

# JEAN QUINTIN'S *INSULAE MELITAE DESCRIPTIO* (1536): AN ANNIVERSARY AND A DISCUSSION ON ITS SOURCES

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*Abstract* - Jean Quentin (1500-1561) was a French Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, a priest, a traveller, a Professor of Canon Law and a writer. His description of Malta, written in 1533, is about how he saw it at the time the Knights first came to Malta, and about the classical and Pauline traditions related to it. This paper analyses the correctness of his version of these traditions.

## Introduction

Jean Quentin was born on the 20th January 1500, and died on the 9th April 1561. This means that three years ago, we commemorated the 500th anniversary since his birth in Autun in France. But what is Jean Quentin's connection with Malta?

Jean Quentin was a Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta, a priest, a chaplain of the Langue de France, the Grand Master's Secretary, the Bishop's regent, and an experienced traveller. He was well versed in Classics and possessed a mastery of the Latin language as can be seen not only from the numerous books he wrote in Latin, but also from the good style in which they were written. He also lived in France where he was Professor of Canon Law at the University of Paris, and a defender of the Faith (Vella 1980b: 1-2).

Jean Quentin came to Malta in 1530, but he is not mentioned as one of the eight Commissioners sent to Malta in 1524 to inspect the islands and to write a report about Malta for the Grand Master (Vella 1980b: 4-5). He stayed in Malta until 1536, during which period he became well acquainted with its traditions so as to enable him to write a description of Malta by 1533.

Jean Quentin's description of Malta is important because it is the first one of its type and length, because of the traditions it preserves which go back to medieval times, and for the great influence it had on later writers on Malta (Vella 1991: 197-203). This description is eighteen pages long, has been edited seven times, translated incompletely into Italian four times, and fully translated into English once in 1980, the edition which included, for the first time, an annotated Latin version, being *The earliest description of Malta (Lyons 1536) by Jean Quentin d'Autun* (Vella: 1980b).

The *Insulae Melitae Descriptio*, as it was called in Latin, is an eye-witness description of Malta, together with an account of the Classical and Pauline traditions (Vella 1980a: 61-4) referring to Malta, written generally in Ciceronian Latin, and enhanced with phrases borrowed from various authors, but particularly

from Pliny the Elder. It is, however, these traditions that I wish to highlight and comment upon in this paper.

The following are the Classical traditions, in the order as given by Jean Quintin, with some brief discussions:

### **Islands called Melita**

*Melitas multas apud auctores legimus: Est Melita in Graecia prope Marathonem campum; est alia a Semiramide condita in Cappadocia, haud procul Euphrate; est et Melita in Adriatico sinu inter Corcyram et Illyricum; Melitam quandam posuit Plinius in Magnesia (p.16; f.A3)*

*[In the works of writers we come across many Malts. There is a Malta near the plain of Marathon in Greece; there is another one founded by Semiramis in Cappadocia, not far from the Euphrates; there is also a Malta in the Adriatic Gulf between Corcyra and Illyria; Pliny placed a certain Malta in Magnesia].*

Jean Quintin here quotes from Plutarch's *Solon* 10.2 referring to a *Melite* near Marathon; and Pliny's *Naturalis historia* 6.8, 3.152 and 4.32, almost *verbatim*, referring respectively to other *Melitae* in Cappadocia, the Adriatic Sea and Magnesia (Vella 1980b: 51 n. 25, 27-29). A discussion on the *Melite* in the Adriatic Sea, which gave the name to the wrongly called 'Maltese dogs' (see discussion below under 16), appeared in Vella (1995b: 11-15).

### **Affinity between 16th-century Maltese and the Punic passage in Plautus' *Poenulus***

*Hannonis cuiusdam Poeni apud Plautum, Avicennae, huiusque similium Punica verba plurima intelligunt Melitenses, (p.18; f. A3v.)*

*[The Maltese understand most of the Punic words that a Carthaginian character of the name of Hanno uses in the play of Plautus; and of Avicenna, and of people of similar dialects].*

Jean Quintin here refers to the pseudo-Punic passage in Plautus' *Poenulus* 930-49. That the Maltese language is akin to other Semitic languages is a known fact; but it is not known how Plautus could have known enough Punic to include it in his play. All he was concerned with was to produce a series of lines of unintelligible words that would arouse laughter from the audience. It was surprising, therefore, how Agius Sultana (1757: 116-20), Gesenius (1837: 357-82) and Caruana (1882: 71-4), with tremendous imagination, edited Plautus' passage to look more Maltese, when it was never written in Punic in the first case!

## Affinity between 16th century Maltese and three Hebrew words in St. Mark's Gospel

*Eiusdem quoque sunt linguae verba illa in Evangelio Eloi, Ephtha, Cumi.* (p.18; f.A3v.)

[*Those words in the Gospel, Eloi, Ephtha and Cumi, also belong to the same language*].

These three Hebrew words were, in fact, quoted only by St. Mark.

## King Battus of Cyrene

*Principio, insulae Melitae rex quondam fuit, Battus nomine,...* (p.18-20; f.A3v.-A4)

[*First of all, the island of Malta once had a king, of the name of Battus,...*]

Battus was not king of Malta, as Jean Quintin says here, but of Cyrene which he founded in 631 B.C. Quintin's mistake originated from Ovid's own mistake (*Fast.* 3.569-70) when he placed Battus in Malta (see full discussion in Vella 1995b: 5-8):

*Hanc petit, hospitio regis confisa vetusto.  
Hospes opum dives rex ibi Battus erat.*

However, we know from other sources that Battus was really called Aristotle who came from Thera and founded the colony of Cyrene in 631 B.C. (PI. *P.* 4.6. 279-281; HDT. 4.155; DIOD. 8.29.1; CAT. 7.3-6; SIL. 8.57-9; JUST. 13.7.1; PAUS. 3.14.3; HSCH *s.v* Βαττος). Furthermore, the word *Battiades*, meaning 'an inhabitant of Cyrene', was used by various authors (SIL. 2.59-61; 3.253). The word also referred to Callimachus, a native of Cyrene. As such, this was also used by Ovid himself (CAT. 65.15-6; OV. *Am.* 1.15.13, 53-4; *id. Tr.* 2.367; STAT. *S.* 5.3.156-8).

## Dido's and Anna's friendship with King Battus

*..clarus insuper hospitii foedere cum Phoenissa Didone, iam tum ultimis illis temporibus, dum haec exiguam adhuc Byrsam taurino tergo in litore Libyco metaretur. Ad quem etiam post, regno expulsa per Iarbam, Anna, sorore mortua, confugit, hospitium vetus Melitensium et necessitudinem sequuta. Ubi comiter accepta et pari fide apud hospitem Regem habita, profuga duos egit annos, relictae patriae, regni, simul et sororis amissae desiderium, una Melita, quantulacunque esset, tam grata et obvia terra solans.* (p.18-20; f.A3v.-A4)

[...especially famous for the ties of hospitality he made with Phoenician Dido, already then in those most ancient times, when she was still measuring on the Libyan shore the little area of Byrsa by the hide of a bull. To him also, afterwards, Anna, expelled from her kingdom by Iarbas, when her sister had already died, fled and sought the ancient hospitality and friendship of the Maltese. Courteously received and treated with equal honour at the house of the hospitable king, she spent two years here as an exile, mitigating her desire for her abandoned fatherland, her kingdom, and also her lost sister, in this one land of Malta, so pleasant and so near, although so small.]

This passage relates as to how Dido, and, later on, Anna, her sister, sought hospitality with Battus, mistakenly located in Malta by both Ovid and Quintin. Yet, the fact is that Ovid's words refer to Anna only, and not to Dido. Quintin, however, transposed Ovid's words *hospitio regis... vetusto* to refer to Dido instead. Vella (1980b: 52 n. 54) suggested that Ovid's words *hospitio... vetusto* and Quintin's *hospitium vetus* may imply that Anna had already sought the hospitality of Battus, when both sisters were fleeing from their brother Pygmalion. Elsewhere in ancient literature, Battus in Cyrene is visited for the first time by Anna only after the death of Dido.

Apart from Ovid's *Fasti* 3.569-70, 572, 575-6, Quintin also quotes from Appian's *Punica* 1.1, Vergil's *Aeneid* 1.367-8; Lucan 5.556; and Silius Italicus 1.24-5 and PLIN. *Ep.* 8.11.3 (Vella 1980b: 52-3, n. 56, 59, 62).

### **Ovid's reference to Anna**

*Quam deinde, metu coacta Pygmalionis fratris, invita, deseruit, Romanos olim fastos auctura, ut inquit Ovidius mensis Martii festa recensens.* (p.20; f.A4)

[Anna, later forced by the fear of her brother Pygmalion, left Malta against her will, which event was one day to increase the celebrations of the Roman calendar, as Ovid says when he recounts the festivities of the month of March.]

The lines Quintin has in mind when he refers to Ovid's *Fasti* reviewing the feasts of March are 3.523-696.

### **Phalaris of Agrigentum and Lucian's reference to him**

*Agrigentino Phalaridi magno, ac vetusti nominis tyranno (vixit enim dum tertius Romae Tullus Hostilius regnaret) non levis intercessit cum Melitensibus amicitiae coniunctio; cuius est in Lucianicis epistolis ingens argumentum petitae ab his et mutuo sumptae per tyrannum pecuniae.* (p.20; f. A4)

*[The great Phalaris of Agrigentum, a tyrant of an established name (for he lived while Tullus Hostilius reigned as third king of Rome) had considerable ties of friendship with the Maltese. About this there is a great evidence in the letters of Lucian with regard to the money sought by the Maltese and taken on loan from the tyrant.]*

Both Phalaris of Agrigentum and Tullus Hostilius lived around 650 B.C. In fact, Phalaris never had such ties of friendship with the Maltese. Quintin's own words are partly taken from those of a 1st century A.D. sophist called Phalaris. Furthermore, he adds to the confusion saying that these 'letters of Phalaris' are found in Lucian, who, in fact, never produced any letters of Phalaris, but two chapters on Phalaris himself (Vella 1980b: 53-4, n.67-9).

### **Cicero's reference to the Temple of Juno in Malta**

*In qua pariter ab oppido non longe (ut auctor est Cicero) in promontorio fanum fuit Iunonis antiquissimum et nobilissimum, magna vi donariorum priscam circum populorum religionem ostendens. (p.20; f.A4)*

*[In this island, during the same period, there was a very ancient and famous temple dedicated to Juno on a promontory not far from the town (as Cicero noted), indicating, by its great amount of treasures, the ancient religion of the neighbouring peoples.]*

Jean Quintin refers to Cicero's speech delivered against Verres (4.103), which he even quoted verbatim in parts. Yet, Cicero's words *ab eo oppido non longe* referred to *Melita* (today Mdina in part), and Quintin's words *ab oppido* (without *eo*) referred to *Victoriosa*. This was a deliberate deviation from Cicero's original sense in an attempt to identify the site of the temple of Juno, now firmly established as having been at *Tas-Silg*, near *Delimara*, with some remains still visible in his own times near *Victoriosa* (Vella 1980b: 54, n.77; Vella 1982: 274; Vella 1986: 315-22).

### **Masinissa and the ivory tusks which were stolen from the Temple of Juno**

*Unde inter cetera sublato incredibili magnitudine dentes eburneos, et in Africa per praefectum regium portatos, re cognita, statim quinqueremi, numen veritus, Masinissa eo referendos reponendosque curavit. (p.20; f.Av.)*

*[From that temple, among the other things, ivory teeth of incredible size were taken away and transported to Africa by the admiral of the king's fleet. Masinissa, having learnt about it, and fearing the punishment of the goddess, ordered them to be carried back thither immediately on a quinquereme and put back.]*

Jean Quintin refers to this incident on the part of King Masinissa of Numidia in conjunction both to the temple of Juno and to Verres' plundering from the same (CIC. *Ver.* 4.103). Cicero's argument had been that Verres' sin was more serious considering that even barbarians refrained from plundering the same temple (Vella 1980b: 55, n.83).

## The Temple of Hercules in Malta

*Hercules etiam delubro hic omnibus ubique gentibus sanctissimo cultus; ... circuitu in passus ter mille et ultra, in eo insulae angulo quem ab argumento loci, patria lingua Euri Portum nominant. Ima pars extat in plerisque, lapidum longitudinis crassitudinisque stupendae.* (p.20-22; f.A4v.)

[Here was also Hercules venerated in a very sacred shrine, by people from all places; ... its circumference is three miles long or more, and it is situated in that corner of the island which, judging from the position of the place, the Maltese call in their national language 'the south-eastern harbour'. The foundations can be seen in many places: stones of stupendous length and width.]

Jean Quintin's reference to *Euri Portum*, which may be translated as 'the Harbour of the East' cannot be other than that of Marsaxlokk, which in fact is south-east, not east; but Quintin's specific words *in eo insulae angulo*, 'in that angle of the island', confirms his own identification of the remains of Tas-Silġ with the Temple of Hercules. As the only temple at Tas-Silġ was, in fact, that of Juno, a natural conclusion was drawn by the present writer assimilating the two temples within the same site, and complementing the reciprocal roles of the two divinities. Also, an explanation was given of how Melqart-Hercules was linked to Astarte-Juno, and not to Astarte-Venus, Juno being, for the Romans, supreme, unlike Venus (Vella 1980b: 55-6, n.91; Vella 1986: 315-22).

## Ptolemy's reference to the Temples of Juno and Hercules

*Iunonem Ptolemaeus in ea insulae parte posuit, quae Orientem spectat, Herculem ad Austrum:... Herculani templi (si modo vera e Ptolemaeo divino) immensae adhuc reliquiae patent;* (p.22; f.A4v)

[Ptolemy placed the temple of Juno in that part of the island facing the East, and the temple of Hercules facing the South: ... Huge remains of the temple of Hercules, (if indeed this attribution of Ptolemy is true), can still be seen.]

Jean Quintin's mistakes lay in not only misinterpreting Ptolemy's bearings as to which temple was situated by the Grand Harbour, which temple by Marsaxlokk, when in fact we understand there was only one temple which housed veneration for

the two deities, but also in referring to some 'immense remains' which still existed by his times. It has been shown, however, how that part of the island includes remains on many other sites that should not be taken as belonging to one epoch (Vella 1980b: 55, n.85-9; Vella 1982: 272-6).

## The Temple of Juno in Malta

*Iunonis templum ... medio fere loco inter oppidum et castellum. Ruina sparsa apparet in multa iugera, fundamentis et substructionibus templi bonam partem eius partem occupantibus, longe etiam in mari, in quo inaedificatum erat infra clivum promontorii, in planitie undique a ventis et praealtis rupibus defensa. Non est locus effabilis, nisi gentis ipsius ore. In vertice promontorii sacellum est Divae Virgini dicatum cognominatae A Corte. (p.22; f.A4v.)*

*[I think that the temple of Juno... is situated about half-way between the town and the castle. The ruins lie scattered through many acres of land; the foundations and substructures of the temple cover a large part of that harbour, even far out into the sea, built there on the hill-top, on a plain, and sheltered from winds on all sides by very steep slopes. The name of the place is very difficult to pronounce except by the local Maltese tongue. On the hill-top there is a shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, called 'Ta' Qort' (Tal-Qortin).]*

Jean Quintin's words *inter oppidum et castellum* clearly point to Victoriosa, where St. Angelo replaced the former dilapidating fort (*arx est praerupta alta in cacumine, excisae et undique impendentis rupis, ad Orientale insulae latus, in Aquilone tendens, ante tota ruinis deformata et caduca, vix consistens...*, p.28; f.B2v.). It is in this area that he imagined the Temple of Juno to have been located (Vella 1980b: 56, n.95-6).

## Malta and the Second Punic War: Cicero's and Livy's references to the incident

*Hinc a Cicerone scriptum, his fere in locis Punica illa bella navali proelio gesta atque versata esse. Romanis tamen inclinatio. Haec nempe in magno secundi belli Punici apparatu dum a Poenis possideretur, sedente iam ad Trebiam Annibale, adveniensi Sempronio consuli, qui in eam a Lilybaeo traiecerat, cum Hamilcare Gisconis filio praefecto praesidii, et paulo minus duobus millibus militum statim tradita est, ut inquit Livius libro eius belli primo. (p.24; f.B1)*

*[Hence Cicero writes that it was practically in these places that those famous Punic wars were fought and took place in naval battles. Still Malta was more inclined towards the Romans. As Livy says in his first book on that war, while great preparations were being made in the second Punic War and Hannibal was still*

*encamped near Trebia, Malta, which was still in the hands of the Carthaginians, together with Hamilcar, son of Gisco, the commander of the garrison, and a little less than two thousand troops, surrendered immediately to Sempronius the consul, who had crossed thither from Lilybaeum.]*

Jean Quintin quotes here from Cicero's speech against Verres (4.103) and from Livy (21.48.8, 21.51.1-2), almost verbatim, with the mistake of saying that while Sempronius was in Malta, Hannibal was already at Trebia. In fact, when news reached Sempronius that Hannibal had crossed the Rhone to invade Italy, he departed from Malta to help his colleague-consul, while the battle at Trebia took place only after the invasion of Malta (see PLB. 3.61.8; LIV. 21.51.5) (Vella 1980b: 56-7, n.103-6; Vella 1995b: 20-2).

### **Verres' plundering of Malta**

*Praetori Verri Melitenses vestes in iudicio, mella quoque, et stragula Melitensia obiecta sunt.* (p.24; f.B1)

*[Verres the praetor was accused of plundering Maltese clothes, honey too and Maltese rugs.]*

Jean Quintin again quotes from the same speech of Cicero (2.176), indicating items plundered by Verres (Vella 1980b: 57, n.110).

### **Reference to pillows stuffed with roses**

*Pulvinus item Melitensi rosa fartus.* (p.24; f.B1)

*[He also took pillows stuffed with Maltese roses.]*

All these words were taken from the same speech of Cicero (5.27). This quotation also throws light on the renowned Maltese roses, which were used for stuffing pillows on account of their odour.

### **Strabo's and Pliny's references to the 'Maltese dog'**

*Huic insulae Strabo nobiles illos, adagio, non minus quam medicinis, canes adscribit, inde Melitaeos dictos, Plinio,* (p.24; f.B1)

*[Strabo attributes to this island those well-known dogs, famous not only because they were spoken of everywhere, but also for their medicinal value. Hence they are called by Pliny 'Maltese dogs',]*

Jean Quintin quotes from Strabo's *Geographia* 6.2.11, and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* 3.152 and 30.43. Strabo's reference to Maltese dogs in our Malta had been quoted verbatim by his contemporary Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. In Vipsanius' text, however, *οθεν τα κυνιδια α καλουσι Μελιταια* are bracketed, indicating an element of suspicion as to the truth or relevance of these words in this passage. Strabo's text is weakly supported by other similar references partially identifying Melita with our Malta (POLEM. HIST. in *Et. gen. B*, s.v. *Μελιταια κυνιδια*): Stephanus of Byzantium's (s.v. *Μελιτη*) reference points to *Melite* near *Corcyra*, not our Malta. The confusion of our *Melite* and another *Melite* near Epirus goes back at least to the 4th century B.C. when Lycophron (*Alex.* 1027-33) already makes the same error. Lycophron's expression 'near Othronus' points to *Melite* near *Corcyra*. We also have the literary evidence of Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 4.12.52) and Hesychius (s.v. *Οθρωνος*) (1st and 5th century A.D. respectively) regarding *Othronus* near *Corcyra*.

On the contrary, classical authors refer to the other *Melite* without confusing it with ours (A.R. 4.566-75, 1150; AGATHEM. 23; PLIN. *Nat.* 3.26.152, 30.5.43, GAL. 18.1. p.291.12. We quote the two references by Pliny (Vella 1995b: 11-5):

*i. Ab Issa Corcyra Melaena cognominata cum Cnidiorum oppido distat XXV, inter quam et Illyricum Melite, unde catulos Melitaeos appellari Callimachus auctor est.*

*ii. quoque quos Melitaeos vocamus stomachi dolorem sedant adplicati saepius. transire morbos aegritudine eorum intellegitur, plerumque et morte.*

Jean Quintin was not aware that Pliny referred these dogs to the island near *Corcyra*.

## St. Paul's shipwreck in Malta

*Scribit in historia sua Lucas evangelista Paulum Christi Apostolum Melitam venisse, naufragumque et vinctum multa humanitate a Barbaris susceptum. (p.24; f.B1)*

*[Luke the evangelist writes in his narrative that when Paul, the Apostle of Christ, came to Malta as a prisoner, after suffering shipwreck, he was received by the inhabitants with great kindness.]*

The passage in Gospel of St. Luke that Jean Quintin refers to is 28.1 (See further discussion under 25 below).

## The Council of Bishops under Pope Innocent

*Quin etiam et hoc memoriae proditum est, Melitae sub Innocentio, Papa XXXVIII habitam synodum ducentorum et quatuordecim episcoporum contra Pelagium haereticum, (p.24; f.B1v.)*

[Indeed what is more, it is also a tradition that under Innocent, the thirty-eighth Pope, a council of two hundred and fourteen bishops was held in Malta against the heretic Pelagius,]

The mistakes of Jean Quintin arise from the facts that Pope Innocent was the 42nd Pope after Peter, and not the 38th, that 59 or 60 were quoted by St. Augustine (*Epist.* 176 intr.) as having attended this Conference, and not 214, and that this Conference was held at *Milevum* in Africa, not in Malta (Vella 1980b: 58, n.118-9).

## Bishop Sylvanus

*In qua tum, praeter ceteros, adfuerunt Sylvanus, episcopus Melitae...* (p.24; f.B1v.)

[In which, besides others, were present Sylvanus, bishop of Malta,...]

This is another mistake of Quintin's, saying that Sylvanus was bishop of Malta, when in fact we know that he was bishop of Numidia (*AUGUST. Epist.* 128.4; Vella 1980b: 58, n.122).

## The origin of the name of 'Malta'

*Inde illa Melitensia concilia, receptissimae inter ecclesiastica decreta auctoritatis, Melivetana Gratianus nominat; et magnus ille Manichaeorum propugnator Faustus, Melivetanus pariter nuncupatur. Quam nunc vulgo appellationem Romana similiter curia usurpat, de Melita nostra sentiens, ex qua Melivetum detorserunt; cum neutra voce vulgaris appellatio convenit, Malta vocatur. Antoninus in itinere suo recensens insulas inter Siciliam et Africam, meminit cuiusdam Maltaciae: unde puto a corruptis illis et iam barbaris temporibus nostram quoque nunc vocem corruptam.* (p.24-26; f.B1v.)

[Hence Gratianus calls by the name of **Melivetana** those Maltese Councils whose authority is universally accepted among ecclesiastical decrees; and Faustus, that great champion of the Manichaeans, was also called **Melivetanus**. Similarly the Holy See now commonly makes use of this name, meaning our **Melita**, from which name they have distortedly derived the appellation of **Melivetum**. The people commonly call the place with neither of these names, since the island is called **Malta**. Antoninus, in his journey reviewing the islands between Sicily and Africa, makes mention of a certain **Maltacia**: from which I think our word (**Malta**) has also come down in its corrupted form, indeed since those times when it was already misused by the misled inhabitants.]

This is an extension of the mistake arising from Quintin's reference of Sylvanus, bishop of *Milevum*. The adjective of *Milevum* in Africa is *Melivetanus*,

that of Malta *Melitensis* (not *Melitaeus*). Even St. Augustine (*c. Pelag.* 2.4.7), whom Quintin quotes here, refers to *Milevum* in Africa by the term of *Melivetanus*. (Vella 1980b: 58, n.125).

### Lucius' inscription in Greek

Α. ΚΑ. ΥΙΟΣ. ΚΥΡ. ΠΙΠΕΥΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ, ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝ

This inscription (*I.G. 14.601*), now lost, was emended to read and translate as follows:

Α[ΟΥΚΙΟΣ] ΚΑ[ΣΤΡΙΧΙΟΣ] ΥΙΟΣ ΚΥΡ[ΟΥ] ΠΡΟΥΔΗΝΣ ΠΙΠΕΥΣ  
ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ ΑΡΞΑΣ ΚΑΙ  
ΑΜΦΙΠΟΛΕΥΑΣ ΘΕΩ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΩ [ΑΝ]ΕΣ[ΤΗΣ]ΕΝ (p.26; f.B1v.):

[*Lucius Castricius Prudens, son of Cyrus, Roman Knight, President of the Maltese and the senators, having ruled and been priest for the divine Augustus, set up (this inscription).*]

This inscription was set up after the deification of emperor Augustus and, probably, during the reign of emperor Tiberius. Lucius Castricius was a Roman Knight, a senator of the *municipium*, of which he was the president, but he was also priest in the propagation of the cult of Augustus, which the emperor himself, during his lifetime, had instituted under the title of *Roma et Augustus*. Malta and Gozo individually formed part of the Sicilian province.

πατρων here is for the more usual πατερων which, like Μελιταιων, is in the genitive case plural of πατηρ, the Greek transliteration of the Latin *pater* for *pater conscriptus*, meaning 'a member of the senate'. In our context, Council, Senate and *Municipium* are synonymous. The title of πρωτος της νησου, met in the *Acts of the Apostles* (28.7), is, therefore, more fully to be understood for πρωτος Μελιταιων και πατερων, that is, 'Head of the People and Council of Malta' (Vella 1980b 59, n.135; Vella 1995b: 24-5).

### A bronze coin with a Greek inscription

MELITAIΩΝ (Vella 1980b: 59, n.136)

[*of the Maltese*]

### Quintin's interpretation of the origin of the name of Melita

*sic ut nomen traxisse videri possit insula, ipso nomine mellis gloriam statim praeferens.* (p.32; f.B3)

[Thus it may be conjectured how the island obtained its name, definitely revealing the glory of its honey by its own name.]

Jean Quintin's sources for his Latin are VERG. *G.* 4.205 and PLIN. *Nat.* 5.72, but neither Vergil nor Pliny were referring to Malta or to its honey (Vella 1980b: 63, n.204). The fact is that there is no relationship whatsoever between *Melita* and *mel*, *mellis*, first because the root of *mel*, *mellis* is *mell-*, and not *mel-*, while *Melita* is the Latin form for Greek *Melite*. In fact, Ovid refers to our Malta in this Greek form in his *Fast.* 3.567 (see below). The name of *Melite* as a place is then found also in other locations in the Mediterranean, while that of *Melite* in Greek mythology refers to a nymph, one of the Nereides, being a daughter of Nereus and Doris, and in none of these occurrences is there a connexion with the Latin word *mel*, *mellis*.

### Ovid's reference to Malta as fertile

*Ob id (credo) ab Ovidio fertilitatis titulo decoratur Melite.* (p.36; f.B4):

[on account of this (I believe) Malta is honoured by Ovid by calling it fertile.]

*Fertilis est Melite sterili vicina Cosyrae  
Insula, quam Libyci verberat unda freti.* OV. *Fast.* 3.567-8:

Note that by *Libycum fretum* Ovid here means 'the Sea of Africa', not 'the Strait of Africa (or Libya)'. For the Romans of Ovid's times (A.D.17), *Libya* meant *Africa*, that is, either what was formerly Carthaginian territory stretching from modern Algeria to a part of modern Libya, or, in a more extended sense, the whole of North Africa. *Mare Africum*, or *Libycum fretum*, divided the Roman province of Africa (in the narrow sense) from western Sicily. Although both *Melita* and *Cossyra* were to be found in *Mare Africum* (*Melita* was also said to be in the *Mare Siculum*), still, the reference to *sterilis Cossyra* leaves us no doubt that Ovid is not referring to Gozo, which is perhaps more fertile than *fertilis Melite* (Vella 1995b: 6).

### Another reference to King Battus by Ovid

*Non eram dicturus, nisi rex ipse Melitensium Battus gravior quiddam de se suisque apud Ovidium fateretur.* (p.40; f.C1v.)

[I would not have mentioned that had not the very Battus, king of the Maltese, admitted it more seriously about himself and his own people in the words of Ovid.]

*Frater adest, belloque petit. rex arma perosus  
"Nos sumus inbelles, tu fuge sospes!" ait.* OV. *Fast.* 3.577-8:

## St. Paul's shipwreck in Malta and the Maltese tradition

*Nec enim (Lucae adducti, sicuti volunt, annalibus) tenacius certiusve credunt indigenae Petrum Romae fuisse quam Paulum Melitae:* (p.42-46; f.C1v.-C2v.)

[The people (guided as they claim by the annals of Luke) believe as firmly and with certainty that Paul has been in Malta just as much as they believe that Peter has been in Rome.]

Quintin's words *sicuti volunt* and *tenacius certiusve credunt* imply his incredulity. Other similar expressions of his include *sumpsisse videri volunt; quam ab eis acceptam referam, ut potero; ponere conantur; rident illum nescio quem ...; Paulum astruunt; ut ... videantur.*

Quintin's version, although incredulous himself, is a testimony of the 16th-century local tradition of the exact site of the shipwreck, namely, by a peninsula inside a beach, which is, according to the *Acts*, within a bay which had been named after the Saint *vetustissime*, 'from very ancient times', by which site a chapel was already erected by 1533 (p.44; f.C2-C2v.):

*Visitur litus loci illius bimaris ...; nunc a Paulo hic vetustissime cognominatum, in quod is navem illisit. Ibi non ultimae venerationis aedicula lapide extracta.*

[The shore of that place, which is between two seas, can actually be visited ...; it has from very ancient times derived its name from Paul in as much as it is the site of the shipwreck. There is a small chapel in stone, not the least venerated in the island.]

The location of a chapel by the site of the shipwreck is further illustrated by the map which is produced in the 1536 version of the *Insulae Melitae descriptio*. This part of the description also gives evidence of the 16th-century local reference to St. Paul's Grotto at Rabat, and to the absence of poisonous snakes in the island:

*Propter urbem spelunca est effossa introrsum rupe, duabus intus aris, ubi cum vinctis Paulum tres asservatum menses referunt ... Praeterea ... Melitae nullum maleficum serpentis genus neque nascitur neque nocet aliunde invectum.* (p.44-6; f.C2v.):

[Near the city there is a cave dug in a rock, with two altars within; they say that Paul was in custody in it for three months along with the other prisoners, ...Moreover ... no harmful kind of serpents is born in Malta, and those brought from elsewhere become harmless.] (See also Vella 1980a: 61-4, and Vella 1980b: 70-3, n.319-56.).

## Ptolemy's and Pliny's references to Gaudos

(*Ptolemaeo Claudus est, Plinio Gaudos, vulgo nunc Gozo*) (p.42; f.C1v.)

[*according to Ptolemy it is **Claudus**, according to Pliny it is **Gaudos**, according to the present people it is **Gozo**]*

PTOL. *Geog.* 3.17:

η τε Κλαυδος νησος, εν η πολις νβ Λ λδ.

PLIN. *Nat.* 4.12.61:

*reliquae circa eam ante Peloponnesum duae Corycoe, totidem Mylae, et latere septentrionali dextra Cretam habenti contra Cydoneam Leuce et duae Budroe, contra Matium Dia, contra Itanum promunturium Onysia, Leuce, contra Hierapytnam Chrysa, **Gaudos**.*

Strabo, writing his *Geographia* (cf. esp. 1.2.37 and 7.3.6), in the later years of the first century B.C. or early in the first century A.D., refers to the bitter criticism which Apollodorus, his contemporary, throws upon Callimachus, the Librarian of Alexandria, for interpreting Homer's *Ogygia* as *Gaũdos*, near Sicily (rather than near Crete), and his *Scheria* as *Corcyra*, that is, *Kercyra* (modern Corfù) (CALL. *Fr.* 13). Yet, Strabo himself commits the error of adopting the name of *Gaudos* instead of *Gaulos* when he refers to Gozo near Malta. The truth is that Gaudos was situated near Crete, and here Jean Quintin was correct to quote Ptolemy and Pliny (Vella 1980b: 70, n.323-5; Vella 1995b: 10-8).

## Ptolemy's reference to the Chersonesos

*Visitur litus loci illius bimaris (Chersonesos Ptolemaeo dicitur, et vere est)* (p.44; f.C2v.)

[*The shore of that place, which is between two seas, can actually be visited (according to Ptolemy it is called **Chersonesos**, as indeed it is)*]

PTOL. *Geog.* 4.3.13:

και χερσονησος πολις λη γ λδ Λ δ.

Probably, Ptolemy's Chersonesos had nothing to do with the site of St. Paul's shipwreck. The place in Malta which deserves to qualify as the unique reference by Ptolemy to it as a *Chersonesos* is the strip of land joining Mellieħa ridge with Marfa ridge, which includes Anchor Bay on one side, and Ghadira Bay on the other.

## M. Vallius' inscription in Latin in Gozo

*M. GALLIO C.F. QVIR. EQVO PVBLICO EX-  
ORNATO A DIVO ANTONINO AVG. PIO PLEBS  
GAVLITANA EX AERE CONLATO OB MERITA  
ET IN SOLATIVM GALLII POSTHVMI PATRONI  
MVNICIPALIS PATRIS EIVS POSVIT.* (p.46; f.C3)

The following is a reproduction and translation of the inscription as it exists by the old gate of Victoria's citadel in Gozo:

*M. VALLIO C. F. QVIR RVFO EQVO PVBLICO EXORNATO A DIVO ANTONINO  
AVG. PIO PLEPS GAVLITANA E[X] AERE CONLATO OB MERITA ET I[N]  
SOLACIVM C. VALLI POSTVMI PATR[O]NI MVNICIPII PATRIS EIVS ... TE.*

[The Gozitan people (has set up this inscription) for M. Vallius Rufus, son of Gaius, a *quinquevir*, having been honoured with a State horse by the divine Antoninus Augustus Pius, from money collected on account of his merits and to recompense his father, C. Vallius Postumus, the president of the Council.]

The term *divo* suggests the date of the erection of this inscription as in the post-Antonine period. It was set up for Marcus Vallius in honour of both himself and his father Gaius, the latter either formerly or still currently mayor of Gozo. Furthermore, it records the honour of a State horse having been donated to Marcus by the deceased emperor Antoninus Pius. The many mistakes in Quintin's version of this inscription show that Quintin never went to Gozo. Indeed, apart from this inscription, he virtually says nothing about that island (Vella 1980b: 73, n.370-1; 1995b: 30-1).

## Ovid's reference to Cosyra

*Loquitur hic aperte lapis de Gaulo male a nonnullis factam Cosyram. Quam  
geographici omnes inter promontoria Lilybaeum et Mercurii, hoc Africae, illud  
Siciliae, pari pene intervallo reponunt. Nautis hoc tempore Pantellaria nominata,  
centum a Melita millibus, quum sit Gaulos ferme contigua. Deceptos hoc dixisse  
coniicio Ovidiano illo versu, Fastorum tertio:*

*Fertilis est Melite sterili vicina Cosyrae,  
Insula quam Libyci verberat unda freti.*

*dum is Annam fugientem e Carthagine describit; quam equidem non dubito a  
promontorio Mercurii (nautae nunc sua lingua Capo Bono vocant, adversum Siciliae  
in altum valde procurrens) Cosyram venisse - nulla enim promontorio vicinior, abest  
quingenta millibus pass. - deinde recta quo destinarat Melitam ad amicum regem  
contendisse. Propterea Cosyram cum Melita coniunxisse poetam.* (p.46-48; f.C3)

[This inscription clearly treats of Gozo, which was mistakenly identified by some with Cosyra. All geographers however place Cosyra between the promontories of Lilybaeum and of Mercury, the latter in Africa, the former in Sicily, practically half-way in between. Pantellaria, so called by the sailors today, is a hundred miles distant from Malta, while Gozo is very near Malta. Those who have said this, I gather, were deceived by that verse, in the third book of Ovid's *Fasti*:

*Fertilis est Melite sterili vicina Cosyrae,*

*Insula quam Libyci verberat unda freti.*

Ovid was there describing how Anna fled from Carthage. Of course, I have no doubt that she came to Cosyra starting from the promontory of Mercury (which the sailors today call in their own language *Capo Bono*, looking towards the deep, right opposite to Sicily) - for there is no other island nearer to this promontory than Cosyra and it is fifty miles distant from it - and that from there she came straight to her friend the king in Malta, which was her destination. For this reason I believe that the poet has linked up Cosyra with Malta.]

Jean Quintin says that Ovid's couplet misled other authors in concluding that Gozo was then called Cosyra. But we do not know what authors were deceived by Ovid's words and confused Gozo with Pantellaria. Quintin's other mistake lay in saying that Anna came to Malta where Battus was king. His mistake originates from the same Ovid who, a couple of lines later, places Battus in Malta.

*Hanc petit, hospitio regis confisa vetusto.*

*Hospes opum dives rex ibi Battus erat.*

Strabo, contemporary of Ovid, says that Μελιτη is 'five hundred stadia' from Κοσσυροϋς. Instead, Strabo probably refers to what he himself (*Geog.* 2.5.19, 6.2.11), Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (9), Julius Honorius (41) and Stephanus of Byzantium (*s.v.*), call Κοσσυρα, that is, Pantellaria. Other writers referring Pantellaria to *Cossura* are the following: LIV. *Epit. lib.* 89; PLIN. *Nat.* 3.8.92, 5.7.42; SIL. 14.271-4. Whatever the inaccuracies pointed out above, one can conclude that both Ovid and Strabo were referring to Pantellaria, not too far from Malta, and not to Gozo, adjacent to Malta (Vella 1995b: 5-9).

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