





VIRTU DELLA PIETRA DI S. PAOLO

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The Military and Hospitaler Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem

Malta, 2010





PATRIARCH GREGORY III



PREFACE

by

H.E. Chev. Joseph R. Pace GCLJ, KMLJ, GrCrMLJ

The Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands and the Commandery of Gozo of the international ecumenical Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem welcome the Spiritual Protector of the Order – His Beatitude Gregory III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch and all the East.

Since the establishment of Christianity on the islands, the Maltese Islands appear to have gravitated towards the Roman Church. However, the arrival of the Order of Saint John in 1530 with their retinue of Rhodian refugees brought a number of individuals who pertained to the Greek Orthodox rite. This community was initially given usage of a chapel originally dedicated to St. Catherine patron of rope-makers at the maritime town Birgu. Since the Rhodians had brought with them the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Damascus, they rededicated the chapel to Our Lady of Damascus. This chapel was enlarged in 1550 under the direction of the

Rhodian Nicholó Flavari. ¹ After the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, the Order established a new capital named Valletta. In 1576, the foundation stone for a new chapel was laid by the Greek 'Papas' Giovanni Calamia. The new Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Damascus was inaugurated in 1587 to serve as the Greek parish church under the direction of the brothers Angelino and Emmanuel Metaxi. The icon of Our Lady of Damascus was transferred to the new church, while a replica was made and left in the Birgu chapel. Throughout the centuries, the chapel in Valletta was modified and augmented. In 1659, the Confraternity of the Risen Christ was established in this church. The Chapel was destroyed during World War II in 1942. It was rebuilt and consecrated in 1951 under the direction of architect Orazio Diacono. ²



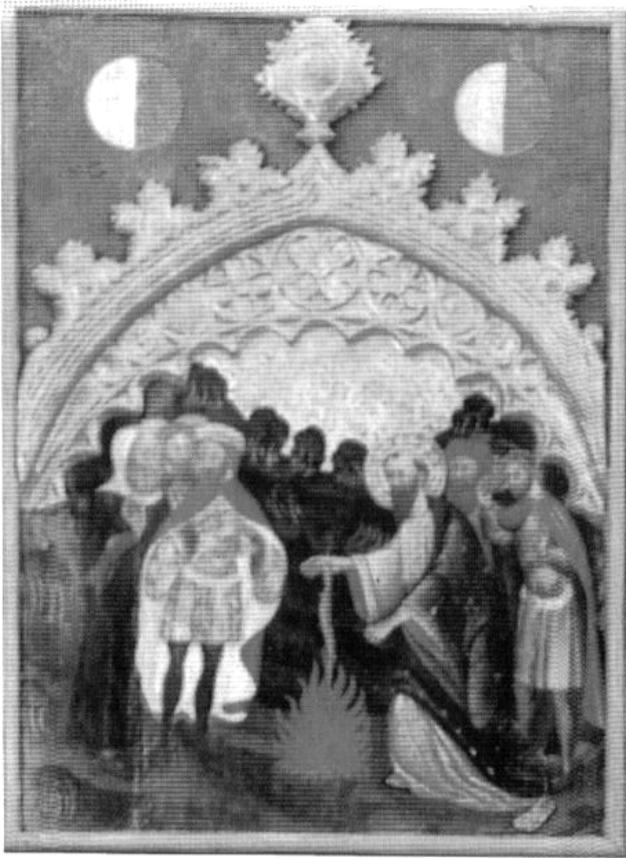
¹ G. Gauci. Churches, Chapels & Oratories in Birgu. Bestprint Ltd. Malta, 2001, p.47

² A. Ferres. Descrizione storica delle Chiese di Malta e Gozo. Malta, 1866, p.181-185

The present most interesting publication has been prepared by the learned Professor Charles Savona-Ventura who served as the hospitaller, historian, and newsletter editor of the Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands within the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem. Prof. Savona-Ventura is primarily a consultant obstetrician-gynaecologist, but has specialised further in medical history and has written several publications in this field, including the book *The Hospitaller knights of Saint Lazarus* published in 2006 by the Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands. The author is also a member of the academic body of the University of Malta, not only in his primary medical speciality serving as head of the academic department, but also lectures in medical history in the postgraduate programme of the Institute of Maltese Studies.

The research carried out by Prof. Savona-Ventura in producing the present work presented in his inimitable recount cannot fail to impress the reader. It thus gave me great pleasure to write the Preface to this small but significant ‘opus’; especially since it has been specifically commissioned for the occasion of the visit to Malta and to the local Lazarite Jurisdictions by His Beatitude, who is combining his stay with the visit by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of the conclusion of the Pauline Year and the celebrations commemorating the occasion of the 1950-year anniversary since Saint Paul was shipwrecked on Malta bringing Christianity to the Island’s shores [*Acts 28:1-10*].





Saint Paul's Miracles in Malta

From a side panel of a Retable of St. Paul, Cathedral Museum, Mdina



VIRTU DELLA PIETRA DI S. PAOLO

COMMENTARY

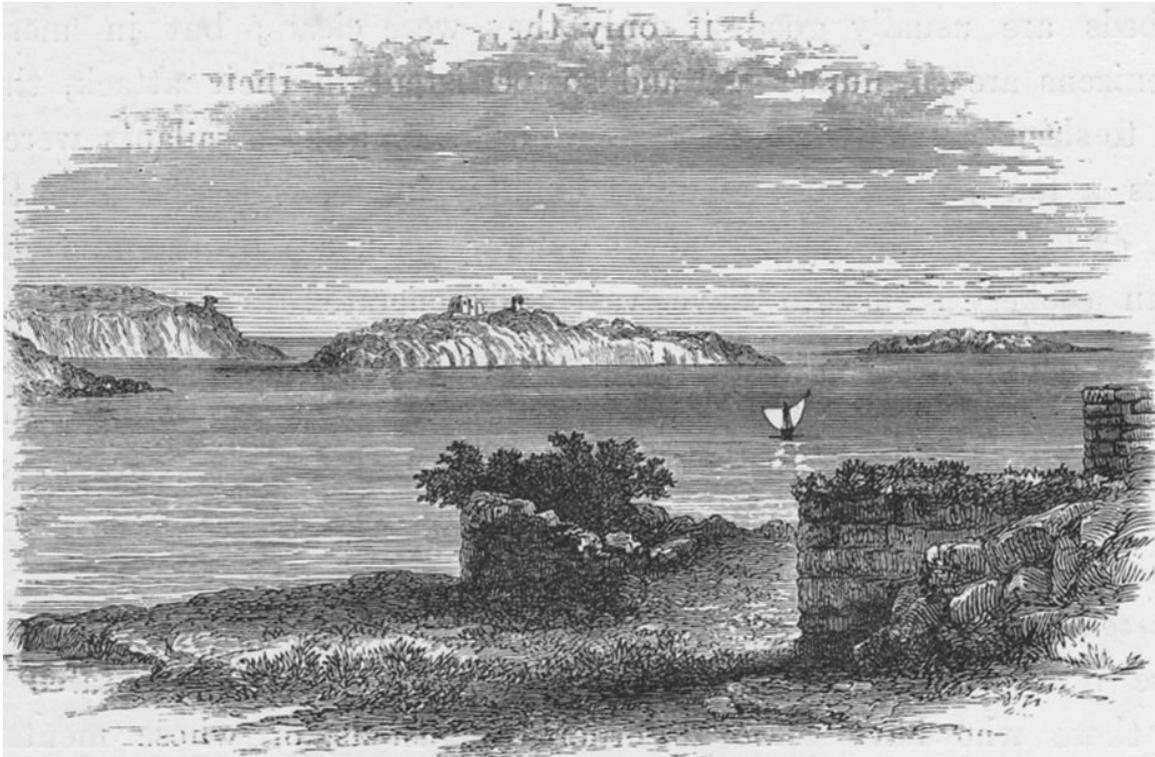
by

Chev. Charles Savona-Ventura KLJ, CMLJ, BCrMLJ

The first actual official association between the island of Μελίτη or Melite mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles [Acts: 28:1] with the island of Malta is the poem *De Actibus Apostolorum* composed by the Classical poet Arator and dedicated to Pope Vigilius in 536 AD; though an earlier post-4th century association was current in the New Testament apocrypha entitled *Acts of Peter and Paul*. According to text of the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostle Paul of Tarsus miraculously cured the father of the Roman Governor of Malta who according to tradition owned and lived at the *villa rustica* in the north of Malta at Burmarrad [etymology: *bur* = fields, *marrad* = sickly].³ According to tradition, the Roman Governor Publius was

³ The *villa rustica* at Burmarrad is known as San Pawl Milqi [= St Paul welcomed]. The archaeological remains at this site suggest that the villa was an olive oil producing establishment. The site excavations carried out in the course of the 1960s by a *Missione Archeologica* from the University of Rome have given inconclusive results. M. Gagiano de Azevedo, *Testimonianze Archeologiche della Tradizione Paolina a Malta*, Rome 1966.

converted to Christianity and became the first Bishop of Malta. In 90 AD, he was transferred to the See of Athens, where he was martyred in 125 AD during the persecution of Emperor Hadrian.



Late 19th century view of St. Paul's Bay and St. Paul's Islands ⁴

However there is nothing to suggest that a Pauline tradition became established in Malta with his arrival and the archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest Christian presence on the island occurred at a post-Constantian date. The *Liber Pontificalis* includes among its earliest sources a donation document dated ~317 AD wherein the archipelago of *Mengaulum* [*Melite-Gaulos*] formed part of an endowment of several lands and other gifts donated by Emperor Constantine to the Lateran baptistry. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon record that in 451 AD *Episcopus Melitenus* Acacius was in attendance; while the *Episcopus Melitenensis* Constantinus also attended the Fifth General Council in 501 AD. The first incontrovertible proof of an established church and bishopric in the Maltese Islands dates from 592 AD

⁴ Antique wood engraved print [approx 6.5 x 10.0 cm]; unsigned, published in Robert Brown: Peoples of the World. Cassell & Co., 1893

when Pope Gregory I wrote a series of four letters in connection of the deposition of *episcopo de Melita* Lucillus and his replacement by *frater et coepiscopus* Trajanus. The See of Malta appears to have belonged to the Roman Church through the See of Syracuse, though it seems to have had some relations with the African Church. The last recorded Bishop of Malta before the Arab invasion of the Islands in 870 AD was a Greek by the name of Manas, who was subsequently incarcerated at Palermo, Sicily. ⁵

The first evidence of a Maltese Pauline tradition may be a 12th century account by Konrad of Quernfurth who refers to the *Uomini di San Paolo* who were claiming to have received a special gift from the descendants of the Maltese, whereby they could administer cures for venom and snakebites. These Maltese descendants had claimed that they had the power of killing venomous animals by spitting on them. This belief was repeated by the German cleric Ludolph of Suchen in the mid-14th century writing “On this island there still live people who boast of being descendants of that household through whose hospitality such [favours] happened to St Paul”. Ludolph also mentions that Malta rock sanctified by the apostle Paul, when pounded into dust and diluted in wine, was a potent antidote against venomous substances. ⁶ In 1485, the deceit of the *Uomini di San Paolo* was exposed by Teseo Pini in his work *Speculum Cerretanorum*. In his work, Pini recalls in Rome in his youth, he had heard a member of the *Uomini di San Paolo* boast of his miraculous power conceded to his family by St. Paul. The swindler carried a serpent-mark on his shoulders as proof that he was a member of this household. Pini recognised it for a simple tattoo. ⁷

⁵ G. Aquilina, S. Fiorini (eds.): *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*. Part IV. Documents at the Vatican. No.2 Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Cancellaria Apostolica and Camera Apostolica and related sources at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 416-1479. University Press, Malta, 2005, doc.1-8 (p.2-11)

⁶ Buhagiar M. St. Paul's shipwreck and early Christianity in Malta. *Catholic Historical Review* 2007; 93(1):1-16

⁷ B. Montinaro, “*Credenze Popolari - Tradizione Paolina*”, *Sudpuglia - Rassegna trimestrale della Banca Popolare Sud Puglia* (year ix/4 - Dec. 1983), 96-97

The rock was by 1536 more directly related to the rock from the cave near the Roman walls of the city of Melite where the apostle is thought to have resided during his stay on the island. A church had been built above the cave by 1366 suggesting an even earlier association. ⁸ Jean Quintinus d'Autun in 1536 wrote that “*Es eo, quod modo dixi, antro, nullo non die, per aduenas lapidum frusta effringuntur, quibus serpentum et scorpionum ictibus tota Africa et Italia, Romae etiam palam sese mederi affirmant. Plebs gratiam sancti Pauli nominat.*” ⁹ A similar statement was made by the Apostolic Visitor to Malta Mgr. Pietro Dusina in 1575, writing: “*Locus iste in quo Ecclesia fundata est, Sanctus est, et valde devotus quia in eo divus Paulus habitavit, et saepe Verbum Dei praedicavit, ecclesia est tota in saxo posita, ex qua fideles quotidie fragmenta eripunt quae dicunt adversus omnia venena prodesse, si aqua immista bibatur aqua hanc gratiam in honorem divi Pauli fuisse concessam illi saxo permagno in quo ipse habitavit, ita mirabilis est Deus in Sanctis suis.*” ¹⁰

Similar assertions were made in maps depicting the Maltese Islands. An early map depicting the “*Chiesia de San Paulosoto alla quale é La Grotta dove si cava la pietra che é contra veleno*” is that by Matteo Perez De Allecio published in Rome in 1582. ¹¹ In 1610, the administration of St. Paul’s Crypt was taken over by the Grandmaster of the Order. ¹²

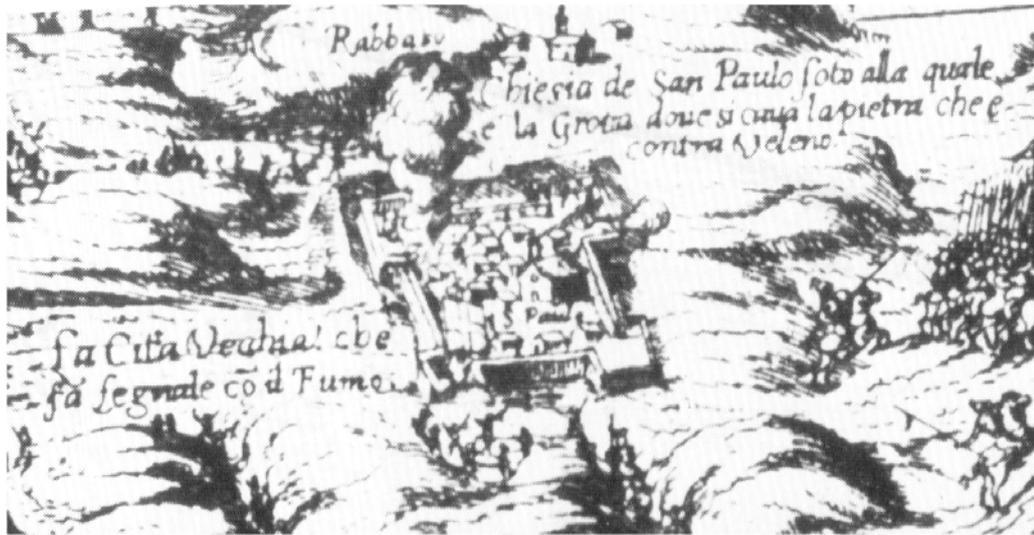
⁸ G. Wettinger. A Land Grant by Bishop Ylario to Bochius de Bochio at St Paul’s Grotto In: Azzopardi J, editor. *Medicine and Folklore. St. Paul’s Grotto, Church and Museum at Rabat, Malta.* Malta: Progress Press; 1990. p.65-67

⁹ Quintinus d’Autun J. *Insulae Melitae description.* Lyons; 1536

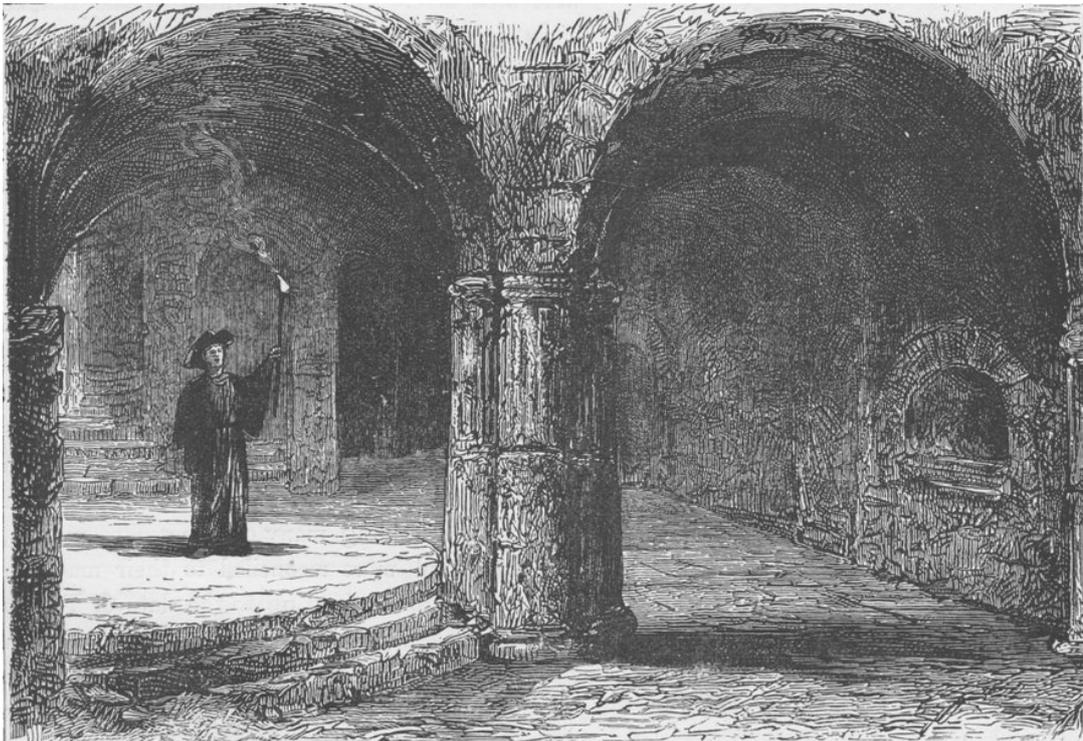
¹⁰ G. Aquilina, S. Fiorini (eds.): *Documentary Sources of Maltese History. Part IV. Documents at the Vatican. No.1 Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Congregazione Vescovi e Rogolari.* Malta: Vista Apostolica no.51 Mgr Petrus Dusina, 1575. University Press, Malta, 2001, fol.27 (p.51)

¹¹ Ganada A. The Grotto of Saint Paul in Maltese Cartography and in topographic illustrations. In: Azzopardi J, editor. *Medicine and Folklore. St. Paul’s Grotto, Church and Museum at Rabat, Malta.* Malta: Progress Press; 1990. p.229-247

¹² Dal Pozzo B. *Historia della Sacra Religione militare di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano detta di Malta.* Verona; 1703-15. Libro nono: p.547



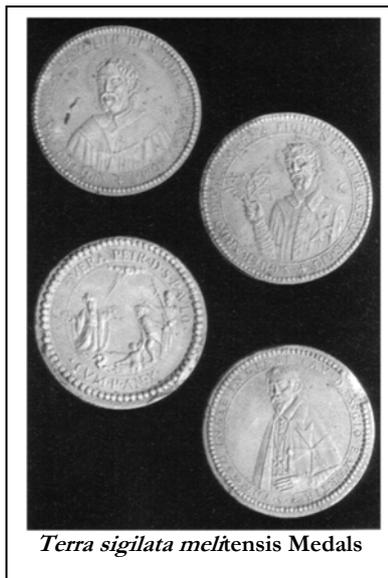
Detail showing the Grotto of St. Paul at Rabat
in the map by Matteo Perez De Allecio, 1582



Catacombs in Citta Vecchia, Malta, where St. Paul is said to have preached ¹³

¹³ Antique wood engraved print [approx 9.5 x 19.0 cm]; unsigned, published in Robert Brown: Peoples of the World. Cassell & Co., 1893

By the 16th century, the viper story described in the Acts of the Apostle had been expanded to include a number of pseudo-historic and medical beliefs. ¹⁴ Jean Quintinus d’Autun further wrote that “XXI. *Praeterea (ut haec insula non solum ab eo diligi, sed etiam pene incolis et custodiri uideatur) Melitae nullum maleficum serpentis genus neque nascitur neque nocet aliunde inuectum. Sunt indigenae quasi terrori serpentibus. Scorpiones, dirum alibi animal, inter manus lasciuientium puerorum conspiciuntur innoculi; uidi qui mandaret. Quod Pauli uiperam admorso pendentem digito citra noxiam.*” ¹⁵ Interestingly, writing in 77 AD, Gaius Plinius Secundus in his *Historia Naturalis* also comments on the absence of poisonous scorpions on the sister island of Malta, Gozo writing in his Liber V: “*mox Gaulos, Galata, cuius terra scorpiones, dirum animal Africae, necat. dicuntur et in Clupea emori, cuius ex aduerso Cossyra cum oppido*”. ¹⁶



Terra sigillata melitensis Medals

Even more important was the perpetuation and augmentation of the 12th century myth started by the *Uomini di San Paolo*. Ground or chipping of rock from St. Paul’s Grotto at Rabat, known as *terra sigillata melitensis*, became an important part of *material medica* in the treatment of venomous snakebites and poisons. The earth from the grotto was available in two forms: (1) *terra cruda* in its crude form and (2) *terra preparata* powdered and worked into a hard paste and made into balls and medals often stamped with special seals of authenticity and exported to Europe.

The rock was also worked into statuettes, vases, and cups (*controveleno cups*). One *controveleno* cup made from *Terra Melitensis sigillata* is held in the Medieval Department of the British Museum. On the internal aspect bears the seal of

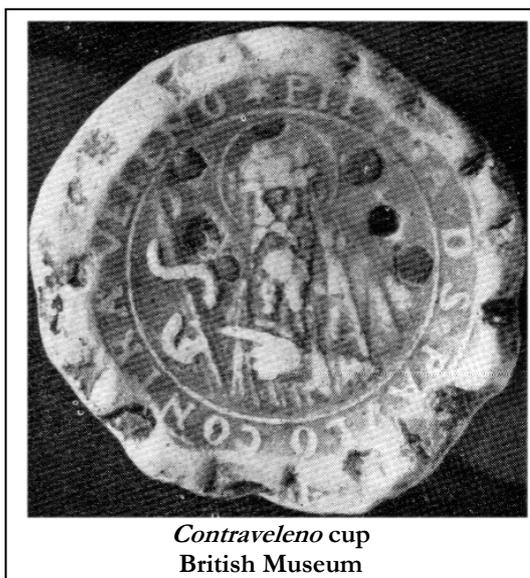
¹⁴ Savona-Ventura C. Maltese Medical Folklore – Man and the Herpetofauna in Malta. A Review. *Maltese Medical Journal* 1990; 2(1):41-43.

¹⁵ Quintinus d’Autun J. op. cit

¹⁶ Pliny the Elder: the Natural History. Teubner editions of the text as established by Karl Mayhoff http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Pliny_the_Elder/5*.html

authenticity showing St. Paul holding a staff around which is entwined a snake with a peripheral legend reading “*Pietra D. S. Paolo. Contra-Veleno*”. Embedded in the material are a number of *Occhio di serpe*, presumably to further enhance its efficacy.¹⁷

In the preparation of *Terra Melitensis sigillata*, the rock chippings from St. Paul’s Crypt were finely powdered in a mortar and subsequently placed in a marble or earthenware receptacle and soaked in water. The suspension after stirring was decanted and filtered through greased paper. The bolus thus formed was used as required. The earth was taken either mixed with wine, water or spirits, or else by drinking water or wine poured into *controveleno* jugs made from the stone.¹⁸ Besides being efficacious for venomous bites, it was allegedly also of use in smallpox and fevers.¹⁹ It was also believed to have a stimulant effect on the heart.²⁰



**Contraveleno cup
British Museum**

Authentication testimonials were regularly issued. A 1571 certification of authenticity of the rock collected by Thomas di Bastiano of Cremona from St. Paul’s Crypt is available in manuscript form. The document confirms that “*subsequenti la experiential qual Jornalmenti si vede contra morsi di viperi et di Animali venenosi et mortiferu di qualsivoglia specie dela quail pietra Ancora si fornino in multo altro loro devotioni.*”²¹ The

¹⁷ Zammit Maempel G. Two contra-veleno cups made from Terra Sigillata Melitensis. *St. Luke’s Hospital Gazzette* 1975; 11(2):p.85-95

¹⁸ Zammit Maempel G. Rock from St Paul’s Grotto (Malta). In: Azzopardi J, editor. *Medicine and Folklore. St. Paul’s Grotto, Church and Museum at Rabat, Malta*. Malta: Progress Press; 1990. p.169-216

¹⁹ Brydone P. *A Tour through Sicily and Malta in a series of letters to William Beckford, Esq of Somerly in Suffolk*. 3rd ed. Vol 1. Dublin: J. Potts; 1775. p.231-232.

²⁰ “*ex ea parantur vasa quibus si v’num vel aqua infundatur, liquor virtute cardiaca donari vulgo creditor.*” Geoffroy S.F. *Tractatus de Materia Medica sive de Medicamentorum Simplicium Historia virtute, delectu & use*. Vol.1, pars.1. Paris; 1772. p.45

²¹ Zammit Maempel G. op. cit.

Swiss-German physician-surgeon Paracelsus [b.1493; d.1541] mentioned the *terra sigillata, id est terrae Sancti Pauli* from Malta in his work *Bucher und Schriften* [ed. Johannea Huser; C. Waldkirch: Basle, 1589-99, vol.6:p.471,566].²²

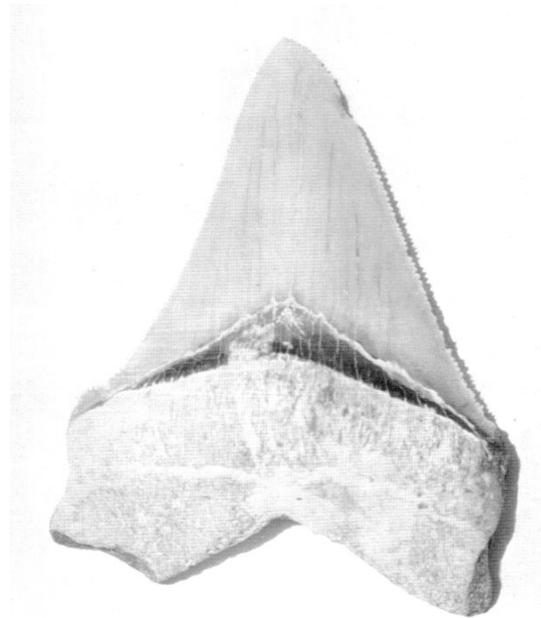
It was also believed that the rock in St. Paul's Crypt had the power of regeneration and no matter the amount of limestone cut from the cave; the dimensions always remain the same. This belief is documented in two Latin inscriptions on marble slabs set in the wall leading down into the Crypt. One undated slab documents that "*Melitensium patrem gentiumque apostolum Paulum fortunatissimo ad hanc insulam naufragio appulsus obscura, quam cerbitis crypta humaniter excepit hospitio. Lucidus hinc tanti viri ditata virtutibus terrarumque orbi prodigiosa reddita et illustris; ne venemertissimi unqua parentis memoria decrescat excosos indies lapidibus, nec ipsa decrescit.*" The second slab tablet erected in 1743 reads: "*Hoc dextrum D. Pauli Cryptae latus terram asportantib. Nunoquam clausu, et nunquam deficiens simper excisij nunquam decrescens ut in majorem cresceret venerationem Em. H.H.M.M. et Princeps Ser. Fr. Emmanuel Pinto Nobiliori auxit ornatu. Anno Dni M. D C CXLIII.*"



Similar properties were attributed to fossil shark teeth – *glossopetra* – which were considered to be imprints of the tongue of St. Paul, and to fossil palatal teeth – *occhi de serpe* – considered to be petrified eyes of snakes. These were mounted and worn as amulets, suspended on devices to be used as poison detector by royalty, or powdered and used as a medicine (known as *linguae* or *lapid. divi Pauli*). *Glossopetra* were also decoratively suspended from coral trees forming *languiers*. These were

²² Dannenfeldt KH. The Introduction of a new sixteenth-century drug Terra Silesiaca. Medical History 1984; 28:174-188.

placed on the table and used for dipping into wine to protect against deliberate poisoning.



Saint Paul's tongue

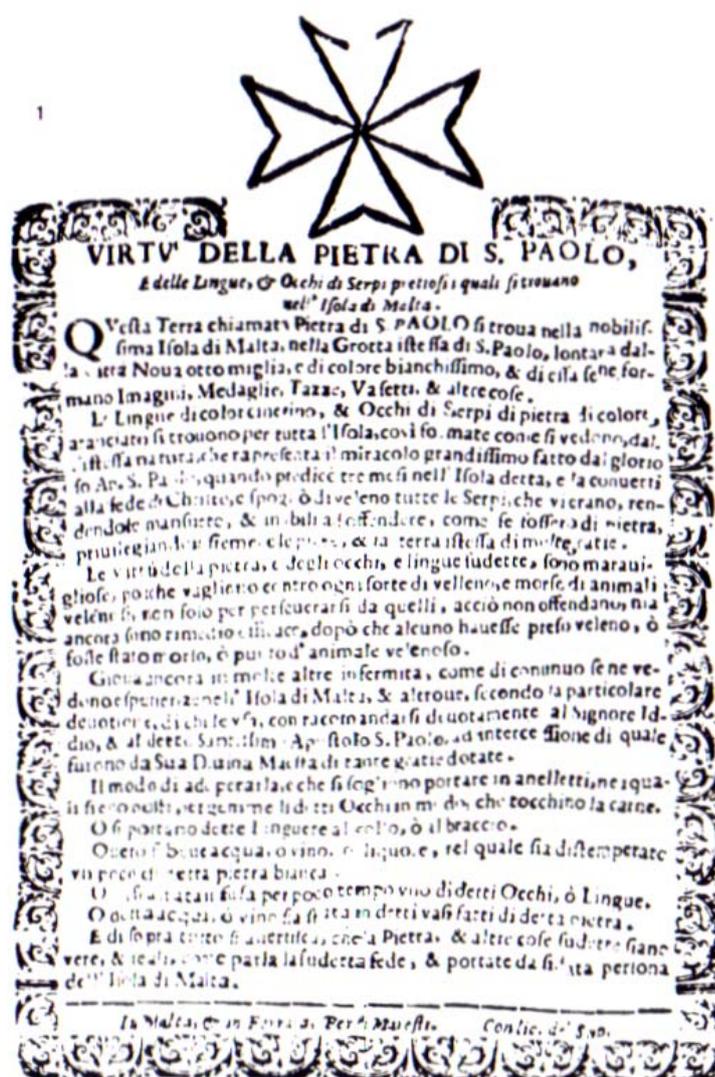
The anti-venomous properties attributed to rock from St. Paul's Crypt were believed to further extend to all ground rock from Malta. The early 17th century historian of the Order, Giacomo Bosio records that on the 31st July 1566, a ship arrived in Malta from Venice laden with timber and iron. While the pine planks were being unloaded, a poisonous serpent fixed its fangs into a seaman's hand. The bite was treated by a Maltese layman who advised the seaman to make the sign of the cross over his hand and cover the hand and snake with powdered Malta rock. The serpent died forthwith, whereas the seaman remained hale and hearty.²³

According to the published handbills, the best way to use the *Pietra di S. Paolo* or the *linguae* and *occhi di serpe* was to “*portare in detti anelletti ne I quail posti per gemme, li detti in modo che tocchino la carne. O si portano detti Linguetti al collo, ó al braccio. O vero si beve acqua, ó vino, ó liquore nel quale sia distemperata un poco di detta pietra Bianca. O vi sia stata infusa per poco tempo uno do detti occhi, ó linguae. O detta acqua, ó vino sia stata in detti vasi fatti di*

²³ Bosio G. Dall' Istoria della Sacra Religione et Illma Militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano. Rome, 1630

detta pietra.” However “*sopra tutto si auuertisca, che la pietra, & altre cose sudette siano vere, e reali, e non falsificate: ma portate da fidata persona della detta Isola di Malta con le debite fedì.*”

Most of the handbills were printed in Malta [1643, 1646, 1654, Malta & Ferrara, n.d.]; Sicily [Palermo, n.d.; Messina, n.d.; Messina & altrove, n.d.]; or Italy [Rome, 1768]. These handbills generally measured 215 x 135 mm, but larger ones measuring 243 x 170 mm were also published. They were generally written in Italian or French, but German and Latin translations have also been described. The earliest known handbill being dated to 1630 was published by Giacomo Mascardi in Rome.²⁴



A handbill printed in Malta, n.d.

²⁴ Zammit Maempel G. Handbills extolling the virtues of fossil sharks' teeth. *Melita Historica* 1978; 7(3):p211-224

Interestingly, a list of prescriptions prepared for patients treated at *Hospitalis Santi Spiritus* dated to 1546 includes two cases of poisoning. The treatment prescribed by the local practitioner failed to include any mention of the use of *lapid & linguae d Pauli pulv.* Instead the practitioner prescribed a *theiriaca* composed of various compounds including *Terra Lemniae*, *trochisci viperarum* and peppers.²⁵ Another 16th century pharmacy inventory includes the drug *Enula capans* made from an extract of the roots of the plant *Inuls belenium* believed to be efficacious against snakebite.²⁶ *Terra melitensis* was highly prized and was considered a worth present to give to distinguished personalities, such as the Apostolic Delegate Rocco Pirri who visited Malta in 1610. In accepting, Mgr. Pirri considered the gift “*un vero dono e un signe presente*”. Prescriptions containing specific mention to *Lapidi D. Pauli* were included in the *spogli* bills of two aromataro – G.F. Azzupardo in the 1694 *spoglio* of fra Giuseppe d’Almeida and Lorenzo Hagius in the 1711 *spoglio* of fra Francesco Martines. A prescription for *Linguae D. Pauli* was named in the list presented by Raimondo Polladi in 1709 in the *spoglio* of fra Giovanni Valz.²⁷ Similar entries for *Lapid. D. Pauli* and *Linguae D. Pauli* were registered in the prescription register of medicine prescribed for the members of the Community of the Society of Jesus for 1713-1735.²⁸ *Lapides sive Linguae Divi/Domini Pauli praeparatae* was on sale at the *Hospitalis Santi Spiritus* in 1769 for the price of three *tari*.²⁹

By the end of the 18th century, the efficacy of *Terra Melitensis sigillata* was being queried. Comte de Borch in 1782 recommended its restricted use but cautioned against using it in cases of fever. He considered that excessive use of the powder was harmful since it could leave calcareous deposits in the milk-ducts and the

²⁵ Fiorini S. A prescription list of 1546. *Maltese Medical Journal* 1988/89; 1(1):19-31

²⁶ Cassar P. Inventory of a sixteenth century pharmacy. *St. Luke’s Hospital Gazette* 1976; 11(1):p.26-34

²⁷ I.C. Grima. An investigation of L’Arte dello Speziale in Baroque Malta – a study of the Spogli of Members of the Order of St. John. Thesis: M.A. Baroque Studies, University of Malta, 2005, p.2125-126

²⁸ P. Cassar. Two centuries of Medical prescribing in Malta, 1683-1882. *St. Luke’s Hospital Gazette* 1969, 4(1):p.48-52

²⁹ Farigiani L. *Taxa Recens pretii omnium pharmacorum Tam Semplicium quam Compositum ... ad usum Hospitalis ... Santi Spiritus*. Malta, 1769. p.34

bladder.³⁰ These items of *materia medica* were regularly exported to the European continent. In spite of the easy availability of *Terra Melitensis sigillata* from local sources, the *Sacra Infermeria* during the period 1770-1798 regularly imported from Marseille *Terra Lemnia sigillata* that originated from the island of Lemnos.³¹ Dr. Hennin in 1821-24 reported that this “absorbent earth found in some caves is used in all cases attended with acrimonious humours, and as a specific in fevers”.³² An authentication testimonial was issued as late as 1844. This specifically states that the stone was a gift: “*Universis et singulis presentes litteras inspectures fidem facimus atque testamur qualiter nos dono dedimus lapillus sectos ex Sacra Crypta ubi Sanctus Paulus Apostolus habitavit in trimestri spatio in quo Melitae Insulae moratus est; respositos in crumena ex gossipio confecta, funiculo Lineo rubric coloris colligate, bostraeque Collegiatae Ecclesiae sigillo in cera rubra hispanica impresso signata. In quorum fidem has litteras testimoniales manu propria subscriptas eodemque sigillo munitas dedimus. Melitae ex Ven^{da} Collegiata Sacrae Cryptae Divi Pauli hac dei 1 Septembris 1844. Fra Joannes Grech, Rector ejusdem Collegiatae Ecclesiae. Coll. Joannes Gatt Said Sacretarius*”.³³ The therapeutic reputation of *terra melitensis* apparently waned after the mid-19th century. Writing in 1870, Dr. A.L. Adams quoting previous authors reported in an apparent historical context that “St. Paul’s earth was supposed to be an antidote for snakebites, and the *terra sigillata Melituae* was considered cordial and sudorific”.³⁴

Besides the previously mentioned Grotto of Saint Paul at Rabat and San Pawl Milqī at Burmarrad, another locality that has been associated with the shipwreck of Saint Paul in Malta includes Saint Paul’s Bay. This region is assumed to be the landing site of the apostle Paul and evangelist Luke together with their fellow travellers after their shipwreck. At the site where the fire was lit and the snakebite episode took

³⁰ de Borch. Lettre sur la Sicile et sur l’isle de Malthe, pour servir de supplement au voyage en Sicile et Malthe de M. Brydone ecrites en 1777. Turin; 1782. p.203-204.

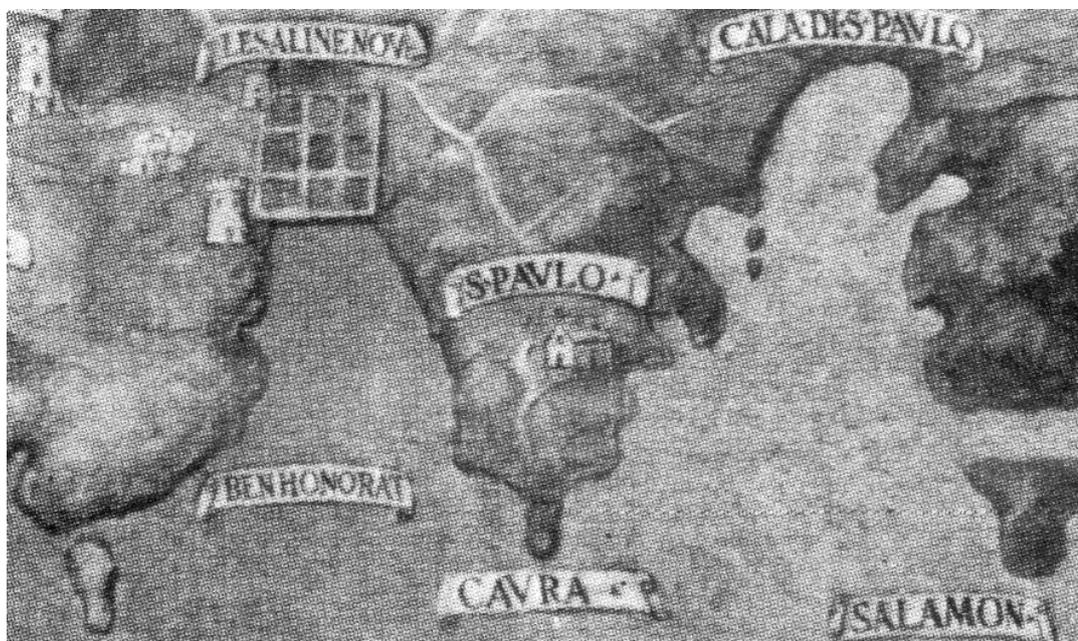
³¹ Cassar P. Importation of the drugs and equipment for the Pharmacy of the Holy Infirmary of Valletta in the Eighteenth century. Journal of the Malta Union Pharmacists 1967; 1(1):p.19-27.

³² Hennen J. Sketches of the Medical Topography of the Mediterranean. London: Thomas & George Underwood; 1830. p.539-540.

³³ Zammit Maempel G. op. cit.

³⁴ Adams AL. Notes of a Naturalist in the Nile Valley and Malta. Edinburgh: Edmonstone & Douglas; 1870. p.81 fn.

place, a church was built to commemorate the event. The bay was mentioned by Jean Quintinus d'Autun in 1536 who wrote that "*Visitur littus loci primarii ... nunc a Paulo hic vetustissime cognominatum, in quod Is navem illist. Ibi non ultimate venerationis Aedicula lapide exstructa.*"³⁵ The church built on this site was mentioned by the Apostolic Visitor to Malta Mgr. Pietro Dusina in 1575, who wrote about the "*Ecclesia Sancti Pauli prope littus maris, quo divus Paulus post eius naufragium primo pervenit, ad cuius honorem fuit erecta dicta Ecclesia, et datum nomen dicti loci quod vocatur la Cala di San Paolo.*"³⁶



**Detail showing the Church of St. Paul at St. Paul's Bay
in the map by Matteo Perez De Allecio, 1582**

³⁵ Quintinus d'Autun J. *Insulae Melitae description*. Lyons; 1536

³⁶ G. Aquilina, S. Fiorini (eds.): *Documentary Sources of Maltese History. Part IV. Documents at the Vatican. No.1 Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Congregazione Vescovi e Rogolari. Malta: Vista Apostolica no.51 Mgr Petrus Dusina, 1575. University Press, Malta, 2001, fol.181v (p.187)*

VIRTUES OF THE STONE

OF ST. PAUL,

Of the Tongues & precious Eyes of Serpents which are to be found

In the Island of Malta.

This Earth, known as St. Paul's Stone, is to be found in the noble Islands of Malta, in St. Paul's Grotto itself, distanced eight miles from the new city: it is of a very white colour and from it are made statutes, medals, cups and vases and other things.

The ash-coloured tongues, & serpents' eyes made of an orange-coloured stone, are found throughout the Island, formed thus, as one sees by nature itself, which represents the very great miracle performed by the glorious Apostle St. Paul when he preached for three months in the said Island, and converted it to Christ's faith: he depleted of poison all the snakes, that there were, rendering them timid and incapable of offending, as if made of stone, privileging the stones, and the earth itself with many attributes.

The virtues of the stone, and of the above-mentioned eyes and tongues, are marvellous, for they are useful against every sort of poison, and bites of venomous animals, not only to protect against these, to stop them offending, but also are efficacious remedies, after one has taken poison, or has been bitten or stung by a venomous animal.

They are useful also in many other illnesses, as one can continuously see experiences in the Island of Malta & elsewhere, according to the particular devotion of the user, who devoutly prays to Our Lord, & to the said Great Apostle St. Paul, by whose intercession they were enriched with so many attributes by His Divine Majesty.

The way to use is, that they are placed in rings as gemstones, the eyes arranged in a way that they touch the flesh.

Or the said Tongues are carried as a necklace or bracelet.

Or to drink water, or wine, or spirit in which some of the said white stone has been dissolved.

Or in which has been infused for a short time one of the said eyes, or tongues.

Or the said water, or wine was placed in jugs made from the said stones.

And above all it is necessary, that the stone, & other mention items are true, and real, and not fakes: but are carried by trusted persons from the said Island of Malta with the trusted credentials.

IN MESSINA, For Giacomo Mattei. With permission of the Superiors.

VIRTU DELLA PIETRA

DI S. PAOLO,

*Delle Lingue, & Occhi di Serpe pretiosi, quali si trouano
nell'Isola di Malta.*

Questa Terra, chiamata Pietra di S. PAOLO, si troua nella nobilissima Isola di MALTA, nella Grotta istessa di S. Paolo, lontana da Città noua otto miglia: è di colore bianchissimo: e di essa se ne formano Imagini, medaglie, tazze, vasetti, & altre cose.

Le lingue di colore cinerico, & Occhi di serpi di pietra di colore arangiato, si trouano per tutta l'Isola, così formate, come si vedono dall'istessa natura, che rappresenta il miracolo grandissimo fatto dal glorioso Apostolo S. Paolo quando predicò tre mesi nell'Isola detta, e la conuertì alla fede di Christo: e spogliò di veleno tutte le serpi, che vi erano, rendendole mansuete, & inabili ad offendere, come se fossero di pietra, priuilegiando insieme e le pietre, e la terra istessa di molte grazie.

Le virtù della pietra, e dell'occhi, e lingue sudette, son marauigliose, poiche vagliono contro ogni sorte di veleno, e morso di animali velenosi, nō solo per preferuarsi da quell', acciò non offendono, ma ancora sono rimedio efficace, dopò che alcuno hauesse preso veleno, ò fosse stato morso, ò punto d'animale velenoso.

Giuuano ancora in molte altre infermità, come di continue febbre vedono esperienze nell'Isola di Malta, & altroue, se cōdo la particolar deuotione di chi le vsa, con raccomandarsi deuotamente al Signore Iddio, & al detto santissimo Apost. S. Paolo, à intercessione del quale furono da Sua Diuina Maestà di tante grazie dotate.

Il modo di adoperarle è, che si sogliono portare in detti anelli, e in i quali siano posti per gemme, li detti occhi in modo, che tocchino la carne.

O si possano detti Linguetti al collo, ò al braccio.

O vero si beue acqua, ò vino, ò liquore nel quale sia dissemparata vn poco di detta pietra bianca.

O vi sia stata infusa per poco tempo vno di detti occhi, ò lingue.

O detta acqua, ò vino sia stata in detti vasi fatti di detta pietra.

E sopra tutto si auuertisca, che la pietra, & altre cose sudette siano vere, e reali, e non falsificate: ma portate da fidata persona della detta Isola di Malta con le debite fedi.

IN MESSINA, Per Giacomo Mattei. Con licenza de' Superiori.