi who complained that Consul Antonio Famucelli had questioned his authority on various occasions.¹⁷⁰

Smiths

Another local trade was that of the smiths. The latter were found all over the island; most probably every town and village had its local blacksmith. A blacksmith was central to early-modern communities in both rural and urban environments. The blacksmith produced plates, pans, knives, forks, and spoons necessities of the households; however the blacksmith was also essential to other professions since he produced tools much needed while working e.g. the plough. In a petition dated 1775 Giuseppe Vassallo asked to replace his uncle as blacksmith. Giuseppe had been helping his uncle on numerous occasions and had completed some of his own products as well. He also pointed out that both his father and grandfather had this same line of occupation.¹⁷¹ In relation to blacksmiths, farriers were equally essential. Since horses were the backbone of pre-industrial economies; horse power was used in agriculture and in transportation. Nevertheless, I came across to only one petition by a farrier.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ AOM 1192, f.,285.

¹⁷⁰ AOM 1186, f.,44.

¹⁷¹ AOM 1192, f.,308.

¹⁷² AOM 1196, f.,85.

Tailors and Other Trades

The knights' presence in Malta did not only give a push forward to commerce; it also promoted other auxiliary industries. As already indicated, Malta received a hotchpotch of foreign merchants especially in the harbour area. The tailoring businesses thrived off considerably from the great number of foreigners settling here. Tailors had to cater not only for the needs and demands of the foreign merchants coming to Malta, but also for the continuous demands of the knights. Travellers who visited Malta noted among other things all the different ropes worn by the Hospitallers.¹⁷³ Moreover, the formation of a merchant Maltese middle class, who followed the French modes of the time, also created work for these tailors; '*ecclesiastics, lawyers, and trades people, who dress in the French style*'.¹⁷⁴ Patrick Brydone, in his *Tour through Sicily and Malta*, states that 'On getting on shore [Malta], we found ourselves in a new world indeed -the streets crowded with well-dressed people, who have all the appearance of health and affluence'.¹⁷⁵ We know that the gentry would commission the sewing of a good number of garments at one go. These garments were to last possibly a life time. The payment for the commissioned work was most generally, paid off many years later and was done *in saldo*, in full.¹⁷⁶

A petition related to the art of tailoring was that by Giacomo de Castro, a needle-lace seller. Needle lace was used in many of the attires of early modern Europe, especially for jabots and cuffs.¹⁷⁷ The latter pleaded the Grand Master for a ten- year monopoly on the production of such a commodity which he termed *sangalli* (needle lace). He needed to elevate himself from the complicated financial situation he, his

¹⁷³ T. Freller, 'Malta Africana or Malta Europea?' in *Costume in Malta An history of fabric, form and fashion*, N.de Piro and V.A.Cremona (eds.) (Patrimonnju Publishing Ltd., Malta 1998).

¹⁷⁴ Boiesglin, 44.

¹⁷⁵ P. Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta Vol I* (London, 1775), 333. Retrieved on 17 March 2011 from <http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=WC0VAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader>

¹⁷⁶ N. de Piro, 'A tailor and his client and a lady and her purchases', in *Treasures of Malta Vol. III*, no. 2 (Easter 1997), 31.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

family, and his dependents were in, after he had suffered a major robbery. His cry for help was answered, but the concession was for 5 years only.¹⁷⁸ The common people could not afford the services of a tailor and of the fabrics used. To economise housewives would knit clothes out of wool and clothes would be passed on from child to child.¹⁷⁹ Fashion reflected one's status in society. In 1767 master tailor Battista Schembri, asked the magistracy for permission to start working in Mdina as a tailor.¹⁸⁰ Most of the tailors in the 16th and 17th century were found in Mdina. Most probably, tailors preferred to settle in Mdina to be close to their main clients, the noble families. However, as Valletta expanded as a commercial hub, many tailors established their workshops there. Furthermore, there were also a number of non-Maltese tailors; a number of Rhodians that accompanied the Order when it had left Rhodes were tailors.¹⁸¹ The previously mentioned Giaccheri brothers from Tuscany were two prominent tailors.¹⁸² And their business seemed to have been prolific since they had bought another piece of land most probably to expand their tailoring activities. According to a witness writing during this period in question Malta boomed with mercers' shops, indeed they were much more than were needed.¹⁸³ In fact, the same can also be said of barbers. In a petition written in collaboration of various barbers and hairdressers, it was pointed out that there were too many of the latter in Malta. They also explained that as yet no consul had been elected to represent their profession; therefore they requested that one be nominated.¹⁸⁴

A trade related to tailoring was that of upholstery, just like in matters of apparel; the higher classes also followed the trends of the time in home-furnishings and furniture. The gentry's and middle class's houses were laden with furniture, embroidery, decorative-hanging ornaments curtains and carpets, as indeed, *Casa Rocca Piccola*, *Villa Bologna* and *Palazzo Falzon* can testify. Upholsters bought only the finest

¹⁷⁸ AOM 1184, f.,48.

¹⁷⁹ Attard.

¹⁸⁰ AOM 1191,f.,146.

¹⁸¹ Boiseclin.

¹⁸² AOM 1192, f.,462-463.

¹⁸³ Mercieca (2000), 187.

¹⁸⁴ AOM 1186, f., 497.

draperies, e.g. silk and velvet, for their work. The style characteristic of the eighteenth-century was the Rococo. Rococo influenced mostly interior designing, this style was renowned for its intricate highly-ornamental and elegant details; furniture and furnishings were characterised by seashells, branches and flowery images.¹⁸⁵ Upholstery entailed arduous long hours of work, since everything was done by hand. In particular, Rococo demanded utmost precision and elegance in its execution. The Maltese followed rigorously what were the trends of the time in the rest of Europe.¹⁸⁶ In the late eighteenth-century, I came across two petitions concerning this profession, one of which was from Salvatore Sammut. He wanted to upgrade from assistant upholsterer to *Maestro tappezzerie*, and wanted to open a shop of his own in Valletta.¹⁸⁷ In 1790, in another petition, Ignazio and Giovanni Battista Sammut, asked to take over their father's profession of upholsterer. They had been apprenticing under their father's supervision for many years and so they felt the time was apt for them to start their own workshop. They asked for a pension for their father so that he could retire.¹⁸⁸

Another important craft was that of clock-making. Horologists were not in abundance and among the most renowned was Vincenzo Motta, the latter specializing in the fabrication of small clocks known as *arloggi ta' lira*.¹⁸⁹ Vincenzo inherited such craft from his father, Annunziato. In fact, in 1755 Vincenzo Motta was asking for a license to upgrade to master horologist, explaining that he needed this job to maintain his family. Eventually he was allowed to use his father's premises.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ E.G. Baur and I. F. Walther, *Rococo* (Taschen, London, 2007).

¹⁸⁶ De Piro, (2003), 104.

¹⁸⁷ AOM 1196, f.,100.

¹⁸⁸ AOM 1196, f.,118.

¹⁸⁹ Debono (2005).

¹⁹⁰ AOM 1186, f., 243-244.

Salt Production

Even the mineral industries, solar salt production and building, played their part in early modern Malta. Salt production played a significant role in the augmentation of Malta's income, while construction provided employment for thousands of Maltese families. The eighteenth-century may well be described as the golden age of salt production in Malta both in terms of quantity and quality. Salt was produced in large quantity that its surplus was like cotton a major export industry. In the 1700s Maltese salt had become commonly renowned for its crystal-clear colour and indeed it became a major component in the trade network between Malta and Italy.¹⁹¹ Income coming from salt-production was one of the major sources of the island's revenue.¹⁹² For the Grand Master owned the saltpans located at Burmarrad, he had the right to lease his saltpans and at the same time also enjoyed the profits coming from the selling of this commodity.¹⁹³ Among the *suppliche* consulted I came across two petitions concerning the production of salt in Malta. In 1732 Giorgio Michallef from Birkirkara explained that 10 years earlier the Order had confiscated the room he owned, which formed part of the Gargur windmill. In exchange Giorgio was given a saltpan for 10 years. Since the 10 years had come to an end he now wished to renew the saltpan's licence for another decade.¹⁹⁴ The second petition submitted by Antonio Berghi explained that he together with his wife he had been involved in the production of salt at the *salnitrieria* after they had been given the assurance that *nitri* was found in abundance, so that they undertook to pay personally for the expenses incurred in its production. Consequently, they asked for a reimbursement and moreover they wished that the *Comun Tesoro* would check the efficiency of this *salnitrieria*. The production of salt was an industry that at least 10

¹⁹¹ B. Brunella, *Archeologia Bizantina a Malta :primi risultati e prospettive di indagine* (Edipuglia srl, Bari 2004). Retrieved on the 20 March 2011 from <http://www.bibar.unisi.it/node/377>

¹⁹² Boiseglin, 44.

¹⁹³ S.Mercieca, 'The Production of Salt in Malta during Early Modern Times', *La Navigation du Savoir Réseau des arsenaux historiques de la Méditerranée Actes du Colloque Premièreeds Journées internationales du patrimoine maritime Méditerranéen* (Villefranche-sur-mer, 2003), 128.

¹⁹⁴ AOM 1184, f.,313-314.

labourers for every salt pan. Salt production was a very laborious job and not many were ready to undertake such a task.¹⁹⁵

Wine, unlike salt, was one of the major imported commodities, brought into the country mainly from Sicily. The production of wine for local consumption seems to have been in constant decline from sixteenth century onwards.¹⁹⁶ A manuscript dated 1750 shows the percentages of imported wares from Sicily, and wine amounted to 15% of all imported merchandise.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, wine was an almost essential commodity for everyday consumption in Malta. In 1724 Giovanni Paolo Fenech, applied for the post of the late Angelo Vassallo as *tramezzatore di vino*. Paolo was also prepared to marry Angelo's wife and take care of her four children.¹⁹⁸ The Grand Master conferred a lot of responsibility to the *tramezzatore di vino* or wine middleman. From the 1750s merchants could only buy wine through the intervention of a middleman. In fact, several middlemen would be sent to Sicily to buy wine in bulk on behalf of the wine merchants.¹⁹⁹ The middleman was a highly paid job, considering that they were paid three tari for every cask of wine imported. The middlemen were chosen by the Grand Master, and throughout the *suppliche* consulted there were many requests for the post of middleman.

The Construction Industry

Throughout the Order's rule, the heavy fortifications programme and the building of new towns and cities was a blessing in times of misery. There are a number of petitions concerning the jobs related to the construction industry. Many architects petitioned the Grand Master to better their position. However, fewer petitions dealing with the lower ranking jobs pertaining to construction have been noted- the so called

¹⁹⁵ Brunella.

¹⁹⁶ AOM 1191, f.282-285/288-291.

¹⁹⁷ C. Vassallo, "Commercial Relations between Hospitaller Malta and Sicily and Southern Italy in the mid-eighteenth century" in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sui rapporti diplomatici e scambi commerciali nel Mediterraneo moderno*, (Salerno, 2004), 450.

¹⁹⁸ AOM 1184, f.,96.

¹⁹⁹ Debono (1984).

'dirty jobs'. Between 1733 and 1734 the Order sought to employ several masons and 12 architects in total. Many applied to fill these vacancies. In 1733 in response to the said vacancies an apprentice draughtsman Michele Cassar from Balzan applied for the post of architect.²⁰⁰ A year later, Giovanni Fenech also wished to fill the vacancy of architect. The magistracy had in store the planning of several public buildings.²⁰¹ Architects were not scarce in Malta, nevertheless only a small percentage of the Maltese population could afford the money needed to study for the said profession. Once the studies were over, aspiring architects had to pass a series of exams to eventually be given the license to become fully qualified architects. Alberto Galdes, an apprentice architect, wished to be nominated an architect, especially since he had sat for the architect's exam and passed.²⁰² Even though one did not have the necessary studies one could still aspire to reach a somewhat important position within the building industry. One Pietro Xerri, after 6 arduous years of masonry work, hoped to be promoted to land surveyor.²⁰³ Construction involved also many other more laborious jobs, usually jobs which were filled by lay people. These included work at the quarries; stone-cutting was a very painstaking and important industry. Stone was also among the short list of items Malta exported to Europe; alabaster was also exported.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ AOM 1184, f.,352-353.

²⁰¹ AOM 1184, f.,380.

²⁰² AOM 1184, f.,154.

²⁰³ AOM 1191, f.,161.

²⁰⁴ Boiseclin.

Conclusion

A final consideration is that I came across no petitions dealing with the two chief industries par excellence, the cotton industry at large and the *Corso*; except for one petition concerning the renewal of a license for privateering.²⁰⁵ Indeed, corsairing diminished after the Order had been receiving a number of complaints against Maltese corsairs, especially from the King of France.²⁰⁶ The latter were disrupting the trade between the French and the Ottoman Turks, and from the 1700s commerce was preferred to the *Corso*. This cannot be said of cotton production, because throughout the eighteenth-century cotton manufacture consolidated its pre-eminence in the Maltese economy.

²⁰⁵ AOM 1184, f.,488-489.

²⁰⁶ Blouet (1963), 56.

Chapter IV:

Petitions Related to Housing and Other Property Issues

Requests concerning property dealt with a number of issues. There were requests mainly for housing, building sites, and building permits. There were also requests from those wanting to perform some alterations and modifications to pre-existing houses. There were, in addition, a number of complaints about the high rents and feuds over property. The authority responsible for such matters was the *Commissario delle Opere* and the *Officio delle Case* that regulated construction. The Order had very rigid procedures concerning the building of houses. The demand for housing, as shall be discussed, reflected the rising demographic level of the time.

During this period misery and poverty were widespread in Europe. According to Eric Hobsbawm -a general crisis had hit Europe in the seventeenth century, leading to a great loss of population. In Malta things were different. The population in Malta did not conform to the trends of the time. In fact, it went through a demographic boom in the late sixteenth century which reached its climax by the mid-seventeenth century.²⁰⁷ According to Brian Blouet, from 1530 to 1800 the population had increased fivefold.²⁰⁸ Indeed, when the Order had first landed on the Maltese shores the estimated population was of 25,000 according to the Order's historian Giacomo Bosio.²⁰⁹ This figure included

²⁰⁷ Cassar ; B. Blouet, 'The changing landscape of Malta during the rule of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem 1530-1798', unpublished Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, Department of History, University of Hull, 1963.

²⁰⁸ Blouet (1993).

²⁰⁹ G. Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Illustrissima Militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano*, Vol., 3 (1594), 93. Retrieved on 15 February 2011 from http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=CbcRvcny4kC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&source=webstore_bookcard

also all the Knights of the Order and the retinue that accompanied them. This demographic boom can be clearly noticed if one compares the estimated population figures for 1590 with those for 1632 that is 28,864 and 52,000 respectively.²¹⁰ In a matter of 6 decades the population nearly doubled in size. Such an evident increase in population had also repercussions on the growth of towns and villages. It seems to have stabilised itself by the mid-1600s and the population remained constant up until the mid-eighteenth-century. These demographic oscillations are also reflected in the number of petitions received by the order on matters of housing. In the years 1630-1649 the *suppliche* related to housing, property and building permits amounted to 43% of all the petitions consulted for this dissertation. This was a period of rapid increase in population and an expansion of several towns and villages.

Housing in the early seventeenth century seems to have been a very precarious affair and indeed it had become a crisis to reckon with. That the available space for housing was insufficient is demonstrated by the fact that many were imploring to use up any public space available. The Order, in its part, appears to have been in great difficulty in satisfying these demands, since the majority of the 100 petitions related to housing that I have studied were not given a definite answer; they were simply told that they were being looked into. The situation was so urgent that, in the year 1632, Torquato Ursino submitted a petition on behalf of several soldiers in the services of the Order. These soldiers had nowhere to stay and were desperate for a dwelling place.²¹¹ Indeed, even the Vice-Chancellor used his position and influence to secure housing for his sister. In the year 1633 he had put forward a petition in which he asked for some suitable accommodation for his sibling with permission to construct and to further modify later on. His influence served a purpose since this petition, unlike the rest, was met positively.²¹²

²¹⁰ Zammit.

²¹¹ AOM 1184, f.,33.

²¹² AOM 1184, f.,50.

The Harbour Areas

One third of all petitions presented in those twenty years were requests for housing and building permits in the harbour areas; mainly Valletta. The harbour areas (Valletta and the Three Cities) became the fulcrum of the economy.²¹³ They developed into the major commercial, industrial and administrative centres of the Maltese islands. Consequently, such prospect attracted many people in search for employment. Eventually, these areas also became the main centres of population since nearly half of the population was situated there.²¹⁴ Indeed, Giovanni Duama di Cassis also hoped to move in Valletta and in the year 1640 he asked the magistracy for a house that would be large enough to accommodate a family of six. However, his plea could not be met at that moment.²¹⁵

Indeed, a great percentage of the supplicants asked for housing at the Manderaggio or at Fort St. Elmo itself. Of course, by today's standards these were everything but houses, since many consisted of miniscule spaces, especially the *piazza* of the forts. These *piazze* consisted of one room and were used to accommodate whole families. A case in point was that of one Maria, wife of Paolo Cicalo, who in 1767 petitioned the magistracy to keep occupying the room of her late husband who had served the Order for forty-five years at Fort St. Elmo as sexton. She asked if she could make use of that same room her husband once lived in. However, Paolo Cicalo's successor was currently using the room and Maria asked the Grand Master to order the latter to leave.²¹⁶ Even Erasmo Demaris from Valletta asked to get hold of a *piazza* in Fort St. Elmo for his son. This room had just been vacated by the late Mons. Garzes. Erasmo wished that the *piazza* be rented to him for life at the price of 30 scudi.²¹⁷ The Manderaggio, which was originally used as a quarry, soon developed into a slum area, for many petitioned to reside in the said area. In 1632, Fra Matteo Dubisson asked for

²¹³ S. Goodwin, *Malta, Mediterranean bridge*, (Greenwood Publishing, Westport, 2002).

²¹⁴ Blouet (1993), 51.

²¹⁵ AOM 1184, f., 266.

²¹⁶ AOM 1191, f., 194.

²¹⁷ AOM 1184, f., 3.

up to seven rooms in the Manderaggio area. His request was actually granted.²¹⁸ Francesco Pagliareschi petitioned to occupy both a room at the Manderaggio and at St. Elmo. The suppliant was a guardian with duties in Bormla he sought to acquire accommodation for his family at the Manderaggio at 15 scudi. However three months later, in July 1634, the suppliant on hearing that there were some unoccupied rooms in St. Elmo, put forward his request to occupy one of them for him and his family.²¹⁹

Certain warehouses and *bottege* were also turned into dwelling places. In the year 1718 a nun Domenica Conti petitioned to be given the *bottega* on the road leading to St. Catherine's monastery. Domenica explained that she was very sick and old. Most probably she wanted to use the *bottega* as a dwelling place.²²⁰ In the same year, 1718, Ursola Alferan and her son Gerolama, petitioned for a room. They emphasized the unfortunate event by which the father, Agostino, had lost his life in Tripoli because of an explosion. They wanted to be permanently given the warehouse sited beneath the *casa di guardia* at a rent of one scudo a year. They also explained that from 1714 they were no longer able to make use of such a site since it was occupied by a woman called Fione Pador. This woman, according to Ursola, conducted an immoral life and so they implored that the said warehouse would become their own residence.²²¹

Every unused space, even public space, was being taken over in Valletta as the people were in such dire need for a place to live in.²²² A similar case was that of Giovanni Muscat who asked for an unused space in Valletta which was close to the *Sacra Infermeria*. There he wanted to build a house and to fix the road in front of the site as well.²²³ Similarly, Marino Micallef also wanted a house in Valletta. He explained that he was very old and needed a place in which he could dwell during his remaining years.²²⁴ Even Paolina Perotto implored to be provided with a site in Valletta where she

²¹⁸ AOM 1184, f.,28.

²¹⁹ AOM 1184, f.,85.

²²⁰ AOM 1186, f.,442.

²²¹ AOM 1186, f. ,439.

²²² B.W. Blouet, 'Town Planning in Malta 1530-1798', *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 35, no.3 (1964).

²²³ AOM 1184, f.,92.

²²⁴ AOM 1184, f.,94.

could build a house for her and her daughters to live in. Paolina was in dire need of suitable housing since she was living in misery.²²⁵ However, the Order had imposed very rigid regulations on construction in Valletta. Only people of a certain status were granted a building permit. And the total costs spent on the construction were pre-determined by the *Officio delle Case*.²²⁶ Indeed, Muscat's request was granted but the other two were not given an answer. Since Muscat stated that he was not only to construct a house but also to fix the road in front of it, I assume that he must have been of a certain social standing to have the financial means to afford such expenditure. On the other hand, the other two petitioners were both poor.

This situation led to an overcrowding of the main cities, and spaces became saturated. So much so, that in 1666 Grand Master Cottoner was forced to put a halt to further migration to Valletta and the Three Cities. In 1641 Cospicua was still expanding, since the Don Palmerino and other procurators of the parish church of Cospicua all wished to acquire a piece of unused land close to the church, so as to build the necessary annexes to the church.²²⁷ Other precautions were taken to overcome the concentration of people in the harbour areas. Indeed, *Casal Paola* or *Casal Nuovo* (New Village) was created for such purpose. Paola was initiated in the late 1630.²²⁸ The building of this city might have been one of the reasons why the demand for housing diminished, since plenty of free spaces were now available.

Settlement in the Central Part of Malta

Apart from the harbour areas, there were inland villages that experienced a growth; these were located in the central part of Malta. Mosta soon developed into a town; from 1608 Mosta consolidated itself as a major town of the Maltese islands. This increase in settlement was induced by the Order's decision to offer small land grants to

²²⁵ AOM 1184, f.,97-98.

²²⁶ Blouet (1963), 192.

²²⁷ AOM 1184, f.,276.

²²⁸ Blouet (1963).

those who wished to settle in Mosta.²²⁹ By the early seventeenth century Mosta had managed to cut off its ties to Naxxar and create its own parish.²³⁰ This is also very much reflected in the petitions for land. Since, in between the years 1630-1649, there were in all 13 applications related to housing in the Mosta area. The *contestabili* of Mosta had petitioned on numerous occasions, always concerning the same matter. They wanted to get a building permit to be able to construct their own houses by the Mosta valley.²³¹ Even, the confraternity of Santa Rosario in Mosta had been expanding, and wanted to enlarge the establishment. Consequently, the brothers were petitioning for the acquisition of some property next to the premises.²³² In that same period, Don Giovanni Agius was representing several people from Mosta, he asked for permission to extend the size of their gardens. Thirty years before, these people had been given some land on which they built houses with gardens. They were using these gardens to cultivate fruit trees and therefore they were asking to be given more land space to produce more fruit.²³³ Similarly, Angelo Calleja from Mosta explained that he built a garden several years prior, which was later on destroyed on order of a *bando*. Therefore Angelo asked the Grand Master permission to re-construct the garden.²³⁴

Other central villages to grow considerably in size where Rabat and Dingli, unlike Mdina which had lost many of its former inhabitants.²³⁵ In 1637 the *contestabili* of Rabat and Dingli petitioned for building permits, to construct houses there.²³⁶ Soon after they re-petitioned explaining that some of the walls of these houses were not built properly and had to be demolished. Consequently the *contestabili* wanted to re-build the walls and asked that all expenses incurred would be paid by the Government.²³⁷

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Cassar, 143.

²³¹ AOM 1184, f.,81, 82, 83.

²³² AOM 1184, f.,365.

²³³ AOM 1184, f.,191.

²³⁴ AOM 1184, f.,194.

²³⁵ S. Fiorini, 'Status Animarum I: A unique source for the 17th and 18th century Maltese demography', *Melita Historica* Vol. VIII, no. 4 (1983).

²³⁶ AOM 1184, f.165.

²³⁷ AOM 1184, f.176-177.

Grievances on Property and Housing

Other petitions related to housing were complaints on rental prices, feuds, and disagreements over property. Orlando Griscti from Luqa explained that while he was building his own house he came across great difficulties when dealing with his neighbours. They tried to obstruct the completion of his house in any way possible. They were doing so because they claimed that the construction was blocking their view. Orlando thus asked that actions be taken to stop his neighbours from interfering.²³⁸ Maria Borg in 1764 explained that as a result of her father's (Giulio Borg) profession *di profumatore della sanita* he was given two magazines in Santa Lucia. One of the warehouses was turned into a house which was used by Maria and her family. When Giulio died, Francesco, his brother, made a deal with Giulio that in return of the inherited post he was to look after his family. Eventually, Francesco also died and the post of *profumatore* was passed on to his son Antonio. Maria thus asked that her cousin Antonio would not be allowed to dispossess them of their home.²³⁹

With regards to rental issues, a certain Giulio Gatt several years before together with some others implored that he would no longer be obliged to pay, in exchange for the use of a *bottega*, 48 scudi per year. Giulio had been paying this rent for 40 years and he was asking that he would pay instead a ground rent on the *bottega* since he had always paid his dues on time and also had a numerous family to look after.²⁴⁰ Another petition dealing with rental prices was that submitted by the *contestabili* of Birkirkara in 1640. They were complaining that the rental prices had rocketed sky high and therefore they asked that the rental fee be reduced.²⁴¹ Domenico Farrugia also submitted a petition regarding a rental issue. Farrugia had leased a house to Francesco Balzan, who had fallen short of paying the yearly rental fee. Therefore he asked that legal actions be taken so as to ensure that he be paid the money due.²⁴² On a different note, Constantino Morales, who wanted to stay in Sicily for a total of 3 years, asked that while

²³⁸ AOM 1184, f.411.

²³⁹ AOM 1191,f.397.

²⁴⁰ AOM 1186, f.302.

²⁴¹ AOM 1184, f.275.

²⁴² AOM 1184, f.,398-399.

he was abroad he could retain his room, most probably because finding housing had become a very difficult affair. His request was granted on the express condition that Constantino kept paying his rent whilst away.²⁴³

Another petition concerning a financial issue was put forward by the *capomaestro dell'Opere e fortificazioni*, Francesco Zerafa in 1730. Zerafa had taken a plot of land in the new building plan of Floriana with the intention of building various houses and gardens. He had already started construction when he fell short of money and was unable to continue paying the ground rent amounting to 600 scudi. Therefore he asked that he would be pardoned of such debt. Zerafa promised that his heirs would pay the sum of 25 scudi annually until such debt was paid off. Zerafa's request was granted and his debt was pardoned.²⁴⁴ However, not everyone was this fortunate with the authorities. A case in point is *protomedico* Giorgio Imbert. The supplicant was complaining against the bureaucratic and the unjust way the magistracy had been dealing with his request. Giorgio asked the magistracy permission to add another storey to a premises. The said premise consisted of several rooms and mezzanine floors situated on the customs house. He petitioned on behalf of his daughter, for it was her that had inherited the premises from her grandfather. This was not the first time they had petitioned, for Giorgio's father had also petitioned 30 years before. But his requests had been rejected. Giorgio had pointed out that next to them the *Fondazione Manoel* had erected a high building with more storeys than Giorgio's building. Giorgio thus petitioned that his request be accepted and that finally he would be allowed to build another floor.²⁴⁵

Confiscations and Demolitions

The order had very rigid rules on construction. Indeed, if a building was not finished by a given time the house was confiscated or demolished. This is what had

²⁴³ AOM 1184, f.,36.

²⁴⁴ AOM 1187, f.,231-234.

²⁴⁵ AOM 1192, f.,350-351.

happened to Domenico Buttigieg. He had acquired a building site in Siggiewi. However, due to his poverty, he was unable to complete it. The only thing he managed to finish, the yard, was demolished. Consequently, he asked to be allowed to complete the building especially since one of his daughters was getting married.²⁴⁶ Similarly, Maddalena Galea from Mosta, who had 10 years before been assigned a site in Mosta, due to her poor financial means did not manage to fabricate the house in time. Therefore she was imploring for an extension of a month's time to finish it, since she had no other form of habitation.²⁴⁷ A similar mishap besieged Paoluccio Galea from Mosta. He too asked for some extra time, to complete the house. Paoluccio was afraid that his house was going to be demolished. He added that he was desperate for such housing since he had to look after six children.²⁴⁸

The Order at times confiscated property to use it for its purposes. Salvatore Borg's house was confiscated to give way to the refurbishment of the nearby fortification. He thus demanded that he be reimbursed.²⁴⁹ A similar case was presented in 1630 by Vito Sparti who lamented that his house at Valletta was pulled down by the authorities to make room for another construction. Since, Vito was not in a condition to hire a house, for he was poor, he asked for a new site on which to build another house.²⁵⁰

Even trivial matters of alterations and refurbishments were regulated by the magistracy. A case in point was Giorgio Camilleri's request. He asked for permission to build a pathway since one of the doors' entrances was blocked by the arsenal that was built next to his house in 1639.²⁵¹ Master-builder Giuseppe Bonnici explained that in the year before, he had built some rooms in *Santa Margherita* square eighteen *palmi* long and wanted to construct further rooms. He also wanted to enhance the square by constructing two balconies, which would have also served as shelters in rainy days.

²⁴⁶ AOM 1184, f.244-247.

²⁴⁷ AOM 1184, f.166.

²⁴⁸ AOM 1184, f. 174,175.

²⁴⁹ AOM 1184, f.292-293.

²⁵⁰ AOM 1184, f.461.

²⁵¹ AOM 1184, f.,231.

Moreover, Giuseppe wanted to modify the rooms at ground level so as to incorporate five arches.²⁵² A similar request was presented by Commander Fra Emanuele Pereyra Courinho. The supplicant sought permission to carry out some modifications on a balcony. He explained that whilst carrying out reconstruction work on his home balcony he noticed that the said balcony was not build according to the street plan of the city and was obstructing the sight. Therefore, in agreement with and on advice of the *Capomastro* (foreman) and other architects he wanted to amend the error.²⁵³ Even renovations to façades had to be licenced. Canonico Fabrizio Pontremoli asked permission to carry out some maintenance on the façade of his house as this had become unstable especially after the earthquakes that had taken place in the past.²⁵⁴

Conclusion

To conclude, from the year 1690s onwards, the requests for housing diminished drastically. The amount of petitions dealing with requests for housing, among the petitions consulted from 1690 down to 1791, is negligible. A plausible reason could be that in the eighteenth-century several projects had been undertaken: the building of Paola, Floriana and an extension of Qormi.²⁵⁵ And so the demand for housing decreased since much new space was readily available. In addition, in 1672 Malta was overcome by an epidemic of plague which had inflicted and killed many people.²⁵⁶ Nonetheless, by the end of Hospitaller Malta fifteen new parishes had been created.²⁵⁷

²⁵² AOM 1191, f.,53-54.

²⁵³ AOM 1191, f., 409.

²⁵⁴ AOM 1184, f.,215.

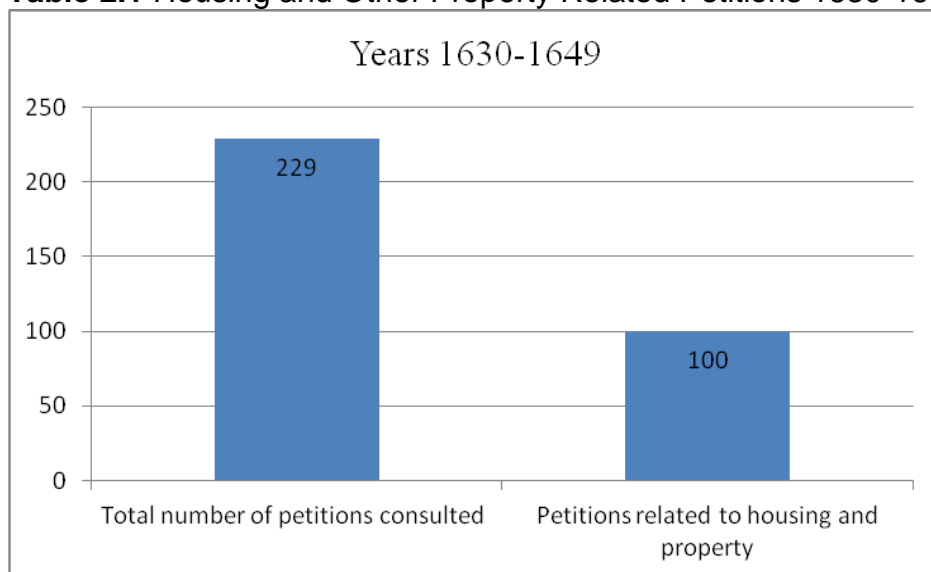
²⁵⁵ Blouet (1964),193.

²⁵⁶ Blouet (1993), 97.

²⁵⁷ Fiorini.

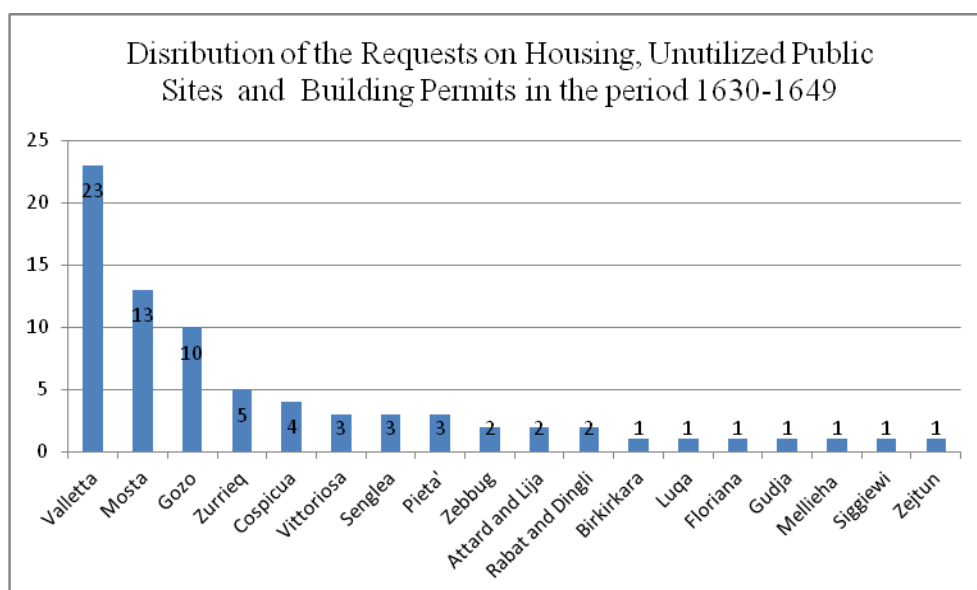
Results for Housing and Other Property Related Petitions

Table 2.1 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1630-1649



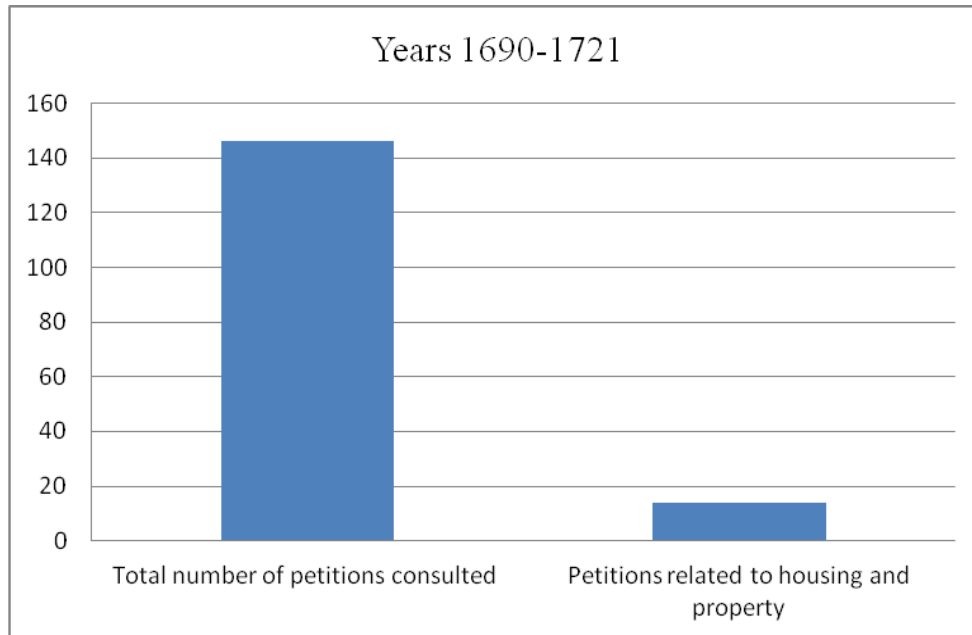
Source: AOM 1184

Table 2.2 Distribution of the Requests on Housing, Unutilized Public Sites and Building Permits in the Period 1630-1649



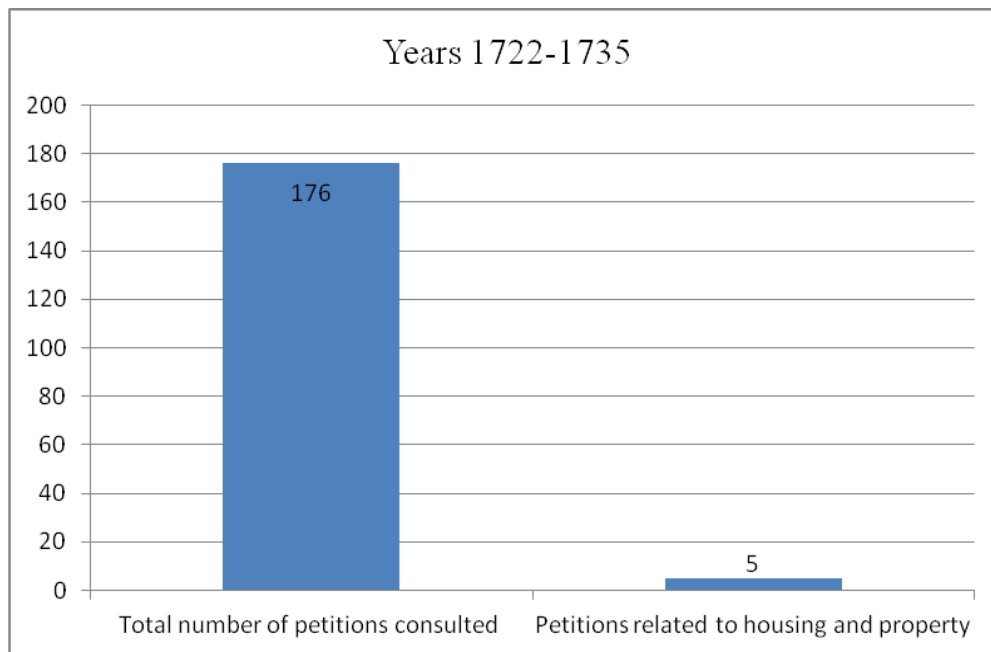
Source: AOM 1184

Table 2.3 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1690-1721



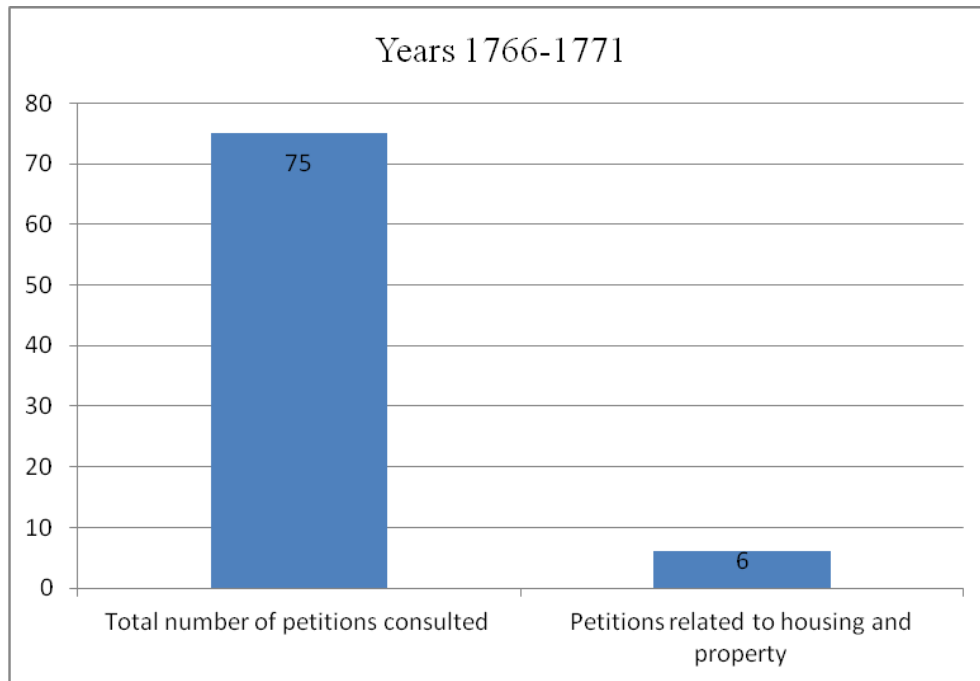
Source: AOM 1186

Table 2.4 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1722-1735



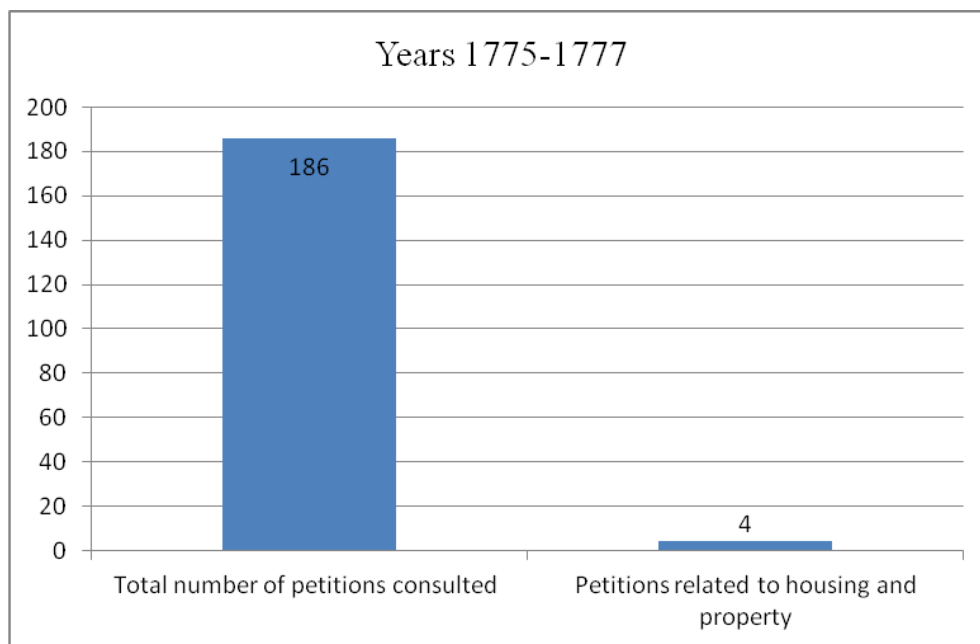
Source: AOM 1187

Table 2.5 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1766-1771



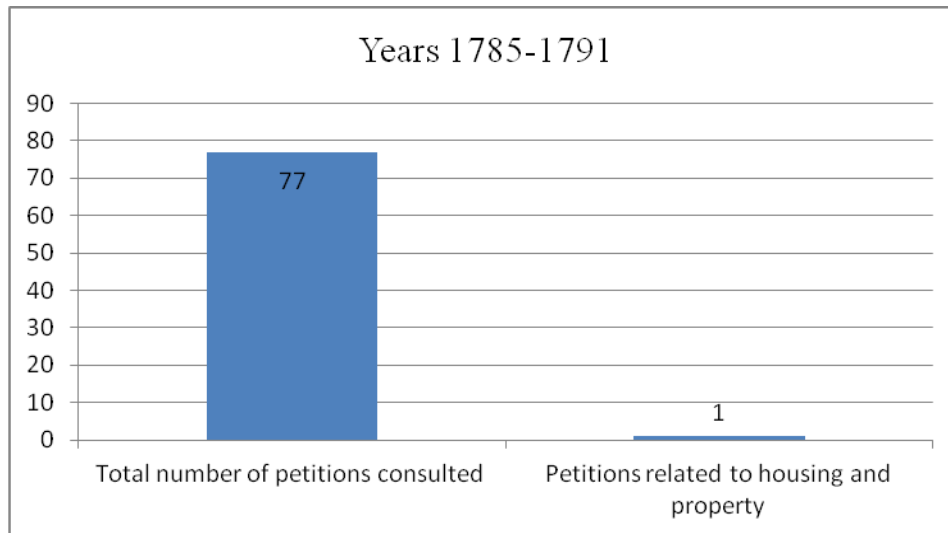
Source: AOM 1191

Table 2.6 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1775-1777



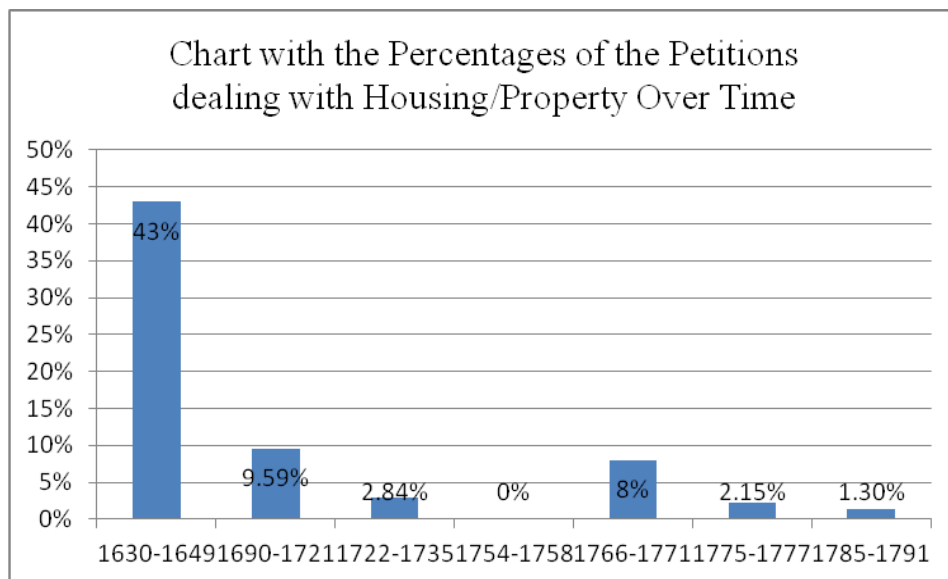
Source: AOM 119

Table 2.7 Housing and Other Property Related Petitions 1785-1791



Source: AOM 1196

Table 2.8 Percentages of Housing and Other Property Related Petitions (see above tables).



Source: AOM 1184, AOM 1186, AOM 1187, AOM 1189, AOM 1191, AOM 1192, and AOM 1196.

Chapter V:

Other Requests

The consulted *suppliche* contain a wide range of other social themes. These included petitions concerning clerks and notaries, gambling, convicts, and the theatre.

Notaries and Clerks

The total number of petitions submitted by notaries and clerks was 11.48% of all petitions consulted. 'Notaries formed an integral part of the Mediterranean medieval and early-modern societies and the records left by them are crucial to the reconstruction of these same societies.'²⁵⁸ Owing to a greater demand for the stipulation of all sorts of acts and official documents (e.g. marriage and birth certificates) in the late Middle Ages, the 'notarial culture' spread all over Europe and the number of notaries increased significantly.²⁵⁹ One of the main two recurrent requests was that by apprentice notaries, who were seeking permission from the Grand Master to stipulate, register, and draft acts and documents in their supervisor's name. The second most frequent request was for permission to sit for the notary's exam, whereby apprentice notaries would become fully professional and legally recognized notaries.

²⁵⁸ Emanuel Buttigieg, 'Encounters with the 'Other': Hospitallers and Maltese before the Great Siege of 1565', in *The Military Orders: On Land and by Sea*, Judi Upton-Ward ed., (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008), 229.

²⁵⁹ P. Burke, *The historical anthropology of early modern Italy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), 113.

Notaries and clerks were in abundance in Malta. Just like the merchants, the notaries and lawyers also formed their own distinct company known as the *Milizia Togana*. This profession was a very respectable and highly- deemed occupation. Notaries were very influential and enjoyed a high social status within Maltese society.²⁶⁰ Their importance was greatly emphasized when considering that the majority of the general population was illiterate and had to make use of a notary for any small thing. The notarial profession was also very important for the merchants since many of the business partnerships,²⁶¹ *compagnia* and *commenda* contracts were drawn up in writing in the presence of a notary – in the form of a notarial deed, a form of guarantee or safety valve for both sides.

Becoming a notary was not as straight forward as it may appear. According to de Vilhena's code of laws, there were very rigid conditions and prerequisites for the candidacy to the notarial profession. First of all, one had to be 25 years of age and over to be eligible. Secondly, one had to be in possession of 300 scudi, and finally one had to have undergone a traineeship of at least 6 years with a senior notary. And apart from these conditions, the claim of respectability and an honest family and reputation were all together very important as well.²⁶² Often the duration of the apprenticeship lasted over and above the stipulated 6 years. Apprentice notary from Naxxar, Francesco Magri, had already undergone 10 years of apprenticeship, before he applied for the notarial license.²⁶³ According to the information gathered from the petitions, 10 years of apprenticeship were then the norm rather than the exception.

Notaries began their studies at a very young age. A certain Baldassare Schembri stated in his *supplìcha*, that he started when he was still a boy.²⁶⁴ Likewise did D' Armanino Michelangelo who wrote that he commenced from '*sua piu' tenera età*'²⁶⁵ and kept on studying the notarial profession for up to 12 years. According to Schembri,

²⁶⁰ Cassar.

²⁶¹ Mercieca (2000), 188.

²⁶² *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali. rinuovate dal Signor Fra d. A.M. de Vilhena* (Malta, 1724), 35.

²⁶³ AOM 1187, f.,156-157.

²⁶⁴ AOM 1187, f., 376.

²⁶⁵ AOM 1187, f.,379.

he had studied '*la grammatica, rettorica, e la filosofia*'.²⁶⁶ So did Giovanni Battista Abdilla of Valletta, who had studied Grammar for 10 years.²⁶⁷ Andrea Zerafa from Valletta studied '*lettere umane e filosofia*' for 5 years.²⁶⁸ Giuseppe Grillet from Valletta was apprenticing under his father's supervision, notary Vincenzo Grillet. Grillet junior had also studied grammar and philosophy.²⁶⁹ One of the requisites set-out in the *Diritto Municipale* by de Rohan, was that they had to be well familiar with the *Institutes* of Justinian and had to have conducted the necessary teachings at the university.²⁷⁰ The process involved in becoming a notary was very similar to other places in Europe.

And in several of the Italian studia one could acquire a combined theoretical and practical training in the *ars notaria* of near professional thoroughness; this would be completed by a period of apprenticeship with an established notary, a stage of at least two years duration. Degrees, as such, were not awarded: the licence to practice as a notary was the end-product of the university course.²⁷¹

To gain experience and earn money many apprentice notaries worked as clerks-*notando and registrando contratti*. Clerks were employed in nearly every sector of employment. There were clerks at the *Ufficcio delle Case*, at the customs-house, at the Monte di Pietà²⁷² and Redenzione, but the great majority of clerks were employed in the tribunals and the Castellania.²⁷³ Not unlike nowadays, a number of complaints had been alleged against the clerks at the Castellania for the poor service they were providing. Many at times when needed these clerks were nowhere to be found and this created great discontent and dissatisfaction among the general public especially among those who came from far away such as Mellieha.²⁷⁴ Therefore in 1780 a law was passed, by which, the working hours of these clerks were formalised. Within the *Suppliche* there were also a number of petitions submitted by clerks who were either asking for

²⁶⁶ Translation of quote: 'Grammar, rhetoric and philosophy'-AOM1187, f. 376.

²⁶⁷ AOM 1187, f.,218.

²⁶⁸ AOM 1187, f.,174.

²⁶⁹ AOM 1191, f.,223-224.

²⁷⁰ The Institutes of Justinian were a set of codes (on law), compiled on order of Emperor Justinian.

²⁷¹ A.B. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities: their development and organization* (Methuen, London, 1975), 222.

²⁷² Michelangelo Larosa a clerk at the Monte di Pietà was asking for a raise in wages-AOM1191,f. 202.

²⁷³ Chetcuti, 170.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

retirement or for an increase in their salary.²⁷⁵ Some members of the clergy also got engaged in clerical duties. This was very common, in fact in the year 1769 Fra Tomaso Dimech a *cappellano d'ubbidienza*, applied for the office of accountant and clerk of the women's hospital.²⁷⁶

Generally, a notary was assigned to every village and town.²⁷⁷ However, this was not always the case, as the following petition demonstrates. Pietro Bernardo Gatto an apprentice notary who was trained by his father, notary Guiseppe Gatto, had asked to stipulate contracts on his father's behalf.²⁷⁸ But, he also added that at that point in time, Naxxar had a great necessity of the services of a notary. Therefore, his expertise was very much needed there. The reply of the auditor stated that an enquiry had been conducted to verify Bernardo's claim and it revealed that in 1726 there was a lack of notary publics in Naxxar. To make up for this lack, several notaries were assigned more than one village. A case in point was Francesco Saverio Zarb, who worked as public notary in Naxxar, Mosta and Gharghur and asked to become public notary for the village of Attard too.²⁷⁹ By the time of de Rohan's magistracy, there were about 58 public notaries one of which worked at Gozo. The greatest concentration of notaries was found in the harbour cities.²⁸⁰

Aspiring notaries and clerks were not allowed to stipulate acts. Permission could only be granted by the Grand Master or his representative, the auditor. Moreover, the notarial exam was the auditor's responsibility. He had to verify that the aspiring notaries had the necessary prerequisites to enter the notarial profession. In fact, the petitions concerning said appointment were always followed by a *relazione* from the auditor.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ Examples of this are petitions AOM 1192, f.470; AOM 1196, f., 117; AOM 1187, f. 204.

²⁷⁶ AOM 1191, f.,268-269.

²⁷⁷ C. Vella, 'The Notary Public in Malta from the Vilhena Code of 1723 to Ordinance V of 1855', unpublished L.L.D. dissertation, Department of Law, University of Malta, 2006), 34.

²⁷⁸ AOM 1187, f.,152.

²⁷⁹ AOM 1196, f.,75).

²⁸⁰ A. Attard, *Index of Notaries 1465-1894*, (Salesian Press, Sliema, 1979).

²⁸¹ Esamineranno con ogni rigore qualsisia Giurislconsulto, che ricorrera' per memoriale, per poter' avere la matricola, e fare l' Avvocato ne' nostri Tribunali, cosi anche coloro, che supplicheranno per la facolta o' di stipulare, o' d'essere pubblici Notari. Dopo l'esame ci saranno la relazione in scriptis , con avere' Avanti

Some waited a long time before they were accepted as notaries. A case in point was Luigi Caruana who had been working as a clerk under the supervision of notary Tommaso Magri and Iganzaio Bonavita for more than 14 years. He was also given permission to draw up contracts, which he had been doing for 11 years. Now he was asking to become a professional notary.²⁸² Francesco Farruggia from Zurrieq requested that he be allowed to take the examination after more than a decade apprenticing.²⁸³ Likewise Magri had been '*scrivano*' for 12 years, this without getting any type of stipend. Magri, was the eldest of all the clerks in Gozo, and since he had the responsibility of a large family on his shoulders, he wanted to become a professionalized notary.²⁸⁴

The petitions concerning notarial issues demonstrate crystal-clear, that family ties were a prominent feature of the notarial professions. Indeed, Mangion Francesco Saverio from Mosta asked the Grand Master to stipulate public acts in his father's name, since he had '*esercitato l'arte di scrivano*' under his father's supervision.²⁸⁵ So did Cremona Magri Eugenio Maria of Gozo, who had already spent 6 years studying at his father's bank.²⁸⁶ Another Magri from Gozo petitioned that same year on similar matters. It was to be expected that the son followed in his father's footsteps, indeed, clients were also passed on from father to son.

Other matters discussed in the *suppliche* are entertainment and requests for pardon. Even though, I have come across very few of such petitions among those consulted, the information they relate is very important for a complete analysis of life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Hospitaller Malta.

agli occhi il solo Dio, il bene publico, ed il nostro servizio- *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali. rinuovate dal Signor Fra d. A.M. de Vilhena* (Malta, 1724), 16.

²⁸² AOM 1196, f.,158.

²⁸³ AOM 1187, f.,153.

²⁸⁴ AOM 1187, f.,259-260.

²⁸⁵ AOM 1187, f.,193.

²⁸⁶ AOM 1187, f.,252-269.

Convicts

Convicts also found a means by which to petition the magistracy. In the few petitions submitted by prisoners the common demand was for a pardon of their sentence. Raimondo Baldacchino had been locked up in the Magistral prison for 10 years and had in the meantime become very sick. He therefore asked the Grand Master permission to be let to stay at the Sacred Infirmary.²⁸⁷ Another convict, a Neapolitan, Giuseppe La Forte also pleaded the Grand Master to forgive his wrong-doings and pardon his sentence. Giuseppe La Forte was very old and in poor health. He asked the Grand Master to provide him with a means of subsistence. Grand Masters were generally compassionate, especially with the poor. This is perhaps one main reason why most of these requests were acceded to.²⁸⁸

Theatre

Grand Master de Vilhena was definitely one such. He built the first public theatre, the Manoel theatre in 1731, which he partly financed.²⁸⁹ The Manoel theatre soon became the place to go to for some form of entertainment. Indeed, opera shows were put-up regularly and international companies frequently came to perform in Malta.²⁹⁰ In fact, from mid-eighteenth century onwards I came across several petitions submitted by employees working at the theatre. Matteo Golfarelli, resident Italian tenor of the Manoel theatre, requested to change his job and wished to work as a tenor in a church instead. For the money he was earning was not enough.²⁹¹ Golfarelli complained that he was being charged more than supposed because he was a foreigner. Giulio de Santis asked permission to bring over to Malta a company of music and drama to perform the

²⁸⁷ AOM 1191, f.,94.

²⁸⁸ AOM 1191, f., 114-115.

²⁸⁹ C., Xuereb, *The Theatre in Malta* (Patrimonju Publishing Ltd, Valletta, 1997), 29.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ AOM 1191, f.,196.

following year in 1756 and for the Carnival of 1757.²⁹² About a decade later in 1766 Giulio De Santis informed the Grand Master that the manager of the employees working at the theatre, Baldassare Grech, was responsible for various irregularities. He had not been able to give an account of where the large sums of money were spent. The former therefore asked to replace the manager.²⁹³ However, Grand Master Pinto seems to have been quite satisfied with the performances staged at the theatre during Baldassare's management and his position was re-confirmed for another year. Baldassare was then replaced by Neapolitan Pasquale Quintvalle. In 1775, the latter asked permission to bring his company to perform in Malta. Among the repertoire performed by his company were ballet, comedies, opera and musicals.²⁹⁴ The audiences were so impressed by the shows performed by his company that the Grand Master elected him the new manager of the theatre.²⁹⁵

Gambling

The theatre was not the only form of entertainment in Malta, the playing of cards was another. The Prior of Messina Fra Giovanni Berzetti and Comm. Foucaudi de St. Aulain in the year 1636 submitted a petition in which they reported that gambling had spread at an alarming rate and that many people had fallen short of money and were in great debts. This was creating many difficulties within the family nuclei.²⁹⁶ Therefore they asked that the Grand Master intervene to stop this. Gambling became even more diffused in the 1700s. It became somewhat a form of an institution well entrenched within Maltese society. So much so that authorities began to regard it as a social vice to

²⁹² AOM 1186, f., 280-281.

²⁹³ AOM 1191, f., 5.

²⁹⁴ AOM 1192, f., 307.

²⁹⁵ Xuereb.

²⁹⁶ AOM 1184, f., 133.

be eliminated. Fortunes were at times made but luck only favoured a few and indeed more were lost, leading many people to great desperation and extreme misery.²⁹⁷

Gambling was not exclusive of the lower class. On the contrary, it was a vice more pertaining to the middle and higher classes. The gentry, having practically nothing to do the entire day except sleeping, indulged into card playing and gambling without second thoughts. It was the higher classes' favourite pastime.²⁹⁸ The knights themselves also engaged in this activity. Even Grand Masters were known to gamble. Throughout Hospitaller rule several laws had been passed abolishing gambling and any games of chance involving money. These bans were addressed both to the Maltese and the knights of the Order. In 1754 Grand Master Pinto threatened any knights who were caught gambling, with excommunication and imprisonment. This law was later on re-confirmed in the renewed *Codice Gerosolimitano* in 1782. The first law banning gaming to target the Maltese population was issued in 1724 by Grand Master Vilhena in *Leggi e Costituzioni*. Those caught gambling in public spaces such as taverns, had to pay a fine or otherwise had to spend time rowing on the Order's vessels. Gambling was most profuse among corsairs, since there was very little to do on board vessels to entertain oneself. In fact, Maltese corsairs were known as "the most renowned card school in the Levant."²⁹⁹

Conclusion

This problem, although it was contained, was never entirely resolved. Gambling still remained an integral part of Maltese life, for it was primarily conceived as a form of entertainment just like the opera. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Malta was not as conservative as one may think, immorality was rampant and gambling was not a problem of the few but it became a social vice to be reckoned with.

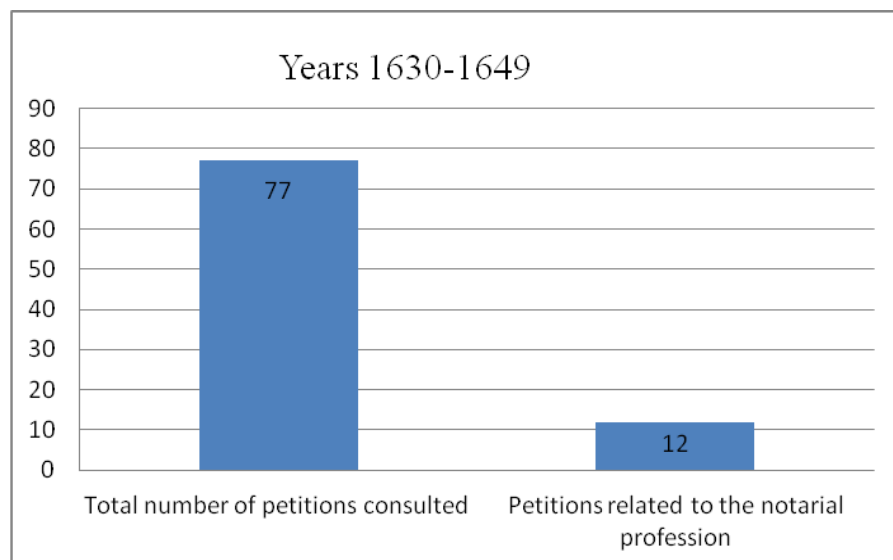
²⁹⁷ Attard, 147.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Bonello (2005), 55.

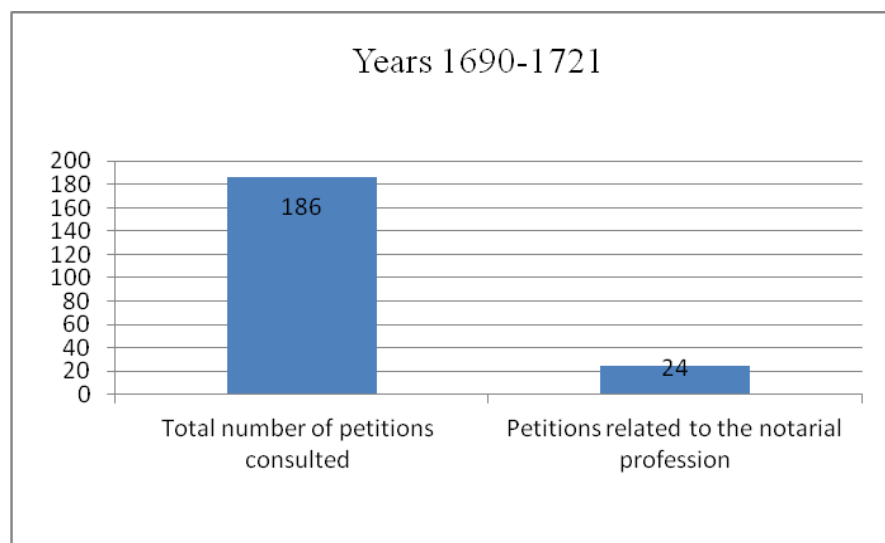
Results for Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Professions

Table 3.1 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Professions 1630-1649



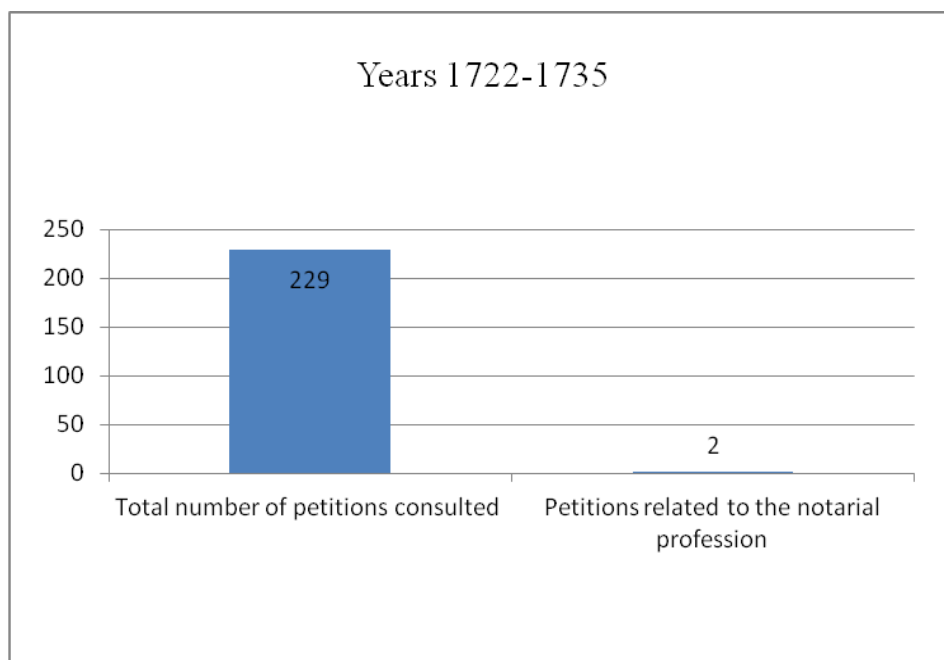
Source: AOM 1184

Table 3.2 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Professions 1690-1721



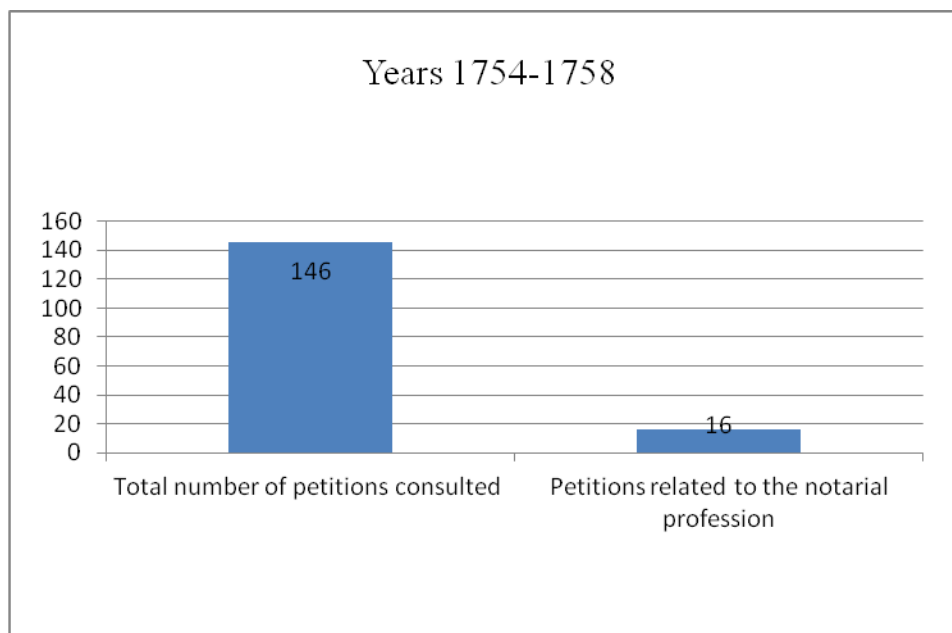
Source: AOM 1186

Table 3.3 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Professions 1722-1735



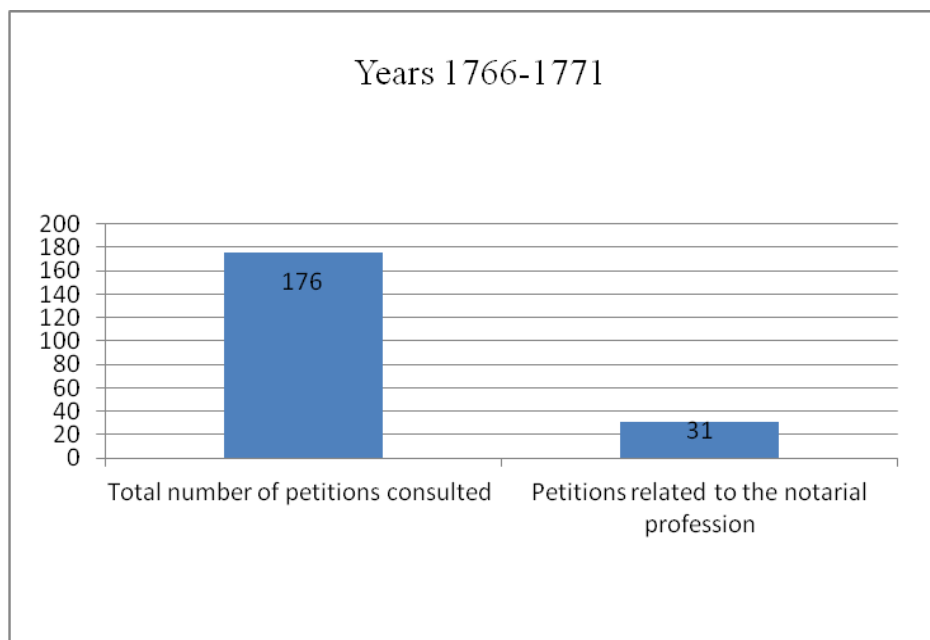
Source: AOM 1187

Table 3.4 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Profession 1754-1758



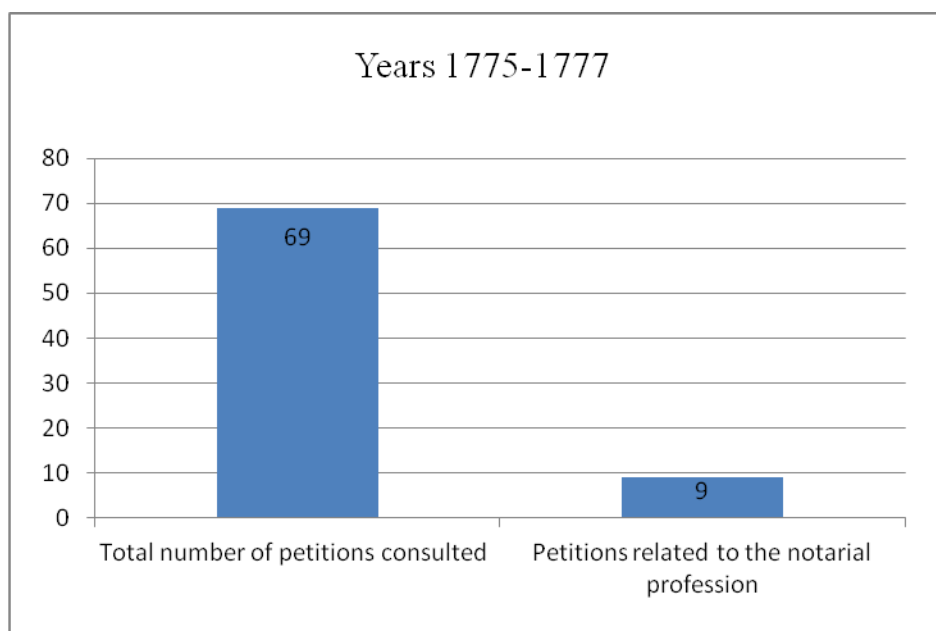
Source: AOM 1189

Table 3.5 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Profession 1766-1771



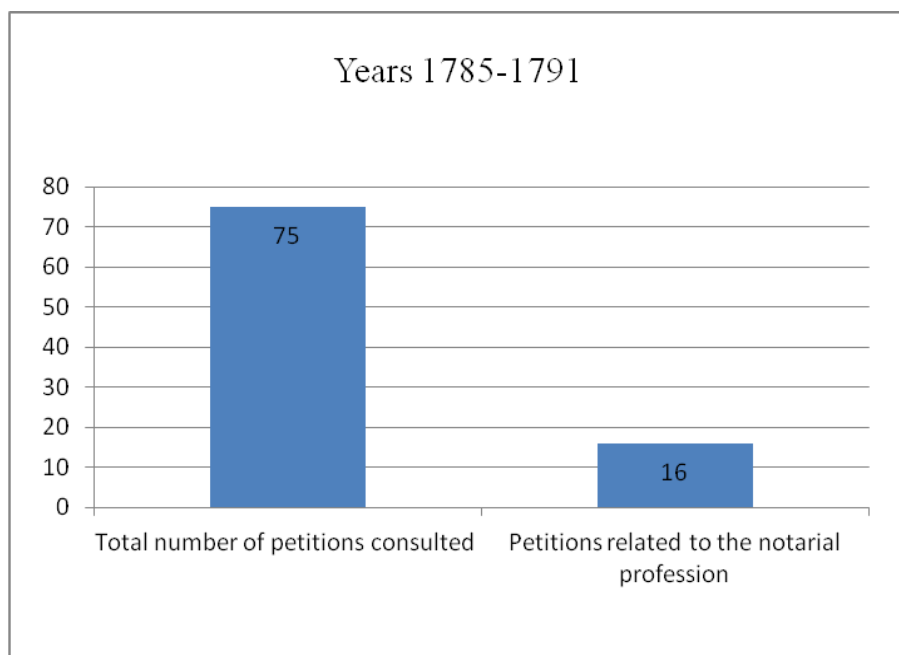
Source: AOM 1191

Table 3.6 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Profession 1775-1777



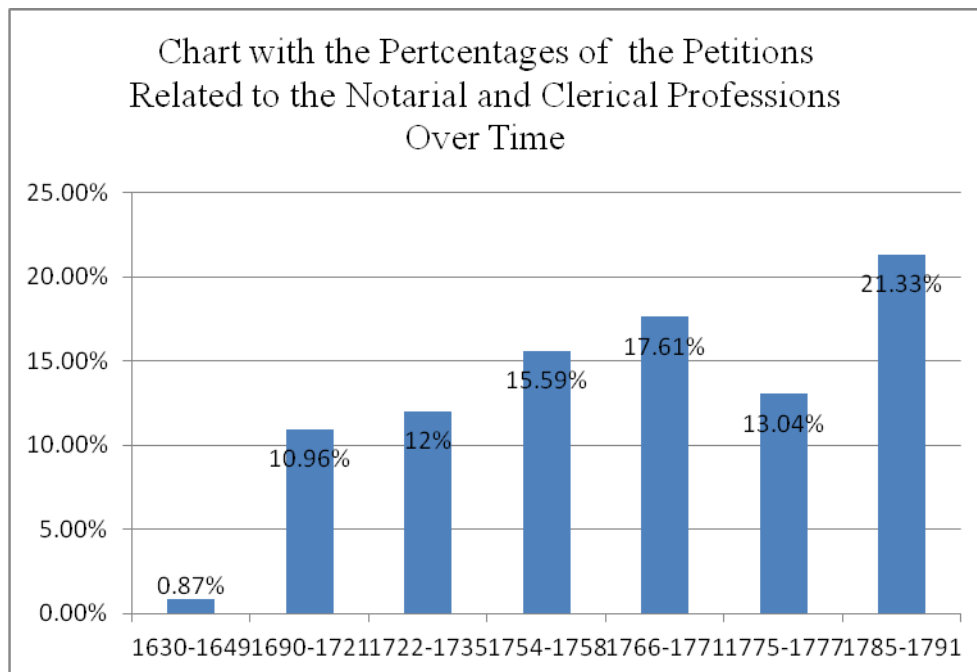
Source: AOM 1192

Table 3.7 Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Profession 1785-1791



Source: AOM 1196

Table 3.8 The Percentages of the Petitions Related to the Notarial and Clerical Profession (see above tables).



Source: AOM 1184, AOM 1186, AOM 1187, AOM 1189, AOM 1191, AOM 1192, and AOM 1196.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation has been to make an analysis of the petitions submitted to the magistracy by members of the various strata of Maltese society in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This has helped to cast an insight into the torture of Maltese everyday life. Unfortunately, due to the word limit, I could not include all the rich data I have found in the manuscripts and I had to leave the medical professions out of the picture. In the nineteenth- century, Malta had acquired the title of 'nurse of the Mediterranean' reflecting the times of the Hospitallers. It also boasted the best medical services of the time. Thus, it comes as no surprise that many medical professionals submitted petitions regarding their employment with the Order. I chose to leave out the petitions of the medical professions over the other because, while conducting my research I had come across a lot of literature covering medicine during the Order's rule. I also came across a study conducted by Giovanni Bonello, *Petitions by Medical Practitioners 1632-1732*, in which he uses the *suppliche* as his source of information I thus avoided inevitable repetition.³⁰⁰ On the other hand, I came across little literature written specifically on some of the themes I chose to discuss, so I thought that these themes would have been more interesting to cover. Among those petitioning were *proto-medici*, *barberotti* (surgeons), *aromatori* and *profumatori* (pharmacists), and *medici dei poveri* (doctors of the poor). Many of the requests submitted by medical practitioners concerned matters of promotions. This omission has not been an impediment to the realization of a fair judgment on the relation existent between the Maltese people and the magistracy, for the doctors constituted a small fraction of Maltese society.

Without a doubt the arrival of the Order of St. John in Malta brought with it a wind of change that radically transformed the Maltese way of life and started a new page in Malta's history. The standard of living rose and the population trebled. New cities were

³⁰⁰ G. Bonello, 'Petitions by medical practitioners 1632-1732', *Malta Medical Journal* (2006: 3), 40-44.

built and towns and villages expanded. Commerce flourished, new industries were founded and many shops opened up. However, this is a very idyllic picture, below the surface things were not as pleasant. In fact, this study has tried to demonstrate that the conditions of work were very poor and wages very low. Some jobs were also life-threatening, especially within the navy and army considering that Hospitaller Malta was constantly at war with Islam. The lower classes took life day by day, and many lived on the verge of poverty. There was great incongruity between the social classes. But, this was the reality of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Maltese life. People kept working until they were old and decrepit and no longer fit to work. It was only after the Grand Master gave his approval, that a person could retire. Skipping work, according to the measures stipulated in de Vilhena's code of laws, was punished severely. One could retire only when an apt replacement had been recruited and a third of the pension, as indicated in the preceding chapters, had to be paid from the successor's salary. The Maltese endured hardship. They were exploited to their maximum. Changing jobs was not an option. Indeed, fixed employment had become a very precious commodity and the Maltese used everything at their disposal to secure their jobs for their children.

The Grand Master was regarded more as a sovereign than a head of a religious order. He ruled over Malta with a clenched fist just like many other feudal lords in the rest of Europe. He had absolute power in every aspect of Maltese life. The Maltese people had to seek approval from the magistracy for the slightest and most trivial of matters, from the erection of a *tenda* for the protection from the sun to the building of a back door. People were not allowed to carry out any alterations to the inside of their houses or balconies without the Grand Master's approval. The Maltese people, just like in any feudal state, had no say in the running of their country. In addition, regardless of class and status the Maltese were, on the whole, left out from attaining influential positions within the governmental body.³⁰¹ Many times foreigners were preferred to natives.

³⁰¹ D. Gregory, *Malta, Britain, and the European powers, 1793-1815* (Associated University Presses, London, 1996), 37.

The Maltese were completely dependent on and servile to the magistracy. Jobs were provided directly or indirectly by the Order and even the staple foods were bought from Sicily using essentially the Order's funds, most of which, it earned from its commendaries abroad. This situation led to the consolidation of a paternalistic relationship based on servitude. Jobs were not provided out of a sense of civic consciousness, but created rather in response to the Order's needs. Pensions and emoluments were given as an act of charity to the less fortunate. A phrase by Giocomo Bosio the official, sixteenth-century historian of the Order, describes fully this notion 'Piu' d'ogn' altro s'empia di paterna pietà e compassione il Gran Maestro, alle miserie, e alle calamità di quel suo povero, e diletto popolo.'³⁰² Once the element of dependency was entrenched in the Maltese mental set-up it remained with them throughout the British rule that followed. So that when the latter left, the Maltese found it very hard to fend for themselves.

In the meantime, the process of state formation for Malta had led, as elsewhere in Europe, to the concentration of power in the hands of the Head of State, who became more of an autocratic ruler, tending to become as absolute as King Louis XIV of France. This was not only to the detriment of his fellow knights, but also to the population.³⁰³

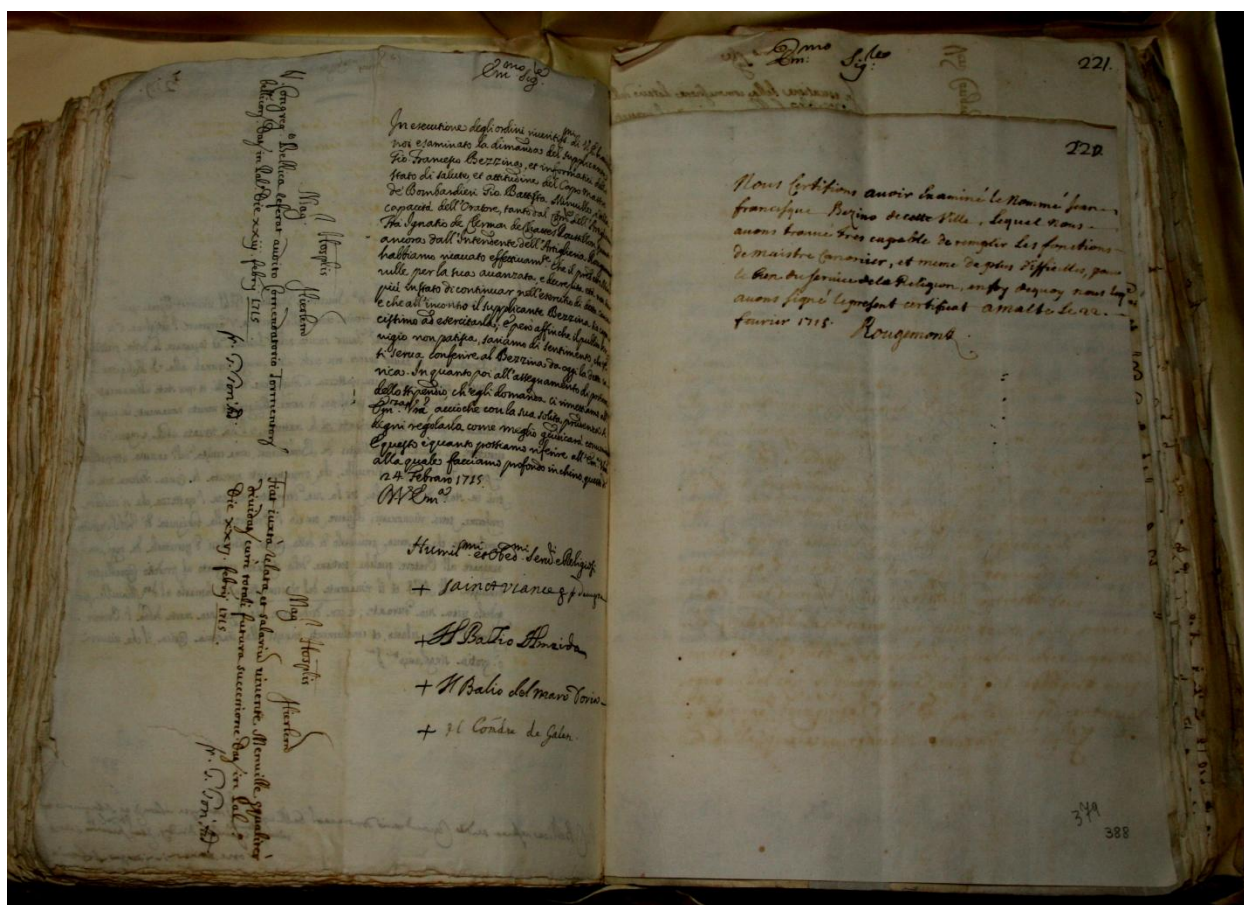
³⁰² 'When the Grand Master saw the extent of the misery (and calamity) his beloved people were living in, he more than anything, felt (paternally) compassionate and pitiful towards his people.' Bosio, 297.

³⁰³ Adrianus Koster, The Knights' State (1530-1798): A Regular Regime, *Melita Historica* VIII no.4, (1983), 310.

Appendix A

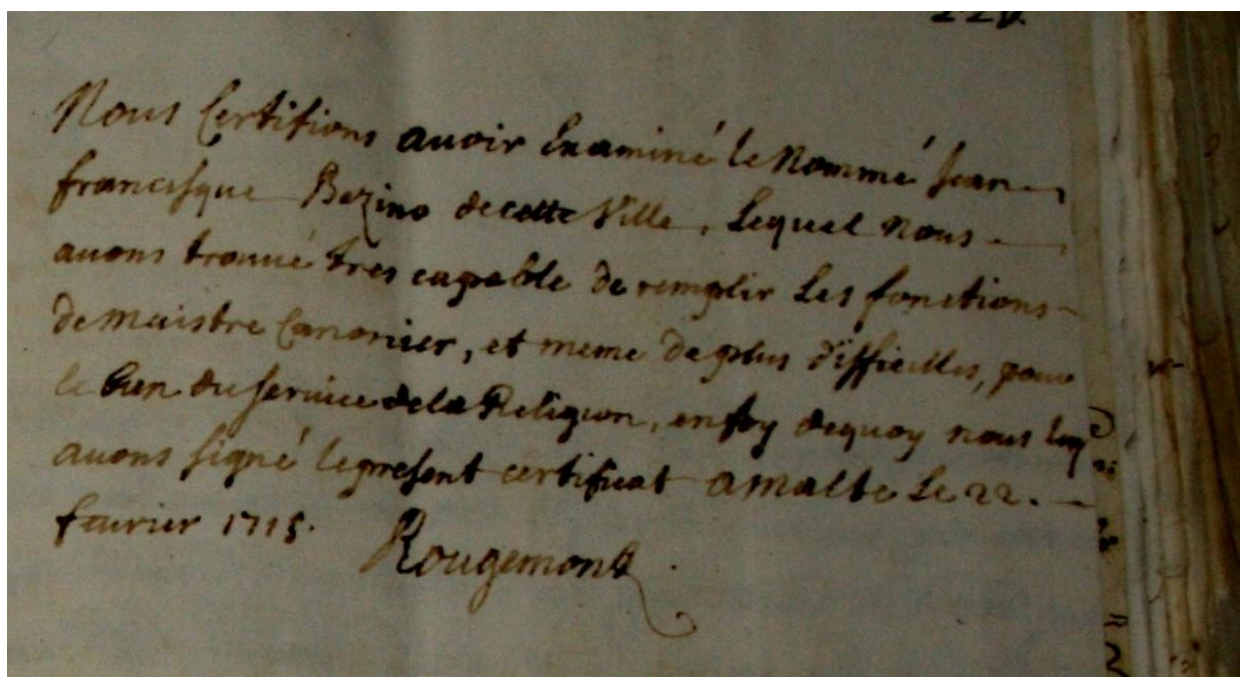
Illustrations

Figure 1 A *Rescritto*



The left page of this manuscript is a rescript. This would be drawn up at the back of the petition by the various officials who would have been assigned the task of looking into the matter. There are also the signatures of the latter, below the *rescritto*. Source: AOM 1186, f., 387 v., 388.

Figure 2 An *Attestato* (letter of reference)



Nous certifions avoir examiné le Nomme' Jean-
francesque Bezzina de cette Ville, lequel nous
avons trouvé tres capable de remplir les fonctions
de maistre Canonier, et meme de plus difficiles, pour
le bien du service de la Religion, en soy dequoy nous luy
avons signé' le present certificat a malte le 22.
Fevrier 1715. Rougemont.

This *Attestato* was written by Knight Rougemont in French. He was acting as a referee in favour of Giovanni Francesco Bezzina's promotion to bombardier. Source: AOM 1186, f., 388.

Figure 3 An *Attestato* (Attestation)

211.

Io fide Io Notaro infra à chiunque spetta la presente
 anche con mio giuramento, qualm^{te} Cesare Bartolo dal
 mese d' Agosto dell' anno scorso 1713. si è portato in mia
 banca, servendosi in qualità di Scrivano, registrandomi
 i proprij atti, et altro, che al giorno m' occorre, et insim' al
 primo giorno si ritrova in mio servizio, e prima d' essersi
 portato con me, stava pure in servizio d' altri Notari, con
 haverli portato sempre con ogni puntualità, e soddisfazione,
 e per ciò presto il mio consenso, per poter conseguire la
 licenza di stipolare Istumenti à mio nome, et in fede di
 ciò mi sono sottoposto con proprio pugno oggi il 7^{mo} del
 mese di Settembre 1714.

Vincenzo Marchese

This *attestato*, written by Notary Vincenzo Marchese, certified that apprentice notary Cesare Bartolo had been apprenticing under his supervision for a year. Vincenzo who was giving his consensus in writing, allowed Cesare to stipulate acts in his name.

Source: AOM 1186, f., 379.

Figure 4 A Supplica.

Pietro Paolo Troisi ^{vin.º} ^{ser.º}, e Usciatto di V.A.S. ^{riuentem.º} Le rappresenta,
 di essendo sin dall'anno 1714, ricorso per memoriale dalla fel. mem. del
~~lor. mo~~ ~~francesco~~ ~~de~~ ~~Perello~~ predecessore di V.A.S., con aver esposto di haver
 un' ardente desiderio di servir in qualità di Coadiutore, con la futura
 succession' a Carlo Troisi di lui Padre come nato dalla Zecca, ottenne sin
 dalli 5. Aprile di dett' anno il benigno rescritto = *Attenta Patrij benigne-*
rentia, Ori benignè supplicata concedimus = come si riconosce dall'ingionti
 Bolla della Cancellaria.
 Ed essendo ridotto a cattivi termini il nominato Carlo di lui genitore, buttato
 in un fondo di letto, antepensionando egli all' A.V.S. con gli grati servizj alla
 sua Sacra Religione, con tanta fedeltà, esattezza, e soddisfazione uni-
 versale per il corso d'anni quarantasei continui resi dal d.º Carlo di lui
 Padre, com' anche quelli dal medesimo Onatore con ogn' attenzione, e
 puntualità prestati per sedici anni, con avere colla prop.ª abilità, e
 industria ridotto in buon sistema la Zecca, e senz' aver mai rispar-
 miato fatiche personali, così nell' essersi conferito in Genova, et in altre
 parti, trasportando seco nuove machine, ed invenzioni per la stampa
 delle monete, ed il segreto di raffinare l'oro con maggior facilità
 di prima, e con vantaggio notabile di detta sua Sacra Religione;
 com' anche in servire come nat.º di Zecca nella Conservatoria con-
 stituente in tutte le contingenze, ch' occorsero; avendo pur' egli
 rimostrato il prop.º talento in tant' opere, che non senz' universal' ap-
 plauso uscirono dalle di lui mani.
 Quindi desideroso di continuar' in tale ministero mediante le speciose, no-
 men che segnalate grazie di V.A.S., alla qual' egli uine tanto tenuto,
 supplicar mil.º la sua conaturale Clemenza degnarsi confermarlo
 in detta Coadiutoria con la futura successione cum omnibus honoribus,
 et onoribus, giacchè il di lui Padre, eziandio che Dio li concedesse
 sup.º con eding

This petition was submitted by Pietro Paolo Troisi, in the year 1730. He was asking to replace his father, Carlo Troisi, as Master of the Mint. He makes reference in this petition to various new machines he came in possession that would have been a great asset in the production of coins. Source: AOM 1187, f., 226.

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