



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

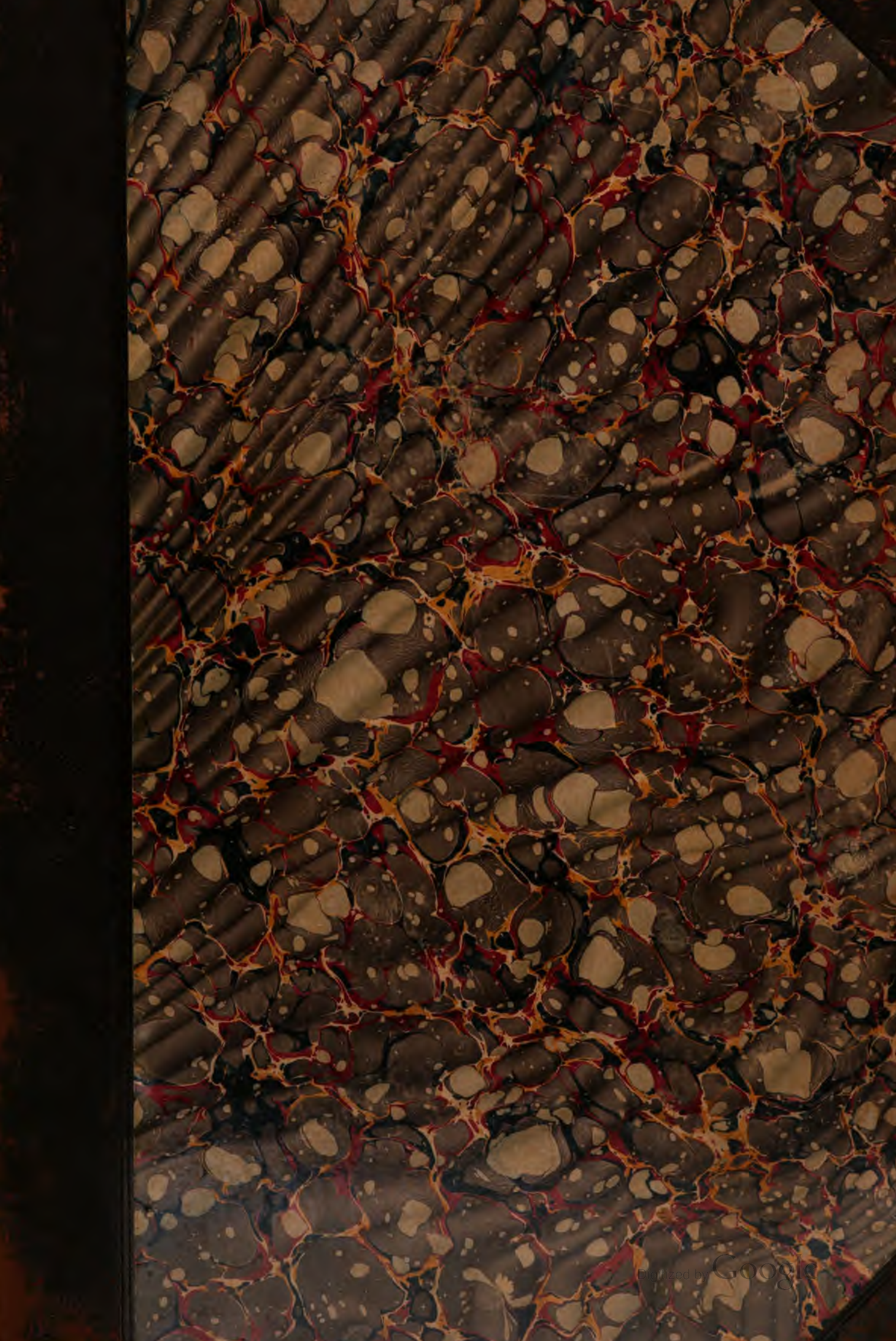
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



Arc 1015.221



Harvard College Library

BOUGHT WITH INCOME

FROM THE BEQUEST OF

HENRY LILLIE PIERCE,
OF BOSTON.

Under a vote of the President and Fellows,
October 24, 1898.



ANGIENT * PAGAN * TOMBS

AND

CHRISTIAN * CEMETERIES

IN THE

ISLANDS OF MALTA

explored and surveyed from the year 1881 to the year 1897,

BY

Dr. A. A. CARUANA

Late Director of Education and Librarian.

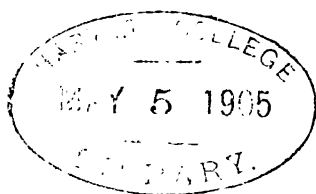
Printed by Order of His Excellency the Governor.

(Copy-right Edition)

£ 10

MALTA,
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE,
1898.
[Price 8s.]

Arc 1015.221



Pierce fund

CONTENTS.

I.

GENERAL NOTES and Different Characters of the ancient Pagan Tombs and Christian Cemeteries in the Islands of Malta.

I GENERAL NOTES

§	1.	Ancient sepulchres in the Islands of Malta constitute a remarkable class of local Antiquities	Page	1
§	2.	They bear no marks of a præ-historic age	"	"
§	3.	The historical Autoctones of the Islands of Malta were the Phœnicians	"	2
§	4.	The Carthaginians	"	"
§	5.	The Greeks	"	3
§	6.	The Romans	"	"
§	7.	The ancient Maltese tombs and cemeteries all sunk in the living rock	"	"
§	8.	Theory of Dr. L. Adams about the ancient tombs in Malta	"	4
§	9.	External appearance, internal arrangement, and contents show two classes of Pagan tombs and one class of Christian cemeteries	"	"
§	10.	Characters distinguishing essentially our ancient Christian cemeteries from the Pagan tombs	"	5

II TOMB-CAVES

§	11.	General characters of the Tomb-caves	"	"
§	12.	Tomb-caves constituting family-vaults and clusters	"	"
§	13.	The Tomb-caves were arranged for the integral preservation of the corpses therein interred	"	6
§	14.	Contents of the human body undisturbed in the Tomb-caves	"	7
§	15.	General character of the country, in which Tomb-caves are found... ..	"	"
§	16.	The diggers of our Tomb-caves were not accustomed to cremation	"	"
§	17.	Punic tombs at Carthage by Pére Delattre	"	8

III ROCK-TOMBS

§	18.	General characters of the Rock-tombs... ..	"	9
§	19.	Simpler forms of Rock-tombs	"	10
§	20.	Shafts of Rock-tombs along the high-roads	"	"
§	21.	Contents in the Rock-tombs	"	"
§	22.	Topographical situation of the Maltese Rock-tombs	"	11
§	23.	The Maltese Rock-tombs are Græco-Roman.	"	"

IV MALTESE CATACOMBS

§	24.	The Maltese Catacombs belonged to a Christian Community	"	"
§	25.	General notes gleaned from the Catacombs of St. Paul, and St. Agatha's	"	12
§	26.	Further general notes relating thereto	"	"
§	27.	Galleries interrupted by different sorts of crypts	"	13
§	28.	Striking points of difference between the Pagan tombs and Christian cemeteries in Malta	"	"
§	29.	Instances of real resemblance between the burial practice of the Phœnicians and of the early Christians in Malta... ..	"	"
§	30.	Topographical situation of the Catacombs in Malta	"	14
§	31.	Farms underlied by the Catacombs of St. Paul, St. Cataldus, St. Agatha, Sta. Venera, Sta. Maria <i>tal-Grotta</i> , <i>tal-Virtù</i> , <i>l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr</i> , and others	"	"
§	32.	No early Christian cemeteries in the Island of Gozo	"	16
§	33.	M. D'Orville's and others' theory of the origin of the Maltese Catacombs rejected	"	"
§	34.	Saint-Non's, Gerald's, and others' opinion in favour of the Greek pagan origin of the Maltese Catacombs impugned	"	17

IV

V HISTORY OF THE MALTESE CATACOMBS

§ 35.	Investigation into the circumstances which may have favoured or retarded these excavations tunnelled under ground	Page 18
§ 36.	The only historical evidence possessed is furnished by the monuments themselves... ..	" "
§ 37.	The history of the Roman Catacombs by Comm. G. B. De Rossi will tell the history of the Maltese Catacombs	" 19
§ 38.	Date and circumstances of the permanent introduction of Christianity in Rome	" 20
§ 39.	Date and circumstances of the permanent introduction of Christianity in the Island of Malta... ..	" 21
§ 40.	Pagan persecutions of the Christians in Rome and its provinces	" 22
§ 41.	The decree of the Senate, A.D. 64, affected directly the assemblies of the Christians all over the Roman Empire : difficulties of the Christians in legally holding the property of their cemeteries	" 23
§ 42.	Different ways by which a burial-ground, or a tomb, could be owned in Rome and her provinces	" 25
§ 43.	Origin and growth of the most interesting Roman Catacombs, explained by De Rossi	" 27
§ 44.	The commencement of the early Christian cemeteries, as long as the members of their congregation did not exceed the limits of a <i>familia</i> or <i>schola</i> , offered no difficulties	" 31
§ 45.	The privileges of Roman laws, concerning burial-places, extended also to the religiosity of the funereals: the Christians conformed to common external usages	" 32
§ 46.	Final permanent restoration of their cemeteries to the Christians in Rome, by the Emperor Maxentius, A.D. 311 ; their plunder and pillage by the Goths and the Longobars in A.D. 750, and consequent translation of the relics of the martyrs	" 34
§ 47.	Traces of the history of the Roman Catacombs investigated in the Maltese Catacombs : similar origin, growth and development inferred	" 35
§ 48.	Claims of the Catacomb of St. Paul and of the lesser Christian cemeteries to be considered contemporary with the establishment of the primeval Church of Malta	" 36
§ 49.	Epoch of the restoration of the early Christian cemeteries to the local Church	" 38
§ 50.	Burial in the Catacombs substituted in Malta by burial in the cemeteries in the open air, in the 5th century : plunder and pillage of the Maltese Catacombs by the Arabs	" 39

II.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

§ 51.	✓ <i>Plate I</i> : Phœnician Tomb-caves at <i>Zurrieq, Xgharet-Medewiet, tal-Horr</i>	" 45
§ 52.	✓ <i>Plate II</i> : Tomb-caves in the lands <i>tal-Buschett, Hotba-tal-Gisuiti</i> , and <i>'Mtarfa</i> , Malta; on the road <i>tal-Qadus</i> , Gozo	" 47
§ 53.	✓ <i>Plate III</i> : Tomb-caves at <i>tal-Horr, Zeitun, Cordin, Birkarkara, Musta...</i>	" 49
§ 54.	✓ <i>Plate IV</i> : Tomb-caves at <i>Bin-Ghisa</i> , and <i>Cordin</i> , Malta; and S. Francesco piazza, Gozo	" 51
§ 55.	✓ <i>Plate V</i> : Phœnician family-vault at <i>Vicolo Catacombe</i> , and <i>Wied-Liemu</i>	" 53
§ 56.	✓ <i>Plate VI</i> : Family-vault at <i>Qasam-il-Fawara</i>	" 55
§ 57.	✓ <i>Plate VII</i> : Family-vault at <i>Mghalaq</i>	" 57
§ 58.	✓ <i>Plate VIII</i> : Phœnician necropolis in the <i>Dweira</i> hill	" 59
† 59.	✓ <i>Plate IX</i> : Family-vault at <i>Imghieret</i> and <i>Nigret</i>	" 61
§ 60.	✓ <i>Plate X</i> : Græco-Roman Rock-tombs, at <i>Ghar-Exem</i> and <i>'Mtarfa</i>	" 63
§ 61.	✓ <i>Plate XI</i> : Rock-tombs in the waste of <i>Ghayn-Klieb</i>	" 65
§ 62.	✓ <i>Plate XII</i> : Rock-tombs, at <i>Ghayn-Klieb</i> and the heath <i>tan-Nigret</i>	" 67
§ 63.	✓ <i>Plate XIII</i> : Rock-tombs on the road <i>tal-Virtù</i> , district <i>tal-Merhlat</i>	" 69
§ 64.	✓ <i>Plate XIV</i> : Græco-Roman tombs at <i>Ghayn-Klieb, Wardia, S. Martin</i> , etc.	" 71
§ 65.	✓ <i>Plate XV</i> : Bell-shaped tombs at <i>'Mtarfa</i>	" 73
§ 66.	✓ <i>Plate XVI</i> : Bell-shaped tombs at <i>Gran Castello</i> , Gozo	" 75
§ 67.	✓ <i>Plate XVII</i> : Other types of Rock-tombs at Gozo	" 77
§ 68 and 69.	Plates XVIII and XIX, the <i>Gherien-tal-Liebru</i>	" 79
§ 70.	✓ <i>Plate XX</i> : the <i>Mintna</i> Catacombs	" 81
§ 71, 72, 73 and 74.	✓ <i>Plate XXI</i> : map of the ancient capital <i>Melita</i>	" 83
§ 75.	✓ <i>Plate XXII</i> : Ichnography of a lesser cemetery in <i>tac-Ciaula</i>	" 87
§ 76.	✓ <i>Plate XXIII</i> : Ichnography and sciagraphy of a <i>Collegium funeraticium</i> in <i>Hal-Pilatu</i>	" 91
§ 77.	✓ <i>Plate XXIV</i> : Ichnography and sciagraphy of a lesser cemetery in <i>tad-Deyr</i>	" 93
§ 78.	✓ <i>Plate XXV</i> : Groups of lesser Christian cemeteries in <i>St. Agti</i>	" 95
§ 79.	✓ <i>Plate XXVI</i> : Other groups in the same field	" 97

III.

MONOGRAPH OF THE CATACOMB OF ST. PAUL.

§ 80.	Plate I: general map	" 101
§ 81.	Beginning and extent etc. of the Catacomb of St. Paul	" 102

§ 82.	Labyrinthine net-work of the Catacomb of St. Paul	...	...	...	...	...	Page	103
§ 83.	Plot of ground originally chosen	...	...	...	...	...	"	104
§ 84.	Accesses to the Catacomb of St. Paul...	...	...	...	...	...	"	"
§ 85.	Areas II, III, IV, V, VI	...	...	...	...	...	"	105
§ 86.	Linking of areas X, XI and XII with the over areas VII, VIII, IX and with <i>Catacomb</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	106
§ 87.	✓ <i>Plate II</i> : Complicated middle zone of the <i>Catacomb</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	107
§ 88.	✓ <i>Plate III</i> : Superficial zone of the <i>Catacomb</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	109
§ 89.	✓ <i>Plate IV</i> : Ichnography of the cemeterial church	...	...	...	...	...	"	111
§ 90.	Accesses to, and details of the two principal crypts	...	...	...	...	...	"	"
§ 91.	Extreme length and details of crypt B	...	...	...	...	...	"	112
§ 92.	Interpretation of the details in the two crypts	...	...	...	...	...	"	113
§ 93.	Architectural form of the two crypts different from those of the Basilicas of St. Agnes and St. Generosa at Rome	...	...	...	...	...	"	"
§ 94.	The laws of the Church affected all Christian burials alike, and the need of concealment befell their Communities in all the Roman Empire at the same time	...	...	...	...	...	"	114
§ 95.	Number of tombs in the <i>Catacomb</i> of St. Paul...	...	...	...	...	...	"	115
§ 96.	The beginning of its excavation has been in a private area of some early Christian Converts in the island	...	...	...	...	...	"	116

IV.

MONOGRAPH OF L' *ABBATIA-TAD-DEYR*.

§ 97.	Situation of <i>l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	121
§ 98.	✓ <i>Plate I</i> : representing the ichnography of the vestibule and cemetery	...	...	...	...	...	"	123
§ 99.	The Cemetery	...	...	...	...	...	"	"
§ 100.	The <i>Cell</i> or chapel annexed	...	...	...	...	...	"	124
§ 101.	✓ <i>Plate II</i> : Orthography of the apse of the <i>Cell</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	125
§ 102.	✓ <i>Plate III</i> : Sciagraphy of the sides of the Cemetery	...	...	...	...	...	"	127
§ 103.	Epoch of the commencement and duration of the use of <i>l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr</i>	...	...	...	...	...	"	"
§ 104.	First attempts to revive the veneration towards the place	...	...	...	...	...	"	128

I.
GENERAL NOTES AND CHARACTERS
OF THE
ANCIENT PAGAN TOMBS AND CHRISTIAN CEMETERIES
IN THE
ISLANDS OF MALTA.

ANCIENT PAGAN TOMBS AND CHRISTIAN CEMETERIES

IN THE

ISLANDS OF MALTA.

I.

General Notes.

The numerous ancient sepulchres in Malta and Gozo constitute, perhaps, one of the most remarkable classes of local Antiquities. The main object of this monograph is to keep on record a brief description of some of the principal of these interesting monuments in the outskirts of the ancient capital of Malta, which are fast disappearing owing to the many buildings in course of erection.

In the history of the manners and private life of ancient peoples, of their government and religion, of their public institutions, arts and manufactures, the preservation of the relics of their ancestors held always a middle place between a civil and religious character.

From the primitive Celtic monoliths, barrows and tomb-hills to the colossal Egyptian pyramids, the kingly Assyrian sepulchres, and the princely mausoleum of Greece and Rome, monuments in honour of the dead have been always regarded as a manifestation of the civil culture of ancient peoples and the expression of their instinctive piety and religious belief, as they are nowadays.

2. The Maltese ancient tombs, though by far the greater number of them were rifled a long time ago, are still, as a general rule, in a good state of preservation. They are hewn out of the living rock; the floor, sides, and roof are uncommonly solid and free from crevices; their interiors bear no traces of disintegration, and are remarkable for the absence of *detritus*

Elegance and regularity of detail are very conspicuous in the most noteworthy specimens.

The marks of percussion on their internal sides indicate that their excavation was effected by sharp pointed metal tools.

Although some of them bear evidence of great antiquity and a date somewhat beyond 2000 years B.C. may, very probably, be assigned to them, all the circumstances connected with them militate against a præ-historic date co-eval with the bone-caves.

The præ-historic bone-caves are commonly vast natural gaps without any definite or regular form, converted into burial depositaries by unsettled hunting races.

The mode in which human remains occur in those caverns is that of a confused mass of the bones of men and of extinct species of animals once their prey, mixed with brown earth, ashes, flint-tools and stones crumbled from the top and sides of the caverns, once inhabited by the troglodytes of the mammoth and cave-bear age.

The formation on a fixed and regular pattern with internal provision for the undisturbed preservation of human remains; the good state of preservation of the bones, their surface close, their layers adhering well together, and though light yet firm and solid; the presence of numerous articles of pottery; the absence of lithic tools, and of the residue of extinct species of animals, evidently tell that the Maltese ancient tomb-caves are the work of cultured peoples, who either took a religious care of the integral preservation of the body of their deceased ancestors for final resurrection, or had most at heart the safe keeping of their relics as cherished family records.

3. The historical autoctones of the islands of Malta were the Phœnicians, who must have settled in our islands several centuries before 1500 B.C. Their race, at least till the Arabs' conquest of these islands in 870 and their duration up to 1090, was the parent stock of the native population.

As yet, we possess no evidence of a people of the stone or other præ-historic ages, nor of a præ-Phœnician race in the islands of Malta.

The tale of our aboriginal giant forefathers, the Phæacians, was first told by Cluverius from a misinterpretation of one or two passages in the VI and VII Books of the Odyssey, supported by the discovery of some large bones and teeth believed to be of a cyclopean race in certain caverns at the time of comm. Abela and Count Ciantar.

The greek rhapsodies of the Odyssey relate only a Phæacian emigration to Corfu from Hiperia, an ancient city near the ruins of Camarina on the river Hiparis in the south of Sicily, which place was mistaken for Malta.

The teeth, of which Abela gave an illustration as well as the bones mentioned by him, have been identified by paleontologists with those of extinct species of elephants and other large vertebrata, which once roamed in herds over our islands, and of which many remains have been recently found in Malta and Gozo.

Those sea-faring Phœnicians fixed principally their earliest settlements near and around the sea-shores and harbours: in Malta, at Kordin and around the creeks of the Great Harbour, at Marsascirocco harbour, at St. George's Bay, at Zurrieq cove, at Melleha and St. Paul's Bay, etc.; in Gozo, at Xghara and Nadur near Ramla-Bay, at Qala and Ghain-Sielem near 'Mgar-shore and cove, etc. In fact many of the remains of the Phœnician Great Stones for the worship of Bahal and Astoreth, the deities of nature, are still found on the heights surrounding those places.

The Phœnician population had a separate autonomous government in each of the two islands, with its proper Suffets and other magistrates and officers, as evidenced by our phœnician inscriptions *Melitensis altera et quinta*.

They were a literate and cultured people, as appears from the inscriptions engraved on several *cippi*, *stela* and *sarcophagi* found in the two islands; they were trained in arts and useful industries, and were skilful traders and navigators.

This is amply attested by Diodorus Siculus, who about 60 B.C. travelled in Egypt, and very likely visited our islands before writing his history. He says: "The inhabitants of Malta are a colony of Phœnicians, who trading as far as the western Ocean resorted to these islands on account of their commodious ports and convenient situation for sea trade. The inhabitants abound in opulence, for they have artificers of every kind of work. They excel most in their manufacture of linen, which surpasses any thing of the kind both in fineness of texture and softness of material. Their houses are most beautiful, magnificently ornamented with projecting pediments and most exquisite stucco-work. The colonists became very wealthy and have increased in splendour and reputation." *

4. Before the overthrow of the Roman Monarchy, the Carthaginians had already become masters of the western basin of the Mediterranean, and by two treaties concluded with the Roman Republic they prevented the free navigation of the Romans in the Mediterranean and beyond the Fair Promontory the present Cape Bon, and their free approach to Sicily, as we are assured by Polybius.

Masters of the western Mediterranean, the Carthaginians about 600 years B. C. assumed the protectorate of the Maltese-Phœnician colony as well as of the other sister colonies in Africa, in Spain and in Sicily against the Greeks, who about 750 years B. C. had settled and founded several colonies in Sicily, and about the end of the 7th century threatened to contest and invade the mastership of the Carthaginians over the sea.

The Carthaginians have left no important monuments in Malta to record their protectorate or domination during 400 years; it seems that having satisfied themselves with garrisoning the island, they have not sent any colony of theirs as they could, and have maintained the rule, on principle, of the pre-existing Phœnician republic.†

* Lib. I. c. IV.

† Frammento critico della storia Fenicio-Cartaginese e Greco-Romana delle isole di Malta.

5. The ancient Ionic Greeks of southern Sicily crossed over to Malta and later on were joined by a Doric colony, very probably at an early date before the Roman conquest of our islands, between 700 and 216 B.C.

The Ionians called the principal island *Melite* which was subsequently changed to *Melitas* by the Dorians and *Melita* by the Romans. The name given to the sister island by the Greeks was *Gaylos*, subsequently converted into *Gaulus* by the Romans.

After the conclusion of the peace with the Carthaginians, the Greeks were allowed to stay in Malta as they were in Sicily and to trade with that island.

The Romans, after the conquest of our islands, allowed to that Greek colony an *autonomy* and *autodicy* similar to those granted to several towns in Sicily.*

The Greeks built the ancient capital in each of the two islands, bearing respectively the names of the same islands, as we are ascertained by Ptolemy. Though become the ruling race, it seems that the Greeks lived in harmony with the native Phœnicians, whose worship they *hellenized* as well as the coins of the previous Phœnician republic.

In the two islands, the Greek colonies had also a separate hieratico-democratical government, headed by a Hierothite and the Archons, as demonstrated by our greek inscriptions *Melitensis prima et tertia*; each government enjoyed the privilege of coining its different autonomous currency. †

6. The Romans, engaged in deadly wars with the Carthaginians, after several successes and reverses, led by the Cons. Tib. Sempronius Gracchus definitely conquered the islands of Malta, at the beginning of the second Punic war, in the year 216 B.C.

As we are informed by Cicero, the privileges of "confederate and allied towns of the Roman People" were granted to our islands, and the retainment of their own laws and autonomy.

The natives lived in thorough concord with their new conquerors, in the course of time adopted Roman habits and names, and later on the two islands obtained by the Emperor Hadrian the privilege of a separate Roman Municipality, of which the evidence is given by several of our roman inscriptions. ‡

This golden age of the islands of Malta, related by Hesychius, Diodorus Siculus, Cicero, Valerius Max. and Clemens Alexandrinus, was enjoyed until the division of the Roman Empire.

The Romans left considerable remains of magnificent marble temples and theatres, of splendid palaces and baths ornamented with mosaic pavements, marble statues, gems, coins and inscriptions.

These are the ancient peoples who colonized or ruled over the islands of Malta, and whose tombs are to be illustrated in this monograph.

7. The ancient Maltese tombs, whether pagan or christian, are all sunk in the living rock.

A great number of them are single caves in barren heaths, in the vicinity of certain villages and of the old capitals; others underlie the soil in cultivated lands; in other localities, they form groups of separate caverns side by side, in the gorges of valleys and on the ridges of mountainous districts both inland and near the sea.

Those in the neighbourhood of the old capitals are fast disappearing under the numerous buildings in course of construction and those erected during the last fifteen years.

Many of those underlying the soil in the fields are being utilised as tanks for collecting rain water, by industrious farmers.

Many other tombs, tunnelled into the bowels of the earth, present an agglomeration of a great many sepulchres within the same excavation.

The different groups of these burial places are characterized by distinctive features of their own. The agglomerations of sepulchres within the same excavation are the last resting places of an early christian community in the island of Malta; they are excavated in the neighbourhood of the old capital, and of some other ancient centres of habitation.

* Frammento critico della storia Fenicio-Cartaginese e Greco-Romana delle isole di Malta.

† Report on the Antiquities of Malta, Cl. XV.

‡ Idem, Cl. XIV.

The most numerous of all these kinds of tombs are those dug in the upper limestone bed, in the northern and western highlands and slopes of Malta. They are met with less frequently in the sandstone or globigerina limestone bed, in the southern and eastern denuded portion of the island.

At Gozo they are more numerous in the northern and eastern portion of the island.

No tombs are found in the plastic and movable beds of clay, or in the hard lower coralline limestone.

8. Dr. A. L. Adams * surmised that scarcity of wood and scanty alluvial deposits may have more or less necessitated the rock-hewn sepulchres of the early inhabitants of Malta, as in Egypt and such-like countries where arboreal vegetation is sparse.

He, further, observed that as no true sepulchres of the early Phœnician settlers in Malta are known, wherewith to compare the other rock-tombs, the difficulty of connecting the Maltese ancient tombs with the builders of the megalithic and cyclopean ruins is complicated by indications on several of them that seem to point to the successive occupation of the islands by diverse conquering races.

Every discrepancy between the Christian catacombs of *Rabat*, of *Siggiewi*, and *Mqabba* and the pagan rock-tombs at *Bin-Gemma*, *Ghain-Klieb*, *Mnaidra*, *Melleha*, and elsewhere was, thus, ignored by Dr. Adams.

This theory is not based on a correct acquaintance with the sepulchral caverns in Palestine and Phœnicia Proper, or with the mode of interment observed by the ancient Canaanite and Semitic races, or with the usages and manners of the early Greeks and Romans in disposing of the remains of their departed.

Our ancient tombs were so slightly studied by our historians that Dr. Adams had to rely on the few particulars gleaned from his own observations, on a very small number of them.

Unfortunately a great many of these monuments had been subjected to the spoliation of their contents before the time of Comm: Abela, and thus competent persons were deprived of the opportunity of exploring and describing them when intact. The default of a law protecting local Antiquities as a common historical inheritance is still deeply felt.

9. The ancient Maltese tombs tell their own tale.

Besides evidence from their internal architectural arrangement, from the presence of fictile and other articles commonly found in them, and from their topographical position with respect to former centres of habitation, the external appearance of a great number explored and surveyed during the last fifteen years points out two broad general features of two distinct Pagan classes, and one Christian.

The accompanying illustrations are of the principal, more common and fixed forms of the Maltese ancient tombs and cemeteries, chosen with a view to establish the grounds of this classification.

Outwardly, our pagan tombs present two very striking marks, which distinguish them from the christian class. These characteristics are *isolation* and the *absence of attempt at concealment*.

Both kinds of our pagan tombs are either *isolated* caves or cells each by itself, for the interment of a single body; or *isolated* family vaults with two or more cells, intended for the members of one family, with a separate and independent access from a common vestibule or shaft; or *isolated* clusters of many independent single cells, grouped together in an open place.

The pagan tombs, therefore, cover a small area.

Besides *isolation*, the pagan tombs never penetrating to a great depth, are hollowed out immediately below the surface of the rocky ground in public places, or along the sides of highroads, or in the flanks of hills and valleys in the open air, exposed to public view.

The ancient christian tombs, on the contrary, form regular and frequently vast cemeteries, in which there are numerous graves for the interment of the members of a community into the same *hypogaeum*, provided with one common access.

* Valley of the Nile, Malta, etc.

The christian burial places, moreover, deeply sunk in the bowels of the rock, show the great care that was taken to conceal the christian sepulchres from the profane, as well as to hide the meetings of Christians held in times of persecution.

10. Besides these external marks, the ancient Maltese tombs, christian and pagan, present a great difference in the internal arrangement of details.

The christian sepulchres exhibit internally uniformity of architectural design, of numerous galleries crossing one another, and of distribution of crypts and of graves along the height of the walls like shelves in a library press.

The pagan tombs, without long and intricate corridors, are essentially formed of small and separate cells or rooms, each cell or rooms with one or a few graves or none, hollowed in the ground or on a raised platform on the side: they mark out internally two clearly defined and distinct classes. In each class there are several forms, in which the specific features of their own respective class are invariably retained.

Some, originally little natural caves or holes in the rock, were enlarged into several vaults and specially fitted for an integral interment: these may be styled **Tomb-caves**.

Other tombs are artificial excavations of chambers or rooms more or less regular and wide, destined for the preservation of the ashes and residue of a cremated body: these may be styled **Rock-tombs**.

II.

Tomb-Caves.

11. The commonest tomb-caves are round and low-vaulted cells of small dimensions, under the surface rock, entered by a semi-oval or rectangular oven-mouth-like aperture situate in front of and near the base of the cave.

This aperture is so low and narrow as to admit of the passage of only one man at a time, and that in a stooping position; and is provided externally with a frame-work with rebates to receive the closing slab: *see plate I, fig. 1 & 2.*

When only a portion of the cave is below the level of the adjacent ground, access into it is gained by a few steps: *see plate I, fig. 2.*

Very often, however, the whole cave is hidden under ground, and the lateral entrance is at the bottom of a narrow vertical shaft, with or without foot-holds in the sides for descent, as illustrated in *plate I, fig. 4.*

In the simplest forms, a vertical boring penetrating through the top of the little vault is substituted for the usual entrance and shaft: *see plate II, fig. 4.*

On the opposite sides of a shaft two cells are very frequently excavated, identical in shape and dimensions, followed by other shafts and caves so as to form a row, as shown in *plate I, fig. 1.*

Numerous *clusters* of tomb-caves in horizontal rows overlying one another, and in front a common gallery in the open air, are often found on the side of a hill or of a valley in both islands: *see plates VII & VIII.*

Some of these clusters of tombs are in an unfinished state, and others appear not to have been used. Evidently, a number of these caves, which were probably the property of priests as in similar cases in Egypt, were always ready at the shortest notice for those who could pay for their purchase.

Individuals of the poorer classes, without the means of procuring a tomb, were of course buried in common pits or repositories.

12. The most interesting tomb-caves are those constituting family-vaults: *see plate III, fig. 2; plates V & VI.*

An oval chamber, or a straight and short gallery half hidden underground, reached by a few steps, on the sides of which are excavated three or more cells, each with a separate opening and without any intercommunication, was the place intended for the burial of all or several members of the same family. The extent of these family vaults apparently depended on the means of the well-to-do classes.

The oval vestibule or gallery in the family-vaults was probably used for the gathering of the relatives and friends of the deceased in the performance of ritual ceremonies on the day of burial.

To the more complete family-vaults a recess is frequently added apart from the general cavity, with an entrance separate from that of the little catacomb, as at Mnaidra family-vault illustrated in *plate VII*.

In Egypt, the more pious worshippers appended votive offerings of cakes, flowers and fruits to their deceased relatives and friends, as well as libations of oil and ointment in like chambers resembling fanes. Very likely, the recesses added to some of the Maltese family tomb-caves served for a similar purpose: in the absence of these fanes, our ancestors made use of the ante-chamber or gallery for the same object.

13. Internally, the Maltese pagan tomb-caves were undoubtedly arranged for the preservation of the integrity of the bodies therein interred.

In the more complete ones, a coffin-shaped hollow or cavity is observed on a small platform in the side of the cell, broad at the shoulders and narrowing towards the lower extremity, corresponding to the form and dimensions of the body in a recumbent position: *plate I, fig. 2, 3*.

These coffin-shaped cavities have a small projection or rock-cushion at the broader extremity, with a semi-lunar hollow to receive the head: they are without lid or cover, as the fixing of the closing slab at the entrance of the cave finished the burial.

Some oval niches in the sides of the cells for lamps lit on the day of the funeral, and probably to hold *shabtis* or clay and brass images, and sufficient room to contain jars, jugs, and other earthenware completed their internal arrangement and furniture.

In several of the caves there are two such coffin-shaped cavities, side by side, probably for the entombment of husband and wife; and more rarely, three, or four such excavations occur: *plate IV, fig. 2*.

In many instances, the interment took place within a stone sarcophagus, which was a substitute for the common coffin-shaped hollow.

Comm. Abela * and Fazelus mention sarcophagi of marble, of lead, and of terra-cotta discovered in several tomb-cases at Malta, and preserved in the Museo S. Giacomo of Abela till the year 1655. One of these terra-cottas, found in 1624 near the cemetery of St. Venera at Rabat, bears on the cover a male figure modelled in relief; another recovered from *Hal-Barka* in 1797, now preserved in the Museum of the Public Library, has a female figure in relief.

Mons. Bres † records other terra-cotta sarcophagi found in his time in the same locality of *Hal Barka*, and preserved in the collection of the Marquis Barbaro till the year 1800.

Others, found in Piazza S. Francesco at Gozo toward the end of last century, are mentioned by canon Francesco Agius in a ms. of *Gozo Illustrato*.

In 1892 several other sarcophagi, in the form of small chests covered with a lid, were discovered by me in the same piazza, and are now in the Museum of the Public Library.

In most cases, rude large stone through-like receptacles were used in place of sarcophagi: see *plate II, fig. 1; plate III, fig. 5*.

In some caves the skeleton was deposited within two large-mouthed jars, joined together so as to contain the head and upper part of the body in one jar, and the lower extremities in the other: so jealous were those people of the integral preservation of their dead: *plate II, fig. 3*.

An instance of this style of interment was found in Punic tombs at St. Louis Carthage.

The commonest way of entombment in small caves was, however, the placing of the deceased in a sitting posture, with the back leaning against one of the sides of the cave and the legs stretched out on the ground at right angles to the body.

* *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. II. not. II. §. V e VII.

† *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. II. cap. VIII.

14. The contents of our tomb-caves are, generally, human skeletons lying undisturbed in a horizontal position, or more frequently loose skulls, ribs, long and flat bones in a good state of preservation, that have fallen away from the semi-erect or seated position.

No traces of cremation are met with in the ancient tomb-caves.

The fictile articles, with which they are furnished, consist of *amphora* and other jars destined for a supply of corn, jugs for water, *letikos* or oil bottles, cups and saucers for the use of the deceased in his long journey to Hades.

These earthenware vessels are mostly of old Maltese manufacture.

Glass beads and other neck and arm ornaments, bronze idols, terra-cotta statuettes are also occasionally recovered from them.

In the apparently more ancient caves, the only coins discovered belong to the Maltese autonomous Phœnician and Greek types.

In those of more recent times, Roman consular and imperial coins up to the epoch of the Emperor Gallienus were found.

15. The general character of the country, over which isolated tomb-caves and clusters are scattered, is that of a barren waste called *Xghara* by the natives, in the gorges of valleys and on the declivities of hills.

Their topographical situation is, ordinarily, at a distance from early inhabited places. They are numerous within the districts of the Great Stone ruins, in the rural localities of *Mdorbu* and *Hal-*auar** between the villages of *Safi* and *Zurrieq*, *Xgharet-Medewiet*, *Marsa*, *Kordin*, *Mghalaq*, *Bin-Gemma*, *Mtahleb*, *Sebbieh*, *S. Martin*, *Mtarfa*, *Torri-Falka*, *l-art-ta-Lippia*, *Ghayn-Tuffiha*, *is-Salini*, *Mellieha*, etc. in Malta; *il-Qadus*, *Xgharet-il-Hassenin*, *ix-Xghara*, *in-Nadur*, *il-Qaghan*, *Ghar-Gerduf*, *iz-Zebbug*, etc. in Gozo.

16. The diggers of tomb-caves in Malta were evidently not accustomed to cremation, but had a full belief in the future reintegration and re-animation of the human body, of the preservation of which they were so solicitous.

All Canaanite and Semitic races took every possible care of the integral preservation of their deceased in caverns, in their native country.

Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave in the field of Macpelah before Mamre, which he had purchased from the sons of Heth in the land of Canaan.*

There Abraham himself, Isaac, Rebecca and Leah† were also buried, in an epoch contemporary with the Phœnician settlement in the islands of Malta.

The same custom of the Canaanites and Semites was followed by the Egyptians who, as referred to by St. Austin, ‡ “dried up and hardened the bodies of the dead, believing in their resurrection.”

This resurrection or return of the soul to its body was believed by the Egyptians to take place after a term of purgation by transmigration into the bodies of animals, prolonged more or less according to the degree of its contamination, within a period of 3000 years, as we are informed by Herodotus.¶ After this cycle of years, the soul, if worthy returned to the essence of the deity, of which it was believed to be an emanation. In fact the offerings and libations of the Egyptians in their tomb-caves were intended for the divine half of the departed.

Whether the Canaanites held the same religious tenets of pantheism and transmigration as the Egyptians is doubtful; but that they believed in the resurrection of the flesh, which they took so much pains to maintain in a fit condition to receive the return of the soul by which it was once inhabited, is very certain.

No doubt can be entertained as to the aboriginal settlement of the Phœnicians in the islands of Malta, and that they followed the same custom of burial as their parent stock the Canaanites.

In a tomb-cave discovered at *Bin-Ghisa* in 1761, a skeleton in an undisturbed state was found lying in the middle of the inner vaulted cave, with the head resting on the

* Gen., Ch. XXIII, v. v. 19 & 20.

† Gen., Ch. XLIX, v. 31.

‡ Serm. c. 2.

¶ II. 123.

usual rock-cushion. A phœnician *stela*, *Melitensi altera*, * was encased in the wall recording the name of Hannibal son of Barmelech; the name of the individual whose corpse was lying there, or of the Carthaginian Magistrate in whose time the sepulchre was consecrated, as presumed by the compilers of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*. The discovery, though fully related by count Ciantar † in 1772, was ignored by Dr. Leith Adams.

Other Phœnician *stela* are still to be seen on the jambs isolating the cells of a family-vault, at the entrance from Vicolo Catacombe leading to the catacomb of St. Paul at Rabat. Though these inscriptions, discovered in March 1885, ‡ probably recording the names of the individuals interred there, are much injured by damp, Professors Sayce and Wright were able to decipher in them an invocation to Baal.

The sarcophagi mentioned by M. Thévét, found in similar tomb-caves on St. Angelo's promontory, bore engraved upon their lids Phœnician names written in Phœnician characters.

The singularity of the absence of spears and other warlike weapons in our tomb-caves shows that they belonged to a people like the Phœnicians, who, as M. Perrot || observes, employed in trade and commerce avoided wars, and sold to others the splendid arms made by them, which they never used except in self defence.

These circumstances are strong evidences in favour of the Phœnician origin and use of the Maltese tomb-caves, against to the theory of Dr. L. Adams.

17. From an interesting treatise on the Punic tombs of Carthage, published in 1890 by Père Delattre of the French Mission, Algiers, we glean that sepulchres of undoubted punic origin were not known in Phœnician Africa till the discovery of the tombs at Byrsa, at Borg-el-Gdid, and the other heights around old Carthage since the year 1878.

A tomb of this kind is in the form of a rude apogean chamber, with one or two pair of horizontal niches, built of layers of long stones without mortar: others are graves in the form of rectangular cells, also built of great stones.

All the pottery found in the tombs of Byrsa is of a primitive form and fabric, and betokens a Tyrian settlement earlier by some centuries than the foundation of Carthage itself.

It is presumed that the primitive Tyrians had chosen in Phœnician Africa the shore and the plain adjacent to the sea for commerce and trade, and the heights of Byrsa as a burial ground before the building of Carthage by subsequent settlers of the same race. The ethnical denomination of Byrsa, being a corruption of the Syrian Bosra, a citadel, indicates its phœnician origin.

The tombs discovered by M. Daux near the sea at Carthage, and at Borg-el-Gdid are caverns cut out of the rock, which, besides difference of form and common pottery, yielded vases of greek types and manufacture, indicating a much later epoch.

Much similar to the punic tombs of Byrsa, the Maltese tomb-caves are, however, all constructed by hewing out a small vault in the living rock without masonry, on fixed types more or less regular; and they present a particular arrangement of details internally, which is not observable in those of Carthage and in other ancient tombs in Malta.

Our tomb-caves do not belong all to the same age.

This may be proved by the different autonomous coins discovered in them, by the primitive rudeness of certain articles of pottery, and by the improved style of construction and the progressive refinement of manufacture observed in others.

Tyrian and Sidonian colonies had settled long before the foundation of Carthage in the maritime districts round the creeks of the Great Harbour, the harbours of Marsascirocco, Marsa, Wied-iz-Zurrieq, Melliha, Ramla, Qala, etc. in both our islands. The former erected a temple for the worship of Melkart the Tyrian Hercules, at St. George's Bay, Malta; the latter raised one to the Sidonian Baal and Astoreth on the slope of Xghara, Gozo.

* Report on the Phœnician Antiquities of Malta §. 41.

† Malta Illustrata, Lib. I. not. II, §. XIV; not IV. §. XXX.

‡ Report to Government, March 1885.

|| Histoire de l'art dans l'Antiquities.

Most of the oldest autonomous coins of our islands bear the prominent figure of Astoreth and a phœnician legend imprinted upon them.

Ovid * records that Dido herself, on her way to Africa, was the guest of Battus king of Malta; and that her sister Anna enjoyed the hospitality of the same king, when she was compelled by Hiabas of Numidia to quit Carthage after Dido's death: the episode of the latin poet is referable to the early Phœnician settlement in Malta.

The oldest Phœnician tomb-caves in Malta, in which only autonomous Maltese-phœnician coins are found, are, therefore, *pra-Carthaginian*, and belong to the age of the earliest settlement of those colonies in our islands.

The Phœnicians continued to be the parent stock of the native race of Malta under the Greek and Roman rules: the autonomous greek and roman coins of Malta and the consular and imperial coins of Rome found in the less ancient tomb-caves point out their different ages.

The latest tomb-caves found at Gozo show the age of the Emperor Gallienus.

During the Phœnician colonization, our islands were naturally influenced by the Egyptian art, which Sardinia, Spain, and Carthage itself, exhibited in their manufacture of pottery till the Greeks superseded that influence, 600 or 700 years B. C. In some of our oldest tomb-caves there were, indeed, discovered brazen idols of Osiris, of Isis, of Harpocrates, and small figures covered with green varnish and inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphics; likewise, a style of pottery denoting Egyptian intercourse.

III.

Maltese Rock-tombs.

18. Our rock-tombs are not natural caverns, but artificial and regular chambers excavated from the surface of the rock to a certain depth underground.

In the commonest forms, they consist of a wide rectangular shaft, provided with descending steps cut in one of its corners: *see plate X. fig. 1, 2, 3*. At the bottom of this shaft and on its sides are, generally, observed traces of burning, the residue of ashes, and other material with which cremation was effected.

In the lower extremity of one, or two, or three, or even of the four sides of this shaft, are excavated comparatively large vertical apertures of as many lateral chambers, provided with rebates in their jambs and lintels to receive a large closing stone-slab. Often the rebates of the apertures are done away with, in which instances the closing slab has a large protuberance in the middle which fits the aperture, and lateral expansions overlying its sides exactly: *see plate XII, fig. 2*.

The lateral chambers are generally rectangular, lofty, with vertical walls and flat-roofed.

The only internal details of the more complete chambers are a low rock-bench or ledge running all round, one or more small cup-boards excavated into the walls, and a pit in the middle or just outside the entrance: *plate XII, fig. 1*.

The presence of these pits, within or without these *hypogea*, served to drain and absorb the rainwater filtered from the shafts, as there is no evidence to show that these shafts were ever roofed over.

In the more simple rock-tombs, the shafts are narrower and the chambers smaller; instead of a shelf or low bench, internally they show small cavities in the sides or projections to hold cinerary urns.

No niches for lamps, nor special receptacles for the integral deposition of corpses there are observed.

This internal appearance is somewhat similar to that of the sepulchre of the Nasones described by Sante Bartole †, and of another mentioned by Fabretti ‡ in Via Flaminia

* Fast lib. III.

† Apud. Grœvii Theas. Ant. Rom, tom. XII.

‡ Inscip. Domest., p. 55.

as a rectangular chamber hewn in the *tufa*, with shelves and small arched recesses in the wall. Since their time, many other tombs of the same description have been discovered in other high-roads of Rome, and the learned De Rossi states that this form of sepulchres was certainly very common among the old Romans.

19. In some localities shafts or chambers are not apparent, but one or more rows of circular borings present a pot-holed surface of the ground, each hole sunk underneath into a small bell-shaped cavity, containing cinerary urns: *plate XV and XVI*.

At Xgharet-Medewiet, and at 'Mtarfa, near the recently erected military barracks in Malta, were found two such Maltese rows of numerous *columbaria*.

In the island of Gozo, outside the present line of fortification, in re-modelling the ascent to the Gran Castello in about 1860, a *columbarium* of about one hundred of these bell-shaped hollows in several rows, underlying one another and communicating by narrow lateral and vertical passages, was discovered: *see plate XVI, fig. 2*.

The place is the site of the old ditch surrounding the walls of that ancient Greek *acropolis*.

Another form of rock-tombs, quite peculiar to the island of Gozo, was explored in 1893 in Piazza San Francesco. A common shaft leads to a suite of four or more sepulchres in one or two parallel rows.

The rooms are small, very low, and irregular in shape, with very narrow passages leading from one to the other: *see plate XVI, fig. 1*.

20. The rock-tombs of pagan Melita, though for the most part not very elaborately executed, could not but have had their open-air shafts protected by some kind of fencing, particularly those along the high-roads in the neighbourhood of the old capital.

The pagan tombs of Rome, in which were preserved the *olla* containing the ashes of the cremated corpses, though not characterized by the same uniformity of design observed in the rock-tombs of Malta, had one or more chambers built over the *hypogæum*, called *exædra* or *solarium* or *cubile superius*, which served for the social gathering of the relatives and friends celebrating the *inferiæ* or *parentalia* in memory of those lying underneath.

The Maltese rock-tombs along the high-roads may, likewise, have had some premises above according to Roman law, which was very particular in assigning the dimensions in feet *in fronte* and *in agro* of each sepulchre.

21. The contents of our rock-tombs are, most commonly, charred human skulls and bones, the residue of cremation, urns of the *stannos* shape containing ashes, occasionally one or two entire skeletons.

The urns are placed on the benches, or on bracket-like projections in the walls, or in the cupboards within the sepulchral chambers.

These urns are, as a rule, in a good state of preservation, and bear the name but rarely of the individuals whose ashes they contain. One in the collection of Mr. George de Conti Sant Fournier, found in a tomb at Rabat, has in relief on the inner surface of the lid SEX. M. F. (Sextus Marci Filius). Another *stannos*, recovered from a tomb at Marsa in 1645, bears the name of KAIKELIA or Cæcilia, probably the daughter of Cassius.

With the cinerary urns are frequently found glass and alabaster vessels, *lekitos*, *unguentaria*, and other terra-cotta vases, which contained the oil and ointment poured out upon the deceased during cremation; also, jars of elegant forms with elongated and rounded body, and a long neck often armed with Apulian ears, bearing the potters' marks. One of these jars in the collection at the Museum of the Public Library is stamped with the Greek name SOTER.

In the same collection there are several painted vases in the forms of *oxibaphon*, *craters* and *lekitos*, ornamented with mythological subjects, of elegant and purely greek style, found in tombs at Rabat in laying the foundations of the house of canon Grimani, and others'.

One of the painted scenes represents, in reddish brown figures on a black ground, the capture of Midas, according to Birch and De Witte; others show Bacchanalian subjects, in black on a light ground; others, discovered in the same locality near the Saura hospital in 1830 and at Nadur, are decorated with drawings of animals in the same old greek style.

Metal articles of personal adornment and attire belonging to the deceased, greek and roman autonomous coins of the island, consular and imperial coins of Rome, are also frequently collected from our rock-tombs.

22. The topographical situation of the Maltese rock-tombs is strictly suburban, along the three high-roads that radiated from the three main gates of *Mrlita*, the ancient Græco-Roman capital of Malta, and spread to the inner parts of the country and towards the sea, namely: Via Boschetto, including *tal-Merhlat*, *tac-Ciaula*, *tat-Tuta* and *Hal-Pilatu*; Via St. Agata, including *Hal-Bajada*, *tad-Deyr*, *tac-Cghaki* and *Hal-Barka*; Via *Ghar-Exem*, including *Tubia* and *Mtarfa*, and other lands pointed out in plate XXI full of rock-tombs.

In one of these tombs, outside Rabat, was buried Lucius Castricius, the friend of the Emperor Augustus.*

At Gozo, the district of the rock-tombs, called *it-Tomba*, extends from the *tal-Brag* plain beyond the convent of S. Francesco to the *Wairingia*, piazza of St. Agostino, and *Ghain-il-Gbira*. Amongst these tombs were those of C. Vallius, of M. Vallius, of Cestius, of Pollio, of Lvtativs and Longinvs, and other leading members and patrons of the Municipality of Gozo †.

The *it-Tomba* district formed the suburb of Gaylos, the ancient Græco-Roman capital of Gozo; it was extensively explored during the years 1892 and 1893.

23. The Greeks and the Romans certainly colonized our islands; under their conspicuous rules was founded a chief town in each of the two islands, and their rule was of long duration.‡

The Greeks and the Romans until the age of Augustus were accustomed to cremation after death, and to place the residual ashes in cinerary urns, which they deposited in underground sepulchres called *hypogea*.

By Roman law, all kind of sepulchres were considered *loca religiosa*, as long as a portion of the body of the deceased was there preserved entire together with the residue of cremation: in our rock-tombs, entire human bones are invariably found mixed up with the ashes in the cinerary urns.

Varro, moreover, informs us that the Romans had their sepulchres along the sides of high-roads "quo prætereuntes admoneant se fuisse et illos esse mortales," that is to remind passers-by that those lying there had been, and they themselves were mortals: and so the Maltese rock-tombs are found excavated, generally, along the sides of the ancient high-roads of the island, and in the outskirts of early inhabited centres of population.

One is, then, justified in regarding our rock-tombs as *hypogea* of the Greek and Roman colonists of the islands of Malta.

IV.

The Maltese Catacombs.

24. The Maltese ancient christian cemeteries tunnelled underground consist of a net-work of galleries and vaults in one piece, along the sides of which are cut the sepulchres intended for the integral preservation of the corpses after death by a Community, who abhorred the funeral pile and reduction of the dead to ashes by fire.

The members of this Community, living in the same Faith of an everlasting remuneration for their good works and dying in the same Hope of final resurrection of the flesh to life again in a world to come, considered themselves united after death by the same bonds of brotherhood and Charity with which they had been tied in life, and thus entitled to a share in the communion of the prayers and merits of their Church: their burial was emphatically called *expectatio* and *dormitio in pace* until the day of universal resurrection.

The members of this Community were the early Christians of the island.

* Roman Antiquities of Malta, Inscr. Melitensis. V.

† Ibid, Inscr. XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XXXI.

‡ Frammento critico della storia Græco-Romano delle isole di Malta.

The primitive official denomination of these burial places in common was the greek appellation *cœmeterium*, a resting place, as during the first three centuries the liturgical language of the Roman Church was greek.

In the 9th century, these cemeteries received the new common appellation of *Catacombs*, which during the 3rd and 4th centuries was applied solely to the crypts of St. Sebastian in the Via Appia at Rome.

25. The following general notes have been gleaned from the recent thorough exploration of the Maltese Catacomb of St. Paul, of which an ichnographical description is accompanied by plates I, II, III and IV, from the description of numerous other lesser cemeteries illustrated in this monograph, and from a partial acquaintance with the Catacomb of St. Agatha.

Without any external show to attract notice, our catacombs present internally the same primitive economical arrangement displayed by the Church of Rome in the burial places of the members of its congregations: an intricate network of galleries or corridors running in every possible direction, crossing and re-crossing one another always at right angles, and often interrupted by door-ways giving admission to crypts and chambers of different dimensions.

These primitive *ambulacra* or corridors are straight by rule, now and then pierced by *arofora* or *lucernaria*, namely vertical shafts for air and light; they are low-roofed and so narrow as to barely admit the passage of two pall-bearers side by side.

These galleries, though at different levels, are invariably in horizontal areas to prevent those of one plane running into those of other planes close by, or below.

Frequent communications between these areas are effected by *catabatica* or flights of steps.

The straightness of the galleries was required by a rite prescribing that the bodies of the departed should lie in a horizontal position, within the graves alongside the galleries.

Their narrowness and lowness were necessitated to secure the solidity of the whole excavation.

The labyrinthine crossing and re-crossing and the frequent communications were calculated to elude the vigilance and the pursuits of pagan foes in time of persecution.

26. The rock-walls of the galleries and crypts are honeycombed with graves, and the low sides are lined with isolated sepulchres of a special form.

The graves excavated in the walls have the form of horizontal niches called *loculi*, oblong in the direction of the galleries, and present a hollow cavity sunk in their flat plane to suit the size of an adult or of an infant corpse, always with a semilunar cavity on a small platform raised above the bottom of the *loculus* to receive the head, as in our phœnician sepulchres.

These graves are often in rows overlying one another, like the berths in a ship. The vertical aperture of the niches, in which the graves are dug, is of the same length of the graves, and is provided with ledges to receive the closing *tabula* or grave-stone, bearing the *titulus* or inscription referring to the individual buried therein.

The chief characteristics of the Maltese Catacombs, however, are the isolated *arcosolia* sepulchres or arched-tombs along both sides of the galleries.

These arched-tombs, resembling in appearance a *cubile* or bed, are formed of a platform raised about four feet above the ground of the galleries, and of the same length of a human body, on the surface of which platform are hollowed the *loci* or *sola* of the sepulchres.

The platform is surrounded above by semicircular arches on its four sides, which support the roof of the sepulchre and of the gallery.

These arched-tombs are the *arcosolia* recorded in the ancient inscriptions of the Roman Catacombs.

A great many of these arched sepulchres in our catacombs contain two, or three, or more of the coffin-shaped hollows side by side, separated by thin partitions, each with its own ledges at the mouth for the covering *mensa*, on which were inscribed or engraved the titles mentioned by comm. Abela, by Niedersted, and by count Ciantar.

The bodies of the deceased persons laid down side by side in horizontal graves were styled *biscandentes* or *terscandentes*, etc.

Several of these arched-tombs in the Catacomb of St. Paul, evidently intended for distinguished personages, are very elaborately constructed; remains of marble and mosaic decorations were found in some of them during the recent exploration.

In some of these distinguished arched-tombs, the angles and surface of the platform are ornamented with *acroteria* and crosses, and the sepulchre is a small chamber inside the platform, entered by an aperture in one of its sides.

These arched-tombs, the great number of which constitutes the main feature of the Maltese Catacombs, are different from the *arcosolia* of the Roman Catacombs, which are generally hewn out in the thickness of the wall and have but one prospect, that on the gallery.

Besides the loculi and the arched-tombs there are hollowed in the depth of the floor of some galleries numerous *formæ* like the graves, commonly used under the pavements of churches and in the present extra-mural cemeteries: these graves are of a later period than the former.

27. The galleries and rows of *arcosolia* are now and then interrupted by doorways into a single, or a *geminous*, or a *tricornus cubiculum* or crypt.

Some of these crypts, which have their walls pierced by common *locular* graves and are fitted with one or two arched-tombs, appear to have been family-vaults of the well-to-do Christians.

The spaciousness of others, much greater than what is required for an ordinary burial and particularly ornamented and fitted, proves conclusively that they were originally designed as places of small gatherings, and for the performance of some religious rites.

During these gatherings of the Christian congregation, the galleries were lit by means of numerous lamps, located in small niches cut purposely in the walls.

Prompted by deep religious enthusiasm, comm. Abela exclaimed that "the remains of hundreds, desirous of participating in common of the meritorious prayers and of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered by their living brethren, were peacefully laid down together in these cemeteries, in the same Christian intimacy of hearts that they enjoyed in their life time." *

28. This short description enables us to mark the striking points of difference between the ancient Maltese pagan-tombs and christian cemeteries.

Besides a very limited area in the pagan tombs, whether phœnician or græco-roman, the cellular disposition is constantly observed.

The corpses were never sealed up in the coffin-shaped hollows of the phœnician tomb-caves, nor the ashes and other remains deposited in the *olla* of the græco-roman rock-tombs; but the burial was completed in each case by the closing of the outer entrance of the cell or chamber, which the pagans had never to enter after burial.

The vestibule and gallery in the more conspicuous pagan family-vaults afforded suitable accomodation for only a very small family gathering.

In the Christian Catacombs, which cover a considerable area, the *locular* graves and arched-tomb system generally prevailed.

Each grave was individually and hermetically sealed up, as soon as it received the body, to render daily or frequent access to the cemetery possible for Christian congregations, or to individuals resorting thither to offer prayers on the tombs.

Some of the crypts are capable of holding a small family gathering, but there is always an oratory to accomodate, occasionally, a more considerable assemblage of Christians.

29. Notwithstanding these marked differences, there are nevertheless some points of real resemblance in the mode of burial practised by our early Christian natives in the Catacombs and that followed by the Phœnician pagans in the tomb-caves.

The galleries and the cripts, though much more numerous and covering a greater extension in the catacombs, have their type in the one or two short corridors and chambers observed in the largest phœnician family-vaults.

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, Not. IV, § V.

In Priscilla's, in Domitilla's, and in other cemeteries of apostolic or quasi-apostolic ages in Rome, some of the crypts were destined for the reception of sarcophagi, and so were some of the Phœnician caves and Greek chambers in Malta. The remains of Lucius Castricius, of Maritimus, of Idomenus, and of the ladies Crispia and Ælia Flavia were laid in marble sarcophagi.*

Originally, that usage may have come down to the earliest Christians of the island from their Phœnician ancestors, and some crypts in our catacombs may have been used for this purpose.

But a sarcophagus is an expensive acquisition, and its conveyance to the catacomb required the assistance of a number of bearers, in times in which it was desirable to attract as little notice as possible to the Christian cemeteries.

Moreover, the increased number of Christian members in a family, in countries where Christianity had been introduced, necessitated an increase of graves in the same family-vaults, and a consequent economy of space.

Hence, the excavation of *loculi* in the walls, in imitation of small sarcophagi of which only one side is visible, was manifestly introduced as an early substitute for those marble, stone, or terra-cotta coffins, which required much room.

The subsequent *sepolcri a mensa* and *arcosolix*, or table-tombs and arched-tombs, have the appearance of a fixed sarcophagus hewn out in the living rock.

Another remarkable likeness is presented by the coffin-shaped receptacles in the Phœnician tombs and in the Christian sepulchres, narrower at the lower extremity and broader at the shoulders; with a small raised platform and a semilunar cavity for the head.

The graves are *unisome*, *bisome*, or *trisome*, that is fitted to receive one, two, or three bodies, both in our Phœnician and Christian sepulchres.

The Maltese Catacombs may, in consequence, be considered a development of the primitive form of family sepulchres, used by the Phœnicians.

30. The topographical situation of the Christian catacombs in the island of Malta is strictly suburban.

The Roman laws very rigorously prescribed that all burial grounds, except those of the Emperors and of the Vestals, should be outside the walls of the city: *hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito*.† On the other hand, the convenience of citizens required that they should not be at a great distance from the city.

Accordingly, the Roman Catacombs, tunnelled in the bowels of hills around Rome to prevent infiltration of stagnant water, were formed within a radius of from one to three miles beyond the walls of Servius Tullius, and from one to two miles from the Aurelian and Honorian boundaries.

The Maltese Catacombs stand at a much shorter distance from the ancient walls, say from four hundred feet to a mile: their topographical position is indicated in *plate XXI*.

Having had their beginnings in *hypogea* of moderate dimensions along the three main high-roads *tac-Ciaula* now Via Boschetto, *Hal-Bajada* now Via St. Agata, and *ta-Ghar-Exem*, they grew in extent, and the lesser cemeteries or *Collegia funeraticia* increased in number, within the restrictions imposed by law not to underlie public roads or interfere with others' private property.

The greater principal suburban catacombs are seven in number, quite independent of each other: four in *Hal-Bajada* viz:—St. Paul's, the oldest and most extensive, St. Cataldus', St. Agatha's, and St. Venera's; one, *tal-Virtù*, in the district *tal-Merhlat*; another St. Maria *tal-Grotta*, adjoining and underlying the church and convent of the Dominicans, situated in Via Boschetto; and a last, *l'Abbatia tad-Deyr*, in Bir-ir-Rhiebu district.

Of these suburban greater cemeteries, those of St. Paul and of *l'Abbatia-ta-Deyr* are now fully explored and illustrated.

Besides these greater catacombs, there are numerous burial-clubs of separate Christian congregations in *Hal-Pilatu*, in *Hal-Barka*, in the lands *tad-Dlam*,

* Abela and Ciantar, *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. II, Not. IV, § XXV & XXXIII; Report on the Græco-Roman Antiquities of Malta, *Inscrip.* V, XXI, XXVII, XXIX.

† *Dig.* XLVII, 1, 2, 3, § 5.

tac-Ciaula, tat-Tuta, tac-Cghaki, ta-bir-ir-Rhiebu, and the immediate neighbourhoods of the ancient capital.

Other Christian catacombs far from the old capital are found at Siggiewi, at Mintna, and other localities inhabited by the early Christian natives.

31. St. Paul's Catacomb, which by comm. Abela and mons. Onorato Bres was confounded with a mediæval cemetery beneath the court-yard adjacent to the church of St. Paul, underlies a considerable area in tad-Dlam farm, at a distance of about 400 feet from the old capital : its origin may be traced to the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd centuries.

It was fully explored and surveyed in 1894 ; its ichnography is given in plates I, II, III and IV of the same place.

St. Cataldus' is nearly at the head of Hal-Bajada road. This saint, Irish by birth, was bishop of Taranto in Apulia, and his great veneration after martyrdom, commemorated on the 10th of May all over Italy, was extended to Sicily and hence to our island. In the year 1739, a chamber decorated with figures of saints in episcopal robes after the old style, was discovered in this cemetery.*

St. Venera's and St. Agatha's underlie two separate farms, on a site opposite tad-Dlam.

In two of the crypts of both these cemeteries, until the time of Comm: Abela, the rock-altar for the celebration of mass was preserved †

The crypt of St. Venera, or *Parasceve* as she is styled in the Greek Santuario Capuano Calend. 5 the 26th July, is decorated with a figure of the saint bearing in hand a crater with fire, allusive to her martyrdom. The crypt of St. Agatha, venerated on the 5th February, is ornamented with several figures representing St. Agatha, St. Lucia and other saints.

These two noble virgins and martyrs, according to local tradition reported by count Ciantar, had repaired to Malta, the one from Marseilles during the persecution of M. Aurelius in A.D. 164, the latter from Catania under the persecution of Decius, towards the year 250.

St. Cataldus' and St. Venera's, when they will be explored, may be found lesser cemeteries ; that of St. Agatha, from the area already apparent, belongs to the class of the greater catacombs.

Though the last three mentioned places bear the names of martyrs of the second and third centuries, their pre-existence is clearly manifested by their internal primitive construction.

Now-a-days it has been ascertained that many of the early Christian cemeteries, besides the historical names of the original owner or the primitive topographical indications, had bestowed upon them in the 4th and 5th centuries the names of martyrs.

The cemetery tal-Virtù, at about one mile to the east from the ancient walls, is sunk within a small hill in front of Siggiewi village. The access to it was walled up after comm. Abela, ‡ who states that in one of its chambers is observable a tribune with an altar cut in the rock, surrounded by seats which formed a chancel for the officiating clergy.

The greater portion of Sta. Maria tal-Grötta's, a mile distant on Via Boschetto to the south, was destroyed during the formation of the substructures of the church and convent of the Dominican monks in 1466.

L'Abbatia tad-Deyr in *Bir-ir-Rhiebu*, at the same distance to the west, is in a better state of preservation. It is the latest of all the early Christian cemeteries of Malta: it belongs to the age of transition between the under-ground and above-ground burials. This cemetery is the subject of a special monograph.

The *Mintna* subterranean, half way between the villages *Mkabba* and *Qrendi*, has been partially explored ; the *Siggiewi* one, which seems to occupy a larger area and until lately believed to be linked with that of St. Paul, is still unexplored.

A megalithic subterranean with christian sepulchres within a cemeterial *Basilica*

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, Not. IV, § XVII.

‡ Ibid., Lib. I, Not. IV, § XVIII.

† Ibid., Lib. I, Not. IV, § XIII, e XVI.

decorated with three absidal tribunes, roofed upon arches supported by huge rock pillars underlies the ruins of the old church Sta. Maria *tal-Knejes* in the district of Hal-Gbir.

Comm. Abela* mentions another one at *Gzirah* near Marsa, in which was discovered a greek inscription published by Gualtieri,† recording that it was purchased and repaired by a certain Zosimus.

Another underground cemetery was discovered in August 1874, on the northern side of the hillock *tal Gisuiti*, near the great harbour. It was then surveyed and a plan of it preserved in the Public Library.

32. In the island of Gozo no early christian cemeteries have as yet been discovered.

The suburban district *it-Tomba* was believed to owe its denomination to an extensive christian cemetery underlying it.

The explorations carried on in 1892 and 93, pushed as far *Ghayn-il-Gbira*, led to the discovery of many pagan tombs, but not a vestige of any used by Christians.

A christian marble, said to have been found some eighteen years ago by the Augustinian monks in Piazza St. Agostino,‡ records the name of Lutatius, of Longinus and of the holy Junia, who in their life-time had prepared a sepulchre for themselves. This title is certainly christian, but unfortunately no note was taken of the circumstances connected with the discovery.

The name of Lutatia, daughter of Cajus and priestess of Livia Augusta, occurs on another Roman marble bearing inscription *Gaulitana VII.* ||

Another Gozo marble of the age of the Antonines mentions P.M. (Publius Marcius), pontiff of the College of the *Seviri Augustales* in that island.¶

The adjunct of divine to the names of the Emperor Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, M. Aurelius, and Septimius Severus, is found on all the Gozo Roman marbles.

In the absence of any other evidence of christian traces, the only testimony above referred to renders it very doubtful whether Christianity was introduced into the sister island at as early a date as it was into Malta.

The marble found by the Augustinians may belong to the fourth century, when Christianity probably found its way into Gozo from Malta.

33. Two different opinions have been held respecting the origin of the Maltese Catacombs.

M. D'Orville and many others deemed that our Catacombs were originally *lautumice* or quarries from which stone was extracted, just as those of Rome had been believed to be originally *arenaria* or sand-pits for the supply of *puzzolana* and sand. By this theory, the Christians found those quarries convenient in which to secretly practise their form of worship, and by adding deeper galleries and premises formed concealed burial places for their martyrs and brethren.

With some apparent likelihood, this theory of the origin of the Roman Catacombs was also accepted by card. Baronius and other ancient writers of Ecclesiastical Antiquities, though Bosio remained silent on the subject.

D'Agincourt and Raoul-Rochette among the moderns entertained the same opinion, which appears to be supported by the connection of some of the ancient Roman cemeteries with sand-pits.

Father G. Marchi and the brothers De Rossi † were the first to shake the foundations of this theory as regards the Roman Catacombs, on geological, architectural, and historical grounds.

The diggers of the Roman Catacombs always studiously avoided in their excavations the friable tufaceous beds, from which *puzzolana* is extracted, as well as the hard lithoid rock, as the former would have deprived their work of consistency and the latter would have retarded and rendered it more difficult of execution. They always carefully chose the granular *tufa*, sufficiently consistent and workable.

* Malta Illus'trata, Lib. I, Not. IV, § XXIV, Not. VIII, § 41. † Tab. CCCXL.

‡ Report on the Roman Antiquities of Malta, § 186.

¶ Ibid, § 167.

|| Report on the Roman Antiquities of Malta, § 152.

§ Roma Sotterranea.

The whole internal architecture of the *Roma Sotterranea*, its intricate network of numerous parallel and narrow galleries crossing one another at right angles, in underlying planes at different depths, form a most difficult arrangement for the extraction and conveyance of *puzzolana* and sand, as compared with the wide semi-elliptical formation of the galleries in only one storey in the common sand-pits.

Besides, the history of the Roman Catacombs, like that of their secret recesses, records the purpose for which they were particularly constructed, and the difficult circumstances attending their later enlargement.

Their allegorical and symbolical decorations, the representation of sacred scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the images of martyrs and saints painted on the walls, and the numerous epitaphs tell, undoubtedly, that they were from the very beginning a Christian work, and used exclusively by the early Christians as burial-grounds.

The occasional connections of some of them with the near *arenaria* or sand-pits were effected at a later period, under circumstances forbidding the continuation of their legal use, thus compelling the Christians to multiply hidden accesses in order to be able to preserve the sacred deposits of numerous martyrs and brethren therein: this is as far as the origin of the Roman Catacombs is concerned.

The theory of M. D'Orville is still more destitute of foundation with respect to the origin of the Maltese Catacombs.

The porous and granular nature of the upper limestone rock into which they are hollowed, though sufficiently consistent underground, is subject to immediate and rapid disintegration when exposed to sun, wind, rain and other atmospheric influences; hence, the nature of the rock renders it perfectly useless as a building material.

Our ancient quarries and those of the present day are extensive superficial pits in the open air, without galleries or crypts, provided only with some trenches for draining rainwater and serving to allow of the cutting out of blocks of stone, and with a ramp by means of which stone and loose material is carted away: no similar quarries are found in the vicinity of our Catacombs.

Moreover, their internal construction, their narrow and low galleries render the cutting and conveyance of large blocks of stone, from their depths to the upper surface, impossible.

Evidently, these places were originally excavated and fitted for burial grounds, as demonstrated by the numerous *loculi* and arched-tombs hollowed in the walls contemporaneously with the digging of the galleries.

34. Saint-Non, Gerald, Gaetani, and other writers, among whom are mons. Bres and canon V. Galea, rejecting the theory of M. D'Orville and retaining that the Maltese Catacombs from the very beginning served as burial-places, were in favour of their heathen origin by the early Greek colonists of the island, and of their subsequent appropriation by the Christian natives.

The traces of greek inscriptions recently discovered in some of the arched-tombs and in some localities of the Basilica of St. Paul's Catacomb, and in other lesser cemeteries, may appear to afford good grounds for this hypothesis. It is, however, well known that during the first three centuries of Christianity, Greek was the liturgical language of the Western Church, and that the earliest epigraphs in the Roman Catacombs are also written or engraved in greek: the greek epigraphs, then, of which only traces appear in our catacombs, do not prove that they belonged to the pagan Greeks; they may have been, and we shall see that they really were, of the native Christians of the island.

In support of his opinion, mons. Bres *, quoting comm. Abela †, states that urns containing ashes, pagan vases and pictures, were found in Abela's own time, in our ancient cemeteries.

But comm. Abela himself records that the objects represented in tab. IV. V and VI of *Malta Illustrata* were discovered in isolated pagan tombs; and from the absence of pagan objects in the Catacomb of St. Paul, he argued its Christian origin.

* *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. III, Cap. XI.

† *Ibid.* Lib. I, Not. IV, § V.

The objects found in that place and mentioned by comm. Abela and count Ciantar are lamps bearing the image of a peacock, symbolising immortality or resurrection ; of a fish, symbolizing Christ ; tiles with a running stag, representing the departure of the soul after death ; the monogram of Christ, and traces of sacred pictures on the walls. No idols, jars, greek or roman statuettes, nor cinerary urns were ever recovered from our catacombs.

As contrasted with the isolated greek *hypogea* of limited areas and only intended for the preservation of the ashes of one or more members of one family, the internal construction of our catacombs, meant for the integral preservation of the corpses of the members of a community after death, exhibit a great many essential points of discrepancy in extension, in general arrangement and details.

Hence, it seems conclusive that executed conformably to one devised normal system and general plan adopted by the Christians of Rome, the Maltese Catacombs claim their purely Christian origin on the self-same grounds as those on which Father Marchi vindicated the origin of the Catacombs of Rome.

V.

History of the Maltese Catacombs.

35. Their Christian origin once established, it will be interesting to investigate the *genesis* of these vast excavations in the depths of the earth ; to inquire into the circumstances, which may have influenced or necessitated their being undertaken by our Christian ancestors, and which may have rendered difficult or feasible their execution and progressive development ; and into the conditions, under which the Christian natives may have legally held possession of, and legitimately used these places in times of general Christian intolerance and persecution by Roman laws and imperial government.

Unfortunately, the *diptychal* tables, the *feriale*, the liturgical and other ancient documents of our primitive Church perished in the great many vicissitudes, which befel the islands of Malta after the fall of the Roman Empire, during the long domination of the Byzantines and that of the Arabs in the middle ages.

Moreover, after the lapse of eighteen centuries since the introduction of Christianity into heathen Melita, local tradition trasmitted hardly any records of the condition of our early Christian forefathers, but that of their ancient venerated places of worship.

The topographical situation of, at least, the suburban catacombs was never forgotten, and there are positive grounds for asserting that even under the Arabs they were regarded with veneration. The story of the natives having been compelled, under the Arabs to seek refuge in these places, which could never have been places of permanent refuge of a Community, has no foundation on facts*.

With the exception of the Catacomb of St. Paul, however, which very likely retained its traditional denomination by reason of its proximity to the Grotto of the Apostle, the primitive names of the other six suburban cemeteries cannot be ascertained.

The denominations of St. Cataldus, St. Venera, and St. Agatha, owe their beginning to the 4th or 5th century, in which time the names of martyrs superseded the topographical indications and the original nomenclature of the owners of the catacombs.

Tal Virtù and *Sta. Maria-tal-Grotta*, certainly, have not received their present appellations earlier than the 13th century.

That of *tad-Dejr* in *Bir-ir-Rhiebu* is purely Arabic of the 9th or 10th century.

36. The only historical evidence which may enable us to tell the history of our catacombs is that of the monuments themselves.

Even this, however, is very scanty, as the indiscriminate savage devastation suffered by these monuments did not spare any of the symbolical, allegorical, or liturgical scenes, and scarcely any of the hieratical images, of which only defaced traces are discernible on the plastered walls.

* Frammento critico della Storia Musulmana delle isole di Malta.

On the basement of one of the arched-tombs in St. Paul's there is still a representation of the martyrdom of the holy woman Ephantini, and nothing more. The picture, no doubt, belongs to the early epoch of the excavation.

The primitive pictures on the walls of the crypts of St. Agatha, St. Venera, St. Cataldus, and *tad-Deyr*, may belong to the Græco-Byzantine period, between the 5th and 7th centuries. Those of *tad-Deyr* were restored about the 12th century; and those of St. Agatha in our own time.

Very few titles of our ancient cemeterial epigraphy have reached us, and some of them are even of a doubtful appropriation.

The oldest epitaph is that of the Maltese lady Ælia Flavia, aged 31 years, 3 months, and 10 days, inscribed on her sarcophagus by F. Fl. Hymnus her husband, and by Marcellus, Titianus, Flavia and Ampelle her sons and daughters, as reported by Panvinius and Gruterus,* during the Consulate of Pudens and Orfitus. A.D. 164.†

Another epitaph, published by Gualtieri, records the resting place of Maritimus, prepared to him by Dicanilla his wife and Cœlia his daughter.‡

A third, found at St. Venera's, records Columba, who died on the 5th of the Calends of August (28th July) ||

A fourth, recovered from near *Bieb-il-Gharrekin*, records the sepulchre of Idomenus and Valeria, prepared for their rest by Fufica, Calene, Curtius, and Oiadus.¶

A marble title, recovered in 1874 from a catacomb on the hill *tal-Gisviri*, was erected by the citizens to the well-deserving Flavius Titus, aged 55 years.‡

Another marble marks the sepulchre of Lutatius Q.F., Longinus and Junia, dug out in their life-time.**

An inscription on the sepulchre of an underground vault in *tar-Rhiebu*, near the cemetery *tad-Deyr*, points out the place where Dionysius and others slept in peace. ††

Of two other marbles of a more recent date, the one found in a cemetery at *il-Gzira* states that the place was purchased and restored by a certain Zosimus; the other, found near the Grotto of St. Paul records the sepulchre of Domesticus, a medical man aged 55 years, who departed this life on the 30th August DCCCX.‡‡

These few inscriptions, the only ones known at present as proceeding from our early cemeteries, do not indeed throw much light on their history.

We are, therefore, compelled to seek further light than that proceeding from our monuments in other sources, manifesting the origin and telling the history of monuments similar and contemporary to ours.

37. By the testimony of numerous epigraphs collected from the Roman Catacombs, and by sound critical references to ancient *notitiæ, itineraries* of pilgrims, *guides* to the Eternal City, and old codes, the learned G. B. De Rossi was enabled to re-construct the topography, to fix the chronology and to tell the history of those places with marvellous industry and most conscientious integrity.

And by recalling the bearing of the ancient laws and usages of heathen Rome and her colonies, the learned De Rossi has demonstrated to evidence the legal possession and use of their burial-grounds by the early Christians, in the very heart of the Roman Empire.

The monumental evidence forthcoming from their mode of construction and the distribution of internal details demonstrates beyond doubt that the Maltese Catacombs belonged to a Community holding the same Creed, and observing the same ritual in the performance of funereal ceremonies as the early Christians in Rome, during the same epoch and under the very same circumstances.

Consequently, the history of the Roman Catacombs may, in general, tell the history of the Maltese Catacombs, if only it be proved :—

That, amidst a pagan Community, Christianity under identical circumstances was introduced and upheld in Malta contemporarily with its introduction and maintenance in Rome itself;

* *Corpus Insc.*, DCCLI. 3.

† *Report on the Roman Antiquities of Malta*, § 173.

‡ *Ibid.*, § 182.

|| *Ibid.*, § 183.

¶ *Ibid.*, § 184.

§ *Ibid.*, § 185.

** *Ibid.*, § 186.

†† *Monograph tad-Deyr*.

‡‡ *Report of the Roman Antiquities of Malta*, § 187 and 188.

That the political, religious, civil and social conditions of the Christians in Malta were, then, the same as those of the Christians in Rome, and her other colonies ;

That all local and circumstantial evidences indicate that the same system of burials in common cemeteries, and the same funereal ritual practices adopted by their co-religionists in Rome, were followed then by the Christians in Malta, amidst a pagan Community still using the isolated tomb-system.

38. The permanent introduction of Christianity into Rome may date from A.D. 42, the second year of the Emperor Claudius, which is the commonly accepted date of the transfer thereto of the Chair of St. Peter from Antioch.

But it appears certain that the Christian religion was announced in Rome towards A.D. 34, shortly after its promulgation in Jerusalem, under the reign of Tiberius. Indeed, on the day of Pentecost, subsequent to Our Lord's Ascension, there were present in Jerusalem, at the first announcement of the Gospel by the Apostles, many Romans, who received baptism from the Chief of the Apostles himself. *

Tertullian, in the 3rd century, quoting from authentic records in the Roman archives, "reminded the pagans that Tiberius himself, being acquainted with the facts that occurred in Judæa, transmitted a message to the Senate purporting the acknowledgment of Christ among the Roman gods. The Senate having declined the proposal, Tiberius threatened death against the accusers of the Christians." †

This evidence is borne out also by the learned greek father Eusebius of Cesarea.

This took place, at least, about eight years before the arrival of St. Peter in Rome.

The new religion, regarded in the beginning as a sect of Judaism, was tolerated in Rome and her colonies for about 24 years up to A. D. 64, under the laws and imperial decrees quoted by Flavius Josephus in his history of the Jewish Antiquities, protecting the Jewish religion in Rome and the colonies: in fact, during the first twelve years after the Ascension of Our Lord, Christianity was preached only to Jews in Judæa and in those countries where Jews were numerous.

In consequence of some grave tumults between the Jews converted to Christianity and those who rejected the Gospel in the reign of Claudius, the Jews of Rome were expelled from the city: this ostracism, however, was not of long duration, and the Jews were shortly afterwards re-admitted, as we are informed by Flavius Josephus and by the Acts of the Apostles. ‡

During the twenty-two years which followed the transfer of the Chair of St. Peter to Rome, the number of Roman converts had become so considerable that St. Paul, writing to the Romans from Cenchrus near Corinth, stated that "their faith had become known to all the world." ||

Nero, at the time, was guided by the moderate counsels of Seneca and Burrus, and had not yet begun to give free course to his passions and cruelties.

The then considerable growth of Christianity in Rome is, further, attested to by Tacitus, ¶ an unimpeachable contemporary authority, who relates that "the detestable superstition, which had its author in one Christ publicly executed by Pontius Pilate, governor of Judæa in the reign of Tiberius, had found its way into the heart of the imperial city itself, and an *immense* multitude were put to death by Nero with every kind of cruelty and mockery." This took place in A. D. 66.

The undisputed evidence of the great number of Christians at that early period is, also, to be found in the testimony of Pliny the Younger, Proconsul of Bithynia in Asia Minor. In his letter to the Emperor Trajan, he thus referred to the Christians : "In their case are implicated Roman citizens of every age, rank, and sex *numerous in the extreme*, as the contagion of their superstition has made its way, not merely into the towns, but even into the villages."

The recent evidence of a great many epitaphs from the Roman Catacombs, recording the names of numerous early Romans of senatorial rank and both sexes, and of members of the same imperial family and household, who had become converts in the apostolic age, fully confirms the assertions of Tacitus and of Pliny.

* Acts of the Apostles, c. II, v. 10.

|| Cap. I, v. 8.

† Apolog.

¶ Annal.

‡ Cap. XVIII, v. 2.

The testimony of Dio Cassius is to the same effect.

This goes straight to prove the early free establishment and thriving condition of Christendom in pagan Rome, until its legal proscription and the persecution of Nero referred to by Tacitus.

Though tolerated under the shadow of the laws protecting the Jewish religion up to A. D. 64, the *hæteriæ* or assemblies of the Christians for the *sinaxis* and worship in common were only privately allowed in the *triclinia* of private palaces and houses, as in the case of the Jews, no other *public* worship but heathen being permitted in Rome and her colonies, except in Jerusalem.

These places of assembly were then styled *Domus Ecclesiæ*, *Domus Dei*, *Dominicum*, and afterwards *Tituli* equivalent to the parish-churches of the present time: such were the Titulus Pudentis, Praxedis, Equitii, Lucinæ etc.

39. Towards the year 216 B. C., the islands of Malta became a Roman colony and were declared "confederates and allies of the Roman People". *

This conspicuous political condition implied autonomous government with the right of sending Legates to the Roman Senate, and other privileges granted to confederate colonies: this political state was improved by the early Roman Emperors, after the overthrow of the Republic.

Our islands adopted, then, the Roman worship of Juno, of Apollo, of Proserpine, of Diana, of Hercules, and since the reigns of Augustus and of Tiberius had the Colleges of the *Seviri Augustales* to take care of the new worship of Augustus-God.

Roman manners, usages, and social intercourse, in the long run were generally adopted; by the Emperor Augustus himself and his successors the natives were admitted to the honours of Roman knighthood and citizenship.

The flourishing economical condition of our colony, towards the beginning of the Christian Era, is attested by Cicero, by Diodorus Siculus and many other Greek and Latin classics and historians.

During this flourishing political, social, and economical conditions of the islands of Malta happened the shipwreck of St. Paul, A. D. 56, on his way under arrest from Cesarea to Rome, and his stay during the three winter months of that year †.

The Chief Man or Primate of Malta was then a certain Publius ‡; that civic dignity had been enjoyed by Lucius Castricius mentioned in the roman inscription *Melitensis V*, before Publius, and after him it was retained by another citizen referred to in the inscription *Melitensis XVII*, whose name did not reach us.

The Apostle was there allowed to freely preach the new religion as he had been permitted before in Asia Minor and other places in the east, in Greece, Cyprus etc., and as he continued to be allowed "to preach the Gospel and the kingdom of God *confidently* and *unmolested* in his own house" || in Rome itself, during his first detention A. D. 56-58.

"The humane treatment of the Apostle and his comrades by Publius and the citizens of the island; the miraculous healing of Publius' father, who lay sick of fever and of a bloody flux, and afterwards of all who had diseases in the island; the no small courtesy shown to the Apostle by the natives, who had witnessed his wonderful preservation from the effects of the bite of the venomous viper; the many honours which he and his companions received during their three months-sojourn; the loading of them with all things necessary before their sailing from the island ¶", are so many instances of the general benevolence with which the Apostle and his teaching were accepted even by the most conspicuous natives.

Moreover, the combined authority of the ancient fathers of the Church, the testimony of old martyrologies, our early Christian monuments and an uninterrupted tradition, trace incontrovertibly the introduction and growth of Christianity in Malta to the early epoch contemporary with its introduction and growth in Rome, under the concurrence of similar circumstances.

* Frammento critico della storia Greco-Romana delle isole di Malta.

† Monografia della data del naufragio dell'Apostolo S. Paolo in Malta.

‡ Acts of the Apostles, cap. XXVIII v. 7

|| Acts of the Apostles, c. XXVIII, v. 31.

¶ Acts of the Apostles, c. XXVIII.

There was, likewise, in Malta at the time a Jewish colony, and probably several of those co-nationalists of the Apostles embraced, then, the faith of Christ.

These Jews had the private observance of their religion protected by laws and imperial decrees as in Rome, in Asia Minor, in Alexandria, and in Greece; they owned several burial-grounds, but their principal cemetery was that of Quabar-il-Lhud on the 'Mtarfa hill, in which place several Jewish epitaphs were found in the time of the comm. Abela.

No wonder, then, if the neophyte Christians of Malta contemporarily to the Christians of Rome throve unmolested under the shadow of the protection of the Jewish religion, prior to Nero's persecution.

An unbroken local tradition points out the site of the *domestic* church, St. Publius palace, in which our Christian fore-fathers privately congregated; after the general peace of the Church in the 4th century, on that spot our first public temple was erected, which stood all the time of the Mussulman domination and was extensively repaired by Roger the Norman after the conquest of our islands, in 1090.

40. The jealousy of the pagans at Rome especially of the pontiffs, who perceived the growing number of Christians, the neglect of heathen temples, and the rarer offering of sacrifices, combined with the struggles of the obstinate Jews in denouncing their supposed co-religionists, obtained from the Roman Senate the decree "*non licet esse Christianos*," in A.D. 64.

Two years later, the first opportunity of enforcing on a large scale that law was presented by Nero's burning of Rome, which, as Tacitus explicitly tells us, was imputed by its author to the hated Christians, and consequently an immense multitude of them were made to suffer the most refined cruelties, A.D. 66.

Among those martyrs, who foretold that persecution, were St. Peter and St. Paul, who suffered death on the 29th June.

After Nero's suicide, on the 9th June A.D. 68, peace was again enjoyed by the Christians for about fifteen years, after which their persecution was renewed by the Emperor Domitian, who did not even spare from his victims his own relations, T. P. Clemens, a Roman Consul, and the Flaviæ Domitillæ, A.D. 83-95.

To a short space of tranquillity, during the brief reign of Nerva, followed the persecutions of the Emperors Trajan, Hadrian, M. Aurelius, and Septimius Severus, from A.D. 99 up to A.D. 210.

These persecutions were carried on, sometimes even more violently, also, in the Roman colonies by the Prefects, with different degrees of rigour, which depended upon the cruelty of their own temper, heathen zeal, and lust of spoliation of the Christians.

Instead of retarding the progress of Christianity, these persecutions served to promote its propagation: under Trajan, it is stated by Pliny jun., that "the number of Christians of all ranks, both sexes, and all ages grew wonderfully." *

Eusebius of Cesarea relates that in the reign of Commodus, many Christians of rank and wealth were found in Rome.†

Tertullian, writing to Scapula Proconsul of Africa, states that it was well known to the Emperor Septimius Severus, that there were many *clarissimi viri et clarissimæ feminae* among the Christians he was persecuting.‡

By a subsequent edict of the Emperor Valerian, the *Senatores et Equites Romani* were expressly included in the persecution. ||

With respect to the islands of Malta, though the diffusion of Christianity has been progressive and steady, still heathenism certainly lingered until the 3rd century.

The opinion of the comm. Abela and others, as to the conversion of the Maltese to Christianity *en-masse*, is untenable: indeed, the worship of Juno and of Hercules, towards the end of the 2nd century, was still flourishing in the island, as testified to by Ptolomy; that of Proserpine and Apollo, and the existence of the *Seviri Augustales* recorded in our Roman inscriptions, were maintained a long time after the Antonines.¶

* Epist. X, 67.

† Hist. Eccl. V, 21.

‡ Ad Scapulam IV.

|| St. Cyprian, Epist. 81. 1.

¶ Frammento critico della storia Greco-Romana delle isole di Malta.

The government and administration of the two islands, and several of the *Patroni Municipii*, during and after the epoch of Hadrian, were pagan as we glean from our Roman inscriptions XVII and XVIII.

Further, it is scarcely possible that several of our pagan tombs, from which coins of the later Roman Emperors were collected, do not belong to the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

All this goes directly to prove the permanence, although lingering, of a pagan Community in Malta, until the 3rd century.

Under the circumstances, the natural aversion and hatred of this local pagan Community and government against the Christians could not have spared them from the general proscription of the Senatorial law A.D. 64, and from the effects of subsequent imperial persecutions, which had extended beyond Rome and Italy into Sicily and all other provinces and colonies.

As a matter of evidence, from the similar mode of construction and economy of place, internal arrangement of details and distribution of graves analogous to the Roman Catacombs, from the same devices contrived for concealment, it is clearly apparent that our Christian forefathers had then to follow the same recondite cemeterial system sunk under ground as in Rome, in which places they had occasionally to hold their *hæterice*.

In the ichnographical description of the Catacomb of St. Paul, *plate I*, we shall see that our early Christians changed its public access with hidden ones, and choked its principal galleries as the Roman Christians did, when the further use of their cemeteries was forbidden by imperial decrees, and their pillage and profanation by the pagans was permitted.

Undoubted tokens of the effects of persecution are still observed in our Christian monuments: in the Catacomb of St. Paul the representation of the scene of martyrdom is still clearly discernible in the basement of an arched-tomb; the palm-leaf, ordinary symbol of martyrdom, is engraved on several tombs in the same place, and in the sepulchres at Inghieret *plate IX*, tal-Liebru *plate XVIII*, ta-Bir-ir-Rhiebu *plate XXIV*.

All this arguing by way of comparison is to demonstrate that Christianity was introduced and grew in Malta contemporarily with its introduction and growth in Rome, under identical political, civil, and social conditions; and that, likewise, amidst a pagan Community our early Christian forefathers suffered from the same persecutions, and were compelled under very identical circumstances to adopt the same economical system of concealed cemeteries, used by their co-religionists in Rome: hence to infer, in general, the telling of the history of the Maltese by that of the Roman Catacombs.

41. The decree of the Roman Senate A.D. 64 directly affected the assemblies of the Christians, rendered illegal their new-born constitutions as a body, and deprived them of the right of acquiring and retaining property in common as such, not only in Rome and Italy, but in all provinces and colonies of the Empire.

The persecution of Nero and of the subsequent Emperors imperilled the very existence of the Christians by an unremitting threat of general extermination.

Under these difficulties, whichever country the Christians found themselves in, by submitting to the existing laws, by conforming to the customs of the place, and by following in their social intercourse with the pagans the manners and common usages in respect of dwelling, of clothing, of food, and otherd etails of daily life, they were careful not to betray themselves to the pagan foes or government agents.

Tertullian often told the pagans of his time: "We navigate in the same ships with you; we fight in your own files; we live in the same places with you; we purchase our goods from you; we have our arts in common with you, and publish our works for your perusal" *.

By such conformity, the Christians could dwell almost unobserved in Rome and in the colonies.

By following a common usage of a great number of clients and friends visiting the palaces and houses of their patrons every morning, as card. Wiseman † remarked, the Christians gathered privately in domestic churches, eluding the vigilance of their foes.

* Apol., XI.

† Fabiola,

Their main difficulty laid in obtaining a position in defiance of the law persecuting them, by which they could legally hold the property of their burial-places and preserve it. As the dogmas of Immortality and final Resurrection held a prominent place in their Creed, the Christians very anxiously had to seek that their deceased brethren should be properly and integrally interred in common cemeteries, conformably to the laws regulating Christian funerals, and meanwhile to conform to common usage and custom, which could not be effected without a certain amount of publicity.

Cremation, though generally practised in the time of Augustus and his immediate successors, was not prescribed by law; on the contrary, a funeral was never considered complete by the pontiffs, nor a tomb invested with a religious character and entitled to the privileges of *loca religiosa*, as long as a bone was not *resectum*, i.e. cut off from the corpse before cremation, or *exceptum*, i.e. saved from the flames of the pile, and interred with the ashes. *

The noble and distinguished Roman families never entirely gave up the practice of integral interment. The Scipios buried their relatives in sarcophagi. It is stated by Tacitus †, that Poppea, Nero's wife, was not cremated, but after the manner of foreign kings was embalmed with spices. The custom of integral interment grew common again in the times of Hadrian and the Antonines.

The early Christians, therefore, by not using cremation did not commit any violation of the law, but conformed to a practice still followed by many of the pagans.

By the Roman laws all kinds of sepulchres, whether of patricians or plebeians, of free born or freed-men, of citizens or foreigners, were considered religious places, entitled to certain privileges under the guardianship of the pontiffs *Divini Juris* ‡. This religious character was extended to all the premises within and annexed to the sepulchres.

The property of sepulchres, in consequence of these privileges, could not be alienated by sale, or exchange, or mortgage, or prescription; nor could the corpses laid therein be removed; nor the epitaphs and ornaments decorating them be effaced; nor could they be demolished or considerably altered: any such violation of the law was punished by transportation, or hard labour: "Quicumque sepulchrum violaverint aut de sepulchro aliquid detulerint, pro personarum qualitate aut in metalla dantur aut in insulam deportantur" ¶.

Mommsen ¶ and Orelli § published several inscriptions recording these privileges conferred upon burial-places by the laws.

The legal privileges extended also to the burial places of slaves: "Locus, in quo servus sepelitur, religiosus est".** Also to the burial-places of criminals, who forfeited their lives to the law, when the corpse was asked for and not expressly denied by capital sentence: "Corpora animadversorum quibus libet petentibus ad sepulturam danda sunt".†† In the cases of criminals executed by burning, the relatives were allowed to gather up from the spot of execution any ashes or bones for the purpose of burial ‡‡.

The body of our Lord after the Crucifixion was delivered over by Pontius Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea by virtue of this law, which, as Ulpian tells us, remained in force until a late period of the Empire.

This fully explains how the early Christians, in time of persecution, could obtain the relics of their martyrs, and honour them with decent burial.

The laws extended their privileges also to the performance of funeral rites: the ceremony of the purification of the family, the *feriæ denicales*, nine days after the burial, took precedence over the exigencies of public service and the strictness of military discipline.

These few particulars enable us to understand how the Christians, under the provisions of the laws, had not in the beginning to apprehend the violations of their sepulchres at the hands of the pagans.

* Cicero De Leg. II, 22; Marcianus, Dig. I, 8, 664. † Ann. XIV, 6.

‡ Caius. Instit. II, 2, 3, 8, 9.

¶ Inscript. Reg. Map., 2646.

** Digest. XI, 7, 2.

‡‡ Pauli. Sent. II.c. 13; Digest. XI, 8, 5, 1; and XLVII, 12, 5.

§ Inscript. selectæ, 2145, 4423, 4428, 4549.

†† Digest. XLVIII, 24, 3.

‡‡ Ulp. Digest. XLVIII. Tit. XXIV.

42. In ancient pagan Rome and her colonies and provinces, the idea of a public and common burial-ground for the inhabitants of one locality, whether noble or plebeian, rich or poor, friends or foes, was utterly unknown.

As the State did not provide a common burial-ground, the families and individuals had to provide separate sepulchres for themselves, which became religious places by interment: "Religiosum locum unusquisque religiosum sua voluntate facit dum mortuum infert in locum suum" *.

The general treatment of the lower classes, and of those who had no means to purchase a decent tomb, was to cast them into the *puticula* or open pits outside the city, where they were to rot together with the carcasses of dogs and other beasts.

The most noteworthy and wealthy families owned their own monuments by the common right of property, wherein, besides the members of the family, were often interred their relatives and friends, also their freed-men and freed-women *testamento honorati* † by their patrons, and their posterity with or without exceptions.

In frequent instances, the heir or heirs were precluded from making use of the family monument, by the usual clause H.M.H.N.S: "hoc monumentum hæredem non sequitur".

Omitting the more conspicuous Roman monuments, with a considerable frontage of 500 feet and 2000 feet in the field, of 100 feet in front and 180 in the field, the ordinary extent of the private monuments was always by law carefully determined with the formulæ *In Fronte, p...., In Agro, p....; or Long. p...., Latum, p....*; in order to prevent their interference with one another, or their encroachment under the public roads.

The ordinary dimensions were from 12 to 30 ft. frontage, and 17 to 50 ft. in the field, an extent equal to that of many of the pagan sepulchres in Malta. In describing the *genesis* of the Catacomb of St. Paul, we shall see that the successive areas, which formed its development, do not exceed these dimensions.

Another way of providing sepulchral monuments was that of several branches of the same family uniting together in owning one common ground, as the sepulchre of the *Arrii*, a plebeian family, outside Porta Capena in the Appian road, and another *Ex Domo Cæsarum et Livia libertorum* etc.

Or of several families joining in a Sodality for the same purpose. These sodalities often assumed a collective appellation in the possessive case, such as *Euseborium, Syncratorum, Pancratorum*, etc. ‡; or the name of the patron of the family, who made donations or bequeathed legacies in behalf of the sodality.

Several of the clusters of pagan tombs in Malta appear to have belonged to the two classes of sepulchres just mentioned.

The Roman *columbaria* offered another means of obtaining, at no great cost, a niche or a row of niches, for the sepulture of one or more members of the same family: from the epigraphs transcribed by Fabretti and Gori in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Romanarum*, it appears that the purchase of *ollæ* and niches in the *columbaria* was very frequent. Among the illustrations accompanying this monograph there is one of a *columbarium* near the Gran Castello at Gozo, and of another at 'Mtarfa in Malta.

The most common way, however, was that of members of the same profession, craft or trade joining into a corporation or *schola*, to form a *Collegium funeraticium* or burial-club: of these colleges in Malta there are several monographed among the following illustrations, which have belonged to early Christian body-corporates.

These body-corporates, by mutual co-operation and contribution of a monthly fee in their meetings, were empowered to purchase a burial-ground, the property and use of which they retained by special laws.

The right of meeting and of private associations had been very much interfered with by direct legislation, in order to prevent plotting against the government, towards the end of the Roman Republic: a number of suspected Colleges was suppressed by J. Cæsar, B. C. 64, and subsequently re-established by Augustus and Claudius II, and again abolished by Trajan III.

* Digest. I. 8. 664.

‡ Armellini, *Antichi cimiteri di Roma*.

¶ Ulp. Digest. XLVII, 21, 22.

† Digest. Lib. VI, de religione et sumpt.

|| De Collegiis restituendis.

Exception was made, in each instance, in favour of the *Collegia funeraticia*, which grew very numerous in and after the reign of Septimius Severus, towards the end of the 2nd and during the 3rd centuries.

There were burial-clubs of pagan pontiffs, of the Martiales Larini, of the Venerei mentioned by Cicero *; of the Capulatorum Sacerdotum Dianæ †, of the Fratrum Arvalium ‡, of the Augurum ||, etc.

The College of the Severi Augustales in Malta is alluded to in our Roman inscriptions Melitensis V, VII and XVI ¶.

Burial corporations of several trades are recorded by the Collegium Fænariorum §, Vinariorum **, Fabrorum ††, Victimariorum, Corpus Fabrum Navalium, quibus ex S. C. jicet coire ‡‡, etc.

Other corporations bore the titles of special worshippers, as Cultores Jovis, Apollinis, Herculis, Dianæ, Isidis, etc.

Other burial-clubs, limited to a number of persons, owed their origin to private foundations, as that of Æsculapius and Hygeia in the Appian Road, founded A. D. 154 by a Lady of rank, for sixty individuals only.

Roman soldiers had their own burial-clubs, maintained by regular contributions from their pay |||.

This privilege of association for the same purpose was, also, extended to the poorer classes by the law: "Permittitur tenuioribus stipem menstruam conferre, dum tamen semel in mense cœant" ¶¶.

The interesting particulars of the organization of one of these burial-clubs of *tenuiores* are noted in an inscription, recovered in 1862 from the ruins of Civita Lavinia, twenty miles from Rome. This corporation was constituted A. D. 133, by a permit from the Senate, to provide a decent burial place; its members styled themselves worshippers of Diana and Antinous; the admission fee was fixed at about 15s., and the monthly contribution at about 4d. §§.

The attention of the learned was first directed to the important subject of the constitutions of the numerous and varied pagan burial-clubs, by the German scholar Mommsen in his work *De Collegiis et Sodaliciis*.

To Comm. De Rossi belongs the merit of having pointed out the bearing of these institutions upon the condition of the infant Christian Church, in her struggles for existence during the first three centuries of the Christian Era.

With a great array of epitaphs and other inscriptions very learnedly compared and discussed, and by numerous other local evidences, De Rossi proved that the Christian burial-places of the apostolic and quasi-apostolic ages in Rome and Carthage had their commencement in the *hypogæa* of private illustrious converts, held by the common right of private property: the martyrs of the first imperial persecutions, in fact, have all had honoured sepulchres in the private monuments of noble Christian families at Rome, as it is recorded in the ancient Martyrologies and topographies of Rome.

As the number of Christians increased, these private monuments towards the end of the 2nd and during the 3rd and 4th centuries, grown into vast cemeteries, became the property of the Church, which held them by the right of her body-corporate, and were administered by her Archdeacon and Deacons.

The primitive Christians, eagerly desirous of obtaining burial near the martyrs' sepulchres, undertook to enlarge those excavations underground, and to dig out rectangular and horizontal receptacles in the thickness of the walls for their rest after death.

By these extensive enlargements, the Catacombs were formed and attained their fullest development in the 4th century.

Often, in the open air within the compounds of these places, pits deep enough to contain horizontal compartments, one above another, for ten bodies were dug out, giving,

* In Verrem II. † Don. Cl. IX, 19.

¶ Report on Roman Antiquities of Malta § 149, 153, 167.

** Fabretti p. 701.

†† Fabret. p. 719, No. 405.

¶¶ Marcianus, Instit. lib. III; digest. XLVII, 22. 1.

‡ Fabretti, 442 No. 49.

|| Grut. p. 198 No. 1.

§ Grut. p. 175 No. 9.

†† Grut. p. 397, No. 1; p. 468 No. 8.

||| Gruterus De Jure Marium, apud Grævii Thes. XII, 1100.

§§ Orelli, Inscip. No. 6036.

thus, rise to the above-ground cemeteries. Some of these cemeteries, in the open air in Rome, were contemporary with the underground excavations of the Catacombs: so are those over and near the Ostrian Catacomb, St. Callixtus', St. Cyriaca's, and others.

The use of the ancient above-ground cemeteries existed in several other parts of Italy, in Dalmatia, in Istria, in the provinces of the Rhine, and in other parts of France, likewise in Malta.

In Roman Carthage, the Christians used only the cemeteries above-ground in the open air, called *area sepulturarum*.

Towards the beginning of the 3rd century, these above-ground cemeteries, exposed as they were to public view, commenced to be greatly interfered with by the pagans. Interments therein had to be given up altogether by the Christians and were entirely superseded by burial in the Catacombs: their use was recommenced in the 5th century. *

43. This general view of the origin, growth, and development of the Christian Catacombs is corroborated by the following summary history of the most interesting Roman ones, given by the learned De Rossi and Armellini.

That the *nuclei* of the earliest Catacombs of Rome were the private monuments of distinguished families is directly pointed out by their primitive denominations in the ancient Acts of martyrs, in the old Martyrologies and Church Calendars, in the Almanac of F. Dionysius Filocalus, in the Liber Pontificalis, and in the ancient Indices and Topographies of Rome.

Those ancient denominations record the proper names of the original owners, such as Priscilla, Lucina, Prætextatus, Domitilla, Commodilla, area Macrobiani, Euelpii, etc.

These proper names appear altogether substituted in the subsequent documents of the 3rd century by those of conspicuous martyrs, whose relics were laid within those places, and by topographical indications.

But it is epitaphic evidence emanating from the same monuments, which bears the most incontrovertible testimony concerning their origin, and the social position of the individuals and families, whose property they originally were.

The learned De Rossi, up to the year 1868, examined and compared above 15,000 of these epitaphs and inscriptions, which number has been since increasing by an average of 500 every year. Vast as this number may appear, in De Rossi's well grounded opinion, it is but a small remnant of Christian epigraphy, which was estimated by him to include above 100,000 inscriptions.

With the light thus obtained, the private origin of the Roman Catacombs of the earliest date was confidently investigated.

As we are endeavouring to throw light on the origin and history of the Catacombs of Malta, and to draw our inferences *ab analogia*, we may be allowed somewhat to dilate in the following digression and notice to show the early rise and later development of some of the Catacombs of Rome.

The body of St. Paul, after his beheading, was delivered to a Roman Lady surnamed Lucina, who, it is recorded in the ancient memorials, laid the body of her master to rest in her own tenement: *In prædio Lucinæ, Via Ostiensi*. The name of Lucina is of frequent occurrence in the ancient records of the Church, and it appears the name was assumed by several other Roman Ladies, probably descendants of the one above mentioned.

In that burial-place of the Apostle were found Christian titles, bearing the consular dates of C. Sosius Senecio and L. Licinius Sura, A.D. 107; of C. Calpurnius Piso and M. Vettius Bolanus, A. D. 111, besides many other titles of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The cemetery of Priscilla Senior in Via Salaria Nova, the place where the crowds of martyrs of Nero's and Domitian's persecutions were buried, was the property of Domus Pudensis.

This Pudens, his mother Priscilla, his sisters Pudentiana and Praxedes, as also

* Monograph tal-Abbatia-tad-Deyr.

Prisca and Aquila, whose mention is made by St. Paul in his epistles and by St. Luke in the Acts, were the first disciples of St. Peter in Rome.

The titles in that cemetery record the rest of Acilius Glabrio, Consul in A.D. 91, of Acilius Glabrio junr., of Manius Acilius, of Manius Acilius V, of Acilius Rufinus, of L. M. Acilius; and other Manii Acilii Glabriones, descendants of A. Glabrio.

Other epitaphs recovered from the same place bear the name of Petrus, quite strange to the Græco-Roman family-nomenclature.

The Vatican crypts in the Via Cornelia are in the old area near the circus and famous gardens of C. Cæsar, in which place the immense multitude of Christians suffered under Nero's persecution described by Tacitus.

In a place in that area, the body of St. Peter was carefully laid after his crucifixion, and a *Memoria* or chapel was erected over it by Pope St. Anacletus, disciple and successor of the Apostle.

That private area, which subsequently became a large cemetery and the property of the Church by the right of her own body, remained the official burial-place of the successors of St. Peter up to St. Victor, A. D. 198.

Amongst the earliest epitaphs discovered there, one in Latin records the name of Livia Primitiva; another in Greek, "Jesus Christ Son of God, the Saviour of the Living".

In the extensive excavations undertaken under the Vatican Basilica by Pope Urban VIII, in the 17th century, several marble sarcophagi were brought to light; one of them bore simply the name of Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter.

The Callixtian necropolis in Via Appia is the result of several originally private sepulchral crypts, with separate boundaries and accesses, joined together during the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The primitive nucleus of that principal Catacomb of Rome was in the crypts of Lucina, whose name they bear in ancient records. Whether this Lucina Senior be the same one, who owned the farm in the Ostrian road, as she very likely was, has not been ascertained.

Lucina is not a Roman *præ-nomen*, but like Renatus and Renata, Redemptus and Redempta, Anastasius and Anastasia, is a Christian *agnomen* given in baptism, in allusion to the light of faith received.

From the galleries of the crypts of Lucina have been brought forth Christian marbles of two Pomponii Bassi, and one of a Pomponius Græcinus, * relatives of Pomponia Græcina mentioned by Tacitus.

Besides these Pomponii, other marbles name a Cæcilius Faustus, a Faustinus Atticus, an Annia Faustina, an Atticianus, a Pompeia Octavia Attica, an Attica Cæciliana, and a number of other Cæciliani *viri clarissimi et Jaminæ clarissimæ*, namely of Senatorial rank, the names of which Cæcilii occur combined in various ways.

It is well known that towards the beginning of the Christian Era, the celebrated Atticus, the friend of Cicero, passed from the Gens Pomponia to the Gens Cæcilia, having been adopted by his maternal uncle Q. Cæcilius, † and that the Pomponii were his heirs.

Towards the second half of the second century, one Pomponius Bassus married Annia Faustina, the grand-daughter of the Emperor M. Aurelius.

These historical circumstances prove the relationship of the Pomponii, the Attici, and the Fausti with the Cæcilii, recorded in the Christian marbles recovered from the crypts of Lucina; and the discovery of these names in that place is strong local evidence that these crypts were originally the property of a Lady of the branch of the Cæcili.

Tacitus ‡ tells us also, that the Pomponia Græcina above referred to, the wife of Plautinus the conqueror of Britain in the reign of Claudius, A.D. 58, was accused of having embraced a foreign superstition, and that though proved innocent in a jury held by her husband and relatives, she continued to live afterwards a secluded life to an advanced age.

* De Rossi, R. S. II, 336.

† Ibid. R. S. II, 362.

‡ Ann. XIII, 32.

The foreign superstition, of which Pomponia Græcina was accused and the life stigmatized as *tristis* by the pagan historian, leave very little doubt that the one was the Christian religion, and the other a Christian life of retirement. Learned modern authors presume on good grounds, that the Lady Lucina, who originally owned the crypts bearing her name in Via Appia, was the Pomponia Græcina of Tacitus.

A later Lucina, descendant of the family of the former, towards A.D. 250 deposited in the same family crypts the body of Pope St. Cornelius of the Cornelii branch connected with the Cœcili.

A second plot of ground near the crypts of Lucina was chosen by another branch of the Christian Cœcili, in the second half of the 2nd century. In this area was laid, in a separate crypt, the body of the illustrious martyr St Cœcilia, and numerous other *clarissimi* Cœcili, Æmilii, Æmiliani, and Cornelii of the times of Hadrian, of Trajan, and of the Antonines.

A second crypt near St. Cæcilia's is the papal crypt, the official burial place of the popes, from St. Zephyrinus until St. Melchiades.

Ancient Martyrologies mention in the same place four great groups, numbering 27, 48, 480, and 4000 martyrs in a large *polyandrum*, or pit, near the cubiculum of St. Cœcilia and the papal crypt. These were the relics of martyrs *qui gregatim comburebantur*, and Pope Damasus recorded their resting place in these words: *Hic congesta jacet turba piorum*.

Shocking as these numbers of martyrs may now-a-days appear, there is nothing in them extraordinary when the Roman usages of the time are considered. The Roman law authorized the slaughter of all slaves, the property of a master slain by one of them: 400 slaves, the property of Pedanius Secundus, suffered death on the same day, for the murder of their master by one of his slaves, A.D. 62.

One of the Senators is reported by Tacitus to have observed to the Senate, on that occasion, that: "now that we have nations amongst us, who have different rites and ceremonies, and foreign religions, it is impossible to keep such a rabble under restraint but by fear, no matter that incidental injustice be committed to certain individuals."

The inscription of Ancyra records that after the defeat of Pompey, 30000 rebel slaves were restored by Augustus to their masters to be slaughtered; after the defeat of Spartacus, 6000 crosses were set up by Crassus, along the road from Capua to Rome, for the execution of as many prisoners, A.D. 24. *

There is no reason to doubt the contemporary testimony of Eusebius, † who states that a Christian town in Phrygia was burnt with all its inhabitants, and that crowds in Egypt were beheaded and burnt together. Lactantius ‡ says, that numbers of Christians, in his time, were not executed singly, but burnt together: *gregatim comburebantur*.

A third area was added to the Callixtian cemetery by Anatolia, daughter of Fulvius Petronius Æmilianus, Consul A.D. 249. Among the most conspicuous contents of this place were the relics of the martyrs St. Calocerus and St. Parthemius, the tutors of the said Lady, pope St. Eusebius, an Æmilius Parthemius, an Æmilianus, a Paulinus, and a Petronia *clarissima femina*.

A fourth area in the same Catacomb is the *arenarium St. Hippolyti*, in which besides the corpses of that martyr and his Greek comrades Adrias, Maria, Neo, and Paulina, was deposited the throng of martyrs, who suffered in the persecution of Valerian and Gallienus, towards the middle of the 3rd century.

An area of later date was the property of St. Soteris, a Lady ancestress of St. Ambrose, martyred during the reign of Diocletian.

The cemetery of Domitilla in Via Ardeatina belonged to a Roman matron of the family of the first Flavian Emperors.

Suetonius || informs us that Titus Flavius Sabinus, son of P. F. Petro head of the Flavian family, had two surviving sons by his wife Vespasia Polla: the eldest, P. F. Sabinus junr was twice Prefect of Rome, in the reign of Nero, A. D. 64, and in that of Otho and Vitellius, A. D. 69; the younger P. F. Vespasianus became Emperor, A.D. 69.

* Appian. De bello civili, I, 120.

† Hist. Eccl. VIII, 11.

‡ De Morte Persecut. CXV.

|| Vespas., I.

To P. F. Sabinus junr. were born three children: P. F. Clemens, who married to his cousin Flavia Domitilla senr.; P. F. Sabinus III, married to his cousin Julia Augusta; and Plautilla.

Of Plautilla was born Flavia Domitilla junr. *.

To the household of the same Flavian Cesars belonged Aurelia Petronilla.

P. F. Sabinus junr., while Prefect of Rome, had known St. Peter and St. Paul, and witnessed Nero's persecution. He is described by Tacitus †, as a "meek man abhorring bloodshed, and grown silly towards the end of his life": in this style Christians were stigmatized by pagan historians.

P. F. Clemens his son, who was Consul in A.D. 95, described by Suetonius as a "man of most despicable inertness", was punished with death by the Emperor Domitian his cousin; and the two Domitillas were condemned to transportation, on the charge of "atheism", as Christianity was then considered, and of being "contrivers of new things," as related by Dion Cassius, ‡ and by Bruttius §.

Two inscriptions found in the junior Domitilla's Catacomb furnish the evidence that that farm was her property: one records a sepulchral area therein, 35 ft. in front and 40 ft. in the field, "granted to Sergius Cornelius Julianus *ex indulgentia* Flavix Domitillæ neptis Vespasiani;" the other mentions a similar concession "*ex beneficio* Flavix Domitillæ."

In the primordial cell, round which Domitilla's Catacomb was developed, were placed the martyrs Nereus and Achillæus, the chamberlains of that imperial Lady, and evidently prepared for them by her.

In the same vault, besides many martyrs of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, were laid to rest St. Petronilla and other Christian members of the Flavian family; Bruttia Crispina, and others of the Gens Bruttia; the Ampliati, whose family head, very probably, was the one mentioned by St. Paul; and several Ulpii, Claudii, and Aurelii of A.D. 123-127.

The Ostrian cemetery in Via Nomentana, among its original denominations had that of *ad nymphas* or *fons St. Petri*, in reference to the baptisms conferred there by the Apostle.

In 1876, the place of the "*Chair where Peter the Apostle first sat*", the anniversary of which is commemorated on the 18th January, was identified by Signor Armellini in the said cemetery.

Laconic inscriptions, most simple symbols, and bare names of the families of the Claudii, the Elij, the Aurelii, and the Julii, from the epoch of Nero to that of the Antonines, constitute the most ancient paleographic class in this cemetery.

An interesting primitive group records Hoctavia, Julia, Claudia, Julianus, Zetus, Justina, Filotecnus, Procla and Luria Januaria.

In the same place were preserved the *memoriæ* of the celebrated martyrs Emerentiana, Alexander, Papias, Maurus, Victor, and other victims of persecution in the 3rd century.

The cemetery of Prætextatus in Via Appia owes its early origin to a member of the noble Prætextati, one of the earliest Christian generations at Rome.

This cemetery lies in front of that of the Cæcili, with whom the Prætextatii seem to have been connected; in fact, one Septimius Prætextatus Cæcilianus was buried near the crypt of St. Cæcilia.

In the primitive galleries of Prætextatus were discovered Greek and Latin epigraphs of the most ancient paleographic forms. One of these marbles is inscribed: "May Urania, daughter of Herodes, have a happy lot". The Herod, to whom the inscription may refer, was Herodes Atticus, the præceptor of the Emperors M. Aurelius and Lucius Verus, whose villa overlaid the cemetery.

The martyrs of the persecution of M. Aurelius had their resting place in this cemetery: a war against the Parthians in the east, another threatened in Britain and Germany, a dire famine, and an extraordinary overflow of the Tiber, had aroused the usual outcry of the pagans: *Christianos ad leones*.

* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. III. 18.

† LXVII. 13.

‡ Hist. III. 65. 69.

§ Apud Eusebium. Hist. Eccl. III. 18.

As most suitable victims, were then first chosen the noble widow Felicitas and her seven sons, A.D. 162, whose commemoration in old Church calendars is antonomastically styled "*the day of the martyrs.*"

St. Januarius, the eldest of the brothers, was laid in Prætextatus', his crypt was discovered in 1857; the mother and Silanus the youngest, in St. Maximus'; Felix and Philip, in Priscilla's; Alexander and Vitalis, in the Jordani's.

The other conspicuous martyrs in this cemetery were St. Quirinus, a tribune, and his daughter St. Balbina, under Hadrian, A.D. 130; St. Valerian and St. Tiburtius, the bride-groom and father-in-law of St. Cœcilia; St. Maximus and bishop Urbanus, A.D. 177; St. Felicissimus and St. Agapitus, the deacons of Pope St. Xistus II, A.D. 258.

The cemetery of St. Agnes in Via Ardeatina was originally the property of the Clodii, the ancestors of the noble victim of the persecution of the co-Emperors Valerian and Gallienus, A.D. 258.

The most ancient Christian marbles recovered from St. Agnes' record the names of Clodius Crescens, of Clodia Victoria his wife, of Clodia Ispes her freed-woman, of Clodius Crescentianus, and of several Ælii, Aurelii, and Cælii Saturnini, in the reign of the first Flavian Emperors.

The cemeteries of Sabinilla and Bassilla, wherein were laid the greater number of the martyrs of the persecution of Claudius Gothicus, had the same beginning in private *agelli*; so had that of St. Cyriaca, in which were preserved the relics of St. Lawrence and of the martyrs, who suffered in the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus; and other greater and lesser Roman Catacombs of the second and beginning of the third centuries.

44. As long as the number of the members of the newly born congregations did not exceed the ordinary limits of that of a noble Roman *familia*, or that of a *schola* of a corporation, the early Christian cemeteries presented no difficulty in their formation, excited no wonder, and implied no infringement of the law.

Excavated along the military high-roads of Rome, they had their entrance exposed to public view, with the usual tablet on the architrave over the door-way, indicating the name of the owner or owners in the possessive form, like the pagan monuments.

The remains of the door-way of Domitilla's, ornamented with a fine front of brick-work and terra-cotta cornice, similar to that of the sepulchre of the Nasones, were discovered in Tor-Marancia in 1865.

There was, then, no need of excavating narrow corridors and passages in several *piani*, or of piercing their sides with *locular* graves. Indeed, the primitive portions of the apostolic and quasi-apostolic cemeteries contain rather spacious *ambulacra* and crypts for the reception of sarcophagi, show pilasters and cornices of terra-cotta, fine ornamentation in stucco, painting in classical style, and inscriptions bearing classical names.

The increasing of Christians, necessitated further development, economy of space, and a special administration, as it was already noted.

Towards the beginning of the 3rd century, the burial ground of the Cæcili in Via Appia, as it appears, was the first to pass into the property of the Church of Rome as a corporate body.

Its administration, was entrusted by Pope St. Zephyrinus to the Archdeacon of Rome, then St. Callixtus,* under whose charge and during whose pontificate after the death of St. Zephyrinus, that cemetery was so considerably enlarged, that it became the principal Christian necropolis of Rome with the name of Callixtian cemetery. Several small *basilicas* and *scholæ* were subsequently added by Pope St. Fabian.†

Many of the other cemeteries became, also, afterwards owned by the Church of Rome during the same century, under the law protecting burial-colleges, and Pope St. Fabian divided their administration among the seven deacons of Rome, about the years 236-249.

The administration of the Roman cemeteries was re-organized by Pope St. Dionysius in the years 259-269. ‡

Of the ownership and maintenance of these Christian burial-grounds in the 3rd century, by the right of the Church as a corporate-body, we possess the contemporary

* Philosoph., lib. IX e II.

† Liber Pontificalis in Fabiano.

‡ Lib. Pontif. in Dionysio.

and direct testimony of Tertullian, who states that they were maintained by moderate monthly contributions paid by the members possessing them: "modicam stipem egenis alendis humanisque". *

This passage of Tertullian is quite parallel to that of the law, allowing the poorer classes to contribute a monthly rate for the purchase and the keeping up of a common burial-ground. †

One of these Colleges bequeathed to the Church is recorded by the following inscription found in Roman Africa: "Euelpius a worshipper of the Word, who bequeathed a sepulchral area to holy Church and to his Christian brethren," whose College was very likely known as "Ecclesia Fratrum," and its members as "Cultores Verbi".

Another inscription from Priscilla's cemetery mentions the "Collegium Pelagiorum"; another from Callixtus', the Sodality of the Eutichii, descendants of the Florii Florentii; another from Domitilla's, the millers' or bakers' club, "Collegium Pistorum."

An inscription, from St. Nicomedes' in Villa Patrizi outside Porta Pia, records the hypogæum of Valerius Mercurius and Julitta, and of Julianus and Quintina Verecunda, bequeathed to the Sodality of their freed-men and freed-women and their posterity professing the same religion.

Another marble from the same place mentions M. Antonius Restitutus, who had dug out a hypogæum for all the members of his family believing in the Lord.

An imperial decree, quoted by Lactantius, ‡ acknowledges that the Christians possessed cemeteries "ad jus corporis eorum non hominum singulorum pertinentia" namely as a body and not as private individuals.

The Council of Elvira for Spain, Dionysius of Alexandria for that town, and Eusebius of Cesarea for the east, render the same evidence to the existence of Christian burial-colleges in those respective places; which all became the property of the Church during the 3rd century. ||

The whole of the evidence accumulated in this and the preceding paragraphs demonstrates on strong grounds the soundness of the theory of the learned De Rossi, that the Christians legally possessed and freely used their cemeteries, until the beginning of the 3rd century, by the common right of private property, and by the right of their corporations; and that during the 3rd century the property of those cemeteries passed to the Church and was retained by her as a corporate-body.

45. The privileges of the Roman laws extended also to the religiosity of funerals, *funera*.

The Christians, under the protection of the law, until the middle of the 3rd century, were able to conform to the common external usages in the transfer of their deceased brethren to the burial place, *elatio cadaveris*.

Common funerals of the middle and poorer classes were generally conducted without any show.

The corpses of personages of note, even of martyrs, were accompanied with lighted torches, *funalia*, made of twisted ropes smeared with pitch: with such pomp the body of St. Agnes was conveyed to the *agellus* of the family, and that of St. Cyprian to the sepulchre of Macrobius in Via Mappala at Carthage. This funeral pomp was occasionally disturbed by the violence of the populace, but it was never subject to legal profanation.

The Christians even imitated, as far as they could, other customs of the pagans on such occasions.

On the ninth day after the funeral, the pagans celebrated the feasts of purification, the *feriæ denicales*, and served a *silicernium* or funeral banquet to the members of the family, in the *schola* over the place of burial.

Days for strewing the tombs with violets, *dies violationis*, commonly in March; and days for spreading roses over them, *dies rosationis*, commonly in May and June, were also observed by the pagans.

These solemnities or *parentalia*, and the offerings to the *Manes*, i.e. the spirits of the departed, were repeated on the anniversaries of the birth and death, and as often as fixed by the liberality of the testators.

* Apol. 39.

† Digest. XLVII, XXII. 1.

‡ De Morte Persecut., No. 48.

|| De Rossi R. S. I. 85.

Besides these social and family solemnities of a private character, the law assigned a public holidays, the *feralia*, from the 3rd to the 22nd of February, for the visitation of the sepulchres.

After the public transfer of the deceased to the cemetery, the Christians privately and unobserved completed all liturgical rites prescribed by the Church; and after burial they followed the custom of a funereal banquet, called *agape*, namely a love-entertainment, to the sorrowing widows and orphans, which entertainment in the cases of martyrs was repeated every year on the *dies natalis*, i.e. the anniversary of the days upon which they suffered.

The custom of scattering violets and roses, and of depositing wreaths of other flowers on the tombs of their brethren, was also adopted by the Christians.

The visitation of the Christian sepulchres was observed from the 2nd to the 9th November; lamps were lit upon the graves; prayers were repeated every day, on the commemoration days of all faithful departed this life; holy Mass was offered for the repose of the souls of the defunct brethren on the three days following the death, on the 7th and 30th days, and at the close of the year, in presence of the family.

To understand how this could take place, it should be borne in mind that until the 3rd century the persecutions had chiefly aimed, in many places, at the Christians individually, not as a body.

Though the sword of persecution was always impending over the heads of Christians, very often long intervals elapsed without descending upon them.

Though the Christians often suffered massacres at the hands of a furious populace, legal persecution was not always and uninterruptedly enforced.

While in several of the provinces of the Empire, the persecution of the Christians was severely and violently carried on by the Prefects, tolerance and forbearance appeared in Rome.

The Emperor Trajan had directed Pliny not to hunt after and persecute the Christians in Bithynia, but only to punish them if accused and convicted.

Alexander Severus, in a contest concerning a piece of waste ground in Transtevere between the *propinarii* or cooks-club and the Christians, had settled the dispute in favour of the latter: in his *lararium*, the same Emperor had coupled the image of our Lord with that of Orpheus.

The Emperor Philip favoured the Christians, whose faith, it is believed, he had embraced.

The Emperor Aurelian, at the request of the Christians in Antioch, turned Paul of Samosata out of the possession of their ecclesiastical buildings in that province.

This primordial *modus vivendi* of the Christians altogether changed about A.D. 257.

The increased number of Christians, and consequent development and extension of their cemeteries, drew the attention of the pagan pontiffs, of the magistrates, and of the Emperors to the insufficiency of the laws checking their progress.

Symptoms of insecurity, and of expediency of concealment of their cemeteries, had commenced to be felt by the Christians in the reign of Septimus Severus, towards the beginning of the 3rd century.

The storm first broke out in Carthage, where the Christian sepulchral areas open to the sky were violently assailed by a furious mob, and the dispossession of the Christians of these places was insistently claimed, though resisted by the President Hilario.*

After a somewhat short truce in Rome under the subsequent Emperors, the persecution against the Christians became general and ferocious under the reign of Decius, the first of whose illustrious victims was Pope Fabian, in January A.D. 250.

The Co-emperors Valerian and Gallienus published the first edict forbidding the assembling of the Christians in, and the use of, their cemeteries, † A.D. 254.

This direct interference with the exercise of their right in making use of their cemeteries involved an urgent double necessity upon the Christians: the necessity of the

* Tertullian ad Scapulam.

† Euseb. Hist. Eccles., VII, 11; Acta Procon., St. Cypriani.

utmost concealment in resorting to those places by new hidden accesses, of choking their old entrances and principal galleries to prevent pillage, and profanation of the martyrs' relics, at the hands of the pagans; and the necessity of using the greatest economy of space in further enlargement and deepening their cemeteries.

All kinds of devices were contrived to render the Christian cemeteries inaccessible to the pagans: the doorways in the high-roads were pulled down; the main staircases, leading directly to the galleries, were cut off; new passages, long, narrow, hidden, and independent of one another, were substituted; the more exposed galleries were filled up with earth; further excavations, irrespective of the restrictions of the law forbidding their extension under the high-roads, were tunnelled in several *piani* underlying one another, and thus the labyrinthine net of the Catacombs was formed.

The Christians very naturally sought to evade the imperial prohibitions in many ways, and in many cases they paid for their disobedience in the Catacombs themselves.

Pope St. Xistus II, with his deacons and his congregation caught in the cemetery of Prætextatus, fell victims to the violence of the soldiers, on the 6th of August A. D. 258; they were followed by St. Lawrence's martyrdom, on the 10th of the same month, of St. Tharsicius and others in Rome, and by the beheading of St. Cyprian in Carthage, on the 15th of September following.

46. Three years later, A.D. 260, the cemeteries were returned to the Christians by the Emperor Gallienus, who survived Valerian his father.

Again interfered with and confiscated, during the short but disastrous persecution of the Emperor Diocletian A.D. 284, the cemeteries were again restored to the Christians by the Emperor Maxentius, A.D. 311, under the pontificate of St. Melchiades.

After this last restoration, the Catacombs continued to be used as burial-grounds until during the 5th and early in the 6th century, they were altogether superseded by above-ground cemeteries.

During this time, by the piety of Pope St. Damasus, A.D. 366-385, many tombs of the martyrs, which still lay hid, were recovered; new accesses were effected, new stair-cases were constructed; some of the galleries were widened; the walls of the more sacred chambers were covered with marble; new shafts for more air and light, to guide devout visitors and pilgrims, were opened; decaying walls were supported with arches; a number of sets of verses commemorating glorious deeds, and pointing out the places where martyrs rested, were engraved on various shrines by the same Pope.

"The Roman Catacombs at this time", states St. Jerome the secretary of Pope Damasus, "were visited by the Faithful with great zeal and in great number, to venerate the martyrs, still in their original resting places"; and so they remained frequented till A.D. 750.

Plundered by the Goths and the Longobards, great care was taken by successive Popes to rescue from that desecration, and transfer to churches, the relics of martyrs from those places, during a period of sixty or seventy years after A.D. 750.

Neglected and forgotten, the Roman Catacombs sank into the darkness of oblivion for the nearly seven or eight hundred subsequent years. Their names were still recorded in most ancient Church-Calendar, Martyrologies, Acts of Martyrs, and Itineraries of Pilgrims; but their topographical indications had become so thoroughly confused by the numerous mistakes of ignorant copyists, that the skill, industry and patience of the learned De Rossi were required to identify them.

During all the time of this utter abandonment, the crypts of St. Sebastian, a small portion of a cemetery in Via Ardeatina, were known to the pious pilgrims.

The earliest visits, after all this time, were those made to the Catacomb of St. Callixtus by certain Franciscan monks, between the years 1438 and 1482, recorded by scribbling on the walls of two or three chambers.

On the 31st May 1578, the discovery of a subterranean gallery by some diggers of puzzolana, in a vineyard in Via Salaria, attracted public attention.

The learned Card. Baronius, the Spanish Dominican monk Alfonso Ciacconio, two young Flemish laymen, Philip De Winghe and Jean l'Heureux (Joannes Macarius), were amongst the first visitors to the place; but their labours were not of much service to the knowledge of the Catacombs.

The re-discovery of *Roma Sotterranea*, on the 10th December 1593, was reserved to the learning, industry, and persevering efforts of Antonio Bosio, Maltese by birth, advocate by profession, resident in Rome from his earliest years with his uncle the Roman Agent at the time for the Knights of Malta.

47. The summary history of the Roman Catacombs thus once told, we may now thus confidently proceed to investigate its general traces in the Maltese Catacombs.

In so far as it has been demonstrated, Christianity was introduced into Malta as early as it was into Rome, amidst a native pagan Community likewise observing Roman heathenism; at a time that our islands were ruled by Roman governors, enjoyed Roman civilization, privileges and institutions; held intimate daily intercourse and flourishing trade with Rome, Italy and Africa, which all goes to prove similarity of political, religious, social, and economical conditions: hence, the bearings of the common Roman laws upon the early Christians of Malta, and their burial-places, could not be different from those concerning their co-religionists in Rome.

Even though deprived of epigraphic evidence, and of the testimony of ancient Guides, Itineraries, and other written documents, our own monuments bear unmistakable proofs of origin and development contemporary with those of the Roman ones, and in every respect similar to them in the primitive system of burial adopted; in the topographical position outside the inhabited places; in the identical *genesis* of the greater cemeteries, beginning within small areas with definite boundaries, linked together round a nucleus, and in the rise of numerous lesser burial-clubs, as would meet the requirements of common laws then in force; and finally, in the similar changes which had to be effected under the restrictions of later persecutions.

A glance at the ichnographical maps I, II, III, illustrating the Catacomb of St. Paul, will show its primitive internal arrangement, and growth by consecutive additions of adjacent areas, under ordinary circumstances; the labyrinthine alterations, excavations under the public road of *biani* in different levels, and directions; the change of the original passages, and all other devices contrived for concealment, as detailed in the description annexed, identical with those executed in subterranean Rome in the times of difficulties, towards the beginning and the middle of the 3rd century.

Map XXI and description annexed illustrates the extent and boundaries of Melita, the ancient Græco-Roman capital of Malta, and the vast topographical region of the pagan and of the early Christian suburban necropolises, beyond its southern extremity, and along its three primitive high-roads radiating outside into the country from its three main gates, now represented by Via Boschetto on the east, Via Ghar-Exem on the west, and Via St. Agata, otherwise Hal-Bajada, between the two other high-roads.

Until our own time, both sides of these three high-roads were strewed with Græco-Roman and Phœnician tombs and with a great number of early Christian cemeteries: Via Boschetto, as far as the convent of the Dominican monks; Via St. Agata, as far and beyond Hal-Barka; Via Ghar-Exem, as far and beyond Ghayn-Klieb.

On the right hand of Via Boschetto are the remains of the Catacomb of Sta. Maria tal-Grotta; in the lands tal-Merhlat, on the eastern side of the same high-road, lies the Catacomb tal-Virtù.

On the right side of Via St. Agata lies the Catacomb of St. Paul; on the left, those of St. Cataldus, St. Agata and St. Venera.

All the lands intervening between Via Boschetto and Via St. Agatha, including Hal-Pilatu and all the new cross-streets in the farms tac-Ciaula, tal-Cullegg, tat-Tuta and tad-Dlam, were all scattered, until lately, with numerous ancient tombs, the more characteristic of which were surveyed and are illustrated in this monograph.

The lands between the high-roads Via St. Agatha and Ghar-Exem, including ta-Cghaki, Hal-Barka, tad-Deyr, ta Ghayn-Klieb, are likewise full of clusters of pagan tombs, and of Christian burial-colleges; in the lands tad-Deyr is the interesting cemetery of l'Abbatia tad-Deyr, illustrated in *plates I, II, III* accompanying its separate monograph.

All the sepulchral areas within this suburban region seen by me, and those recorded by comm. Abela and count Ciantar, had a definite frontage of about 15 feet and length of about 30 feet in the field, each with a separate access.

Still, others much more conspicuous in the lands tad-Dlam, tal-Cullegg and tac-Ciaula, had an average of about 40 feet in front and over 100 feet in the field.

The frontage of the primitive nucleus of the Catacomb of St. Paul is 40 feet, its length in the field 56 feet; the other areas, subsequently linked to it, have likewise a delimited frontage and length in the field of nearly the same dimensions: they were, then, undoubtedly the property of wealthy families and citizens of the islands, towards the beginning of the 2nd century.

From the neighbourhood of this suburban necropolis were recovered the following marbles:

A Latin marble, in the year 1887, now preserved in the Museum of the Public Library, bearing the following epitaph:

C . AEBVTIO . L . F . FAL .
VELLIÆ . M . F . RVFÆ .
M . BENERTIO . RVFO .

A Greek marble in the collection of the late They, thus turned into Latin:

KALPVRNIANVS . *jacet . heic*
CVI . MVSAE . DELICIAE . *illi . ipsi . qui . monumentum*
CVRARVNT . ET . COR . DONO . DANT .

A marble epitaph, preserved in the old collection of comm. Abela and restored by the same, records:

IN *hoc loco* IACET
BONE . MEMORIE
BONIFACIUS . *Qvi* . BIXIT .
IN . *hoc* , SECVLO . AN
NIS . LV . ET . *quiebit*
IN . *pace* . sub . OSCULO . III KAL . SEP .
TEMBRE . INDICTIO
NE . *duodecima* .

A lead tablet, discovered in 1875, now in the Museum of the Public Library, records:

D . M .
FVFICA . CALENE
CVRTIVS . OIADVS
IDOMENO . COIVGI
FECERVNT . *et* . VALERIAE
BENEMERENTI .

Two inscriptions over the entrances of two lesser Christian cemeteries in tac-Ciaula and tal-Cullegg fields, discovered in 1892 and 1894, point out that they were the respective properties of ASCANIVS and of EPTYCHIANOY.

The interesting Christian hypogæum in tar-Riehbu was the property of the family of a certain DIONYSIVS . R .

Thus, it may be held conclusively demonstrated that the topographical situation of the ancient burial-grounds *extra urbem*, along the high-roads as illustrated in *plate XXI*, was strictly Roman; and that the individual areas, both of our ancient pagan tombs and of our Christian cemeteries, defined by determinate boundaries conformably to the provisions of the then common law, were private properties of the natives.

48. In this monograph, our concern is principally with the Catacomb of St. Paul, illustrated by *plates I, II, III and IV* accompanying a separate monographic description of the place, which is the earliest Christian cemetery of Malta; with the cemetery l'Abbatia tad-Deyr, subject of another separate description; illustrated by *plates I, II, III*; and with several lesser Christian burial-clubs of our island.

The claims of these cemeteries to be considered contemporary with the primeval Church cannot be doubted. They evidently show the internal architectural construction and arrangement of details of the earliest Christian cemeteries in Rome.

The characters of some of the lesser cemeteries in tac-Ciaula, tat-Tuta, in the lands and gardens tal-Cullegg, in tac-Cghaki, in Bir-ir-Riehbu, and other localities are those of sepulchres limited to one, or to a few joint-families.

Others, too large for a family sepulchre and too small for a numerous community, present the features of those possessed by burial-clubs or colleges of members of the same profession, or trade, or congregation.

They, generally, consist of a number of small galleries leading to crypts of various dimensions, having the usual order and distribution of *locular* graves, arched-tombs, and *formæ* sunk in the ground, without any spacious chamber for the meeting of a large congregation.

These lesser cemeteries, owned by the right of family property or that of corporations, do not exhibit any indications of ever having been interfered with in times of persecution.

The vastness, the number of graves and crypts, and a suitable *schola* for the assembling of Christians in the Catacomb of St. Paul, give it the character of a common cemetery.

The primordial commencement of this excavation, in the property of some of the notable native early converts, occurred in the early years of the infant Church of Malta, and its gradual growth in later years. A telling proof of this is the monumental evidence yielded by the Catacomb itself.

With a considerable frontage on the public road of Hal-Bajada, it had originally its door-way, discovered on the 30th January 1894, exposed to public view, like the original entrances into the Roman Catacombs.

A commodious and straight flight of steps led directly to the subterranean *schola* the largest and main crypt of the whole place.

The first areas of the entire excavation were on the same level ground with the primitive nucleus, the ground of which was, subsequently, deepened to form a *basilica* or *schola*; they present great regularity in form, in the straightness of the walls, and galleries with free communications, and symmetrical distribution of sepulchres.

Some of these sepulchres were very elaborately ornamented with marble friezes and mosaic.

Several shafts for light and ventilation opened directly through the ceiling into the open air, within the precincts of the place.

The regular entrance and door-way of the place could not have stood on a high-road, visible to every passer by, and its regular and gradual development could not have taken place, except during the first two centuries of the Christian Era, in which period the Christian cemeteries were suffered to grow as *loca religiosa*, under the Roman law, which protected all sorts of sepulchres.

The Catacomb of St. Paul, having grown into a large common cemetery, must have become the property of the Church of Malta, retained by the right of her corporate body, as is very apparent from the large number of sepulchres it contains, and the additional areas gradually linked to it, probably, towards the end of the 2nd century, like the Callixtian in Rome; and must, likewise, have been, accordingly, administered by the Archdeacon of this Church, as the rule was with other Churches.

Indeed, as it has been already observed, it was towards that epoch that Pope St. Zephyrinus is stated * to have been buried "in his own cemetery," which previously belonged to the Cœcili in Via Appia; that the administration of that vast Roman necropolis was entrusted to St. Callixtus, the Archdeacon of the Church of Rome and successor of that Pope †; that Pope St. Fabian, in the years 236-249, caused several buildings to be erected in seven other common Roman cemeteries, transferred to the Church and assigned to the administration of seven Deacons; and that Pope St. Dionysius, in the years 259-269, reorganized the administration of the said cemeteries and parish churches, dividing them among presbyters.‡

Very likely, the other common Catacombs in Malta became also by the same time the property of the local Church, and were erected in parochial *tittles* later on, administered by presbyters, as the practice of the Roman Church was here generally adopted.

* Liber Pontificalis in Zephyrinus.

† Philosop lib. IX, c. 11.

‡ Liber Pontif. in Fabiano and in Dionysio.

Our Catacomb, in the irregularity of its later portions, exhibits all the contrivances resorted to in Rome to protect from pagan profanation the Christian sepulchres, when the commencement of imperial interference was felt under the reign of Septimius Severus, A.D. 202; in consequence of the prohibition of the further use of the cemeteries owned by the Church, under the reign of the Co-emperors Valerian and Gallienus, A.D. 254; and of their confiscation by Diocletian, A.D. 284.

In our islands there was a community devoted to Septimius Severus: a statue in his honour and another to Lady Julia his wife, after the Parthian victory, were erected by the Order of the Decurions at Gozo, under the care of Dapsinus, the Chief Man of that island: two Latin inscriptions Melitensis XIII and XXII *, testify the then public attachment of that people to those Augusti.

Under the circumstances, the imperial decrees could not but affect the Christian Community in Malta. The Catacomb of St. Paul did, then, undergo the notable alterations observed in its labyrinthine portion; its crossing under the public road to the opposite field of St. Agti, in spite of the law; the original above-ground entrance from Hal-Bajada road was, then, pulled down and blocked up; the wide shaft, in which the principal stair-case was hewn, obstructed; the under-ground communications walled up; and several primitive galleries were choked up with rubbish and soil.

The present hidden, long, narrow, winding passage from vicolo Catacombe, ending in a secret *catabatica*, was then opened through a Phœnician family-vault in the gardens of the premises of the Rector of the Grotta Collegiate Church, and lowered down across several pre-existing Christian arched-tombs, still visible.

That passage is, still, the one used to go into to visit the place.

Deeper areas, which were not contemplated in the original plan of the excavation, were then tunnelled within the Catacomb at different levels.

Zones of rows of sepulchral chambers, each with an independent access, were then dug out in the surface of, and underneath, the surrounding enclosure, which chambers were in different ways linked with the main excavation, and afforded several means of unobserved entrance and escape, in the remotest *laciniæ* of the place.

These chambers, in form of burial-colleges, were evidently made to elude the law forbidding the use of the Church cemetery, and to avoid the notice of the pagans, towards the middle and the end of the 3rd century.

49. We possess no special data to enable us to ascertain the epoch of the restoration of our ancient cemeteries to the local Church.

Very probably it occurred about A.D. 311, when the Emperor Maxentius, having put a stop to persecution in A.D. 306, returned to Pope Melchiades and to the Bishops of Carthage the cemeteries and the property of the respective Churches in Rome and Africa.

At all events, it is certain that in consequence of the general peace granted to the Church, A.D. 330, under the laws acknowledging and protecting the Christian worship, the local property and cemeteries were restored to the Church in Malta, as in Rome and elsewhere.

Towards the second half of the 4th century, public *memoriæ* or little chapels and crypts commenced to be erected and excavated over and near the areas of Catacombs.

To this epoch must be referred the beginning of the crypts adjacent to the Catacombs of St. Cataldus, St. Agatha, St. Venera, tal-Virtù, Sta. Maria-tal-Grotta, and tad-Deyr. Those crypts were adorned with pictures and images of their respective Saints, in Græco-Byzantine style, as the islands of Malta were then a dependency of the Eastern Empire.

Comm. Abela testifies that until the year 1655, the ancient rock altars, on which mass was celebrated, were still preserved in those crypts, decorated with crosses of dedication engraved on the walls, as they may still be observed at St. Agatha's and tad-Deyr.

Regular chapels, except on St. Venera's, were regularly built over those crypts after the expulsion of the Arabs, which shows the great veneration, in which they were held by the natives.

* Report on the Antiquities of Malta, 163 and 174.

Count Ciantar* quotes an ancient local tradition, pointing out the site over her crypt as the place inhabited by the Catanese patroness and martyr St. Agatha, during her refuge in Malta : the church over the crypt was re-erected by the natives, A.D. 1504.

In the crypt of the Catacomb tal-Virtù, comm. Abela mentions the existence of a tribune surrounded with benches, in the form of a regular chancel for the officiating clergy.

To the same epoch ought to be referred the commencement of the veneration of the Grotto of St. Paul, reduced to the form of an oratory, which place until Constantine the Great had been the lower portion of the State prison in the island. †

50. Burial in the Catacombs began gradually to be substituted in Malta as in Rome, by the use of cemeteries in the open air, round the *memoria* over and near the Catacombs, towards the end of the 4th century, till it was superseded altogether in the 5th and 6th centuries.

The very interesting monument l'Abbatia tad-Deyr, as well as other local over-ground cemeteries, mark this epoch of transition between the 4th and 5th centuries. ‡

Our Catacombs, like those of Rome, no longer used as burial-places, remained until the year 870 still visited as sanctuaries and venerated as shrines, in which were laid the holy relics of the primitive Christians of the island : the high veneration in which they were held is indicated by the *frescoes* in early mediæval style, representing the images of saints on their walls and in the crypts annexed to them.

A wholesale plunder of these places was committed later on, and a careful removal of their sacred contents to some other places was, then, undoubtedly effected; for no human remains were found amongst the quantity of rubbish in the place, during the recent exploration ; and it is not likely that the Church could have suffered the profanation of such dear and hallowed deposits in the general rifling of her cemeteries.

The pillage of the Roman Catacombs commenced by the Goths in the year 750, was carried on by the Longobards, and after the translation of the Christian relics by the great care of the Roman Pontiffs, begun that very year and continued during the sixty or seventy years following, those sacred places remained derelict, and the most wonderful tales were told of their extent.

The epoch and circumstances of the spoliation of the Maltese Catacombs may be inferred, on good grounds, from an historical consideration of the contemporary political vicissitudes of the islands of Malta.

Since the division of the Roman Empire, between the two sons of Theodosius the Great in A.D. 395, our islands were a dependency of the Eastern Empire up to the Mussulman conquest in the 9th century.

It may be, and it is highly probable, that the Vandals, the Eruls, and the Goths successively occupied the islands of Malta, in the interval A.D. 440-535 ; but the invasions of the Vandals and of the Eruls, as a consequence of those of Sicily, were not storms of large bodies, nor of a permanent character; the Gothic occupation of our islands may have been of a short duration, by a small pacific garrison, not by a large body of invaders.

Under the Eastern Empire, the Church of Malta remained in the free possession of an independent patrimony, governed and administered by her Bishops, who were immediately and only subject to the Holy See : thus, the Church of Malta enjoyed full liberty with civil and canonical rights || over her property and cemeteries.

Hence, the profanation and pillage of her *loca sancta* could not have occurred then.

In 870, the Arabs of Tunis and of Sicily invaded the islands of Malta, and became the permanent masters till the year 1090.

By the *Ahkam Sultania*, the then Public Right of the Moslems, the property of the Church in the conquered countries, as well as the property of the *Demanium* of the late government, was confiscated ; Religious tolerance, with certain restrictions limiting religious practices to a private form, was regulated by the *Aman* granted by the Caliph Omar to the Christians of Syria and Egypt. ¶

* Malta Illust., Lib. I, Not. IV, § XIV.

† Monog. Critica della Grotta di San Paolo, Malta.

‡ Idem of L'Abbatia tad-Deyr.

|| Frammento Critico della Storia Byzantina delle isole di Malta.

¶ Frammento Critico nella Storia Musulmana delle isole di Malta, p. IV.

It is but natural to refer the sad devastation of the Maltese Catacombs to the time of the Musulman conquest and long domination in Malta.

The vulgar belief, to which undue credit has been given by our historians, in the use of the Catacombs as refuge places by the natives, during the Musulman domination has no historic grounds: those places are altogether unsuitable for a permanent refuge or dwelling, nor did the treatment of their vassals by the Arabs ever lead to that necessity in Spain, in Sicily, nor in any of the other countries of their numerous conquests.

The place to which the Christian relics of the Maltese Catacombs were then transferred is unknown. It was, most likely, to some pits within the precincts of the early medieval pre-arabic cemetery, existing under the lateral atrium of the church of St. Paul, at Rabat.

Comm. Abela * relates, that in his time, in 1640, a very considerable pit was there discovered, in which a great number of corpses were piled, *accatastati*, that is to say regularly laid one above the other, under a crypt dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen.

The place and the crypt were then restored, and the following inscription commemorates the great care then taken of it.

D. O. M.
Vetustissimum . Christianorum.
Ossuarium
Temporum . Injuria . Olim . Dilapsum
Terraque . Obrutum
An . Salutis . MDCXL . Repertum
Ne . Fidelium . Animæ
Sacris . Carerent . Suffragiis
Neve . Religiosum . Deperiret . Monumentum
Pii . Concives
Eruere . Instaurareq . Curavere.

The orderly laying of the remains in rows above one another, and not heaped at random in a confused mass, and their location under a sacred crypt, may mark the place as that to which the regular translation of relics was effected.

During the Mussulman domination, and after the cessation of the Arabs' government by the Norman conquest in 1090, and during the reigns of the Swabian and Aragonese sovereigns, those places remained abandoned and neglected.

The ancient native veneration for these sanctuaries was again aroused, towards the year 1607, by a Spanish gentleman from Cordova, Fr. Giovanni Beneguas.

Leading a hermit's life, Beneguas fixed his abode in the Grotto of St. Paul, and by the generosity of the Gr. M. Fr. Aloph De Wignacourt, then sovereign of Malta, was erected the chapel of St. Publius, afterwards enlarged into a Church by the Gr. M. Fr. Giovanni Lascaris de Castellar, over the Grotto, and a collegiate was annexed to it. †

Visits to the accessible portions of our Catacombs were revived at the same time, but on account of some inconveniences and an old hearsay of the loss of some persons in the Catacombs of St. Paul and of *Sta. Maria tal-Grotta*, the passages to the galleries were walled up, and the only area of the Basilica with its surrounding corridors was left accessible.

The Catacomb of St. Paul was suffered to remain in this state till the year 1894, and the other cemeteries, still unexplored, are in the same condition.

Of the local historians, comm. Abela in 1647, and from him mons. Onorato Bres in 1816, have tried to draw public attention to these interesting monuments.

Comm. Abela, however, had very little to say as he could not see the place explored, and the study of Roma Sotterranea had just commenced in his time: he even failed to record one single epitaphic title of those he states to have seen discovered there.

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. III, Not. II, § XXX.

† Monografia Critica della Grotta di S. Paolo.

Recently, the pious Rector of the Collegiate of the Grotto of St. Paul, the late Rev. Giovanni Gatt Said, in a monograph entitled "The Grotto of St. Paul", attempted a brief description of the cemeterial *basilica* and of what he deemed to be the *catacumenæum*.

His description, and his belief in the extreme extent and junction of that Catacomb with the Grotto of St. Paul, like Abela and Bres, are far from correct.

In the beginning of the year 1894, the clearing out of the place was begun, and towards the end of August was brought to completion: its details are given in the ichnographical description accompanying *plates Nrs. I, II, III and IV* of the Catacomb of St. Paul.

The drawings of the following illustrations were accurately executed by the late lamented Filippo Vassallo, LL. D., Assistant Librarian, and the ensuing chromolithographs, by Messrs. Griggs and Sons, London: the descriptions annexed to them are intended to illustrate and record some of our principal monuments of this class, explored during the last sixteen years.

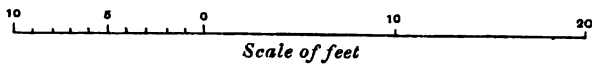
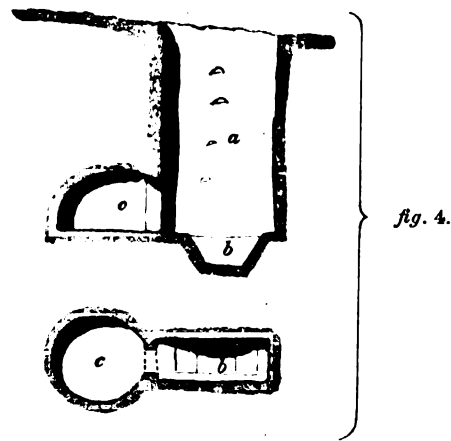
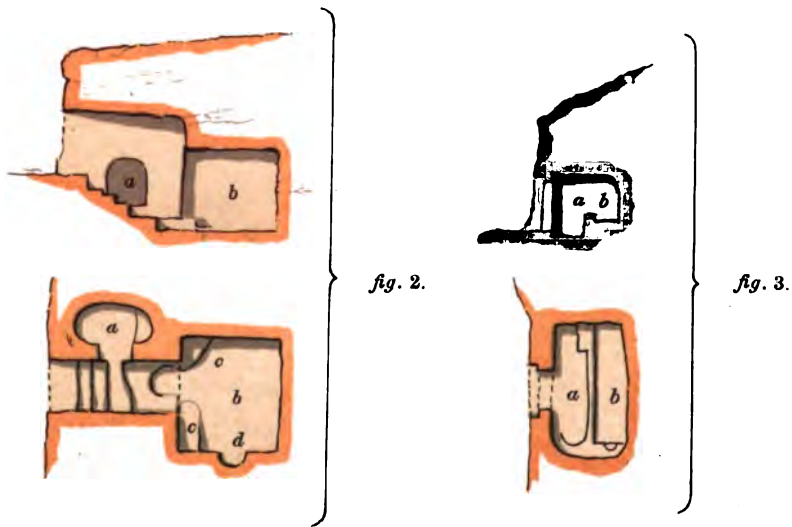
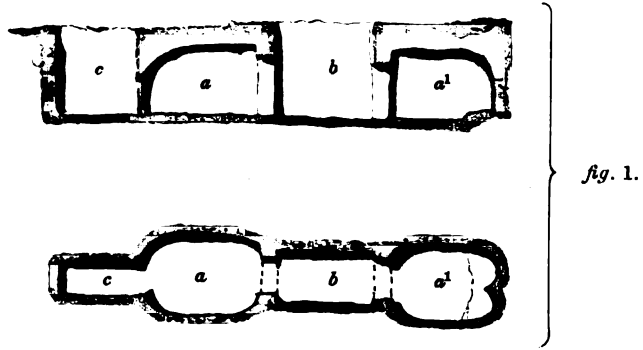


II.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS.

phaenician tomb-caves, Malta.

pl. No. I.



tombe fenicie, Malta.

PLATE No. I.

51. Plate No. I is an illustration of four single Phœnician tomb-caves.

Fig. 1 represents the plan and section of two tomb-caves, *a a'*, joined by a common shaft *b*, discovered in the lands ta-Danieri in the field tal-Hlewa at Zurrieq, in 1885.

At the back of cave *a*, another shaft *c* is dug for another intended cave, probably one of a row of caves of a similar description.

The direction of the axis of both caves and shafts is from north-west to south-east.

Both shafts are rectangular and vertical; 6 ft. long, 2 ft. 9 in. broad, 5 ft. deep.

The form of each cell or cave is elliptical, the longer axis measuring about 6 ft., the shorter 4 ft.

No coffin-shaped hollows are apparent in the sides; but on the ground of cell *a'*, which is *bisome*, there is a rock cushion with the two usual semi-lunar cavities to receive the heads of the two bodies deposited thereon.

Besides the usual furniture of amphoræ and other articles of rude pottery, in cell *a'* were found two human skeletons *in situ*; and in cell *a*, the loose bones of another skeleton, which was probably laid down in a seated position.

In the outskirts of the old and populous village of Zurrieq, there are numerous rows of such tomb-caves in the surrounding fields.

Fig. 2 shows the plans and sections of two other single tomb-caves at Xgharet Medewiet, on the outskirts of Zeitun, near the Phœnician ruins.

The two caves *a* and *b* are reached by a small common flight of steps, hewn in a shaft.

Cell *a*, to the right of the staircase, is elliptical, 4 ft. long, 2 ft. wide, and 2 ft. high; and is provided with an oven-like aperture, 2 ft. wide. Internally, it has only a small rock-bench, on which was seated the corpse interred therein with the head and shoulders leaning against the side of the cave, and the remaining portion of the body extended upon the ground, as the place was not fitted to receive a corpse in a horizontal position.

Cell *b*, in front of the landing at the bottom of the shaft, is square shaped, 5 ft. 6 in. side, and 4 ft. high. Its rectangular entrance is only 2 ft. by 2 ft. 6 in., on a level with the landing, but this presents an incavation in the middle provided with three sills to increase the height of the passage into the cell.

Internally, cave *b* is provided with two rock benches *c c*, for two bodies lying horizontally, and a niche *d* for lamps.

In these caves, which had been rifled long ago, no jars were found.

This is the district round Melkart's temple, where numerous Phœnician ruins and such sepulchres are observable.

Fig. 3 shows the plan and section of another single tomb-cave, in the same locality. It is provided with a pit *a*, at the entrance, to receive the rain-water falling in the shaft.

The opening, furnished with rebates for the closing slab, is 3 ft. high by 2 ft. 6 in. wide, and has one sill to descend into the cave.

The cave is rectangular in form, but apsidal towards one of the sides. It measures 7 ft. by 4 ft., and its vaulted ceiling is 4 ft. high.

Internally, it has a rock-bench with a regular coffin-shaped receptacle *b*, for a horizontal interment and the usual cavity for the head.

Like the two preceding ones, this tomb was despoiled of its contents long ago.

Fig. 4 represents a Phœnician cave of a different type, discovered on the western slope of tal-Horr hill in 1864, in the course of the laying out of the Addolorata Cemetery.

A rectangular and vertical shaft *a*, 10 ft. deep, 5 ft. 6 in. long, 2 ft. 6 in. broad, provided with foot holds on two opposite sides, leads to the lateral entrance of the cave *c*, which is hemispherical in form, 2 ft. 3 in. in radius.

At the bottom of the shaft there was a catch-pit *b*, to prevent the filtering of the rain-water, which was afterwards absorbed, into the cave.

A corpse was interred there in a sitting posture, with the head and back leaning against the wall and the lower extremities stretched forward on the ground, surrounded by several articles of pottery.

Specimens of tomb-caves of this form are very common.

In the whole hill of tal-Horr and the districts round Tarxien village and Cordin hills, where numerous Great Stones still remain, many of these tomb-caves are met with.





fig. 1.

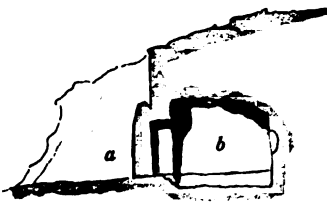


fig. 5

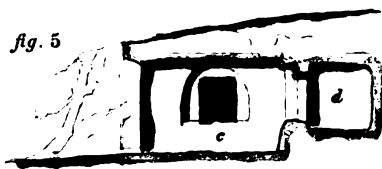
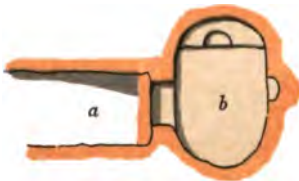
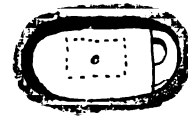


fig. 2.



fig. 4.



10 5 0 10 20
Scale of feet



fig. 3.

tombe fenicio, Malta.

PLATE No II.

52. Plate No. II exhibits the illustration of five different types of single Phœnician tomb-caves.

No. 1 shows the plan and section of a cave found in the lands of Boschetto, near Verdala palace, in 1890.

The usual shaft *a*, in the lowest extremity of one of its sides, is pierced by a small rectangular passage into an ellipsoidal cell *b*, at a lower level.

The entrance, without rebates, was closed by a large slab of stone, which overlapped the sides and the lintel.

Internally, it has a large stone through or sarcophagus for the dead body, several holes in the wall for lamps, and contained common fictile jars on the ground.

No. 2 was discovered in the same locality.

A passage *a*, from above-ground, leads through a narrow opening into a small vestibule *b*, in the side dexter of which is a single cell *c*, and in front of the passage a single cell *d*.

The level of these cells is above that of the ante-chamber, in order to prevent the filtering of rain-water thereinto collected in the passage, which is not provided with the usual catch-pit.

The entrances into both these cells are rectangular, of the usual dimensions, furnished with rebates to receive the closing slabs.

Numerous caverns of this description are found in the lands tal-Buschett, tal-Fulia, tal-Barumbara-ta-Zuta, etc.

Figure No. 3 represents the preservation of a human skeleton in two *doliola*, found interred in a Phœnician cave on the slope of the Hotba tal-Gisuiti, in 1861.

Many entombments in similar jars were discovered in the inner sine of Marsa, near the Gas-works, little before the year noted.

The same way of preserving the human bodies after death, within sarcophagi built of bricks, was met with in other localities in Malta and Gozo.

No. 4 is an illustration of a single Phœnician tomb-cave of small dimensions, found in the road tal-Quadus, between Xeukia and Ghayn-Sielem, Gozo, in 1884, with a narrow boring or shaft *a* opening immediately through the height of a simple cell *b*. A catch-pit is marked *c*.

The remains of two skeletons were found in this cave; also several articles of pottery of local fabric; a Phœnico-Maltese coin, 3rd brass, with the draped head of Astarte on the obverse, a tripod and the phœnician legend on the reverse; and an imperial coin of Augustus, which proves the age of the tomb.

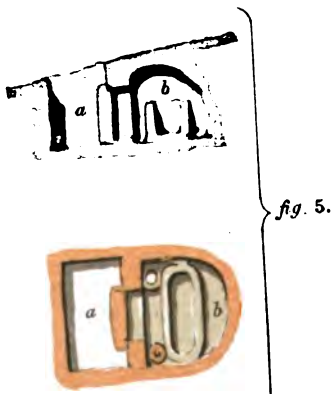
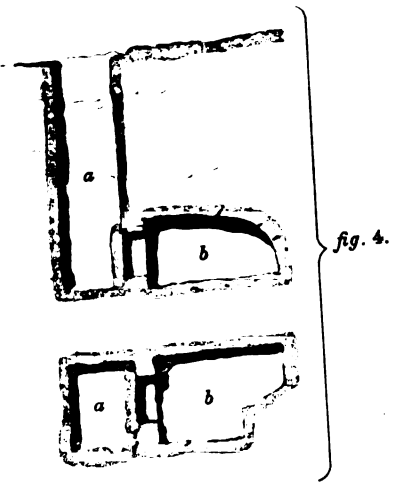
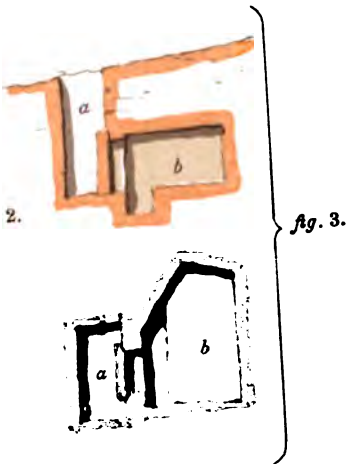
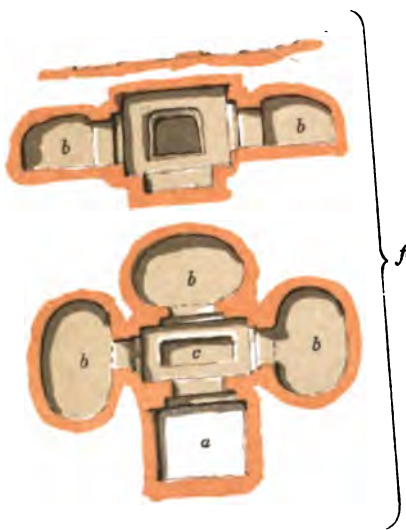
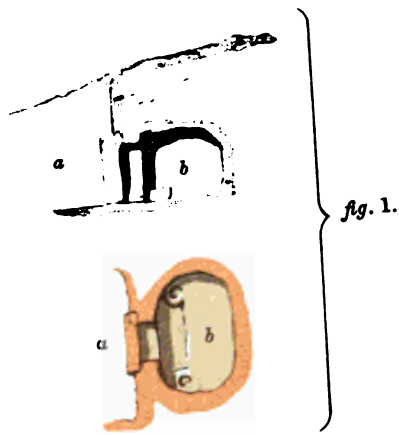
This is one of the simplest forms of tombs-caves; the place is within the district of the Great-Stones tal-Qaghan and ta-Mrezbiet.

Similar caverns are found in the lands taz-Zebbug, Xghara, and Nadur.

No. 5 represents one of the many Phœnician single tomb-caves without a shaft, in the waste ground of the 'Mtarfa hill, the 'Mdorbu lands near Gudia, in the proximity of Hal-Safi, Had-Dingli, etc.

The entrance *a* into the cell *b*, is direct from the road or the heath, in which the sepulchres are excavated.





10 5 0 10 20
Scale of feet

PLATE No. III.

53. In Plate No. III are illustrated five other single Phœnician caves, found intact more or less, of a regular elliptical type and the ordinary dimensions; a vertical shaft at different heights, affords a lateral passage at the lower extremity of one of the sides into a vaulted cave *b*, closed by a large slab *in situ*.

No. 1, found at Tal-Horr, has the usual shaft and pit *a* at the entrance, and a rock bench inside the cave *b*, in which the usual receptacle for one corpse is hollowed; and two holes in the sides of the bench for receiving the tapering extremities of two amphoræ.

No. 2, found in Strada Botanico at Zeitun in 1882, is an interesting cluster of three caves *bbb*, each with a separate opening, arranged laterally on the sides of a large pit *c*, in the middle of a small ante-chamber entered through the shaft *a*, 5 ft. 4 in., under the level of the street.

Nos. 3 and 4, found the one in Cordin and the other at Birkarkara, do not exhibit any internal arrangement different from that of No. 1, except the absence of the coffin-shaped receptacles. In No. 4 were found a quantity of *amphoræ*, *stamnos*, *unguentaria*, *arybaltos*, etc.

No. 5, found in the field tad-Dipp at Musta on the 28th April 1893, contained a large stone sarcophagus in the middle of the cave *b*, and holes for locating jars and lamps.

Besides several *lagenæ*, two brass bracelets were lying by the sarcophagus, indicating that it was the tomb of a woman.

All the lands round Musta village and Misrah-Ghonoq are pierced by similar caverns.



fig. 1.

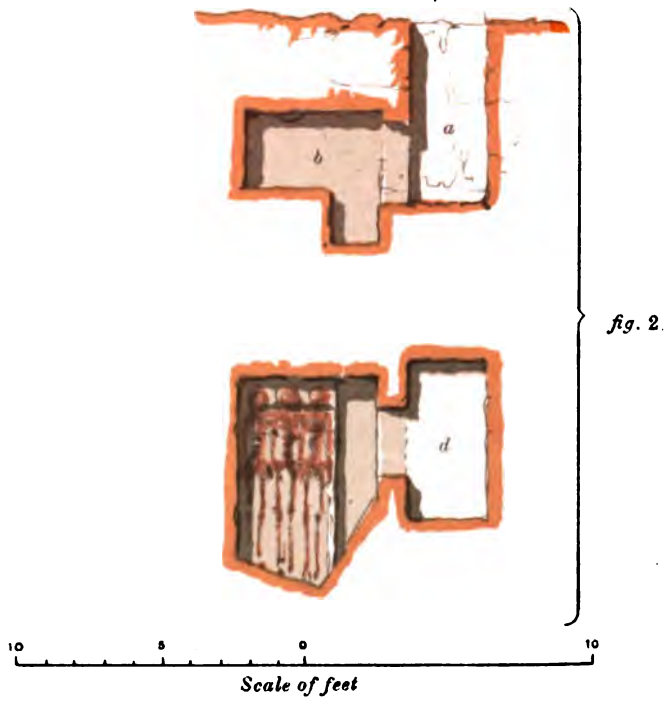


fig. 2.



fig. 3.

PLATE No. IV.

54. Plate No. IV is an illustration of three more Phœnician tombs of a somewhat different type, and larger dimensions.

Fig. 1 represents the Phœnician cave discovered in 1761 at Ben-Ghisa, in a rural tenement the property of the Falzon family, and described by count Ciantar. *

The customary shaft is wanting, and the sepulchre is entered directly from the ground of the field, through a rectangular opening *a*, of the usual height and width.

The cave is divided into two rooms of a regular rectangular form, and count Ciantar informs us that the side walls were still, when discovered, very nicely plastered and looked in a good state of preservation.

The outside room *b*, is the ante-chamber of the sepulchre; the floor of the interior room is about ten inches above that of the exterior.

Lying undisturbed on the ground of the interior room was found a human skeleton, with the head raised upon a stone; it was so fragile, that it fell into dust when air was admitted.

By the side of the place, where the body rested, is a pit to receive the remains of corruption, and a projection of the rock with a lamp upon it.

Several *amphoræ* and other jars completed the sepulchral furniture.

In the wall, at the right side of the skeleton, was encased a Phœnician *stela*, Melitensis altera, † the reading and interpretation of which was the subject of grave discussion among learned Orientalists.

The sepulchre is styled in this inscription "conclave domus æternæ", just as the Egyptian tombs were styled "eternal habitations".

The name of Hannibal bin-Barmelek or Bodmelek is mentioned in the last line.

Gesenius and others believed, that that was the name of the individual, whose remains lay in the place.

Drummond, led by similarity of names, was of opinion that those remains were of the ancient great Carthaginian leader. He failed to observe that the Carthaginian Hannibal, the son of Hamilcar of the family of Barca, died in Bythinia. The ancient patronymic Barca, still preserved in the ethnic denomination of Hal-Barca, seems to have been a further reason of this groundless conjecture.

Mr. A. Vassalli ‡ read Hannibal bin-Bat-Melek, that is Hannibal son of Battus, the name to the Phœnician ruler of Malta mentioned by Ovid.

Renan and the Editors of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* have more grounds to believe, that that Hannibal was eponymous magistrate or Suffet of the island, when that tomb was consecrated on the 1st day of ?

The age of this inscription is referred to the epoch of the Ptolomies.

The promontory and sea-coast of Ben-Ghisa are literally scattered with such sepulchral caverns.

No. 2 is an illustration of an interesting Phœnician tomb-cave found near Cordin prisons, in July 1893; it is still in a good state of preservation.

A shaft *a*, 6 ft. deep and 2 ft. 9 in. wide, leads down to the lateral opening into a quadrilateral cave *b*, 7 ft. by 5 ft.

On a raised platform, by the longer side of the cave, were fitted the places for three corpses found undisturbed, with stone cushions for the head.

The earthen articles found were *amphoræ*, *oinochoi* and other jugs, cups, *patera*, and lamps.

No. 3 represents a human skeleton preserved within a sarcophagus, made of terracotta of three pieces without a lid, found at Gozo.

* Malta Illustrata, lib. I, not. IV; lib. II, not. II.

† Report on the Phœnician Antiquities of Malta §§ 41, *Corpus Insc. Semiticarum*.

‡ *Mylsen Phœnico-Punicum*.

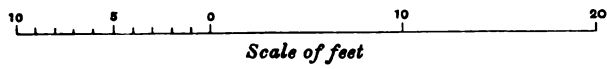
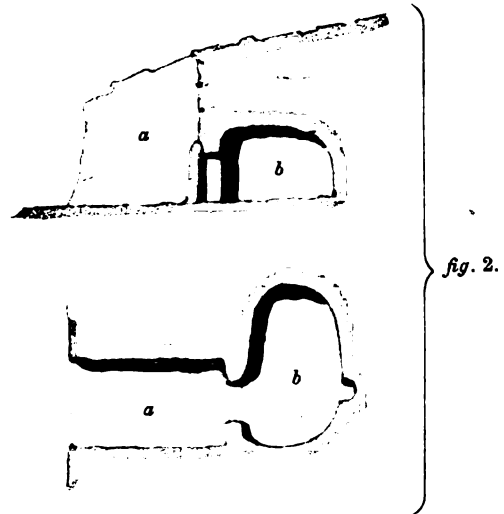
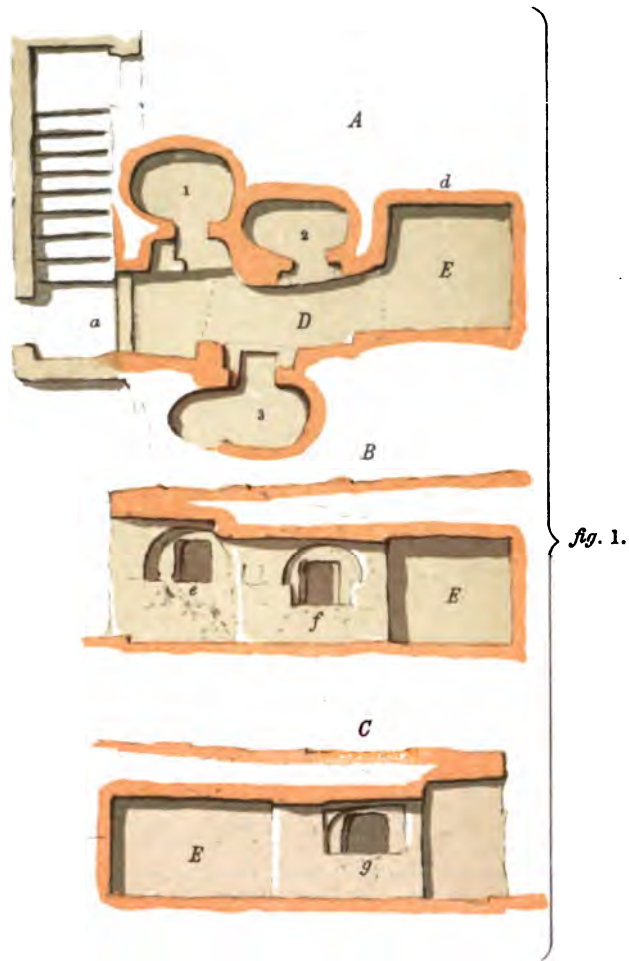


PLATE No. V.

55. Plate No. V, fig. 1 is an illustration of an interesting Phœnician family-vault in connection with the entrance into the Catacomb of St. Paul, from Vicolo Catacombe in Hal-Pilatu.

The present access to the vault, through a flight of steep steps from Vicolo Catacombe, was made when the Christians felt the necessity of opening a passage from this vault to the Catacomb underneath, through a long and tortuous gallery tunnelled underground, in order to hide the entrance of their cemetery, as demonstrated in the monograph of that Catacomb.

A, shows the plan of the whole vault.

The original entrance *a*, from the garden of the Rector of the Collegiate of the Grotto, is still indicated by the usual arched opening, furnished with two sills to descend into the gallery **D**.

This gallery is 14 ft. 6 in. long, 4 ft. broad on the average, and about 5 ft. high.

On the opposite sides of this gallery are arranged the elliptical caves or cells 1, 2, 3, above the level of the ground floor.

At the inner end of the gallery is a regular four-sided room **E**, 9 ft. 9 in. by 7 ft. 3 in., which may have served as the funerary chamber and the place for the offerings.

It is in the side *d* of this chamber, that the winding corridor above mentioned to the underneath cemetery was excavated.

On the side dexter **B** of the gallery, there are the two separate small apertures *e* and *f*, girded by an arched-frame typical of all similar caves, leading to cells 1 and 2, each of which cells is about 6 ft. long and 3 ft. 6 in. broad.

These caves contain no sarcophagi, neither do they have any hollows to receive the corpses, which were consequently laid down horizontally on the floor of the cells.

On the side sinister **C**, there is only the aperture *g* of cave 3, and the commencement of two more caves along its continuation through the inner chamber.

On the jamb separating the apertures *e* and *f*, are the vestiges of a Phœnician *stela*, discovered in 1885,* in which invocations to Baal were easily deciphered by Prof. Sayes. The traces of another Phœnician inscription are clearly visible near the aperture of cell *g*.

Similar clusters of sepulchral family-vaults are found in the neighbouring places.

Fig. 2 is the plan and section of a Phœnician tomb-cave, met with unrifled in the field "Raba Nemel" at Wied il-Liemu, presenting the same constant characters of its class, viz. a shaft *a*, 8 ft. deep 5 ft. broad, an elliptical vaulted chamber *b*, 8 ft. by 5 ft. 4 in., with hollows for lamps and jars, and a small rectangular entrance closed with a stone.

This kind of tomb-caves is very numerous in the lands tac-Cghaki, tar-Riehbu, and in the districts of 'Mtahleb, Bin-Gemma, Fiddien, S.Martin, Wardia-hill, etc.

* Report to Govt. 11th March 1885.

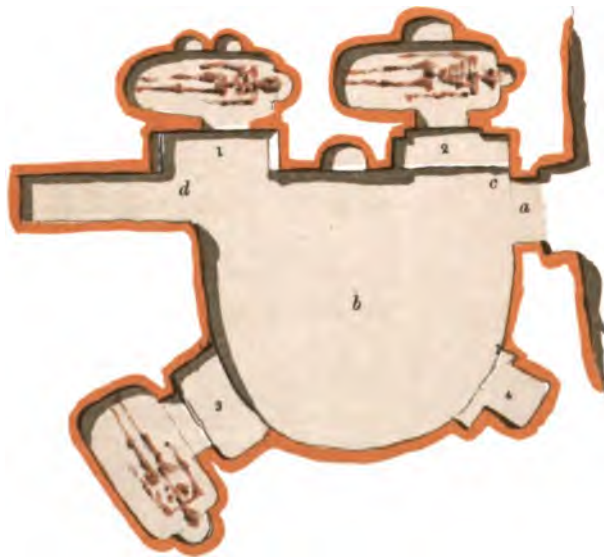
A



B



C



10 5 0 10
Scale of feet

PLATE No. VI.

56. Plate No. VI is an illustration of a very typical and complete Phœnician family-vault, in the rural tenement Qasam-il-Fawara in the district tal-Gzirah, by the road leading to Fort-Manoel and Sliema.

The whole excavation is within an isolated block of rock, elevated on the ground of the field adjacent to the Villa (late) Tagliaferro.

A, is the front elevation representing the entrance, about 3 ft. high, surrounded by an arch-frame cut in the rock.

B, is the elevation of the side by the right of the entrance.

C, is the plan of the whole place.

The entrance *a* leads down to an oval flat-roofed ante-chamber *b*.

On the side *c d*, are hewn out of the rock two cells 1 and 2, each with a regular and separate entrance as indicated by figure **B**.

A third cell 3 of the same shape and dimensions, stands on the oval side of the ante-chamber; and the commencement of a fourth cell no. 4 is apparent on the opposite side.

The interior arrangement of each of these cells shows that each was meant for a single and proper entombment, as each is provided with one single regular life-size coffin-like cavity, dug in the ground to receive the corpse, with the semi-lunar cavity at one extremity to fit the head.

A short gallery on the prolongation of the side *c d*, was intended for the enlargement of this family-vault.

An internal longitudinal section on the same line *c d*, besides the entrances into the lateral caves and the cavities of niches for lamps, shows an attempt at decorating the lower portions of the jambs of these entrances, with rows of perforated scales, a form of ornament frequently met with in our Phœnician monuments.

This tomb, unknown to comm. Abela and count Ciantar, was first noticed by the late Librarian Dr. C. Vassallo.

Other family-vaults of the same description are, very probably, to be met with in the neighbouring hill ta-Xbiex, tal-Ghorghar, and surrounding districts.



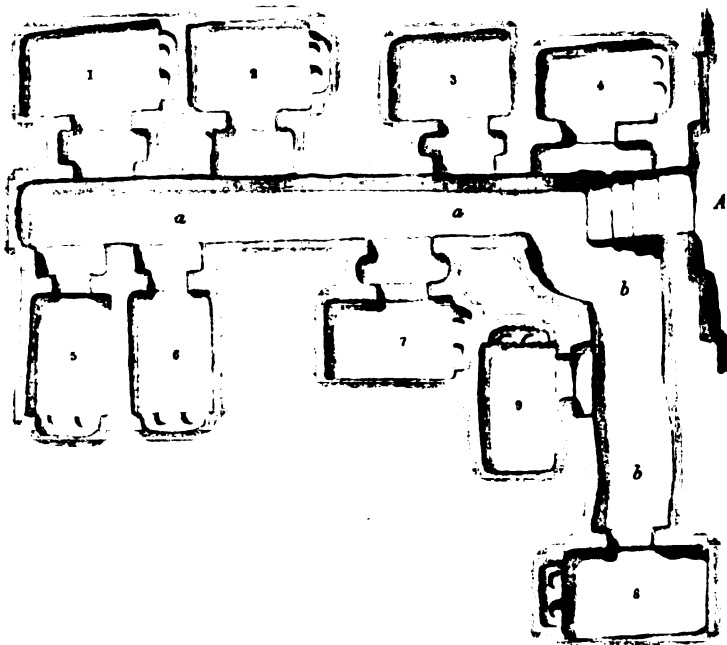
phaenician tomb-caves
"tal-Maghalay," Malta.

pl. No. VII.

1



2



3



tombe fenicie
"tal-Maghalak," Malta.

57. In Plate No. VII are illustrated the front entrance, the plan, and a vertical section of another interesting and large family vault in good preservation, on the brow of the Mghalaq valley, about a quarter of a mile to the north-west of the Mnaidra Great Stones, in a rural tenement denominated Habel-l'Abiad.

This sepulchral vault was explored the first time by Dr. L. Adams and Bishop Errington in 1865, and surveyed in 1893.

Fig. 1 represents the front entrance of this vault.

A small arched-opening **A**, leads into a subterranean gallery excavated in the rock; another, **B**, leads into a small separate circular and vaulted cell, about 4 ft. 6 in. diameter and 2 ft. 6 in. greatest height.

Over entrance **B**, a semi-oval depression covered still in part with red cement was, probably, intended for a tablet.

This simple circular cave was fitted for two interments, with two coffin-shaped hollows for the reception of two corpses, on the ground.

At the entrance **A**, four steep steps lead down into gallery *a a*, in the sides of which are excavated the tomb-caves marked 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 in fig. 2.

Cell 3 does not seem to have been used; the other six cells have served for the interment of two bodies each, as clearly indicated by the usual receptacles with the semi-lunar cavities at the wide extremity for the rest of the head.

At the lower end of the staircase, on the right side there is another gallery *b b* terminating with another bisome cell 8, and having cell 9 on the left side.

All these cells of the same form and type, broader at the shoulders and narrower towards the lower extremity, average 5 ft. 5 in. in length, and from 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. in height.

The sides of the galleries and of the cells contain several hollows for the location of lamps.

Fig. 3 is a section of the side sinister of the gallery *a a*, showing the vertical and separate entrances into the cells on that side.

Each cell was closed by a slab within a frame-work, girding the opening. Lateral hooks, in the aperture of no. 2, seem to show that the closing slab was occasionally secured by cross bars.

The arch over the aperture of cell 3 is ornamented with diverging rays from a centre, like those of a scallop shell.

A similar decoration is observed in one of the *arcosolia* of the Christian cemetery L'Abbatia tad-Deyr, which belongs to the 5th century.

Bishop Errington, who devoted much of his attention to the antiquities of southern Europe and of northern Africa, was of opinion that this mode of architecture and ornamentation belongs to a much later period than that represented by the megalithic buildings of Mnaidra and of Hagi-ar-Qim. This is quite correct, because the characters of our Great-Stones show, undoubtedly, a more primitive style of construction and decoration.

This tal-Mghalaq little catacomb, resembling in many details the caverns tal-Liebru to be next described, does not offer any Christian symbols, and though it may belong to an early age, during which Christianity was introduced into Malta, it is strictly pagan.

The whole district, as far as the brow of Mnaidra hill, is called Qasam-il-Hofor, on account of the great number of Phœnician caves of the same type existing in that locality.

In the vicinity of some of these cave-tombs are found small oval recesses, separated from the principal subterraneans by an intervening rock-wall about 9 in. thick, and communicating with them through a regular opening surrounded by a frame-work to receive the closing stone.

These small recesses shut off from the general cavity, without the fittings for interment, have suggested that they may have been used as shrines for funereal worship, or as places where the votive offerings of the relatives and friends of the deceased may have been preserved.

The remarkable feature of such sepulchres and shrines is the nicety and regularity with which the various internal details have been carried out.

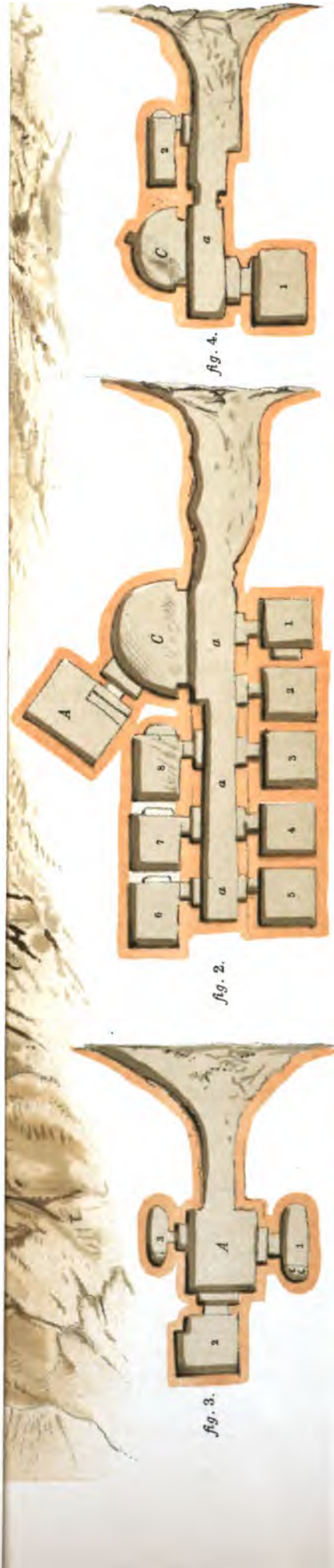


Fig. 4.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

tombe fenicie, Malta.

PLATE No. VIII.

58. Plate No. VIII is a very interesting illustration of a series of numberless clusters of Phœnician tomb-caves, in several irregular rows on the slope of the Dweira, one of the hills in the Bin-Gemma ridge, over three miles to the west of 'Mdina, on the side opposite to Bin-Gemma valley, the little Church of the Madonna della Lettera, and the high road leading to Gneina and 'Mgar-Barrani.

These clusters are, generally, formed of a great many caverns in tiers overlying one another irregularly; each tier is sided by a narrow gallery in the open air; each cavern is perforated by cells in its sides; and each cell has its own separate entrance and is fitted for the reception of one, or two, or more corpses in separate coffin-shaped grooves.

Fig. 1 is a representation of a portion of the eastern slope of the Dweira hill, scattered with the caverns referred to.

The plane above the hill was found, also, literally hollowed with similar caves, which were still in good preservation, when discovered by Captains Lewis and Fielden in 1874, while the extensive works of the fortress and lines of Torri-Falca were in progress. No notice was given at the time of their discovery, and they were all ruthlessly rifled of their contents.

The plane slopes of the valleys and the rugged sides of the hills of Gebel-Ciantar, of Wardia, of Selmun, of Ghayn-Zeituna, and Melleha, in Malta; of Nadur, of Ghar-Gerduf, of Xghara and of Ramla valley, in Gozo, are perforated by a number of burial caverns of the same type.

Fig. 2 exhibits a portion of the internal arrangement of these caverns, in one of the lower tiers: nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 mark the cells underlying those in the over tier, and entered separately from the common gallery *a a a*.

The place is entered from the chamber **A**, leading to a large circular cavern **C** opening into the gallery *a a a*.

The cavern **C** appears to have served as a common funereal chamber, in which the rites of washing and anointing the deceased before burial were performed.

Figs. 3 and 4 show portions of smaller clusters of tomb-caves in the same locality, having the same internal arrangement, which demonstrates that they belonged to a race who held the same religious belief, and observed the same burial customs.

A is the common vestibule; **C**, the funereal chamber; *a a a*, the common gallery; numbers show the arrangement of cells in the sides of the gallery.

All the hill of Bin-Gemma and the near places of is-Santi, l'Iscrivit, Wied-Ghersuma, etc., are filled with similar tomb-caves.

In the upper tiers, the internal of the cells and galleries appears more regular; the circular funereal chamber in each is of larger dimensions, and seems to have been used as a place for larger occasional gatherings: some of them by spreading corridors, extending into the bosom of the hill inwards, resemble little catacombs.

The local ethnical denomination of the caverns in the Dweira hill is Gherien-il-Lhwwd, that is Jewish caverns. The name, the number, the perfect similarity and proximity of these caverns one to another, suggested to fra Gregorio De Dominicis and count Ciantar * the idea, that the whole was a place inhabited by an Essenian colony, a Jewish sect of anachorets, rigid observers of the Mosaic law, who chose to live by themselves in solitary places, according to Philo and Flavius Josephus.

In the opinion of De Dominicis, the small cells were the dwelling places of the Maltese Essenians, and the large circular caverns were the *Semnon* or oratories, in which they gathered to pray.

The popular denomination *il-Lhwwd*, by itself, is not a sufficient indication that the place was formerly inhabited by a Jewish colony, as that vague denomination is referred to all pagan monuments by the country people.

The internal arrangement of these cells with coffin-shaped bins, dug out in their sides, precisely identical with those observed in similar caverns throughout the island, does not allow of any doubt as to their intended use.

* Count Ciantar, Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, Not. 7, §§ 8.

The numerous jars and other fictile articles, recovered from the tomb-caves in the same hill by the Royal Engineers, in laying the foundations of torri-Falca fortress in 1874, prove their Phœnician origin.

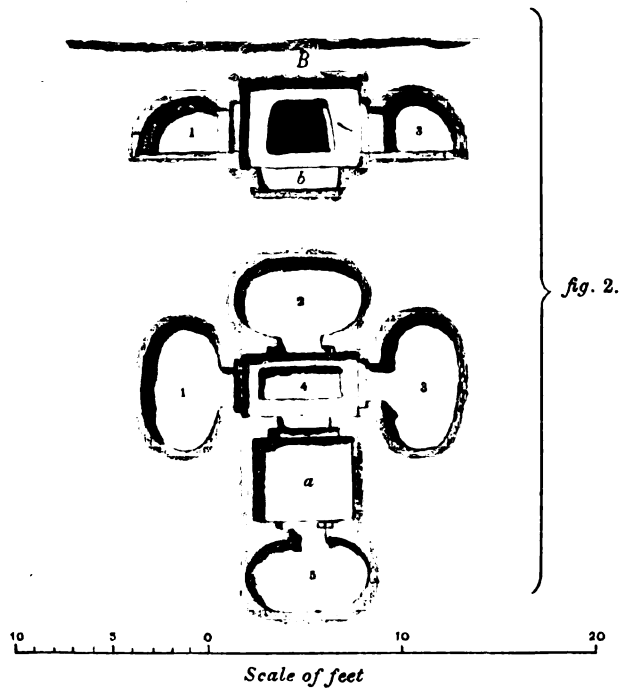
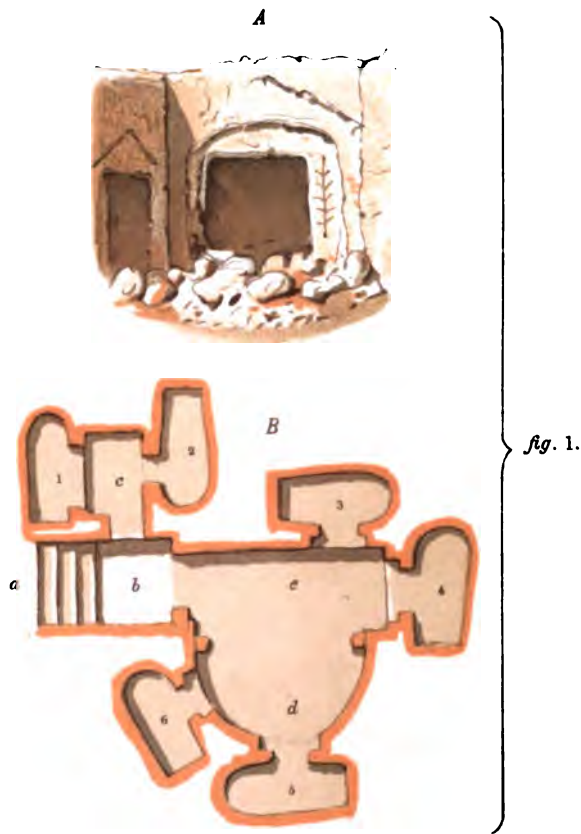
Further, the ethnical appellation of *Gherien-el-Lhwud* is not a hint that they were Jewish sepulchres, as to point out similar sepulchres we have the name of "*Kabur-el-Lhwud*" by which is known, an ancient Jewish cemetery at 'Mtarfa in which place, during the time of comm. Abela *, were discovered several grave-stones bearing in Hebrew characters the names of the persons interred beneath.

* Malta Illustrata Lib. I, Not. VIII, §§ XIV.

phoenician tomb-caves, Malta.

"Inghieret."

pl. No. IX.



tombe fenicie, Malta.

"Inghieret."

PLATE No. IX.

59. Plate IX, fig. 1, is an illustration of another family-vault, originally apparently Phœnician, and subsequently made use of by the Christians, probably under circumstances similar to those of tal-Liebru.

This cavern lies in the heath tal-Inghieret, in the ascent to Luqa village to the east, and at a short distance from the Poor-House recently built.

It was explored with great difficulty in 1892, as the place was and still is encumbered with soil and material.

B shows the ichnography of this sepulchre.

The access *a*, from the adjacent ground, through a descent of four steps encased in a shaft, leads to a square landing place *b*.

On the right of this landing there is a passage into a small separate rectangular vault *c*, on the opposite sides of which are disposed two coffin-shaped cells nos. 1 and 2, rounded at the internal termination.

In front of the stair-case, there is the entrance into a short gallery *e*, over 10 ft. long crossing a much more regular and conspicuous area.

On the right side and at the inner extremity of this gallery, are arranged cells nos. 3 and 4, having an absidal termination towards the head similar to nos. 1 and 2.

On the left side is a semi-circular *exædra d*, in the side of which are two cells nos. 5 and 6, similar to the preceding ones.

All the cells seem fitted for a single interment.

A shows the front elevation of the two separate entrances, one into the vault *c*, and the other into the gallery *e*: that into *e*, is of larger dimensions and more notable; it is girded by an arched frame-work surmounted by a gutter, and has a palm-leaf engraved on the left jamb.

The original phœnician character of this monument is indicated by the cellular form of its sepulchres, like small ovens; its subsequent use by the Christians is pointed out by the lateral *exædra d*, and the palm-leaf engraved on the left jamb of the entrance into gallery *e*.

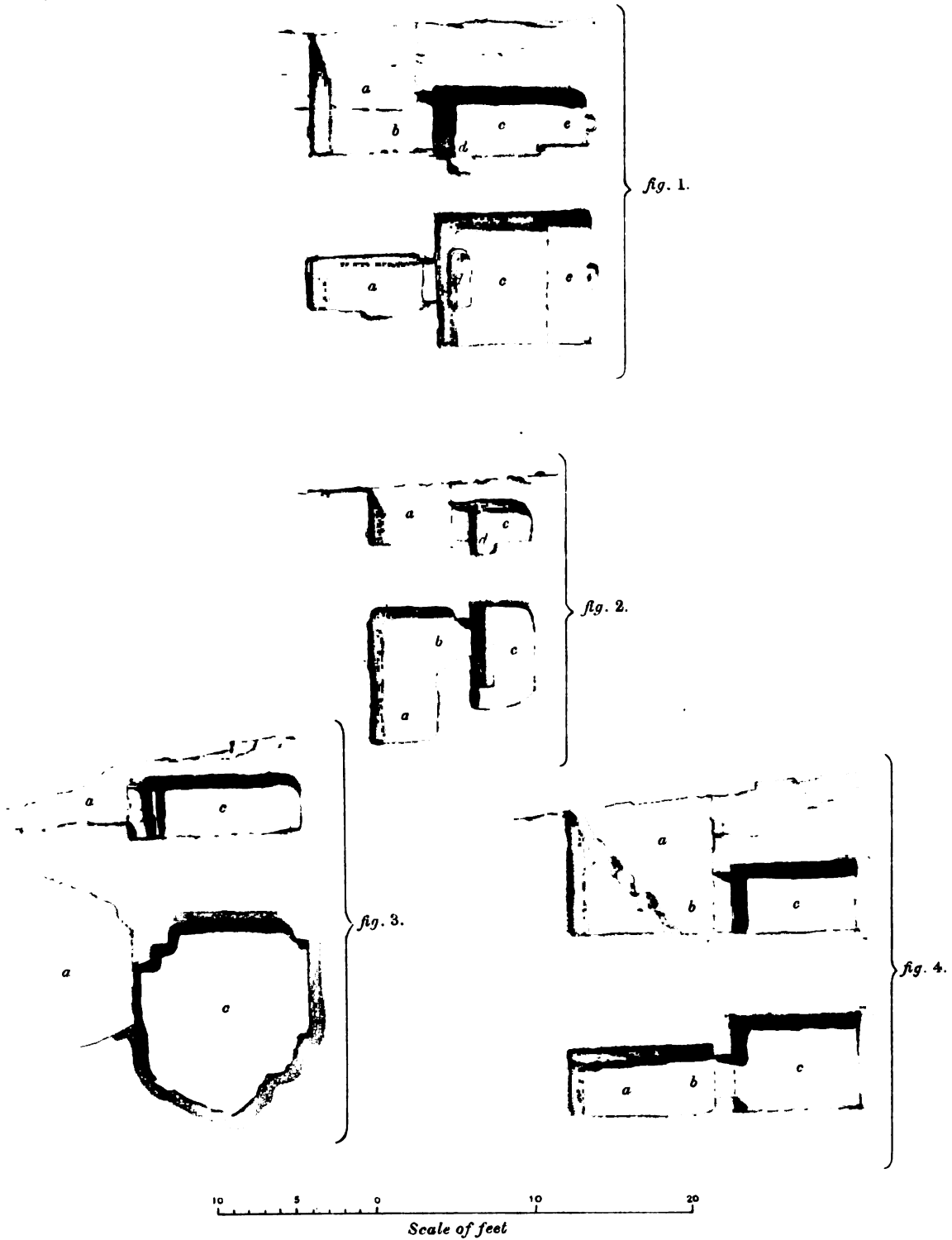
In several other localities in Malta are observed evident signs of other phœnician sepulchres subsequently fitted for Christian interments.

These graves, few in number, show that the sepulchres belonged to a family, not to a community.

Fig. 2 is another Phœnician family-vault at Nigret, reached by means of a shaft *a*. It contains four isolated cells 1, 2, 3, 5, hewn out in the walls of a small antechamber with a pit *b* or 4 in the centre.

Family vaults of this description are very numerous in Malta.

B represents a longitudinal section of the place.



tombe Greco-Romane, Malta

PLATE No. X.

60. The rock-tombs illustrated in this and following plates are all characterized by a wider shaft *a*, provided with a flight of steps cut in the rock at one of the corners; by an opening *b* wider than in the Phœnician caves; by one or more lateral flat-roofed chambers of a more or less rectangular form, surrounded by a low shelf or bench, and exhibiting some large hollows in the sides; also, by the absence of any sort of fitting for an integral interment.

A small pit near the entrance, for the rain-water that fell in the open shaft, is always present.

Vestiges of burning are generally observed on the sides of the shafts.

The objects found in this kind of tombs are urns and other jars containing ashes and charred bones, and occasionally a skeleton; *lekitos* and other vessels, which held the oil and balsam poured out upon the corpse during the process of cremation, and frequently, some of the articles of wear which belonged to the deceased.

Plate No. X illustrates the plans and sections of four of the numerous rock-tombs in the vast heath round Ghar-Exem, and 'Mtarfa, explored and surveyed in the course of 1888-90.

The wide shaft peculiar to these Græco-Roman tombs is marked *a*, showing the stair-case in one of the corners; *b* and *c*, indicate the entrances at the lower extremity of one of the sides of the shaft; *d*, shows the usual pit at the entrance into a rectangular flat-roofed chamber; *e*, marks the bench or shelf in the most finished ones.

'Mtarfa district, as also all the country round Rabat, tac-Cghaqi, S. Duminicu, the Had Dingli road, etc. are full of rock-tombs after the simple type described.

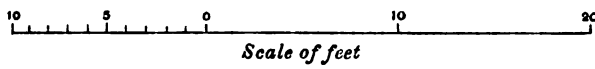
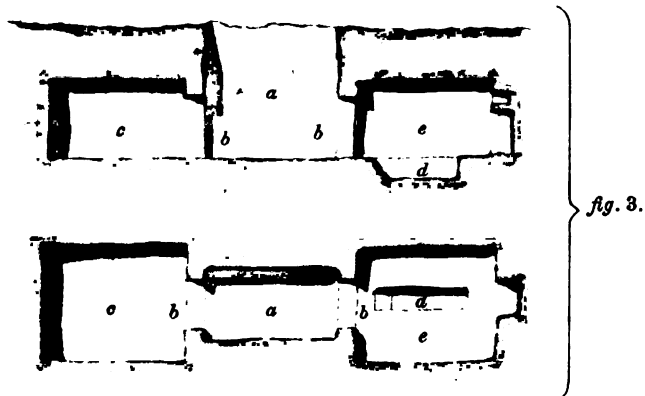
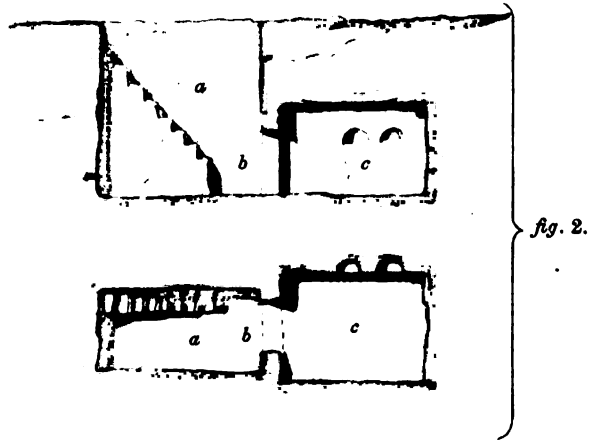
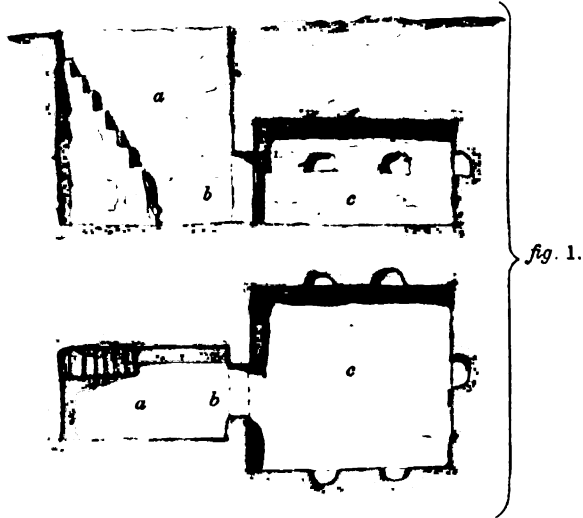


PLATE No. XI.

61. In Plate No. XI are, further, illustrated three more regular and complete of the numerous rock-tombs in the vast waste and valley of Ghayn-Klieb and Ghar-Exem, explored during 1890-91.

The usual shafts, entrances, and chambers are lettered *a*, *b*, *c*, *e*; and the catch-pits, *d*.

Figs. 1 and 2 are conspicuous for the number of small niche-like cupboards or recesses, cut in the walls of the sepulchral chambers for the location of cinerary urns, similar to the Roman *columbaria*.

No. 3, is a cluster of two sepulchres *c* and *e*, on the opposite sides of a shaft; *e*, is more complete with a pit *d* in the middle, a bench or shelf round the sides, and a small recess in the wall.

These tombs had been opened long before the above-mentioned date.

Kalpvrnianvs, the poet, was probably interred in one of these tombs, in the proximity of which was found the following epitaph, preserved in the late They's collection, translated from the Greek:—

KALPVARNIANVS . jacet . heic
CVI . MUSÆ . DELICLÆ . illi . ipsi . qui . monvmentvm
CVRARVNT
ET . COR . DONO . DANT.

In the neighbourhood of Bir-ir-Rhiebu, on the roads of Bir-ir-Rhua and 'Mtahleb, rock-tombs of this type are very common.

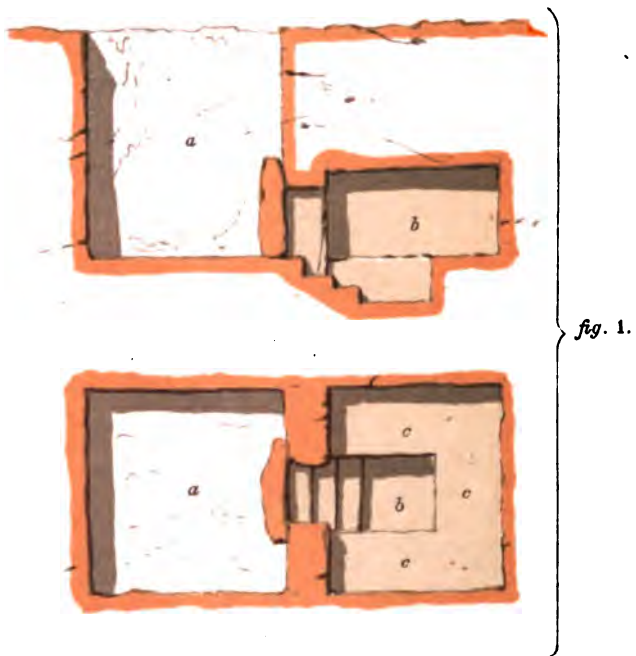


fig. 3.



fig. 2.

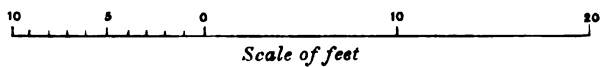


PLATE No. XII.

62. Plate XII, fig. 1 shows the plan and section of a large and interesting Roman tomb, found in a good state of preservation at Ghayn-Klieb in the neighbourhood of Rabat, in October 1890, not yet spoiled of its contents.

From an exterior and spacious court or shaft *a*, 12 ft. deep and 10 ft. wide, is entered the square chamber *b*, at a lower level, 7 ft. high, of the same length and width as the court, with a bench or ledge *c*, all round the sides.

Two jars with ashes and cremated bones were found there; also two skeletons; two alabasters; gold beads and bracelets; silver clasps; a ring; two small gold plates; and other small earthen vessels and plates.

Among the objects of personal wear recovered, evidently belonging to one of the deceased whose remains were preserved therein, there was a *luna* or half crescent of silver, which the Roman Senators wore upon their boots to hold the sides together just above the ankle.

Lady Smyth, who was interested in the discovery and was present at the opening of this sepulchre, made a donation of these articles to the Museum of the Public Library.

No. 2 represents a family-vault in the Xghara of Nigret. It consists of three chambers *b*, *c*, *d* on the three sides of a common shaft *a*, descended by steps hewn out in one of the corners.

The elevation and entrance into chamber *c* is shown by *e*, in the accompanying section fig. 2.

All the country in the proximity of Ghayn-Klieb, and the whole heath of Nigret are full of similar rock-tombs.

No. 3 is another small and single rock-tomb, in the same locality.



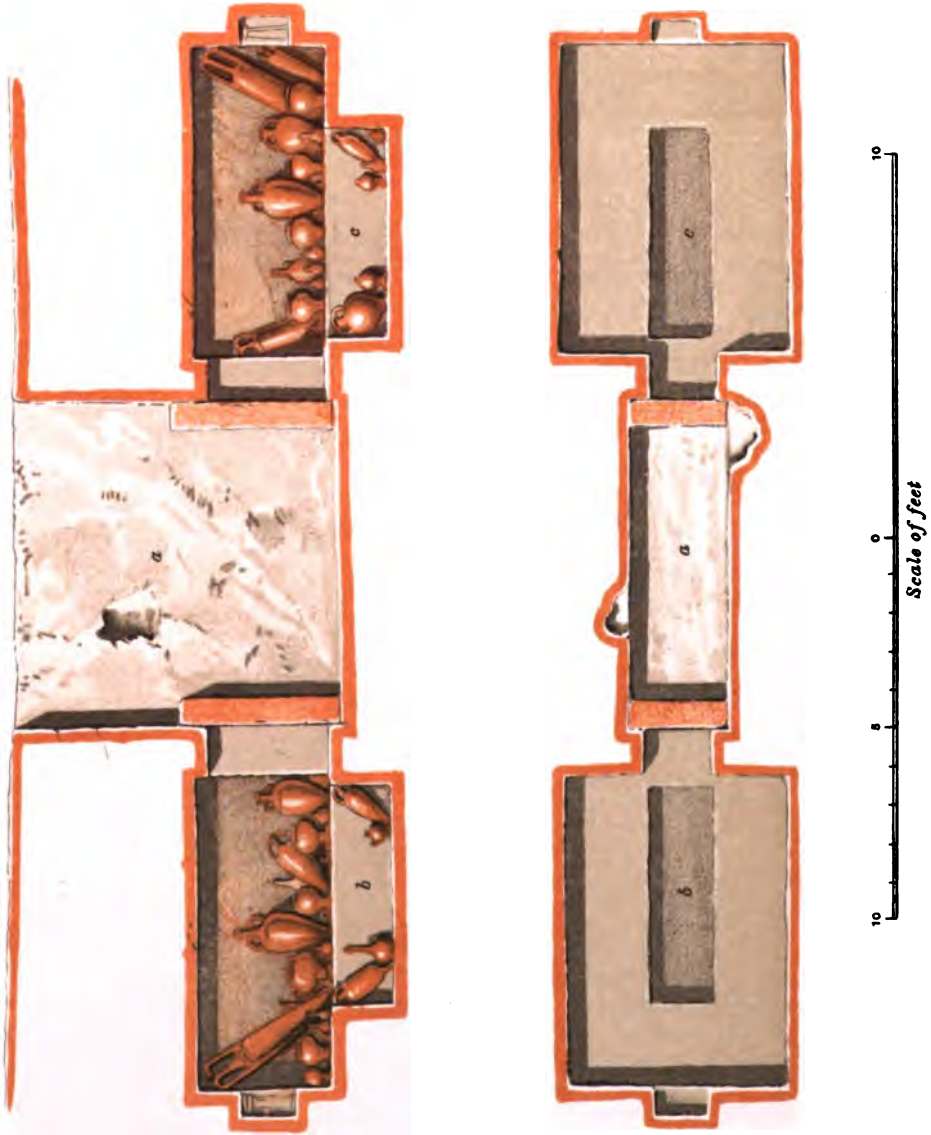


PLATE No. XIII.

63. Plate No. XIII is the illustration of an interesting Græco-Roman hypogeum found in very good preservation on tal-Virtù road, in the district tal-Merhla, in January 1890.

The place was still unrifled when discovered, and the greater portion of the objects found was purchased for the Public Library Museum.

A perpendicular large and regular shaft *a*, cut in the rock, 8 ft. 6 in. deep, 8 ft. 7 in. long, and 2 ft. 6 in. wide, formed the yard of this rock-tomb, where the burning of the corpses was conducted.

At the lower end of the two opposite and furthest sides of this shaft there were the entrances into two opposite rectangular and flat-roofed chambers, *b* and *c*, each entrance being sealed up with a huge stone.

These sepulchral chambers, exactly alike, were each 8 ft. 4 in. long, nearly 6 ft. broad, and 5 ft. 2 in. high.

A rock-bench *a*, about 2 ft. above the level of the ground, ran along three sides of each chamber, and a wide niche made the whole internal fitting.

On these benches and within these niches were placed the *olla*, containing human ashes and cremated bones, and an array of many glass and earthen vessels.

Pits *b* and *c* were excavated in the middle of each chamber.

No holes in the walls for lamps, and no excavations for an integral interment were observed.

The members of the family, whose relics were preserved in this hypogæum, were as many as the cinerary urns in each chamber.

In chamber *b*, were laid ten urns of the *stamnos* shape, besides many other vases ; in chamber *c*, twelve urns were deposited, besides a quantity of charred bones.

The inventory of the articles found was very rich. Besides the twenty-two *stamnos* mentioned, the following articles of earthen-ware were recovered viz :— 4 *amphoræ*, 4 *lagenæ*, 7 *seriæ*, 5 *diotæ*, 35 *aryballoi*, 20 polished red pear-shaped *unguentaria*, 7 *pocula*, 22 *patellæ*, 1 large *patera* with handles complete, 39 red *bilychnis* lamps, and 6 red polished *monolychnis* lamps.

Of glass objects, there were 65 iridescent *unguentaria*, a large *urn*, a large *ampulla*, and the fragments of several cups.

Of metal objects, there were a leaden sarcophagus, 4 ft. long. secured by brass plates at the angles; a brass *strigilis*, a brass *guttus*, and a circular *speculum* 6½ in. in diameter.

There is no doubt but that this vault was the property of a distinguished family. The district, in which this rock-tomb lied, from ta-Saura hospital as far as the Dominicans' church, is that in which the richest rock-tombs recorded by comm. Abela and count Ciantar were found. The painted and figured Greek vases, in the collection of the Public Library, were recovered from one of these tombs near Saura hospital.

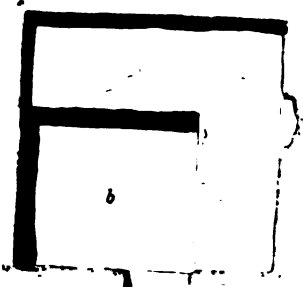


fig. 1.



fig. 2.

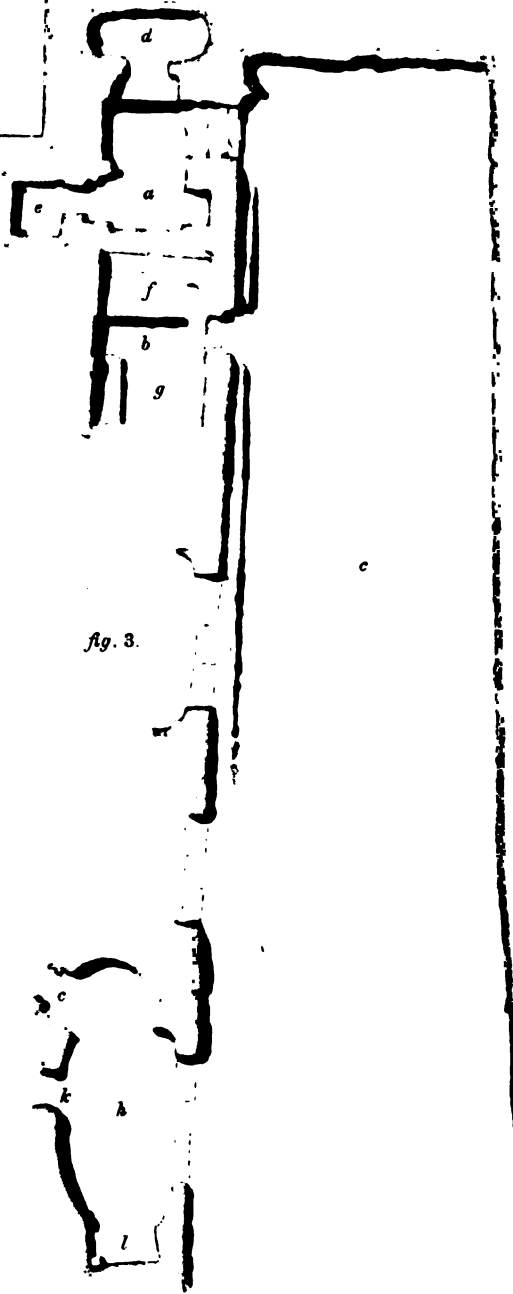
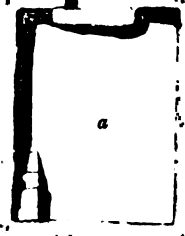


fig. 3.

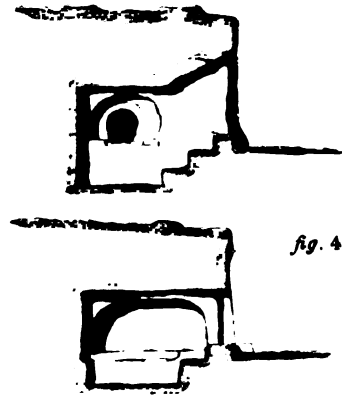
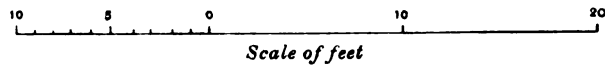


fig. 4.



Scale of feet

PLATE No. XIV.

64. Plate XIV figs. 1 and 2 represent the plan and section of one of the numerous Græco-Roman rock-tombs existing in the country of Ghayn-Klieb, of the same description as that illustrated in *plate XII, fig. 1*.

There are at Ghayn-Klieb, at Nigret, at Wardia, at S. Martin, at Sebbieh, at the Saline, and other localities, numerous clusters of such rock-tombs; fig. 3 represents one of those clusters, arranged along the side of a long common shaft *c*, part of which is in a good state of preservation, and part has been destroyed for agricultural purposes.

Towards one of the extremities of this common shaft, there are still two small chambers *a* and *b* with separate entrances, in the sides of which are arranged the small recesses *d, e, f, g*; towards the other extremity, on the side of a circular vestibule *h*, are seen the entrances into three other small recesses *c, k, l*, now destroyed.

No. 4 is a section of tombs *a* and *b*.



Graeco-Roman cluster, Malta.

pl. No. XV.

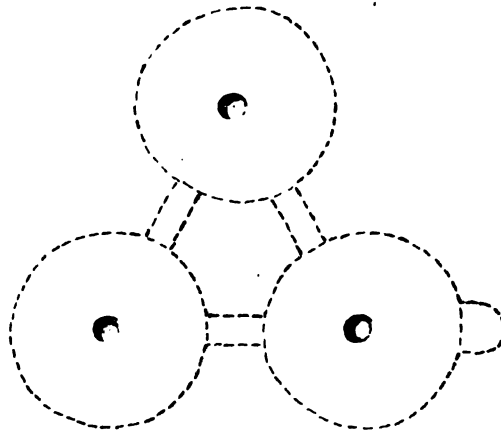
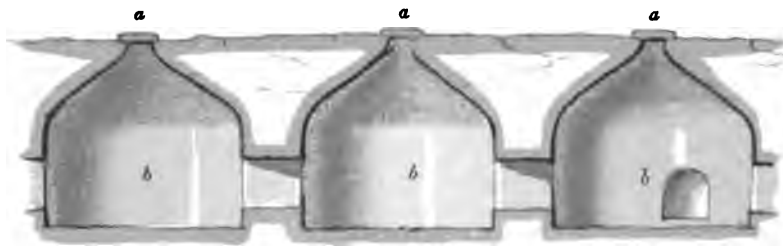


fig. 1.

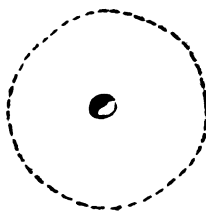
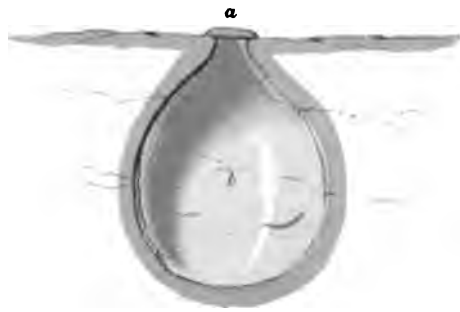


fig. 2.

10 5 0 10 20
Scale of feet

colombario Graeco-Romano, Malta.

PLATE No. XV.

65. Plate XV exhibits the illustration of another and a simpler type of Roman rock-tombs, sometimes isolated, and sometimes forming rows of communicating single tombs.

A boring *a*, in the surface of the rock, takes the place of the ordinary shaft.

This opening is sunk down into a little bell-shaped chamber *b*, in which is generally found an urn with ashes and charred bones, and a few articles of pottery.

At St. George's Bay in Marsascirocco, near the sea-coast, and at 'Mtarfa there are extensive pot-holed areas, in which numerous rows of the ancient Maltese *columbaria* are sunk.

Those illustrated in this plate, figs. 1 and 2 are situated at 'Mtarfa hill near the military barracks recently erected there, and were surveyed in 1892. The articles of pottery recovered from the place were removed to the Museum of the Public Library.





fig. 1.

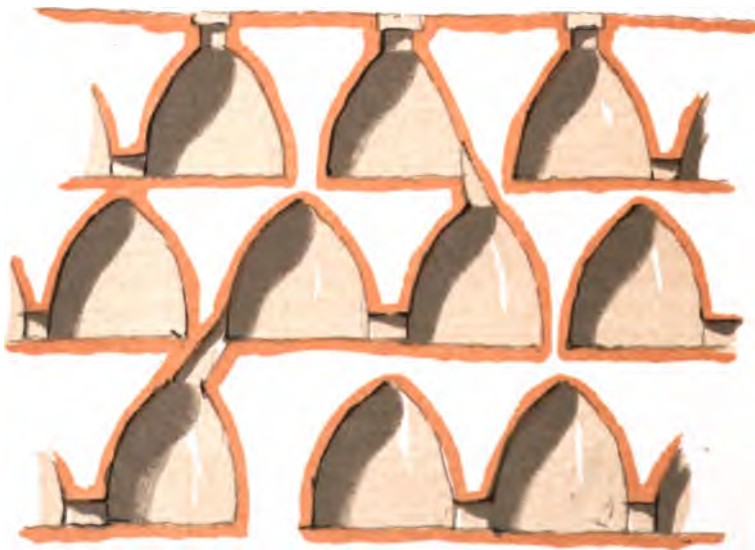
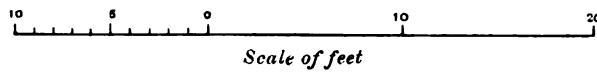


fig. 2.



. PLATE No. XVI.

66, Plate XVI, fig. 2 is another illustration of a *columbarium*, which originally numbered about 100 bell-shaped tombs, of the same type as those of 'Mtarfa. This columbarium was lying beyond the line of the present fortification in the Salita del Gran Castello at Gozo, and was found about the year 1859: the tombs were sunk in the depth of the rock so as to form several rows underlying one another, and communicating by vertical and lateral passages as observed in the illustration.

These small caves, the entrances and passages into which are very difficult, were formerly regarded as places of storage during the frequent invasions of the Arabs, to which the island of Gozo was subject.

The site, however, in which those caves were dug out is in the ditch surrounding and without that ancient acropolis: they, therefore, could not have been intended for storing supplies. Moreover, the smallness of the place in each cave and the narrowness of the passages and intercommunications, renders it very difficult to understand how they could have answered such a purpose.

The residue of ashes and charred bones were found in some of these caves.

Fig. 1 is an illustration of other rock-tombs, particularly characteristic of the island of Gozo, discovered in Piazza S. Francesco in 1893.

Shafts *a, a, a*, lead to five concamerated small caves, low-roofed and irregular in form.

In nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 were found cinerary urns, four small earthen sarcophagi, cremated bones, several articles of pottery and glass, and some coins of the Emperor Gallienus, which indicate the date of the excavation.

In no. 4 was found a large sarcophagus built of tiles, containing a skeleton.

The articles recovered were removed to the Museum of the Public Library.

fig. 1.

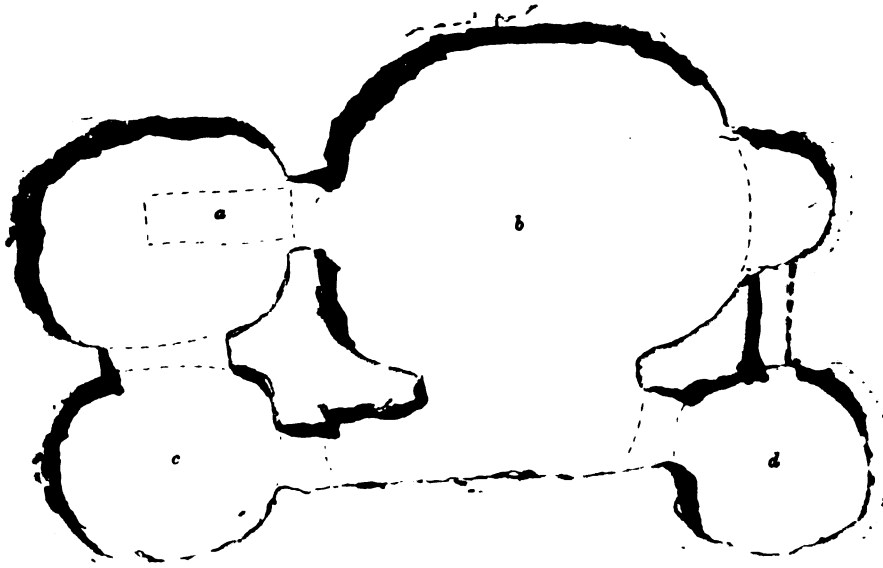


fig. 2.

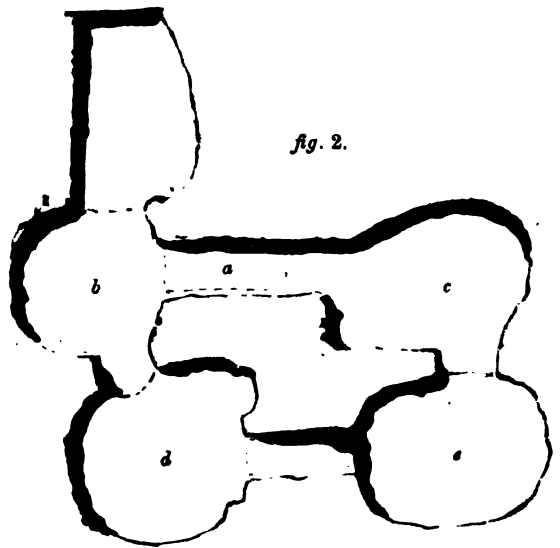


fig. 3.

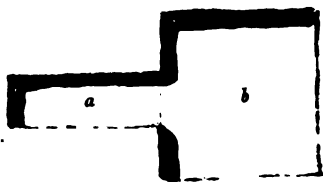


fig. 4.

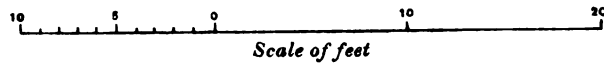


PLATE XVII.

67. Plate XVII, figs. 1 and 2 are illustrative of other rock-tombs in Piazza San Francesco, Gozo, of the same type as those shown by *fig. 1, plate XVI*.

The chambers *b, c, d, e*, entered by a common shaft *a*, lie in parallel rows: they are very low-roofed and irregular in shape.

The whole vicinity, as far as tal-Brag and Ghayn-Qatet, is scattered with caves of this kind.

Figs. 3 and 4 are illustrations of the many more regular and refined Græco-Roman tombs of the same type as those of Ghayn-Klieb in Malta, filling the whole districts of the Wairingia, and Ghayn-il-Gbira, Gozo.

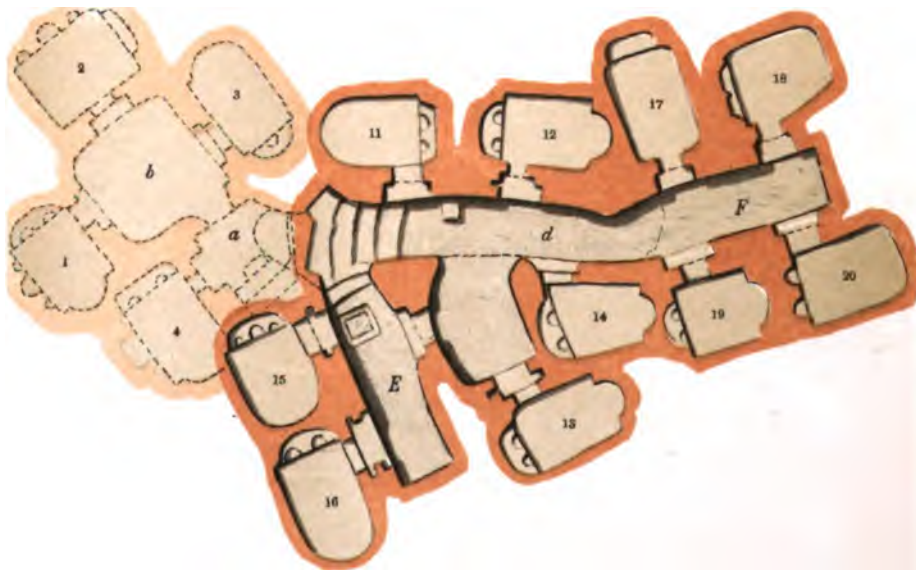
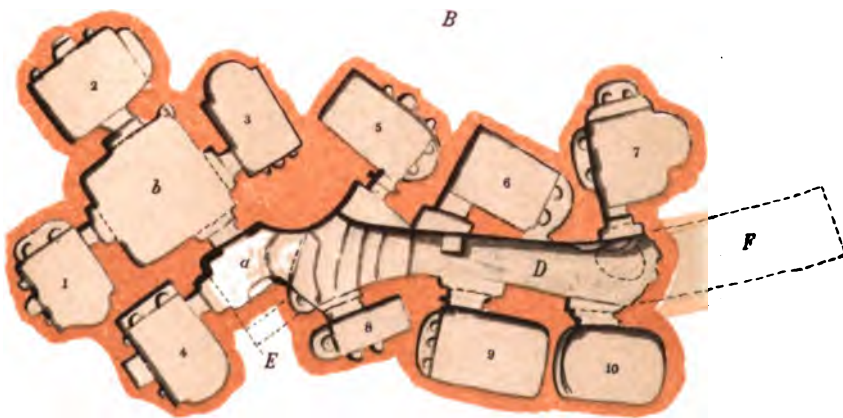
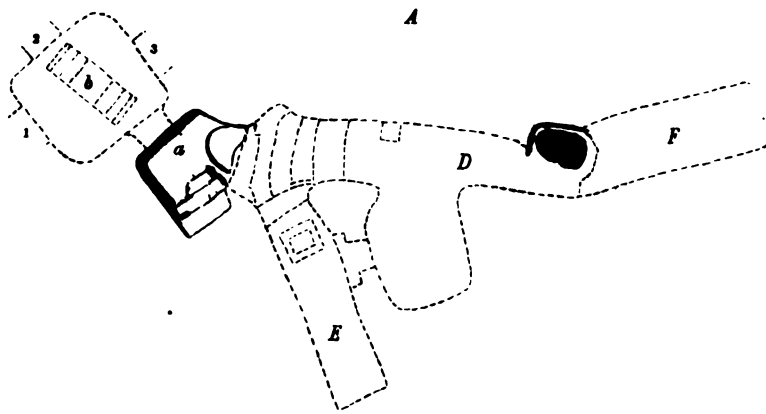
In this part of the *pomærium* of the ancient Græco-Roman capital of Gozo must have had their resting place C. Vallius, Cestius, Dapsinus, Æmilianus, and other worthies of the old Roman Municipal Community of that island.

In one of these tombs were found a very nice glass urn and other glass vessels, besides several earthen *olla*, and jars; they were purchased for the Public Library.



Christian catacombs "tal-Liebru," Malta.

pl. No. XVIII.



12 0' 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
Scale of feet

catacombe cristiane "tal-Liebru," Malta.

PLATE XVIII.

68. Plates XVIII and XIX are illustrations of a monograph of *tal-Liebru-Gherien* or caverns, existing in the *'Mdorbu* district, explored and described in October 1884.* Originally a group of pagan Phœnician tombs, these caverns were at a later period enlarged and converted into a lesser Christian cemetery.

The *'Mdorbu* place, within the boundaries of Hal-Safi and Gudia, is literally scattered with isolated and clustered Phœnician caves; and proves that in the neighbouring district of Hal-Giawwar and Hal-Ilwwn, where there are still considerable remains of Great Stone monuments, the Phœnicians of the island had one of their thickly populated settlements.

The numerous trenches, evidently intended to drain the place, and the many holes in the rock to let in poles upon which to fix tents and awnings, are a confirmation of this.

The *Gherien tal-Liebru* lie in a tenement belonging to the Ursuline nuns. They had been plundered long previous to their exploration in 1884; the fragments of some vases only were recovered, among which was a nice monolychnis lamp, bearing in relief the figure of a peacock surrounded by fishes, and the monogram of Christ, which may be taken as an indication of the Christian use of the excavation, during or after the 4th or the 5th centuries.

The *tal-Liebru* caverns tell their own tale of their transformation from Pagan to Christian tombs.

Plate XVIII shows the details of their ichnography.

The shaded lines, in fig. **A**, mark the entrance provided with four sills, by means of which to descend into *a*, one of the primitive original Phœnician caverns dug in the rock, immediately under the surface of the ground.

The dotted lines indicate the subsequent enlargements of the place: the use made of the place by the Christians is shown by the symbols illustrated in the next plate.

An *æroforium* for light and ventilation into the lower gallery is marked *d*.

B shows the arrangement of the first enlargement and upper rows of caves or cells.

In front of the original cavern *a*, is excavated a lower square ante-chamber *b*, nearly 7 ft. side; in its three sides are hewn the cells 1, 2, 3, forming part of the original pagan cluster.

Nos. 1 and 2 were apparently fitted with receptacles for two entombments; no. 3 was fitted for one.

The usual pit in the middle of this vestibule is indicated by *b*.

On the right hand side of *a*, is dug out no. 4, a bisome cell.

At the opposite corner there was, probably, another cell, which completed this Phœnician cluster, as the Phœnician tomb-caves very seldom penetrate deeper into the rock.

In that corner was subsequently tunnelled a flight of steps down to the lower gallery **D**, 17 ft. 6 in. long, 3 ft. wide, and 6 ft. 6 in. high.

Laterally to the four upper steps there is a descent to a lane **E**.

On the side dexter of the gallery **D**, is arranged the upper tier of cells: nos. 5 and 6 fitted with the usual receptacles for two interments each; and no. 7, for four.

The upper tier, in the side sinister, contains cell no. 8 for a single interment, and no. 9 for three: no. 10 apparently was never used.

The lower tiers of cells, illustrated by fig. **C**, contain on the side dexter nos. 11 and 12, and on the side sinister nos. 13 and 14, each fitted for two interments.

Nos. 15 and 16 are two other caves on the side sinister of the lane **E**, excavated for further cells, and communicating with the gallery **D** through a passage *e*. In the floor of this lane, *p* marks a pit. These pits, very common in our ancient tombs, were necessary to collect the rain-water, which falling through the open shafts of their accesses, was immediately absorbed by the porous stone in which the pits are dug.

F is a bending of the principal gallery, having on its two opposite sides nos. 17, 18, 19 and 20, bisome caves, the most conspicuous for their ornamentation.

All the cells described have the characteristic Phœnician form, exhibiting the same oven-like apertures with frame-works all round, in which to fit the closing slab, the same details internally, all nearly of the same dimensions, with separate entrances and without any inter-communication. No loculi, nor arched tombs, nor *exædræ* are apparent in this little cemetery.

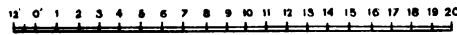
Christian catacombs "tal-Liebru," Malta.

pl. No. XIX.

A



B



Scale of feet



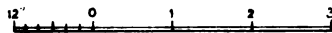
1



2



3



Scale of feet



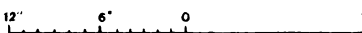
4



5



6



Scale of feet

catacombe cristiane "tal-Liebru," Malta.

PLATE No. XIX.

69. Plate XIX is a sciagraphical illustration, showing the transformation of the pagan *Gherien tal-Liebru* into a lesser Christian Catacomb.

Figs. **A** and **B** are the side dexter and the side sinister of the gallery **D**, showing the order of the tiers of tombs, with their small rectangular openings within an arched frame-work.

Greek crosses, of the forms given by figs. 5 and 6, are carved on the jambs between the caves 9 and 10, and by the passage to no. 13.

A palm-leaf, fig. 4, the symbol of Christian victors in the battle and confession of faith, is beautifully engraved near the entrance to cave no. 14; and the traces of another are visible near the opening of cave no. 11.

On the internal elevation of no. 19, towards the place of the head, is an ornamentation like that of fig. 1; on that of no. 20, are engraved three bends sinister crossed by a barrulet, fig. 2, early devices of mediæval heraldry.

On the internal elevation of no. 18, similarly situated, at the head is a decoration resembling fig. 3, either a mitre or a sacred vessel.

Local and circumstantial evidence demonstrates, that we are manifestly dealing with a cluster of tombs originally pagan, immediately underlying the surface of the overground, with an access entirely exposed to public view, and with a cellular internal arrangement common to all our Phœnician tomb-caves.

The conversion of the place into a small Christian Catacomb is evidenced by the tunnelling of a cemeterial gallery, ornamented with crosses and other Christian emblems, in which the same type of Phœnician tomb-caves has been preserved, and by the consequent necessity of boring a shaft in the deeper and inner portion of the excavation, for air and light, as in the early Christian cemeteries.

This change could not have been effected in the early centuries of Christianity, as the early Christian cemeterial architecture was strictly formed of *locular* and *arcosoliar* tombs, essentially different from the *cellular* arrangement of our Phœnician caverns; nor would the Christians have disturbed or made use of pagan tombs in those early ages.

Until the complete collapse of heathenism in Malta, towards the end of the 3rd century, the appropriation of the tal-Liebru caverns by the Christians could not, consequently, have been effected.

After the general peace of the Church, in the beginning of the 4th century up to the end of the rule of the Byzantine Empire over our island, the necessity of the Christians to hide their sepulchres in the Catacombs ceased altogether, and they commenced to use their over-ground cemeteries.

There, then, remains the very probable conjecture, that the appropriation of these caverns by the Christian natives may have taken place under the rule of the Moslem invaders of Malta, between the years 870 and 1090 of the Christian era.

The devices of mediæval heraldry ornamenting some of these tomb-caves concur to support this conjecture.

During the Arabs' rule, a native Christian population, reduced to a state of vassalage, besides a number of Greek slaves, dwelt in the island.

These vassals, as in Sicily and elsewhere, had their lives and religious toleration secured, under certain restrictions, by the *Aman* of the Caliph Omar, granted to the Christians of Jerusalem, of Syria and of Egypt, which was extended to all Christian countries conquered by the Arabs in Europe.

Among these restrictions, as we are informed by Mawerdi in his treatise of *Ahkam Sultania*, the Arabs' Public Right, the Christians were forbidden to perform funereal service in public, or to have their sepulchres near Mahomedan cemeteries.

These limitations may have compelled the native Christians to appropriate the tal-Liebru tomb-caves, as in the tal-Ingieret, and other localities.

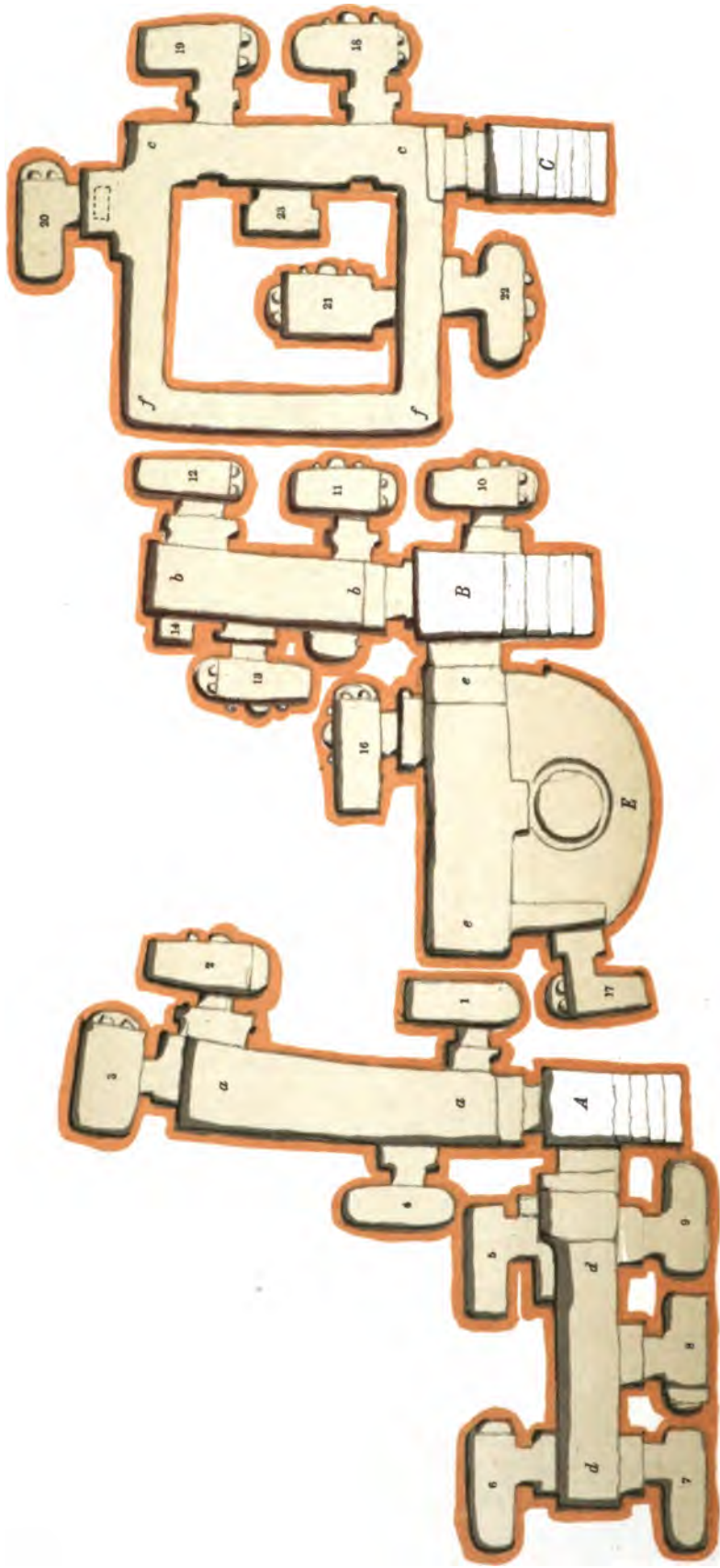


PLATE XX.

70. Plate XX presents the ichnography of a portion of the Catacomb *tal-Mintna*, midway between the villages of 'Mqabba and Qrendi.

The main character of this cemetery is that of separate under-ground groups of sepulchres, clustered together side by side, originally independent of one another : each group has a distinct access, and its own internal arrangement.

The present communications in the three groups mapped in the plate were recently opened, in order to convert the place into a large cistern.

The three separate accesses, through shafts open to the sky from the heath of Mintna, similar to those of all pagan Maltese tomb-caves ; the internal excavation of short galleries ; the oven-shaped sepulchres, like the Phœnician cells, hollowed on both sides of the galleries, render these caves thoroughly like those of Mnaidra and of Gherien-tal-Liebru.

The pagan cellular type of these sepulchres, each with an oven-shaped aperture invariably observed in all our Phœnician tomb-caves, fixes the commencement of these excavations at an earlier period than that of the primitive locular and arched-tomb system adopted by the Christians.

The presence of a circular *exædra* with the usual basin met with in our primitive Christian cemeteries, and of an altar-piece like that in the Catacomb of St. Paul at Rabat, may indicate that the place, originally the property of some pagan families, was subsequently enlarged and developed into a Christian Catacomb by reason of the owners embracing Christianity.

A, B, C, are the separate shafts, each provided with steps descending into the three distinct groups. The steps leading to **B** were removed when this access was walled up.

In front of **A** there is a gallery *a a*, 16 ft. by 3 ft. 3 in., widening to nearly 5 ft. at the inner extremity.

In the sides of this gallery are hollowed the cells nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. Through no. 1, the dotted lines mark the communication recently made with the adjacent group; through no. 4, the commencement of another cell, and probably the prolongation of another gallery, is seen.

On the side dexter of **A** there is a second gallery *d d*, 14 ft. by 3 ft. 3 in., in the sides of which are excavated the cells nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 ; no. 7 is ornamented with scrolls, and no. 8 with scallop-like radiating decorations.

The excavation of these cells is of exquisite workmanship.

In front of **B** opens a gallery *b b*, nearly 10 ft. by 2 ft. at the beginning, and 3 ft. 8 in. at the inner extremity. Nos. 10, 11, 12 and 13 are bisome cells, hollowed in the sides of this gallery; nos. 14 and 15 show the commencement of other cells.

Through no. 12, the dotted lines mark the recent passage into the next group.

On the side dexter of **B** runs a gallery *e e*, 18 ft. by 5 ft. 3 in. In the sides of this gallery are hollowed the bisome cells nos. 16 and 17, and a semi-circular *exædra* **E** with the usual basin in the middle.

The third group has a regular rectangular form, sided by four galleries : the galleries *c c* and *f f* are nearly 13 ft. long; the galleries *f c*, 12 ft. 6 in. The bisome cells nos. 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 are excavated in the sides of these galleries.

No. 23 appears to have been an altar-piece, richly decorated with pilasters.

When in 1860, I entered the place the first time, it was through the neck of a well marked *g*, in an adjoining pen.

All the place round Mintna is full of similar small Christian groups, indicating the presence of an early Christian community in the two old villages of 'Mqabba and Qrendi.

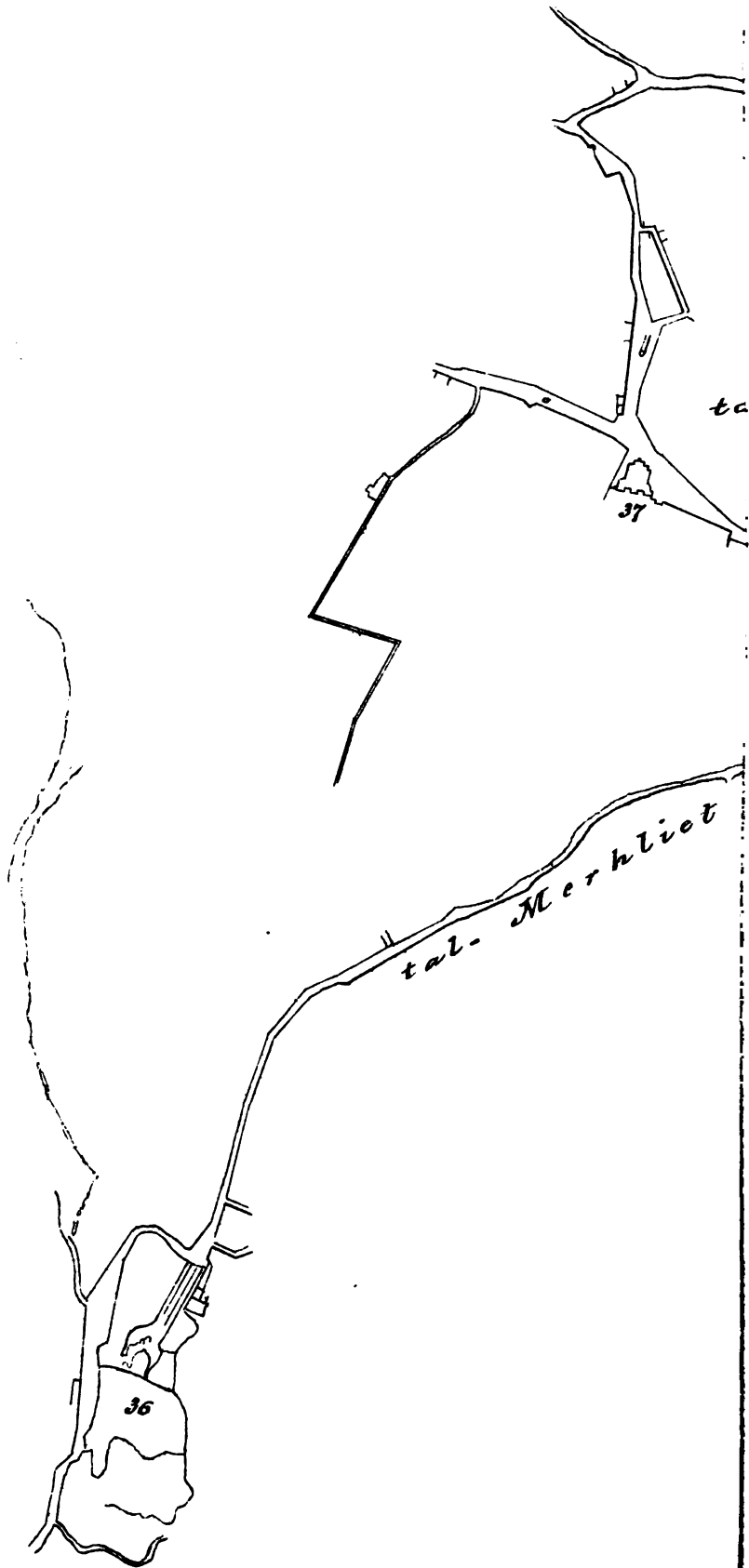


PLATE No. XXI.

71. Plate XXI is an illustration of the extent and boundaries of the ancient Græco-Roman capital *Melita* and of its suburb, showing the topography of its ancient tombs and catacombs.

That town stands on the terrace of the most eastern and northern hill of the Bin-Gemma ridge, bounded by the deep valleys of Wied-l'-Mdina, of Hemsia, and of Saqqaja, on the north and east; by a Roman *agger* or wall and the valley of Ghar-Exem, on the west; and severed from the rest of the plain to the south by a deep ditch, on which stood a *vallum*.

The portions lettered **A** mark the sites in which are still observable remains of the layers of stone, belonging to the north-western and western Roman walls towards Ghar-Exem.

B...B mark the ancient ditch, separating the town from its suburb to the south: the length of this ditch, from Sta. Maria tal-Qasgha to the place called *it-Tribuna*, is 2600 ft.; its average width, 82 ft.; its average depth, 12 ft.

The foundation of the Church of St. Paul, the lane called *Hofra-ta-San-Paul*, and the cellars of the houses at Rabat along this line, belong all to this ditch.

Beyond to the south, was the *pomerium* of the ancient capital.

The letters **C** and **D** point out the sites on which stood the two main gates of the town, facing the two lateral high-roads tac-Ciaula, now Via Boschetto, and ta-hal-Bajada, now Via St. Agata.

Those two primitive high-roads, still showing the old cart-ruts along their sides, were and are the main arteries of the country; the tac-Ciaula road leads to Gorgenti, to Siggiewi, tal-Ghalia, Gebel-Ciantar, Madliena, and to all the eastern coast; the Hal-Bajada road leads to Hal-Barka, Dingli, Wied-Lemu, Fiddien, and to the southern coast.

The foundations of **C** were met with, twelve feet under the present level of the road, in May 1890. The rock-bridge across the ditch, affording a passage through **D**, still roofs a portion of the lane Hofra-ta-San-Paul.

A third gate **E** must have stood near tal-Qasgha little chapel, as a third high-road, that of Ghar-Exem, runs in front of it, and is the main artery leading to Bieb-ir-Rhua, 'Mtahleb, Bahriq, Wied-Ghersuma, Bin-Gemma, Ghemieri, Mellieha and the western coast.

Count Ciantar* states, that an old ms., of which no particulars are given, mentions a fourth gate near St. Paul's Church, in front of Strada Hal-Pilatu now Strada Collegio, which is not a high-road but only a comparatively recent cross-way through the field tac-Ciaula, which field originally extended over to tad-Dlam: no traces of this presumed gate between and so near the other two gates, were ever discovered.

The circumference of the ancient capital thus bounded, measured by comm. Abela, † was about 12400 ft., or over two miles and a half.

Its ancient denomination recorded by Ptolemy ‡ and Cicero ¶ and by our Roman epigraphs, was *Melita*.

For strategical purposes, the Arab conquerors of the island reduced its extent towards the northern frontier by a ditch lettered **F**.

In the town thus reduced to about one-fifth of its original extent, the Arabs fixed the residence and the principal quarters of the Emirs, of the Muftis, and of the Cadis ¶. Of the rest of the town was made the large esplanade of Saqqaja, a *Rabat* or *place de frontier*.

Thus reduced it was called 'Mdina by the Arabs, and remained the capital of the island under the Normans, the Swabians, the Angevins, the Aragonese, and the first period of the Sovereignty of the Knights of St. John.

72. After the Carthaginians, as a free city, *Melita* was given by the Romans a Greek Autonomy like the free cities of Sicily, and afterwards was raised to a Roman Municipality, which nominally lasted under the Byzantine rule.

* *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. I, Not. II, § V.

¶ In Verrem. V.

† *Ibid.*, Lib. I, Not. II, § IV.

‡ Lib. IV, c. 3.

¶ Frammento critico della Storia Musulmana delle isole di Malta.

During the last period of the Arabs, the native citizens obtained a share in the government of the city.

The Normans, after their conquest in the year 1090, re-instated the Municipality of the city; the Aragonese Sovereigns instituted the "Consiglio Popolare" of the island.*

The armorial ensign, given to the town by Count Roger after the Norman conquest, was a shield, with the two colours of the Norman family de Hauteville, viz: white on the right and vermilion on the left side. After the delivery of the Turkish siege in 1565, the bearings were further adorned by the addition of an olive branch to the right and a palm on the left, and the shield was surmounted with a civic crown.

By a diploma signed by the two Viceroy's of Sicily Dom Nicolò Speciale, and Dom Guglielmo Moncayo, dated from Palermo 3rd January 1427 †, the title of Città Notabile was conferred upon 'Mdina by King Alfonso V of Aragon, in consequence of the ransom of 30000 gold florins paid to Don Antonio Cardona, to whom our islands had been mortgaged by that sovereign.

The erection of Valletta by the Gr. M. Fra Jean de la Vallette Parisot was completed towards the beginning of the year 1571; and the Gr. M. Fra Pietro del Monte declared this new city the capital of Malta, on the 18th March.

The old capital, however, saved its ancient privileges of delivering the keys and giving possession of the island to the elected Grand Masters of the Order of St. John, and retained its municipality and other honours under the rule of the Knights.

It is related by Comm. del Pozzo ‡, that the dismantling of the decaying walls of 'Mdina, and the transfer of its inhabitants to the three towns on the other side of the great harbour was decided upon in 1645. The great excitement of those inhabitants, especially of the women, prevented the Gr. M. Lascaris to carry the project into effect; and the *Giurati* of the place undertook to levy a temporary tax for the repairs of the decaying walls.

The repairs and some changes were commenced in 1710, and brought to the state of completion in 1727, under the Gr. Mastership of Fr. Antonio Manoel de Vilhena.

73. The primitive internal topography of the old town had not been disturbed by the Arabs, nor was since, with the exception of the square in front of the Magisterial palace, which was the residence of the Capitano di Verga, the Chief Magistrate of the town, erected in 1727; and the square in front of the Cathedral formed at the beginning of this century, during the revolt of the country people against the French in Malta.

The deep black lines in the map mark the remains of Norman buildings.

The following are the principal topographical and historical indications, of the place.

No. 1 is Porta Reale gate, removed to its present site by Gr. M. Manoel from no. 2 where it was under the Arabs, and where it stood until 1727. Near that gate of the town was a little church, under the title of "Sta. Maria della porta", formerly used as a "scuola di negromanzia", and afterwards as a "Grammar School". ||

The asterisk, outside Porta Reale gate, marks the site of a pillar with a capital and cross over it, erected by the natives immediately after the Norman restoration of the Cathedral Church.

No. 3 is *Bieb-il-Gharreqin* or Porta di Greci, near the quarters formerly inhabited by the Greeks of the town, with no. 4 their little church of St. Nicolas.

Nos. 5, 6, and 7 are bastions S. Paolo, S. Pietro, and the redoubt De Homedes, on the southern front.

Nos. 8 and 9 are bastions Vactari and De Redin, on the northern front.

No. 10 is a cavalier, erected under the rule of Gr. M. Manoel di Vilhena: in the parapet of this cavalier were laid three inscriptions, now removed to the Museum of Saqqaja, recording the works and improvements executed under the Magisterships of Fr. Hugo Loubenx Verdala in 1582, and of Fr. Aloph de Wignacourt in 1618.

* Frammento critico della Storia Musulmana delle isole di Malta.

† Abela, Malta Illustrata.

‡ Tom. II, ann. 1645.

|| Ms. in the Archives of the Cathedral "Notizie riguardanti le isole di Malta".

The above mentioned places constituted under the Knights of St. John the four ordinary military posts, "le poste ordinarie", and the three extraordinary military posts of the *Deima*, the national militia of that town, which in times of dreaded invasion was raised to 2000 foot-men, and included, besides cavalry, the companies of Naxxar and Siggiewi.

The command of the *Deima* in ordinary times was vested in the governor of the town, the *Capitano di Verga*, a temporary civilian magistrate and military tribune.

In time of war, a Knight Commander chosen by the Gr. Master took the command of the *Deima* of the town.

The cornets of the horse militia were borne in all public ceremonies by a civilian, chosen by the Gr. Master from the most conspicuous citizens, who took precedence over the cavalry of all other districts of the island, after the Knights and the colours of the Order.

It was the privilege of the senior *Giurato* of the town to bear the colours of the foot *Deima* of 'Mdina.

The Chief Magistrate entrusted with the civil and military government of the island together with four *Giurati*, during the Aragonese rule was styled *Hakem*, *Capitano Militare*, *Capitano di Giustizia*, and *Capitano di Verga*; he was ordinarily elected for one year by the King of Aragon or the Viceroy of Sicily, and subsequently by the Grand Master.

The civil jurisdiction and military command of the *Capitano di Verga* originally extended all over the island; but under the government of the Knights, his civil and criminal jurisdiction was restricted to the old capital and country districts, and his military command to 'Mdina and casals Dingli and Tartarni.

As *Capitano Giustiziere*, the *Hakem* was the president of the *Corte Capitaniale*, and in criminal cases was assisted by a lawyer, officially called *Assessore*: civil cases of importance were adjudged by his Court.

The functions of the *Giurati*, of whom one had to be a lawyer, concerned the victualling of the place, and the adjudgment of certain cases reserved to them by law.

Civil cases of an interest not above one *uncia* of silver were decided by "Idiot" judges, illiterate individuals enjoying the reputation of honesty and good sense, chosen annually by the artizans, hair-cutters, and lesser traders, from their own class. These petty judges held their hearings early in the morning, under the lodges of the town, and were styled '*Mhallel tal-ugia*':—their institution dates from the Norman conquest.

74. Nos. 11 and 12 mark the Magisterial palace for the residence of the *Hakem* and of "la Corte capitaniale e la corte del giudice idiota", after their transfer from no. 15 under the rule of the Grand Master Manoel: the architect of this building, and, probably of the ancient Municipal palace no. 17, was the French Knight Mondion. Previous to the erection of that palace, the *Hakems* resided in their own private houses, provided also with the criminal prisons during their tenure of office: these prisons are still seen in the houses of the *Castelletti*, *Navarro*, *Falson*, and *Cassar*.

No. 13 marks the old victualling stores of the Municipality of that town.

No. 14 points out the palace of the noble family *Des-Inguanes*, in which King Alfonso V was domiciled in the year 1432, during his campaign in Tunis.

It is in this site, *Strada Reale*, that the considerable remains of the temple and theatre of *Apollo* were discovered.

No. 15 denotes the ancient armoury, after its removal from no. 17.

No. 16 is the Church of *S. Pietro* and the nunnery of *St. Benedetto*.

No. 17 is the Municipal palace, after its removal from no. 15.

Nos. 18, 19 and 20 indicate the sites of the Cathedral, the Episcopal Palace, and the Seminary of *Mons. Fra Paolo Alpheran de Bussan*.....

Nos. 21 and 22, the *Carmelites' Church* and convent, and the little chapel of *Sta. Maria tad-Daul*.

No. 23, the palace of the noble *Michele Falson*, Vice-Admiral of Aragon, now the property of the noble family *Stagno Navarra*, in which palace was received the Gr. M. Fr. *Philippe de Villiers l'Isle Adam*.

No. 24, the site of the ancient Roman Senatorial palace, of which the foundations and relics were discovered in February 1881. *

On the site numbered 25, the foundations of the *prætorium* of the ancient capital were discovered in 1889. †

No. 26 and 27 mark the sites of the Ospedale Saura, of the Franciscans' Church and convent and the joining Ospedale of Santo Spirito.

No. 28 marks the site of the old *is-Sieg*, the *Segio*, corresponding to the *Tokos* of Gozo, the place of assembly for public and commercial transactions. ‡

No. 29 the Churches of St. Paul, and St. Publius.

Nos. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35 mark the places of the Catacomb of St. Paul, the court and lanes of *Diar-hanzira*, the Catacombs of St. Cataldus, St. Agatha, St. Venera, and *i' Abbatia-tad-Deyr*.

Nos. 36 and 37, the Catacombs *tal-Virtù*, and of *Sta. Maria tal-Grotta* with the Dominicans' Church and convent.

The whole land *tac-Ciaula* and *tat-Tuta* in Via Boschetto, *tal--Cullegg* in Strada Collegio, and *tad-Dlam* in Via Sta. Agata, now intersected by several cross-ways, formed originally but one farm. The most telling proof of this are the numerous pagan and Christian caverns honey-combed throughout its length and breadth, underneath those streets as well as under the rows of houses recently built thereon.

The lands beyond *tad-Dlam* and *tat-Tuta*, all the eastern district from *tal-Merhlat* to *Gnien-il-Gbir*, including the lands of Boschetto, *ta-Zuta*, *tal-Fulûa*, etc.; and all the trail in the western district from *Hal-Bajada*, *Hal-Barka*, and *tac-Cghaki* to *Bir-ir-Riehb* and *Uhayn-Klieb*, etc., are likewise literally full of these tombs.

The whole place, beyond doubt, was the burial ground of the ancient Melita.

* Recent Discoveries at Notabile, 1881.

† Frammento critico della Storia Greco-Romana e Bizantina delle isole di Malta.

‡ Plate XXI.

fig. 2.

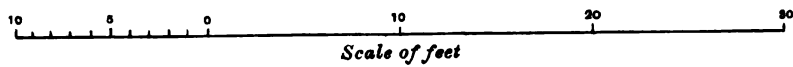
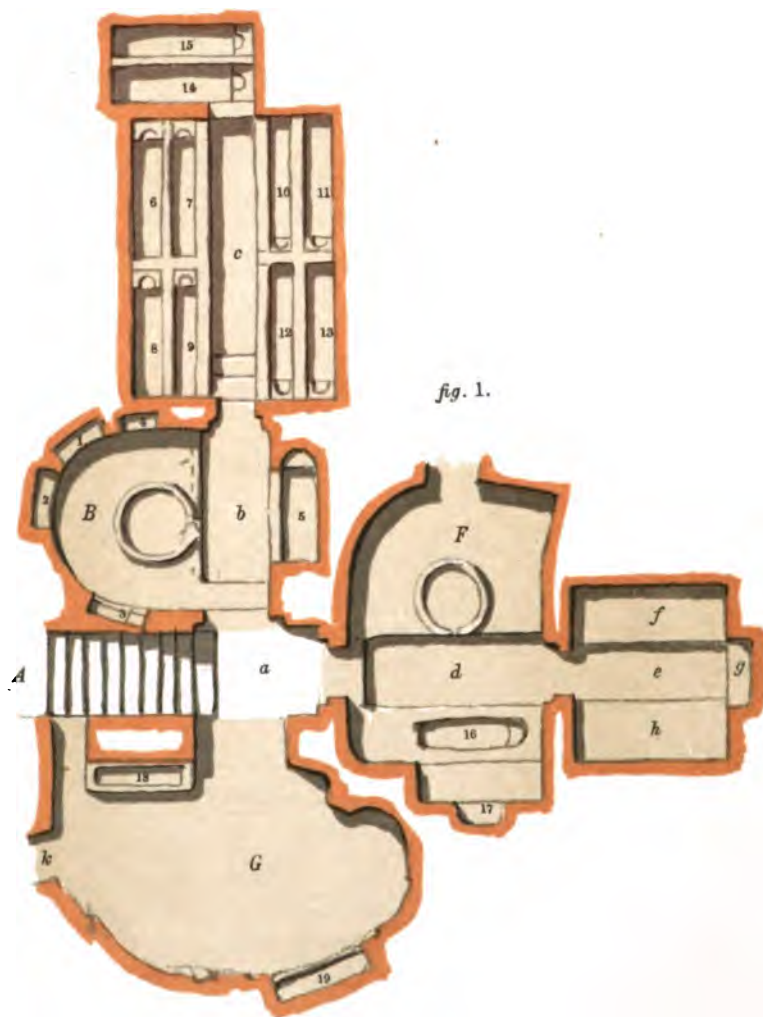


PLATE XXII.

75. Plate XXII, fig. 1 shows the ichnography of one of the very interesting Christian lesser cemeteries in the lands tac-Ciaula, Via Boschetto, explored and surveyed in 1892, when it was being destroyed to lay the foundation of a row of new houses.

In the Christian places of sepulture isolation of tombs entirely disappears; they are common burial-grounds for the members of a community, or burial-clubs for the members of colleges or limited congregations professing the same religious faith.

The sepulchres themselves, moreover, are not in the shape of cells or chambers, but are simple *loculi* or pits of the size of a corpse.

The one described here was very apparently a burial-college of a small corporation.

A shaft **A**, 15 ft. by 5 ft. and about 9 ft. deep, sunk in the lands tac-Ciaula, is provided with a stair-case leading down to a landing *a*.

On the right side of this landing, on a level about 2 ft. higher, opens the first gallery *b*, 11 ft. by 4 ft., and on the prolongation of the same gallery opens a second gallery *c*, 15 ft. long.

This second gallery is on a level, about 3 ft. higher than the first.

On the right side of *b*, there is an elevated oval *exædra* **B** with two small *loculi* nos. 1 and 2 for children, and two larger ones, nos. 3 and 4 for adults. In the middle of the line uniting the extremities of the *exædra* there is the usual hollow circular basin, similar to those observed in all our Catacombs, with its orifice towards the gallery, which served for ablutions before interment.

On the side opposite the *exædra*, another *loculus* no. 5 is seen.

On each of both the two opposite longer sides of gallery *c*, are arranged the graves nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13; and at the inner end nos. 14 and 15.

These coffin-shaped receptacles are fashioned like the Phænicians, with a raised semi-lunar cavity to receive the head.

All these graves are sunk in a raised flat platform or bench above the ground, and not cut in the walls like the earliest Christian *loculi* of the Catacombs.

They are all provided with horizontal ledges to receive the closing table or mensa.

In front of the landing place *a*, the same disposition of sepulchres is observed; a first gallery *d*, 11 ft. by 3 ft., and a second gallery *e* on a higher level, about 10 ft. long.

Another *exædra* **F**, with a passage intended for the commencement of another gallery; a small arched recess with a *forma* no. 16, and above it a *loculus* no. 17; and three platforms *f*, *g*, *h*, for other graves, completed the arrangement on this side.

On the left side of *a*, there is a cavern **G**, in which apparently the work designed was not carried into effect. It only exhibits two graves, nos. 18 and 19, and a passage *k* for further extension of this little Catacomb, still encumbered with material.

Fig. 2 is a sciagraphy of the side dexter of the entrance, and of the galleries in front.



fig. 2.



fig. 1.

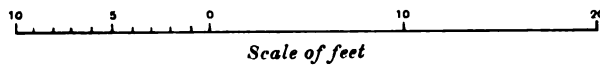
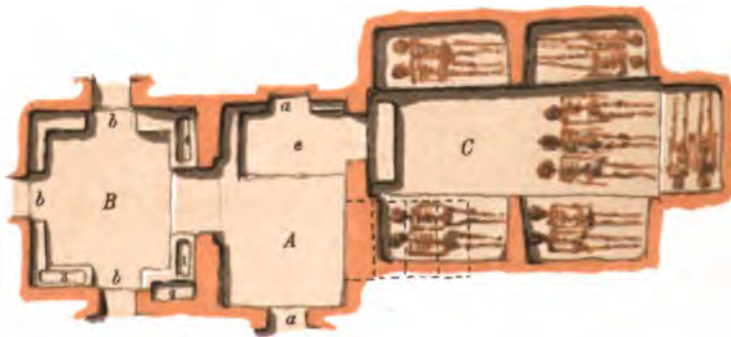


PLATE XXIII.

76. Plate XXIII is the illustration of the ichnography and sciagraphy of another lesser cemetery in a good state of preservation, in the same locality of Hal-Pilatu, having all the features of a *Collegium funeraticium* or burial-club of another corporation.

The entrance to the place is, at present, under Strada Collegio, and its extension is tunnelled under the premises and yards of the Primary Schools recently built at Rabat.

Fig. 1 exhibits the plan and general distribution of sepulchres in this cemetery.

A, is the vestibule or ante-chamber, reached by a flight of steps marked *d d* in fig. 2; on its two opposite sides *a, a*, are the prolongations of two further arms of this cemetery, still encumbered with stone and soil.

B, is a rectangular chamber at a lower level than **A**, sided by rock benches running all round, seemingly fitted for occasional assemblings of the members of the corporation; the only table-tombs 1, 2, 3, and 4 are located in the corners of this chamber.

The apertures *b, b, b*, point out the directions of further areas, still unexplored on account of the materials with which they are filled up.

In order to open an entrance into area **C**, and tunnel it under ground so as not to meet the surface of the above-ground, the diggers were compelled to sink a deep and wide shaft marked *e*.

The distribution and number of sepulchres in area **C**, which terminates the cemetery on this side, is shown by the illustration.

Fig. 2 is an illustration of the sciagraphy of the side dexter.

A second lesser cemetery of the same description stood, until 1892, in the extremity of the same Strada Collegio abutting in Via Boschetto, bearing on the entrance the Greek title ΕΥΤΥΧΙΑΝΟΥ, i.e. of Eutichianus. When the discovery of the place was reported, a great portion of it had already been destroyed to lay the foundations of a row of houses, now built upon the site.

In the field adjoining the Canonica of the Collegiate of the Grotto of St. Paul lies another lesser cemetery of the same type and extent, bearing the Latin title of ASCANIVS; a fourth one, close by the new building of the Primary Schools, is reached by a flight of steps from the same field, and extends under a little house and Strada Collegio.

Numerous other cemeteries of this kind are met with, at short distances, in the lands tac-Ciaula, tat-Tuta, tac-Cghaki, within the same district.



fig. 3.

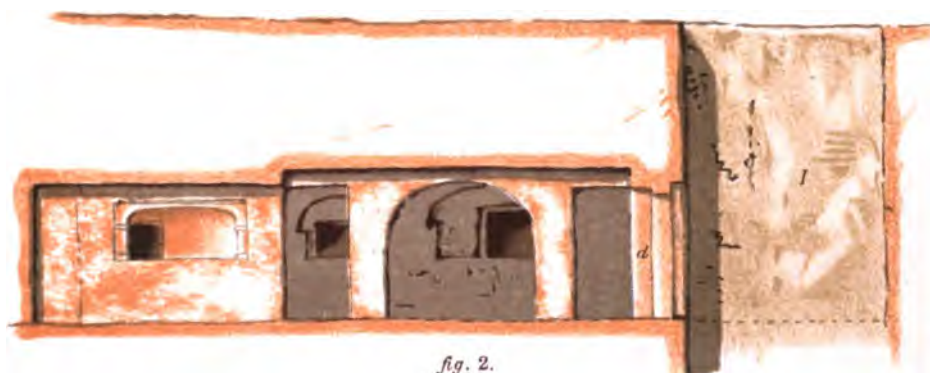


fig. 2.

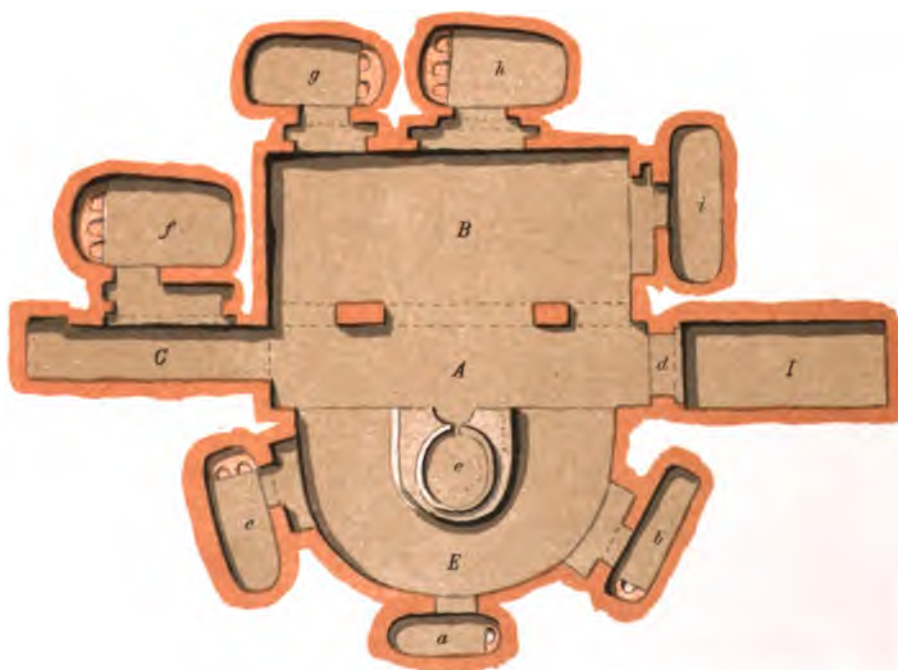


fig. 1.

PLATE No. XXIV.

77. The plan and elevation of an ancient group of under-ground Christian sepulchres in *tad-Deyr* tenement are represented in *plate XXIV*.

The descent, in fig. 2 representing the elevation, is through a shaft marked **I**, at present the neck of a well, 9 ft. by 3 ft. 4 in. wide and originally 13 ft. deep.

A lateral opening *d*, about 5 ft. 6 in. high and 3 ft. wide, at the base of this shaft leads to the little catacomb. On the jambs of this entrance are observed the holes of the hinges, upon which swong the two leaves of the door originally closing the entrance.

The immediate access is in the *ambulacrum* **A**, 14½ ft. long and 3½ ft. wide, in fig. 1 representing the ground-plan.

On the right side of this ambulacrum opens an ample *exædra* **E**, of about 15 ft. in diameter, in the middle of which is a circular low platform *e* of rock, 3 ft. 8 in. diameter, hollowed out and provided with an outlet in its edge towards the ambulacrum.

The use of this great basin, common to all our cemeteries, will be discussed when describing the Catacomb of St. Paul.

Around this *exædra* are excavated the small *unisome* vaults *a* and *b*, and the *bisome* vault *c*. At present, crosses are observed incised above these vaults, of a recent date however.

In continuation of the ambulacrum above mentioned, is a narrow corridor **C**, 10 ft. long by 2 ft. 6 in. wide.

To the left of this corridor, above a bench of rock, rests an arched entrance, adorned with moulding at the base of its two pilasters, and under the impost of the arch. Under this arch is found the passage to the conspicuous *trisome* vault *f*, of a type strictly Phœnician.

Opposite to the above described *exædra*, to the left of the ambulacrum **A**, are three passages to an ample cubiculum **B**, 14 ft. 6 in. long and 7 ft. wide, of which the middle passage is arched on two pilasters *p p*. Along the greater side of this cubiculum, two small vaults *g* and *h* are excavated, of the same type as the preceding.

That to the right is *bisome*, and bears the following title in vermilion on the vaulted entrance; fig. 3.

RI dIONISii
INIIOC CORPORA
RECV REPOSITA

The first name ending RI cannot be deciphered, it may be gregoRli; the second, by supplementing the initial d and the final ii, reads dIONISii.

The inscription restored would stand:

gregoRli (ac) dIONISii REPOSITA
IN HOC (sepulchro) CORPORA.

The above letters CV may refer to some date.

The *trisome* vault *h* is, at present, without any indication.

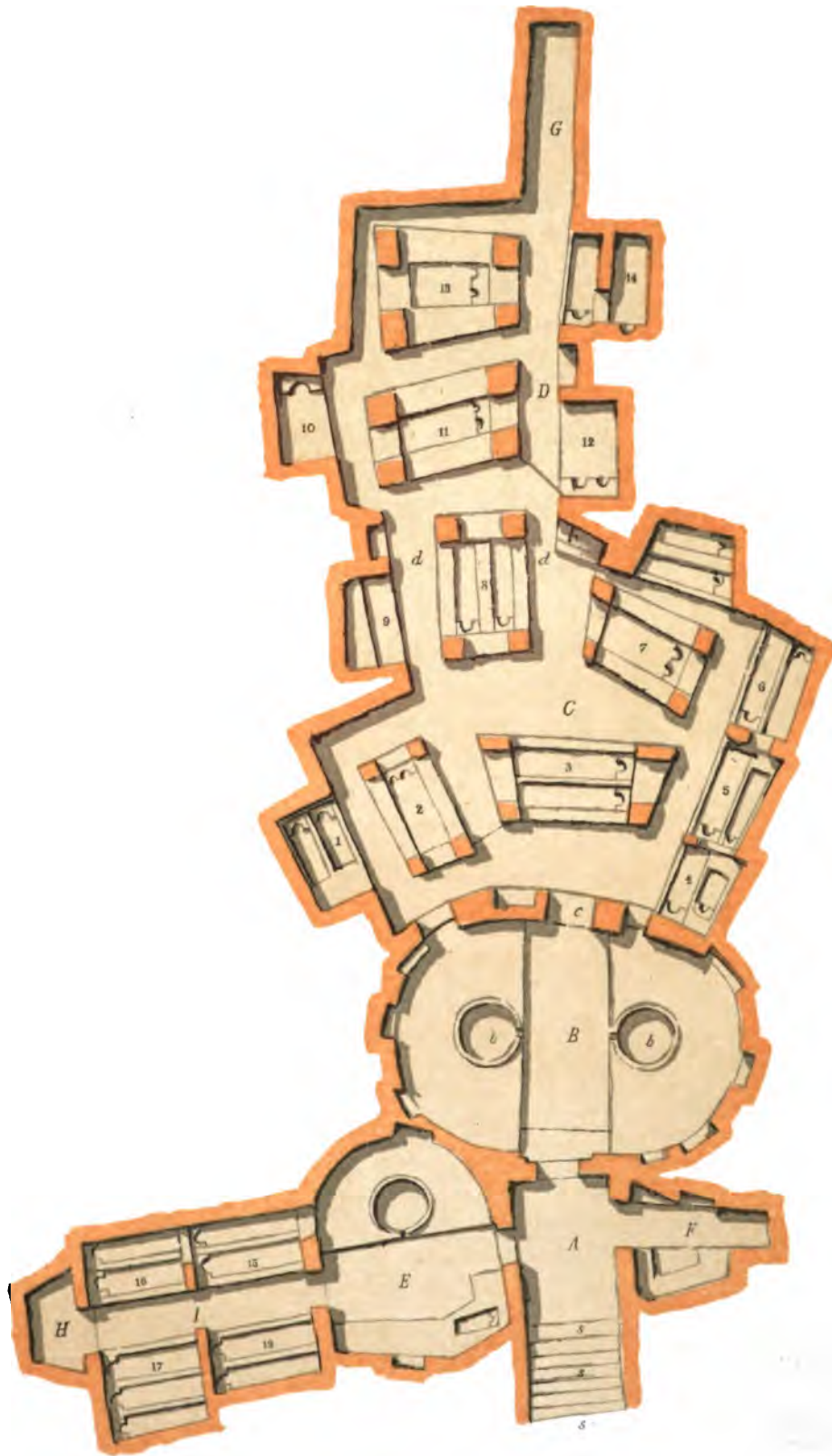
At the left side of the cubiculum **B** is another sepulchre *i*.

One cannot in the least doubt that the Christians used this little Catacomb. The construction of the greater part of its sepulchres perfectly similar to those of the Phœnicians in Malta, and very different from the locular and arched-tomb arrangement observed in all other our Catacombs, reveals its primitive origin.

On the right side of this little Catacomb are seen other smaller groups of Christian sepulchres, decorated with palm-leaves, crosses, heads surrounded by halos, effaced pictures representing angels, and the following remaining latin letters of an epitaph **IMATO**. These sepulchres are all of a Phœnician type, indicating their early age.

Lesser catacombs in the tenement of "St. Agti."

pl. No. XXV.



10 5 0 10 20 30 40
Scale of feet

Catacombe minori in "St. Agti."

PLATE XXV.

78. Plates Nos. XXV and XXVI are illustrations of two of the numerous lesser early Christian cemeteries in the lands of "St. Agti," showing their original beginning in small burial-clubs, subsequently connected together into several groups, midway between the Catacombs of St. Paul and of St. Agatha.

The lands of "St. Agti", opposite to the fields tad-Dlam in Hal-Bajada road, are a portion of a formerly large tenement, extending so far as the Church of S. Cataldus on the north and the Riehbū lands on the west, scattered with a large number of Phœnician and Græco-Roman isolated tombs, and with early Christian lesser Catacombs tunnelled under ground: it formed, evidently, a large public burial ground, beyond the *pomœrium* of the ancient capital.

On the northern portion of that tenement, several houses have been built, and the large caverns have been turned into cellars.

In the year 1896, the Government purchased the remaining extensive portion, in order to prevent its further and utter destruction.

In the illustration No. XXV, the descent and entrance is marked by a stair-case *s, s, s*, encased in an open shaft leading to **A**, the lower landing place.

B, is the common *exœdra* of the earliest area of the whole group, in which are laterally observed the usual basin *b b* on a raised platform, and several *loculi* in the walls.

The opening *e* marks the entrance into the first gallery **C**, where are found the *bisome* and *trisome* arched-tombs nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; and several *loculi* in the surrounding walls.

In some of these *loculi*, together with the relics buried therein, were found two entire glass vases in good preservation, the fragments of others, and several *bylichnis* lamps.

One of the largest sepulchres, in the form of a Phœnician tomb-cave, has the closing slab of its oven-like entrance sculptured with the figures of axes, hammers and other carpentry tools, meaning, probably, that the place was a carpenters' burial-club.

The passages *d, d*, mark the entrance into the further gallery **D**, in which are found the arched-tombs 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, besides the *loculi*.

A further prolongation **G** of this gallery has not been used, as no *loculi* and no *arcosolia* are apparent on its sides.

This was, manifestly, the first area of the whole of this group.

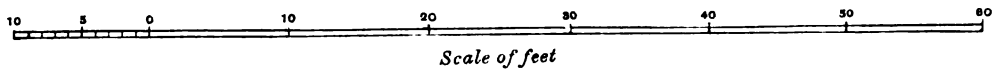
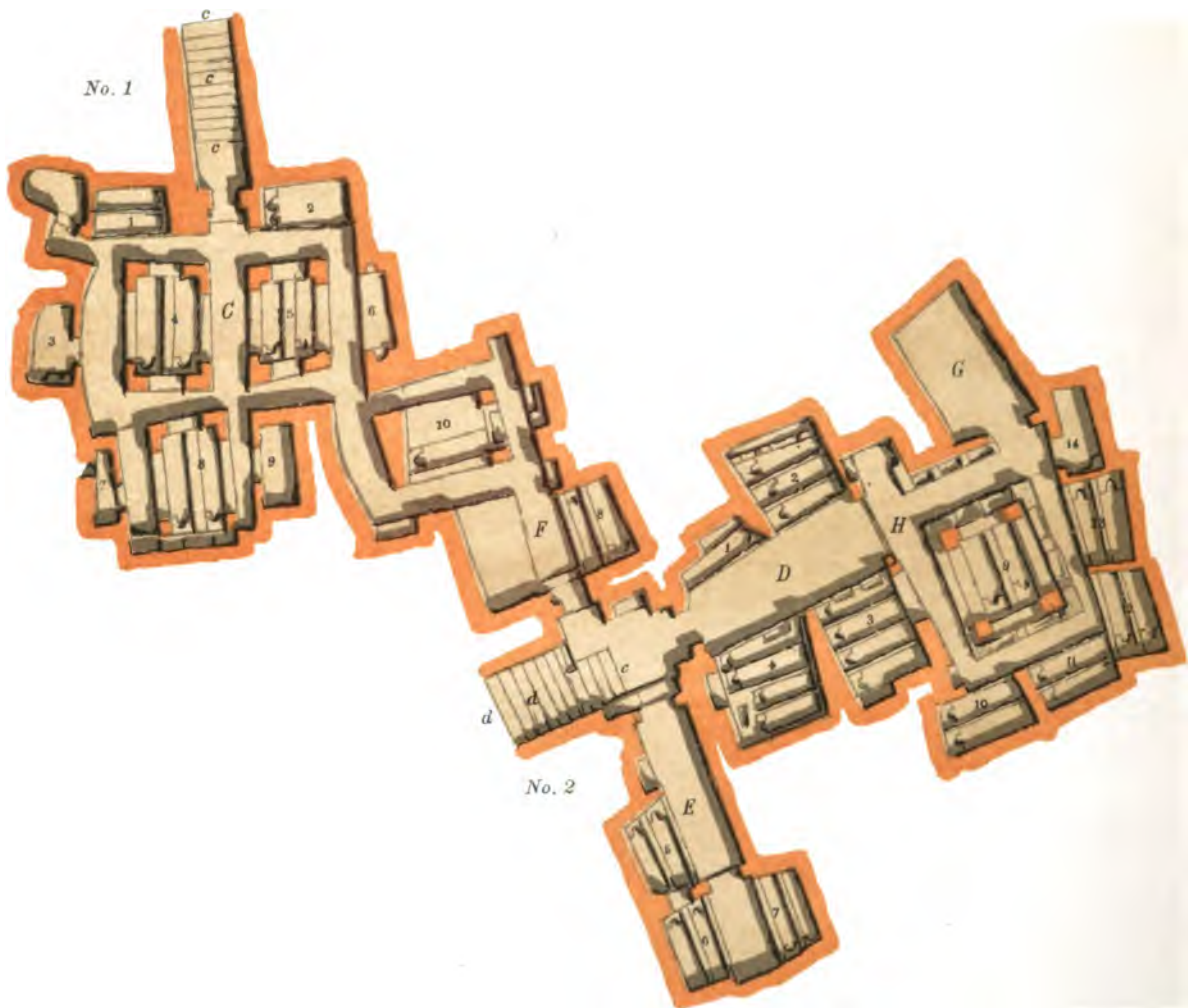
On the side sinister of the landing place **A**, is grouped another area having the *exœdra* **E**, and the gallery **I**, exhibiting the same arrangement within area **C**, and the arched-tombs nos. 15, 16, 17 and 18.

In the inner end of gallery **I**, is a small cubiculum **H**, probably meant for an *arcosolium*.

On the side dexter of **A**, is the beginning of another gallery **F**, which shows only a few *loculi*.

Lesser catacombs in the tenement of "St. Agti."

pl. No. XXVI.



Catacombe minori in "St. Agti."

PLATE XXVI.

79. Plate XXVI is the illustration of two further groups of lesser under-ground cemeteries in "St. Agti," apparently having a contemporary beginning by two brotherhoods as they are provided with a separate entrance, and were subsequently linked together.

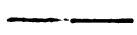
The descent to no. 1 is through the stair-case *c c c*, dug out in the rock, and leading directly to a large cavern **C**, in which are seen excavated the unisome and bisome arched-tombs nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, in the form of small caves with an oven-like apertures, and several loculi in the wall.

The original descent to no. 2 was through the shaft and stair-case marked *d d d*, leading to galleries **D**, **E**, **F**, in which are found the arched-tombs nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

The gallery **D** is crossed by a gallery leading to area **H**, having the arched-tombs 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, besides the loculi.

G, shows the intended prolongation of another gallery on the side of area **H**.

The usual vestibule and *exedra* are wanting in these two groups, which may point out a later date of construction.



III
MONOGRAPH
OF THE
CATACOMB OF ST. PAUL.

—explored and

pl. No. I.

Lands of the College
Diar Hanira or the court *Vicolo Catacombe*



alta—esplore e
lam."



III.
MONOGRAPH
OF THE
CATACOMB OF ST. PAUL, MALTA.

80. The object of this monograph is a topographical and historical description of the rise and development of the Catacomb of St. Paul, the ichnography of which is illustrated by the accompanying *plates I, II, III and IV*.

This extensive excavation underlies the rural tenement *tad-Dlam*, and a great portion of the *Diar-hanzira* court and lanes, to a distance of about 365 yards beyond the walls and gate-ways of the ancient capital.

The Arabic vernacular denomination *tad-Dlam*, i.e. place of darkness, still retained by that field, is allusive to the Catacomb underneath.

The court and lanes of *Diar-hanzira*, now Vicolo Catacombe, adjacent to that field, undoubtedly formed part of *tad-Dlam* tenement in the epoch, during which that vast subterranean vault was excavated: that court may have been opened through that tenement during the Arabic domination, as nearly all its lanes and all the houses built therein are hollowed underneath with sepulchral caves, which the Romans would not have permitted in their times.

The vernacular denomination of *Diar-hanzira* is grounded on the belief of the natives in the story of a sow, which, let loose in one of the caves linked to the Catacomb, made its appearance in the distant village of Siggiewi.

The tenement *tad-Dlam* occupies the middle site of the Hal-Bajada esplanade, at a notable distance from the valley of Saqqaja on the east, and that of Ghar-Exem on the west.

The site chosen prevented the prolongation of the subterranean galleries into the slopes of those valleys, and their flooding by the water collected therein during the rainy season.

Besides the plain configuration of the ground free from notable undulations, the geological condition of the rock, easily cut out with the pick-axe and yet very consistent when not exposed to atmospheric changes, aided very considerably the execution of those under-ground excavations.

That rock is a soft porous variety of the upper limestone bed of the island, reaching in several localities the full thickness of 200 feet.

This bed, forming the high terraces of the Bin-Gemma rows of hills, of which the esplanade of Hal-Bajada is one, withstood on the northern and north-western portions of Malta the extensive denudation, which the south and south-eastern portions dipping towards the principal harbours yielded to.

The internal architecture of the excavation essentially of a sepulchral character, similar in general to that of the early Roman Catacombs, demonstrates that it was the primitive burial-ground of the early Christians of Malta.

Comm. Abela, in the year 1647, estimated the longitudinal extension of this Catacomb at several miles. There is a great exaggeration in this estimation, grounded on the vulgar belief that the place stretches forward as far as *Wied-il-Gbir* and *Siggiewi* on one side, and to the *Mtahleb* and *Bin-Gemma* valleys on the other. The same exaggerated opinions were formerly entertained of the extension of the Roman Catacombs.

After an abandonment of nearly eleven centuries, a regular exploration and survey of the place was undertaken on the 2nd January 1894, and carried on to the end of August of the same year.

The place is completely isolated within well defined boundaries, which are now ascertained on all its sides.

It has no communications with the Catacombs and crypts of St. Agatha, of St. Cataldus, and of Sta. Venera, on the opposite side of Hal-Bajada road; nor with the near Grotto of St. Paul as asserted by comm. Abela, mons. Bres, and the rev. Gatt Said. The two small apertures, walled up in the little crypt on the left side of the said Grotto, hitherto believed to be passages into this Catacomb, are the accesses to two Phœnician tomb-caves.*

Not one single area was found to have escaped pillage; not one single sepulchre unrifled; even some portions of these subterranean areas have been appropriated by the private land-lords of the houses in *Diar-hanzira*.

The walls, the galleries, and the crypts in the more ancient areas, still preserve the remains of their plaster covering, and the pictures once decorating them are denoted by only faded traces of their previous existence

The inscriptions and epitaphs, mostly Greek, on the tombs are all defaced, with the exception of some letters.

Its solid architectural form is all that is maintained intact.

The once blocked up corridors and areas are now cleared; the walled up passages, opened; and the whole place, including the portions appropriated by private landlords, has been regularly surveyed and mapped.

81. The Catacomb of St. Paul had, of course, a beginning within narrow limits, and attained its progressive development by further excavations, and by the linking of several lesser cemeteries, in the course of time.

Its growth extends in a southern and south-western direction, where the tenement tad-Dlam had originally its widest expansion from Via Sta. Agata to Via Boschetto, including the lands tac-Ciaula: see *plate XXI*.

As local evidence shows, the southern and south-western portions tad-Dlam, including the property of the Augustinian monks in Via Sta. Agata now covered with recent buildings, was and is literally underhollowed with Christian hypogæa.

The northern and eastern portions of the same field, ending in a narrow shred of land tapering towards the two main gates of the ancient capital, are strewn with numerous pagan caves; and it was this, which compelled the Christians to choose their burial-ground in an opposite direction.

A reference to the general map, *plate I*, shows that the greater axis of the Catacomb, stretching in a direction north and south, is 220 ft. long; and its minor axis, stretching from north-west to south-east, is 150 ft. in length.

This does not indicate a very considerable extent; but the length and area of the catacombs is not calculated so much on the longitudinal and superficial extent of ground which they underlie, as on the united length of the galleries and lanes and on the united areas of their super-imposed *piani* or storeys.

The united length of the galleries of the Catacomb of St. Paul would be, if placed in one straight line, about 2750 ft., a little over half a mile.

Its total area is about 2590 sq. yards.

Its average depth under-ground is 15 ft.: the lowest levels are those of areas X, XI, and XII, which attain a depth of 18 ft.

A limit to a much deeper excavation was imposed by the meeting of running water, filtered through the porous rock above, collected in the numerous fissures and gaps characterizing the lower stratum of that bed, and invariably met with in the place.

The depth of the Roman Catacombs, generally excavated in the bowels of hills, is much greater. Sig. Armellini † states, that the more superficial *piani* average from 18 to 22 feet underground; the middle, from 33 ft. to 48 ft.; the deepest point is about 82 ft., in one of the regions of St. Callixtus.

A further glance at the general map, *plate I* accompanying this monograph, conveys at once the impression, that the southern and south-eastern extension of the Catacomb, round and beyond the crypts **A** and **B**, exhibits a great regularity of straight

* Monograph of the Grotto of St. Paul, Malta.

† Antichi cimiteri Cristiani di Roma, part. II, cap. III.

horizontal galleries, crossing one another at right angles, interrupted here and there by crypts on one side only, and also of an orderly disposition of rectangular areas and of sepulchres, along the sides of the galleries.

This regular excavation, marked by uniformity of plan conformably to a preconceived design and pattern of cemeterial architecture universally, adopted by the early Christians of Malta, is the earliest portion of the Catacomb.

The work, evidently undertaken within a private area, with clearly defined frontage and limits in the field according to law, which prevented underlying public roads and interfering with neighbouring areas, was freely executed with a direct entrance from Hal-Bajada road, under the guardianship of common law protecting all burial places as *loca religiosa*, until the middle of the 3rd century: (§§ 41, 42.)

The absence of empty recesses for the reception of sarcophagi, as they are found in Priscilla's, Domitilla's, and other Roman Catacombs of apostolic age, does not warrant us to refer the commencement of our Catacomb to that remotest epoch.

The place bears the marks of transition from the early use of sarcophagi in the isolated Phœnician tomb-caves of the island, to that of the berth-like graves in the walls and the subsequent arched-tombs, which were the first production of Christian sepulchral architecture in the beginning of the 2nd century.

On the other hand, the conspicuous absence of the Christian monogram, and of domed hexagonal and circular chambers of the age of Constantine, testifies to its earlier antiquity.

The western and north-western portions overlain by *piani*, the perimeter of which is marked by dotted lines in the general map, show an inextricable network of short and narrow corridors, sided by opposite groups of *geminated* and *tricornous* chambers, without the preservation of the same level throughout.

Several of the aforesaid chambers spread and underlie the public road, in violation of the limits assigned by law, and are linked together and with the main Catacomb by hidden irregular passages and holes.

The *loculi* themselves, in this portion of the cemetery, are of smaller size; and each corner in the chambers, each intersection of the corridors, and the thick brims of the arched-tombs themselves, are taken into account for the excavation of smaller graves.

Overlying this middle region of the Catacomb, the *agellus* or over-field tad-Dlam is literally hollowed out with groups of caverns, filled with Christian loculi and arched-tombs.

Each of these caverns, in this superficial zone, has its own access in the open air; they are all linked with one another and with the Catacomb by secret lanes and passages, penetrating through pre-existing chambers and sepulchres.

82. The labyrinthine network of this portion, the spreading of the *piani* under the public road, the netting of the under-chambers with the over-ground caverns to provide more ways to elude pagan vigilance, the irregular and uncouth excavation, show manifestly that the whole of this region was hewn without a preconceived plan, under great stress of economy of space and need of further accommodations, and under the necessity of concealment in consequence of the new restrictions of the laws.

This necessity of hiding came on the Christians all over the Empire at the same time, when they were forbidden to make further use of their cemeteries by the edict of the co-Emperors Valerian and Gallienus, A.D. 254. (§§ 44 45).

The legal protection of their burial-ground once withdrawn, the Christians of Rome saw no longer any reason for keeping within the limits imposed by the law, and so did the Christians in Malta. In order to prevent the profanation of their sepulchres, they choked up with soil and other materials the original entrance from Hal-Bajada, and several of the ancient galleries, like the Christians in Rome, to render their Catacombs inaccessible to the pagans, and had to devise other means to enable themselves to accede secretly and unobserved.

It was then, that the hidden, long, and tortuous gallery through a pre-existing Phœnician family-vault, in the garden of the Rector of the Collegiate of the Grotto, was contrived to afford the present concealed passage from Vicolo Catacombe.

The superficial zone of Christian caverns in the field tad-Dlam marks the period of the short yet baneful persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, A.D. 284: (§§ 45, 46). The

Christian cemeteries were then actually confiscated, and to meet their requirements the Christians of the islands were compelled to hollow in *agello* their tombs, after the manner of the pagan inhabitants.

After the termination of that persecution, the property of the Catacomb of St. Paul must have been returned to the local Church, as it was elsewhere, and several little alterations, such as a number of regular *lucernaria* communicating with the open air, were evidently effected.

83. The dark lines, in the general map *plate I*, mark the lower flat of the Catacomb, divided into areas noted with Roman numerals agreeably to its gradual development.

The dotted lines mark the middle and superficial regions, which for convenience of description are illustrated in separate *plates II and III*.

Each area in the lower *piano* has its boundaries well defined by rock, on nearly all sides; in the primitive areas the horizontal plane is invariably maintained, to prevent interference with the arrangements in adjacent areas.

The breaking of a sepulchre or of a crypt to afford an abrupt passage into a gallery, thus encroaching upon a pre-existing arrangement, indicates always the addition of a new area.

The lowering of a *piano* under an area, so as not to disturb the detail in that area, demonstrates the posterior excavation of that *piano*.

Thus, the earlier and later growths, and the linking of the several areas of the Catacomb, may be detected.

We may proceed now with the *genesis* and topographical description of the earliest and lowest portion of the Catacomb of St. Paul, *plate I*.

A plot of ground in tad-Dlam field seems to have been originally secured, by legal formalities, for a burial ground by some early native converts, with a frontage of 130 feet on Hal-Bajada road, and a length of 100 feet in the field.

The crypts of Lucina, which formed the nucleus of St. Callixtus' cemetery at Rome, have 100 ft. in front on Via Appia, and 180 ft. in the field: the extent of those of the Cæcilians, in the same place, is frontage 250 ft., length 100 ft.

On this plot of ground, the site **C D G H** of area **I** sided by four rock walls, with XL. P. *in Fronte* et LVI. P. *in Agro*, was certainly the nucleus around which grew the Catacomb; because this is the only area, which possesses an independent and direct entrance from the public road; and the other areas have their passages, marked by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, only through this area.

Around and behind the spot chosen was the *area adjecta monumento*, or the compound of the place, under which the enlargement of the Catacomb took place.

The primitive internal arrangement of area **I**, which, intended for a private family may have consisted of two or three short galleries and one or two chambers pierced by graves in the walls, was substituted by the two considerable crypts **A** and **B**—subject of special illustration and description no. IV—when the place became the burial ground of a Christian community, and a place for assembling was needed.

The loftiness of these crypts was obtained by lowering the floor, without interfering with the ceiling.

The place, in the beginning, may have answered the wants of a community still few in number.

The regularity of structure, and its apparent and immediate access and door-way, on the public road, tell that the work was undertaken when the place enjoyed still the protection of the common law, during the first period of the excavation.

84. The principal accesses into this area are two; one **E**, direct and prominent, from the high-road of Hal-Bajada; as in the Roman Catacomb (§ 44); the other **F**, indirect and hidden, from Vicolo Catacombe.

The former **E** is a rectangular shaft 22 ft. long, 5 ft. wide, in a perpendicular direction to Hal-Bajada road, with a flight of steps cut in the rock, leading to a nearly square landing.

Like all the other shafts of our ancient tombs, this was exposed to the open sky; no traces of a roof, or foundation of any covering were met with.

A pit *e*, in the landing of **E**, received the rain-water from the shaft, which was afterwards absorbed by the porous rock.

Both sides of this shaft are pierced by rows of locular graves.

In front of the landing of **E**, a pathway, under a regular arch-way, slopes directly into the first gallery *a a*.

A door, with double leaves swinging upon vertical posts at the corners of this entrance, and opening towards the reveals against which they hung, must have been used to close this access, as the sockets in the lintel and threshold to receive the tops and bottoms of the lateral posts are still visible.

Local evidence, when the soil was removed from the place, showed that the land tad-Dlam had been a *bâr* or heath, crossed by cart-ruts in many ways like several other places in the island, before the Romans found it convenient to fix the boundaries of Hal-Bajada high-road.

The only access to the Catacomb of St. Paul, known until August 1894, was that marked **F** from Vicolo Catacombe, crossing a Phœnician family-vault **H** with three cellular tombs *t, t, t*, (see plate *V*): the original access, no. 6, to this vault was from the garden of the Rector of the Grotto of St. Paul, as the lane Vicolo Catacombe and the adjoining court cannot be of an earlier date than the 9th century, during the Arabs' occupation of Malta.

Through the inner chamber **V** of that pagan vault, and through three other Phœnician caves *k, k, k* on the same line, the narrow, winding, and sloping corridor *fff*, 90 ft. long, ending in a *catabatica* or flight of steps towards the gallery *a a*, was tunnelled under-ground.

The rude marks of the pick-axe on both sides of this corridor show plainly, that the work was not carried out at the same time as the excavation of the regular area to which it leads.

In the Roman Catacombs are likewise observed the same two sorts of accesses, the one from public or near public roads in the open, and the other concealed from the *arenariæ* or sand pits.

Father Marchi * deemed the former ingresses the more recent, belonging to the 4th or 5th centuries; and the latter, the original ones. In his theory, the accesses exposed to view would, naturally, have led to the capture of the Christians by their pagan persecutors, in their own cemeteries and places of assembly; while in the 4th and 5th centuries, they afforded a commodious passage to the many pious visitors of the venerated shrines of martyrs.

Plausible as this theory may appear, the learned De Rossi has upset it by the amount of evidence collected from the Roman Catacombs themselves.

In De Rossi's theory, the original accesses were those directly from the public roads, under the common law protecting all burial-places as *loca religiosa*; and the hidden accesses became necessary only when legal protection of Christian cemeteries was withdrawn, towards the middle of the 3rd century (§ 45).

In our case, the most telling proof, that the concealed access **F** into the Catacomb of St. Paul is later than the excavation itself, is furnished by the breaking of the corridor *fff* and of its terminal steps *s, s*, through the sepulchres in a *tricornous* chamber pre-existing in the middle zone, and by so disturbing the pre-existing arrangement in the crypts *m m* and a former ambulatory in the lower region.

The Christian natives were, evidently, compelled under pressing circumstances, to seek this secret inconvenient and difficult passage, when they were forbidden to make further free use of their cemetery, and to choke up with soil and material the direct entrance from Hal-Bajada.

85. Area II, bounded by **D I L G**, having XL. P. *in Fronte* et L. P. *in Agro*, was necessarily the first enlargement of the Catacomb, as it is the only area having direct communications 2, 3, 4 with area I.

* Pp. 35 and 41.

The map shows the number of galleries, and the distribution of monuments.

The sepulchre of the martyr Eutykinoi in this area is marked 5.

Ærofora are noted *o*.

On the side **IL**, the commencement of two *ambulacra* hints at the contemplated further extension in that direction.

Area III, bounded by **G L M N**, with XXX. *P. in Fronte et XLV. P. in Agro*, is the southern extension of area II, exhibiting the continuation of the same galleries, same order of tombs, and the additional crypt *h*.

The prolongation of gallery *g g g*, to the north-east, indicates the intended extension of this area in that direction, so as to occupy the whole rectangular space of the plot of ground originally secured, on the side **G H** of area I.

On the side **L M** of area III are the remains of galleries and monuments once existing in area IV, which through a wide and regular door-way *n* abutted into the gallery *g g*: the place is now reduced to a store.

Areas V and VI are the furthest *laciniæ* of the Catacomb to the south. They appear to have been originally excavated in a separate plot of ground, with CX. *P. in Fronte et L.P in Agro*.

These two areas form two wings, each with separate boundaries, and both with a common entrance **O** from a house in Vicolo Catacombe.

A few steps in front of this entrance lead down to an access into the gallery *bbb*, in the sides of which are hewn several table-tombs still in good preservation, and the *exædra* *c*, adjoining area IV.

Besides the crypt *d*, in area VI is observed a passage *i* into area III, through the breaking of the rock-wall in this last mentioned area, which indicates its posterior excavation to that of area VI.

86. A passage *p p*, cut through the hemisphere sinister of crypt **A**, and interfering with the previous arrangement of area **I** on that side, slopes into area X; a few steps on the prolongation of gallery *a a*, lead down into area XI; another stair-case at the head of gallery *q q*, leads down to area XII.

It was through area XI, that a crooked pathway to the Grotto of St. Paul was believed to exist by the Rev. G. Gatt Said.

The three areas X, XI and XII mark the lowest levels of the Catacomb: they underlie areas VII, VIII and IX, illustrated in *plates nos. II and III*, and are consequently the latest excavations, purposely deepened not to disturb the pre-existing areas overlying them.

The linking of area X with area VIII is through a stair-case marked *l*.

Areas XI and XII have no direct communication with areas VIII and IX overlying them.

Area XIII, although nearly on the same level with the lower *piano* and very apparently intended to be linked with it, lies however without the Catacomb in the garden of the Rector of the Grotto, in which place the Catacomb was destined to obtain its further extension.

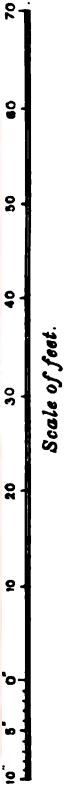
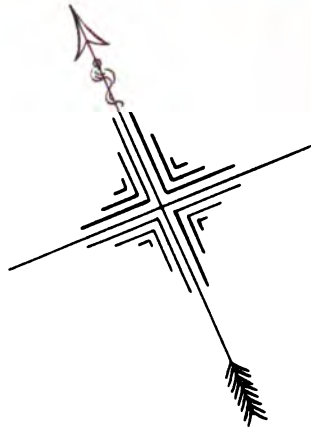
This area possesses LV.P. *in Fronte et XXX.P. in Agro*, with an original entrance from **P** under the level of Vicolo Catacombe.

A descent, on either side of **P**, leads to the galleries *x x* and to the crypt **S**.

In the sinister gallery *x*, is found the usual basin or lavatory *y* within a semi-circular *exædra*.

A passage no. 7 from this *exædra*, and another marked 8 from the adjacent crypt on the left, lead into chambers **Q** and **R** of the local Græco-Roman type, which had their former accesses through the shaft *z*, and were subsequently incorporated with this area.

Middle zone of the catacomb of St. Paul.



Zone mediana delle catacombe di S. Paolo

PLATE II.

87. The complicated middle and over-regions or storeys, illustrated in *plates nos. II and III*, present the features of an agglomeration of a great many *hypogæa* at different levels, but in juxtaposition; some sunk into the bowels of the ground, others lying immediately under the surface of the rock, with separate accesses, and linked together and with the main Catacomb at different times and under different circumstances.

The earliest agglomeration in the middle zone appears to have gathered round area VII, *plate II*.

With the exception of **B** and **D**, the whole place was choked with materials until the late explorations.

Shaft **A**, indicates the original entrance into area VII, overlying in part area X, *plate I*.

The accesses 1, 2, 3, lead to the separate hypogæa **B** and **C**, and to the gallery *a a*.

Access 4 from **B** leads into chamber **D**: an æroforum is marked **O**.

Communication with under-area X is effected by a stair-case *l*, leading upwards to gallery *a a*. On the side of this gallery is found an *exædra* **E** with the usual hollow *e*, and the accesses 5, 6, 7, 8 to the hypogæa **G**, **H**, **I**.

The *exædra* **E**, in the belief of the Rev. Gatt Said, was the *Cathecumeneum*.

K, marks a small family-vault with a separate overground entrance *a*, subsequently linked to **I** and to the next area, through the passage *k*.

Area VIII, overlying area XI, was the next in order of formation.

The primitive portion of area VIII belongs to the superficial zone of caverns overlying the Catacomb.

Two ramps of stairs, within a superficial shaft **L**, lead down to a landing-place, in which are found the accesses 9, 10 and 11 into the hypogæa **M**, **N**, **O**.

The usual *exædra* with its basin is seen at **O**.

N, is the latest of the above-mentioned chambers; for it does not possess arched-tombs but only *formæ* or graves sunk in the ground, as in the latest periods: no. 12 is a tomb in the side-wall.

P and **Q**, mark two other hypogæa of the same form and age, communicating with **N** by 14 and 15.

R, points out another hypogæum entered by 16 from **N**, and completes area VIII, which is linked to area VII by passage 17 into the little vault *k*.

The four chambers **Q**, **P**, **N**, **R**, evidently, form one group belonging to the later extension of the hypogæum, entered from **L**.

Area XIV exhibits the aspect of the burial-club of a corporation: it is the most superficial in this region.

Within a vestibule **A**, of which the foundations are still visible, were the regular ingresses into two crypts.

B, marks the entrance into a regular elliptical crypt, with the usual circular platforms and basins *b* and *c* complete.

On the sides of two inner galleries *a a* and *d d*, are several arched and table-tombs.

C, is the entrance into a lateral crypt, communicating with **B** through a narrow passage.

This area overlies a portion of area VII, and is linked to chamber **D** underneath by a narrow passage at the corner of **C**.

The place around this area and neighbourhood is full of Christian *hypogæa* of the same type, with no sort of communication or linking with the main place: they were, probably, either burial-clubs of different corporations or of Christian sodalities.



PLATE III.

88. Plate No. III represents the other end of the middle and superficial zone.

Area IX, overlying area XII *plate No. I*, lies principally in the superficial zone of the Catacomb.

It is mainly constructed of isolated caverns, each with its own immediate access from above the ground, sloping one into another, of which the deepest one is linked with the Catacomb underneath.

A, is a regular stair-case encased in the rock, leading to gallery *a a*. *Exædra* **B** is entered by no. 1; the hypogæa **C** and **D**, by nos. 2 and 3; the vestibule **E**, by no. 4.

F, points out a crypt to which entrance is obtained from the *exædra* through no. 5; **G**, a hypogæum entered through no. 6 from **C**; **H**, another crypt to which there is access from **C** through no. 7; the entrances to the lateral chambers **I**, **K**, **L**, are from the vestibule **E** through nos. 8, 9, and 10.

This is the most complete area of superficial hypogæa in area IX.

M, is another shaft directly entered from the surface of the rock by *o*. On three sides of this shaft there are stair-cases leading to the caves **N**, **N**, and to galleries *m*, *m*, and *n*, *n* of the hypogæa **O** and **P**.

An æroforum, in area XII underneath, is marked *e*.

P, is linked with **F** in the preceding group by no. 11.

Q, is another shaft leading to a third group of sepulchral caves **R**, linked with **P** by no. 12, **S** and **T**.

U and **V**, are shafts into a fourth group, formed of caves *b*, *c* and *d*. This group is linked to **R** by no. 13.

Cave *d* overlies crypt **A** in area I; *c*, communicates with area X underneath, through a breach in the ceiling of an arcosolium, behind the hemicycle sinister of crypt **A**.

Area no. XV had its original entrance, now choked with material, into chamber **A** from the present road of Hal-Baida, and after crossing the road spreads down under the field of "St. Agti," opposite to that of tad-Dlam.

Two small galleries *a a*, and *b b*, shoot out from two of the sides of the vestibule **A**, on the lines of which galleries are excavated small recesses with arched-tombs and locular graves, as shown in the illustration.

At the extremity of gallery *b b* is found a *cubiculum* **C**, enclosing two elaborate and isolated *arcosolia*, and a circular *exædra* **E** with the usual rock-basin.

In one of the inner corners of the gallery *a a*, lying under the road, a narrow passage *d* links this area with area no. IX in the main Catacomb under tad-Dlam.

A passage **D**, with some steps in the inner extremity of gallery *b b*, leads to the overlying area no. XVI under St. Agti's field.

Area no. XVI belongs to the superficial zone of the Catacomb, spreading under the *agellum* of St. Agti.

D, marks the linking of the preceding area with area no. XVI.

Its original access was from **E**, through a regular flight of steps cut in the rock.

On the three sides of the landing place *f*, are found the three descents into the galleries *e e* and *g g g*, and into the *exædra* **G**.

The illustration shows the order and distribution of the sepulchres.

This area XVI was certainly one of the latest excavations, and exhibits all the features of a burial college of some corporation, as the other excavations in the same field of St. Agti unquestionably were. On the slabs covering some of the sepulchres in these lesser cemeteries are found sculptured the hammer, the pincers, the axe, the pickaxe and other implements of carpentry and masonry, pointing out that they may have belonged to corporations of Fab. Lignariorum and Cœmentariorum.

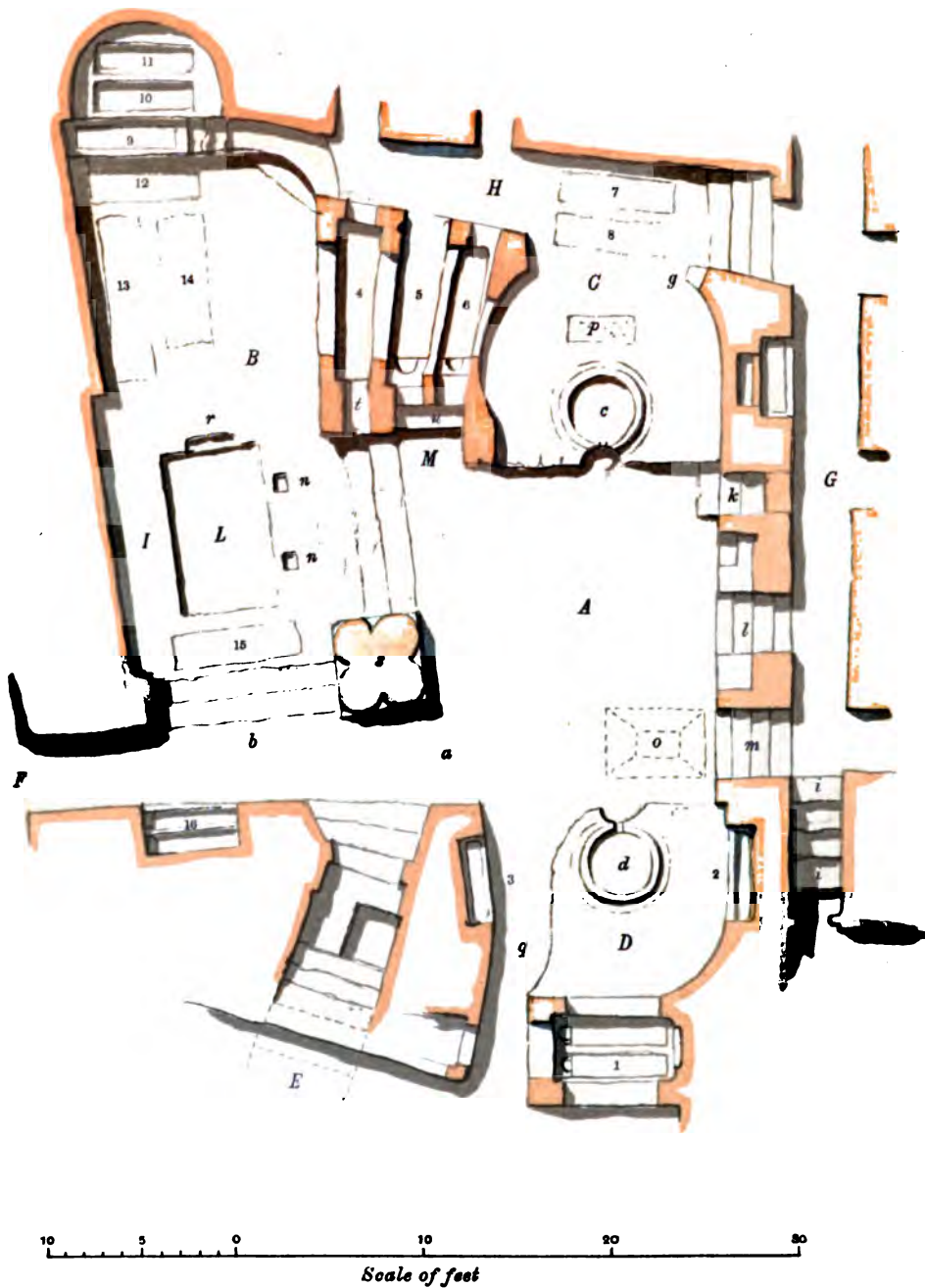


PLATE IV.

89. *Plate IV* is an ichnographical illustration of area I in *plate I*, covered by the two most notable crypts in the Catacomb of St. Paul.

The vastness and loftiness of these crypts when compared with the rest; their form and ornamentation; the groups of arched-tombs by which they are surrounded; the variety and number of their details; and their immediate proximity to the original main entrance into the Catacomb, tell that they were destined for some definite object, in connection with the interment of Christians in that Cemetery.

Everything betokens the antiquity of the two crypts **A** and **B**; they certainly were the nucleus, around which the whole Catacomb was developed, by the addition of subsequent areas (§§ 83).

The whole structure of these crypts hewn in the living rock is the hand-work of the *fossors* of the oldest crypts and chambers in this Cemetery; for their excavation would have greatly disturbed the order of the later *ambulacra* and sepulchral areas, if not very early devised and executed.

The crypts underlie some caverns in the upper ground *tad-Dlam*. To increase their internal height, and provide a greater breathing space for an assembled congregation, the floor was deepened below the level of the adjacent areas.

The whole place was decorated with pictures and other ornaments, the remains and defaced traces of which are still visible in several parts.

90. The two crypts have separate accesses *a* and *b*, from a common pathway at the lower end of entrance **E**, from *Hal-Bajada* road. **F**, marks the later entrance from *Vicolo Catacombe*.

The extreme length of crypt **A** is 40 ft., its breadth nearly 16 ft., its height 10 ft.: it may be regarded as a longitudinal nave.

At the two ends of **A** there are two lateral and opposite *exædra* or apses **C** and **D**, the floor of which is a platform raised about 2 ft. above the level of the middle portion of the nave, the extent of which limited by these platforms is 18 ft. by 16 ft.

In the middle of each of these semi-circular platforms is a circular hollow *c* and *d* in the rock, 4 ft. 4 in. diameter, plastered and girded by a raised edge. At the point of contact with the straight line bounding each platform superiorly, this edge is provided with an orifice or outlet, communicating with a semi-cylindrical cavity along the whole height of the platform, destined for the location of a jar-shaped vessel to receive the flow of water from the rock-basin above.

An *æroforum* for light and ventilation is indicated by *o*.

In the platform **C**, besides the circular hollow described, there is sunk a rectangular pit *p*, covered with a perforated slab resembling the lid of a gully.

In the wall enclosing the sinistral apse **D**, is excavated an arched-tomb no. 1, and two locular graves nos. 2 and 3.

These two opposite apses were originally walled up behind; in fact, the sinister *exædra* still retains its original apsidal form, notwithstanding the interference of an arched-tomb no. 1, and of the lateral passage *q* to inner areas; and the trend of the original wall, closing the dextral *exædra*, is still discernible in the lower portion of that wall, close by the steps *g* leading to the gallery **G**.

A flight of deep steps *i i i* leads down from **G** to area XII.

The corridor **H**, with two passages to inner areas, was constructed posteriorly to crypt **A**, and the rude work indicates that it was undertaken at a time when the *fossors* were not at liberty to open passage-ways elsewhere.

On the side of gallery **H**, towards the crypt **A**, are observable three particular arched-tombs, nos. 4, 5, 6, very probably fitted for sarcophagi.

On the ground of the same gallery, there are two graves nos. 7 and 8 of the later style of *formæ*.

The communication of crypt **A** with the cemetery is through three regular rectangular apertures *k, l, m*, into the gallery **G**, from the middle portion of the crypt.

These apertures are fitted to receive woden frames for doors to close the crypt ; the holes for the vertical lateral posts at the corners of the lintels and threshold are still visible. On the sides of aperture *m*, there are still the holes for a door-latch and bolt.

By the sides of the steps leading to the above-mentioned entrances there are rock-seats.

91. The extreme length of the crypt **B** is almost 30 ft., its width about 12 ft., its height 12 ft. 6 in.; its level is lower by three steps than that of the adjacent crypt : it may represent a cross-nave.

Opposite the entrance to the crypt **B**, there is an arched-tomb no. 16

The inner extremity of crypt **B** ends in an apse, within which is situated an altar-tomb no. 9, and two lofty loculi nos. 10 and 11. On the left side of this apse, until the time of comm. Abela, a small circular hollow, 10 in. diameter, was observable, bearing the monogram of Christ within a laurel-wreath *en relief*. *

This is the only monogram, that existed in the place.

Comm. Abela †, further, states that in his days in the Cathedral was preserved a small old marble ark or chest, containing relics, bearing on the lid a similar monogram supported apparently by two angels. Neither the name of the martyr, whose relics are in that chest, nor the circumstances connected with its former rest and subsequent translation to that Church, are recorded: very likely, its original resting place was the spot mentioned by Abela.

That marble chest with its contents, as we are informed by a ms. note of canon D. Ignazio V. Costanzo to the Malta Illustrata of comm. Abela, was afterwards placed under the principal altar of the Church.

On the side dexter of crypt **B**, in front of its wide communication with crypt **A**, an altar-piece **I** is hollowed in the thickness of the wall, in the form of a large square niche, surmounted by an arch. Faint traces of sacred pictures are there still visible.

In the middle of the floor and in front of the niche **I**, is a rectangular cavity **L**.

To one of the sides of this cavity is joined a small pit *r*; and on the longer side, towards the crypt **A**, were erected two small pillars *n n*, of which the basements and fragments were lately found.

Very likely, these two pillars supported a lattice-work screen all around the spot.

The ceiling of this portion of the crypt **B** is higher than the rest ; it was and still is in part ornamented with a cornice all round.

There is some difficulty in determining the object of this place, so extensively decorated and shewing the great care taken of.

The cavity **L**, may have served to receive the basement of the *Confessio* or sepulchre of a martyr within a wooden ark or altar, on which the Holy Sacrifice may have been celebrated. The small pit *r* by the side of *cornu Epistolæ*, in that case, was used for the reception of water after the ablution of the hands of the sacrificing priest and of the other priests assisting him, as we are informed by St: Cyril of Jerusalem, ‡ that the ablution of hands of all the assisting priests took place after the Offertory.

The forms or graves nos. 12, 13, 14, 15, dug in the ground of this crypt, belong to a later date.

The communication between the crypts **A** and **B** is through a wide lofty arched aperture, supported by four joined pillars *s*, fluted from one third upwards, on the left side; and two joined pillars *t*, on the other side.

On the right of this passage stands a small vaulted recess **M**, sided by pillars, and containing a noticeable arrangement.

In the middle of this recess there is a small table-tomb *u*, which was mistaken for a receptacle of relics by the Rev. Gatt Said, and below it an infant's grave sunk in the ground.

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, Not. IV, §§ IX.

† Ibid, Lib. I, Not. IV, §§ X.

‡ "Vidisti Diaconum aquam lavandis manibus porrigentem Sacerdoti, et illis qui circum Altare Dei stabant, Presbyteris." Initio Catechesis quintæ mystag.

Above the table-tomb *u*, there are three small windows of the three arched-tombs nos. 4, 5 and 6 grouped together, resembling the small windows of the shrines of martyrs under or above the *mensa* of present altars.

Comm. Abela had seen iron hooks for suspending lamps, within these three sepulchres: those hooks are no longer seen, but the whole arrangement bears strong evidence that those, whose remains were preserved therein, were personages of note and veneration.

The rite, conformably to which those corpses were laid down, with their heads towards the altar-tomb in that recess, tells that they were Churchmen.

No crosses of dedication, like those in the crypts of St. Agatha and of *L'Abbatia tad-Deyr*, are engraved on the walls of the two crypts described, that rite having been introduced later than the excavation of the place.

92. In giving the interpretation of these crypts and of their details, the Rev. Gatt Said suggested that the two crypts formed the cemeterial *Basilica*, in which the native Christian congregation with its bishop and presbyters assembled for the celebration of the holy mysteries, and for the recitation of prayers in common.

The crypt **B**, in his opinion, was the nave of the men's division, the men being introduced by the *ostiarrii*, a lower order of clerics. The crypt **A** was the nave of the division for women shown in by the deaconesses, conformably to the ancient discipline of the Church. These two divisions were separated by *transenna* or wooden lattice-work screens.

As no fixed altar and no fixed episcopal chair and seats for the officiating clergy are to be seen anywhere in these crypts, the Rev. Gatt Said suggested that a portable wooden altar to be located within the recess **M**, or in the terminal apse in crypt **B**, and portable chair and benches may have been used, as Father Marchi * observed was the case in some of the Roman Catacombs.

The Rev Gatt Said did not take any notice of the niche **I** in the crypt **B**, in front of the passage between the two crypts **A** and **B**, nor of the details in it.

In that pious gentleman's belief, the two large circular hollows in the platforms **C** and **D**, within the lateral *exedrae* of the crypt **A**, covered with white linen during the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, were used for the *collectae* or reception of the offerings of the congregation, towards the maintenance of the clergy, as prescribed in the *Ordo Romanus II.* †

Dr. Leith Adams, ‡ relying on vulgar native hearsay, deemed those hollows corn-grinding vats, made use of by the Christian refugees in the Arabs' time. He, further, asserted, of course not on the result of personal inspection, that the grinding stone was still to be seen in some of our Catacombs, an assertion which is altogether erroneous. He failed to observe that those hollows are plastered, and that, owing to the friable nature of the rock, they are quite unfit for the object mentioned by Dr. Adams.

The belief of the natives' asylum in those subterranean places, during the Arabs' domination, is simply a story similar to that told of the Roman Catacombs under the Gothic domination and the invasions of the Longobards.

93. The architectural form and internal arrangement of the crypts just described are entirely different from those of the Basilica discovered by Father Marchi in the *Cemeterium Ostrianum*, which, following Bosio, he mistook for that of St. Agnes; and from the Basilica of the Cemetery of St. Generosa, and other places in Rome.

The spaciousness of the two crypts **A** and **B** is nearly equal to that of the chancel and of the men's and womens' divisions taken together in the Ostrian Basilica; they could, therefore, have afforded room for a congregation of over one hundred Christians, which was in the beginning considered a great assembly, as smaller congregations met in minor crypts.

Though our two crypts do not present a fixed place of chancel for choral service, nor a fixed room for the Episcopal chair, they certainly served the purpose of a Cemeterial Basilica or Oratory for occasional congregations.

The separation of the two crypts answered that of the two sexes, in their assembling together for prayers in common.

* Monumenti delle Arti Cristiane primitive nella Metropoli del Architettura.

† Memoria V, pag. 97.

‡ Valley of the Nile and Malta.

Portable wooden altars, on which Masses were celebrated on the anniversaries of the Christians buried in that cemetery, may have been located in recess **M**, or in the terminal apse of crypt **B**. Fathers Marchi and Martene * quote many examples of such wooden portable altars in the form of chests, containing martyrs' relics, isolated within chancels, and similarly located within apses in the Roman Catacombs.

The site, however, of a permanent altar and chancel appears to have been the one in front of the niche **I**, and of the aperture communicating the two crypts **A** and **B**.

The two large circular hollows *c* and *d* in the lateral platforms of crypt **A**, so characteristic of all our Christian cemeteries, were simply lavatories for washing and anointing corpses conformably to the ancient rites of the Church, previous to their being wrapped in a linen winding-sheet by the *fossors*, and carried away for interment. This is clearly pointed out by the orifice in the edge of those basins to allow the water, which had been used, to flow into the receptacles placed within the semi-cylindrical cavities underneath. The water thus collected was then poured out into the pit *p*, and immediately absorbed by the porous rock.

Our Antonio Bosio in his *Roma Sotterranea* states, that he observed several of these accessories for the washing of the corpses of the dead before interment, conformably to the ancient ritual of the Church, and in support of his statement he quotes the authorities of St. John Chrysostome, Omelia 84 in Job, and of St. Gregory the Great, Lib. Sacrament. Tom. V.

The primary and appropriate object, then, of the crypts described seems to have been that of a funereal chapel in the vestibule of the cemetery.

In that chapel the deceased was laid down by the *sandapilarii* or *lecticarii*, after its removal from the place of death on a *birota*, a two-wheeled vehicle, or on a *lectica*, a coffin-bed.

After the recitation of the liturgical prayers and the performance of the prescribed burial rites, the deceased was conveyed to the *loculus* or place of rest.

The immediate proximity of this chamber to the original entrance from Hal-Bajada road is a further indication that it was the first place in the cemetery, where the deceased were laid down before being carried to the place of final deposition.

94. As the laws of the Church affected all Christian burials alike, the early Catacombs were generally devised and modelled conformably to one type, that prescribed by the Roman Church.

Again, as the need of concealment befell all Christian Communities in Rome, as well as in the colonies and provinces of the Empire during the same Imperial persecutions, our Catacombs had to bear the same changes, more or less, to which those of Rome were then subjected.

Still, independently of this essential uniformity to the universally recognised pattern, each Catacomb had its own architect; and each exhibits its own characteristics depending upon a variety of local circumstances.

The excavation of the galleries, and the form and distribution of tombs, give an internal appearance to the Catacomb of St. Paul and to all our other Cemeteries somewhat different from that of the Roman ones.

The Roman Catacombs present a net-work of longitudinal galleries hewn out through massive blocks of *tufa*, crossed by transverse corridors and passages at distant intervals, in order to retain the massive solidity of the walls.

The sides of these galleries and corridors are pierced by horizontal rows of berth-like graves or *loculi*, one below another, interrupted now and then by crypts or family vaults, and by *table* and *arched-tombs*.

These graves and crypts are never hollowed to a great depth inside the thickness of the *tufa* walls; their length, that of a man, is along the sides of the galleries to receive one single corpse.

* Tan. I, lib. I, c. 3.

The epitaphs, speaking of sepulchres *bisome*, *trisome*, and *quadrisome* in Rome, destined for the interment of two or more corpses, are generally presumed to refer to graves dug out in the open or under porticos, sufficiently deep to receive as many bodies, separated by shelves one above another, and not to the *loculi* in the Catacombs.

The *piani* or storeys, preserving constantly a horizontal level, are sunk to a great depth one below the other, and thus separated by a considerable thickness of sides and ground.

This compactness gives them a solid, heavy, and stern internal appearance.

The Roman *fossors* were obliged, by the nature of the rock, not to reduce the thickness of the walls and grounds of the adjacent galleries and of the superincumbent *piani*, in order that the solidity of the excavation in the soft granular tufa might not be imperilled.

Moreover, the Roman *fossors* had very often to resort to masonry work, and to the construction of solid brick walls and arches to support the vaults of the galleries.

The primitive internal portion of the Catacomb of St. Paul is a regular net-work of galleries, distributed in adjacent areas, but not overlying one another, as in a regular building and as understood by comm. Abela and the Rev. Gatt Said. Additional areas at different levels were, of course, subsequently made at intervals, as the wants of the Christian Community increased; but the construction of more than one *piano* or flat does not seem to have been originally contemplated.

The galleries are not bounded by walls, but are sided both ways by rows of completely isolated arched-tombs of a peculiar form, the locular graves being comparatively very few.

These arched-sepulchres are in the shape of a *cubile*, i.e. bed-like, as already noted, consisting of a platform of the height and length of a bed, and as wide as to be able to receive two or three or more bodies *biscandentes* or *terscandentes*, that is to say side by side.

These platforms surmounted by an arch on each of their four sides, springing from the corners, opening into the galleries, and covered by the flat ceiling of the Catacomb, form one piece and work with the whole excavation.

The hollows in the platforms for the reception of the bodies, separated by thin rock-sides, resemble those of the Phœnician tomb-caves in Malta, in their wider extremities bearing a small rock-cushion with a semi-lunar cavity to receive the head.

In only a few instances of the more elaborate sepulchres did the interment take place in a small cell, excavated within the platform, like those stated by Sig. Armellini * observable in the most ancient areas of the Catacombs of Domitilla and of St. Agnes.

Some of the sepulchres in St. Paul's are ornamented with *acroteria* and other decorations; others had a mosaic and marble coating.

The whole work is hewn out in one piece in the living rock, without any masonry.

The Maltese *fossors*, well acquainted with the nature of the rock of the place, reckoning on its consistency under ground, paid little heed to the thickness of the walls; and by the complete isolation of the sepulchres were able to give a light and slender internal appearance to the whole construction.

95. The number of tombs, still in a more or less good state of preservation in the Catacomb of St. Paul, is estimated over 900.

This number does not include the tombs destroyed, nor those in the areas appropriated by private owners, which are estimated at about 500 or more, thus making a total of say about 1400.

No large *polyandria* or pits for the interment of common people were met with.

This may, apparently, tell the existence of a small native Christian Community, during the first two centuries of the Christian Era.

The native Christian Community could not, certainly, have been very numerous in the beginning, as heathenism, certainly, lingered in the islands of Malta up to the 3rd century †; but there are two remarks to be offered on this point.

* Le Catacombe Romane, parte I, cap. VII.

† Frammento critico della storia Greco-Romana delle isole di Malta.

The first is, that within the same district there are five other suburban Catacombs and a great number of lesser Christian cemeteries having the features of burial Colleges.

The existence of these Catacombs and of so many lesser cemeteries in the suburban district, belonging nearly to the same epoch, is an evidence of the increased urban Christian Community, during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The second remark is, that the detailed description of the Catacomb of St. Paul clearly indicates that it was the special burial place of the distinguished classes of the urban population.

This may be inferred from the absence of a *polyandrum* or pit for the burial of common people, from the comparatively few locular graves it contains, and from the presence of a great many *arcosolia*.

It is not without good foundation to premise, that like St. Callixtus, the Catacomb of St. Paul became the property of the local Church as a corporate body, towards the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century, in which the Bishops and other distinguished personages were interred; and that attached to the principal *Titulus* or parish Church, it was administered by the Archdeacon of the Diocess (§ 48).

This is at once pointed out by the ample *schola* formed of the crypts **A** and **B**, intended for the gathering of the brethren, and by the venerable shrines grouped around it.

96. It has been observed that the commencement of this excavation was within a large area in the farm *tad-Dlam*, the property of some Christian converts, as early as the introduction of Christianity in Malta.

To what conspicuous convert may that primitive area originally have belonged ?

Deprived as we are of all historical and traditional records relating to this query, a conjectural answer, such as may be inferred from circumstances concomitant with the introduction of Christianity into the island, may only be expected.

Our earliest Christian epitaphs record the sepulchre of the Lady *Ælia Flavia*, that of *Maritimus*, of *Idomenus* and *Valeria*, those of certain *Columba*, of *Flavius Titus* and of *Q. Lutatius Longinus* and *Julia* his wife. These individuals certainly belonged to families of note, as may be gleaned from the respective epitaphs; but with the exception of that of the Lady *Ælia Flavia*, none of the others bear a date.

The epitaph of Lady *Ælia Flavia* indicates a Consular date referring to A.D. 164, a date near enough to the commencement of the Catacomb, but does not afford any ground to infer that its original area was hers or her's family.

The Acts of the Apostles* state that the Chief Man of Malta, *Protos insulæ Melita*, who received St. Paul and his companions of the ship-wreck and treated them most kindly all the while in A.D. 56, was a certain *Publius*. †

This *Publius* was the first to be benefitted by the visit of the Apostle, who miraculously healed *Publius*' father of a long fever and flux of blood, by the simple imposition of the hands of the Apostle and his prayer.

There is no doubt that this Chief Man and his family were the earliest converts to Christianity in the island.

Ancient Ecclesiastical records and tradition bear undoubted testimony, that the Primate *Publius* was ordained Bishop of Malta by St. Paul himself. ‡

It is expressly stated in the same Acts, that that Chief Man possessed considerable farms near the place, where the ship-wreck happened; and local tradition records that besides his rural property he held a palace in the capital, in which he assembled the neophyte native congregation; and that that palace stood on the site now occupied by the Cathedral Church.

It is also traditionally recorded, that that *Publius*' landed property formed the early patrimony of the Church of Malta, and that despoiled of that property by the Arabs in 870, it was restored to her by Count Roger, after the Norman conquest in the year 1090.

* C. XXVIII.

† Monografia critica della data del naufragio di S. Paolo in Malta.

‡ Monografia critica di S. Publio, Proto-Vescovo di Malta.

All these circumstances may be considered good ground, upon which to conjecture that one of the principal pastoral cares of the Bishop Publius had been to secure the original plot of ground in tad-Dlam, for the proper interment of his little Christian flock thus to prevent their cremation, as he had provided a suitable place for the Christian congregation in his own palace.

IV
MONOGRAPH
OF THE
CEMETERY "L'ABBATIA TAD-DEYR."

IV.
MONOGRAPH
OF THE
CEMETERY *L'ABBATIA TAD-DEYR*.

97. At about one third of a mile from the ancient capital, to the left hand side of the road *Bir-ir-Riehbu*, is the entrance to a field named *l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr*, the property of the noble family Testaferrata Bonici.

The road runs westward below and by the side of the hill, upon which the ancient Græco-Roman capital of the island extended; and the field is one of the terraces lying on the western side of the hill, looking towards the valley of *Ghar-Exem*.

At the internal side of that terrace, the crest of the hill rises and within that crest of the hill is situated the ancient Christian Cemetery, known by the Italo-Arabic name of *Abbatia-tad-Deyr*.

The appearance of the place is that of a vast natural cavern, reduced to its actual regular form by the ancient Christians of the island.

Exteriorly, on both sides of the entrance to the cavern, in the same mass of rock, are several pagan tomb-caves and Christian hypogea.

The previous existence of these tomb-caves indicates that the site had been originally chosen by the native pagans as a place of sepulture, and explains the origin and development of the Christian Cemetery and the hypogea posteriorly constructed through some of these tombs, as in the case of *tal-Liebru*, *plates XVIII, XIX*.

The very regular and elegant excavation of the Cemetery, the frescos, paintings and other ornamentation still preserved, clearly demonstrate the great esteem in which that monument was held by our forefathers.

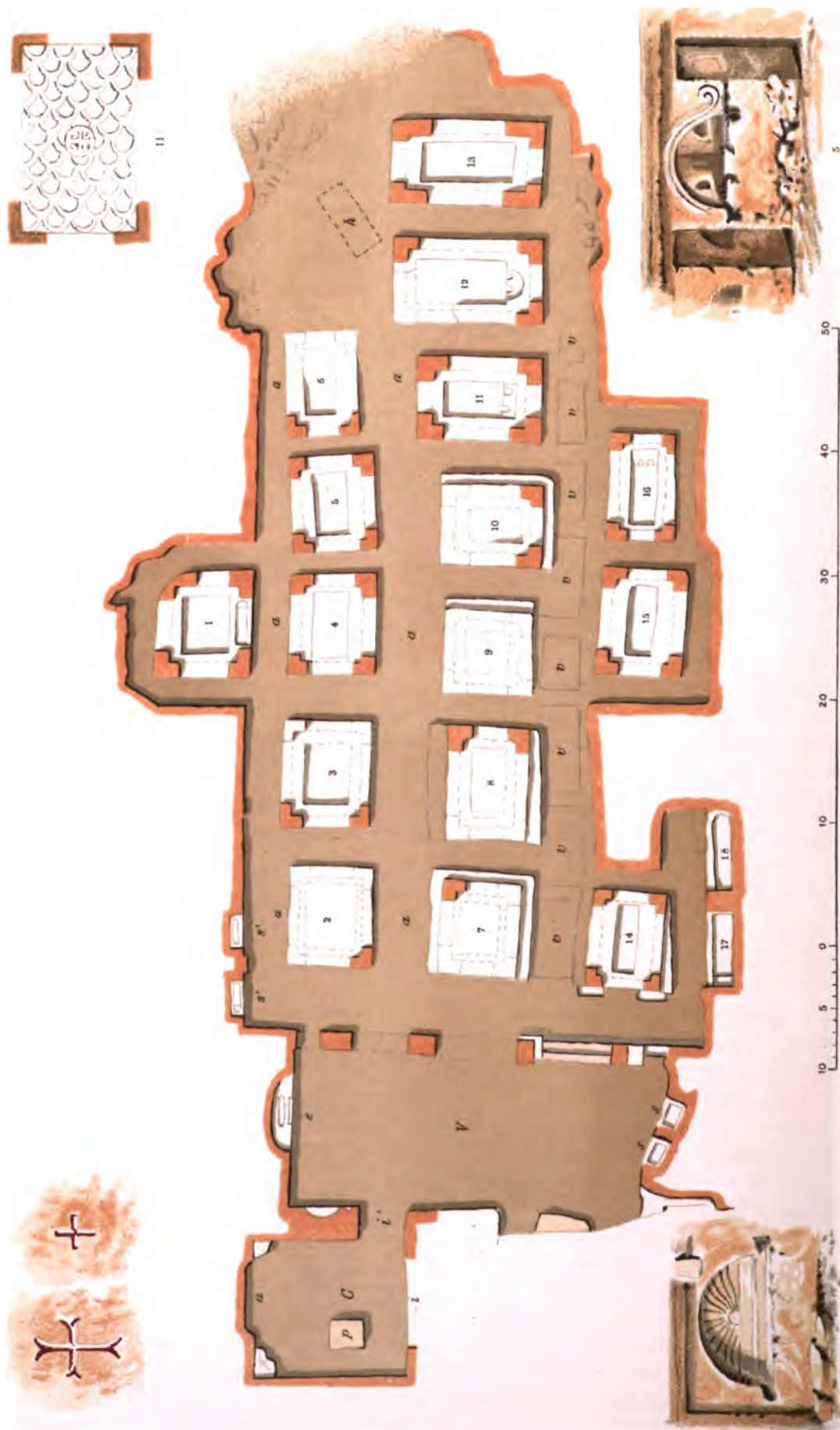
That once holy and venerable place, now fallen into a deplorable condition, is at present reduced to an ignoble cowshed and even worse, to the great shame of those, who ought to have cared for its preservation.

The Cemetery *tad-Deyr* is united by means of a spacious and ornamented vestibule to a crypt, near at hand, like the *Cellæ* or *Memoriæ* near and over the above-ground ancient Christian Cemeteries in Rome.

The excavation of this crypt is the enlargement of an original tomb-cave, existing in the projection of the hill, on the right side of the entrance to the vestibule, and reduced to its present rectangular form and dimensions to serve the performance of the funereal rites, for which it was intended.

*Schnography of the cemetery 'l'Abbatia tad-Dejr'
Rabat, Malta.*

pl. No. I.



*Sonografia del cimitero 'l'Abbatia tad-Dejr',
Rabat, Malta.*

PLATE I.

98. *Plate I*, represents a correct ichnography of the whole monument with its vestibule and *Cella*, excavated entirely in the bowels of the hill.

The vestibule **V**, stretching from east west, having one ingress, is 30 ft. long and 13 ft. wide.


The exterior tomb-caves to the left side, with a long frontage, were destroyed to give way to the formation of this vestibule.

From the vestibule, resembling internally a portico, five symmetrical passages lead to the adjacent cemetery, of which passages the middle one is the widest, and the two extreme lateral ones are the narrowest.

In the interior of the vestibule, in the middle of the right side wall, which looks towards the east, there is an apse *e*.

On the right of this apse there is a rude painting of the Eternal Father, holding a banner, the Roman letters **S. C. R.** and others almost illegible, written in vermilion.

Towards the middle, there are traces of another figure now all but obliterated.

On the right lateral pilaster of this apse is depicted St. John the Evangelist in episcopal robes, the best preserved of all the frescoes, which adorned the vestibule. 

On the left side of the pilaster, which separates the first two entrances to the cemetery, is a fresco representing the Archangel Michael: this fresco is the one which has suffered most from the injurious effects of humidity.

Beneath the painting of the Eternal Father, towards the middle of the apse is observed a trough with an outlet at the bottom, excavated in the rock.

In the opinion of comm. Abela, several holes in the wall under the above said painting were used to sustain the supports of a wooden fixed altar, which is very probable.

The trough, probably, served to hold the water with which the dead were washed before interment, as the usual circular rock-basin observable in nearly all our early Christian Cemeteries is there wanting.

Eight crosses of dedication, alternately Latin and Greek, are cut on the pillars of the vestibule, and coloured vermilion.

On the left side, *s, s* are two small sepulchres *a mensa*.

The vestibule undoubtedly served for the religious meetings of a Christian congregation on the occasions of funerals, on the days of the Commemoration of the holy defunct brethren, and on the anniversaries of those laid therein. "Great misfortune of our times, exclaimed comm. Abela *, that these and similar venerable monuments, which have been the decoration and ornament of the most ancient cities, in which the ineffable sacrifice of Mass was offered so many times, are not kept with the care and reverence deserved for the honour of Divine Worship!"

99. The Cemetery, beyond the vestibule, is of one storey, rectangular in form.

The extent of the area it occupies is 95 ft. in length, from the exterior side of the vestibule, and over 26 ft. in breadth; but the natural cavern penetrates into the inner bowels of the hill for a much more considerable length, without showing traces of the work of man.

Several parallel corridors divide the Cemetery throughout its length, crossed by lateral passages, and sided by arched-tombs.

Towards the middle of its two greater sides are two *cubicula*, with the arched-tombs nos. 1 and 15, almost symmetrical.

There is another *cubiculum*, with the sepulchres nos. 17 and 18, at the extremity of the left side towards the vestibule.

The arched sepulchres, numbering from 1 to 18, are cut entirely out of the living rock: with the exception of nos. 17 and 18, they are isolated on the four sides, and covered above by the flat roof of the cavern, which is supported by the arches springing forth from the four lateral pilasters of each sepulchre.

* Malta Illustrata, lib. I, not. IV, § XXIII.

On the surface of the platforms and under the place destined for the *mensa* or tomb-table, are hollowed the usual coffin-shaped receptacles to receive the corpses of the dead, each separately.

Nos. 5, 11 and 18, more elaborate than the others, present a peculiar ornamentation, indicating that they belonged to some notable personages.

An archivault decorates the exterior arches of no. 5, formed of a wide moulding terminating in volutes.

The vault of no. 11 is adorned with perforated scale ornaments, and bears the monogram of Christ with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, in the middle.

The vault of no. 18 is engraved like a scallop-shell.

The lines of these sepulchres trace the *ambulacra a a a*, and their isolation marks the other croosways and passages illustrated in the ichnography of the place.

Several small pits marked *v, v, v*, are sunk under the ground-floor of the left gallery, like those of which the use was re-commenced in the 5th century in *extra-mural* burial places, and afterwards for inhumation inside the Churches.

The very few *locular* tombs are those marked *s, s*.

Here and there, in the lateral walls and in the pilasters of the sepulchres, numerous small niches are found for the *Mnarah* or lamps, which were lit on commemoration days of the defuncts.

Towards the internal extreme end of the Cemetery, where the want of light and ventilation was more felt, a *cataracta* or sky light *h* opens directly upon the surface of the overstanding hill.

No epitaphs, no epigraphs, no medals, no other records were recovered from the place, exposed as it was to easy depredations.

100. **C** is the *Cella* or crypt of the Cemetery.

When this chapel was enlarged, need was felt to support its thin flat roof by means of a thick pillar *p*, cut entirely out of the solid rock in the middle of the crypt.

The outside entrance *i* seems to have been the original entrance.

The present internal communication *i'* with the vestibule appears to have been made subsequently to 1647, as it is not indicated in the ground plan drawn by the comm. Abela, and the same writer positively tells us that the entrance to the crypt was from without.*

The crypt has the form and the ordinary dimensions of a cemeterial chamber, or *cubiculum*.

A small window projecting outwards, on the right side near the angle with the wall facing the entrance, has served to illuminate the interior of the crypt.

An apse *a* is hollowed in this same wall, in which, at the time of Abela, an isolated altar stood, cut out of the rock itself.

Two perforations *b b*, (*plate II*), in the vaulted roof near the top of the apse, indicate the holes from which two lamps were suspended, one on each side of the altar.

On the right side wall is engraved a Greek cross, with its four extremities bifurcated.

On the left side wall is a Latin cross, with a ship beneath and a palm to the side.

These crosses indicate the dedication of the crypt.

Of the low seats of rock, recorded by Abela, which ran along the sides of the crypt, only two remain at the angles of the walls near the apse.

The interior of the crypt was carefully and entirely covered with plaster, preserving still the traces of some frescoes, which reveal the great religious care that had been taken of the place.

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, Not. II, §§ XXII.

Mural frescoes in the "L'Abbatia tad-Deyr," Malta.

pl. No. II.



PLATE II.

101. *Plate II*, shows the orthography of the apse of the *Cell*.

On the cavity of the apse is a painting, after the antique, of the Crucifixion and the Annunciation.

In the centre of this picture is the Crucified Redeemer; at the foot of the cross to the right, Our Lady; and to the left, St. John the Evangelist.

On the right arm of the cross, one can still read the Latin word **VIKTOR**, and on the left arm, **MORTIS**.

On the upper portion of the vertical part of the cross, there seem to be the Latin letters **R** and **X**, among other letters.

Near the head of Our Lady, are the letters **MAT**.

Near that of St. John, are the letters **OH**; but at the time of Abela there was read **IOH**, and though the letter **I** is no longer visible the space which it occupied still is observable.

To the right of Our Lady is a representation of the Angel Gabriel, with the Latin words **ANGELVS GABRIEL**.

To the left of St. John, there is again the image of Our Lady with the letters **DOM**; but Abela in 1647 read **M. DOMINI**; the place of the missing letters is at present smoothed down.

Two oval banners in the form of pendants, with a shield on each, are painted on one of the broad sides of the pillar, which upholds the roof.

On the one to the left is a quartered shield, bearing the pales of Aragon in a field *d'or*, in the right chief quarter; and the eagle in a field *d'argent* to the left. It is the shield of the Royal Family of Aragon, as King James of Sicily had it quartered towards the end of the 13th century.

On the shield to the left is simply a white cross in a vermilion field, the blazonry of the Knights of the Order of St. John.

Comm. Abela *, believing that these two shields were painted at the time of King James, more than two centuries before the coming of the Order of St. John to Malta, piously thought either that the shield of that Order had at first represented the ensign of the Universal Church, or that some servant of God, foreseeing the coming of the Order of St. John, had caused the *insignia* to be painted there at the time!

Monsignor P. Duzzina, in his Apostolic visit of 1575, relates that this crypt, although furnished with an altar, was without a door and the necessary ornaments, and that it was not benefited; on this account, he ordered that Masses were not to be celebrated in it before it was provided with, at least, a door.

* *Malta Illustrata*, lib. I, not. IV, §§ XXII.



fig. 1.



fig. 2.



fig. 3.



PLATE III.

102. The sciagraphy of the side dexter, *fig. 1*, and of the side sinister, *fig. 2*, are illustrated in *plate III*.

By its internal regular and elegant appearance, the l'Abbatia tad-Deyr is essentially different from our earlier Christian Cemeteries.

Our primitive Cemeteries, the result of several additional areas, at different levels in the body of the rock; of numerous intricate, low, narrow and winding *ambulacra*, crossed by frequent *cunicula* and blind passages, provided with *locular* as well as with arched-tombs, are thoroughly *hidden* under ground.

L'Abbatia-tad-Deyr, consisting only of one floor in the same level, of a few *ambulacra*, moderately wide, straight and high, with a regular vestibule and a chapel, is not *recondite* and strictly subterranean, as it lies above the neighbouring lands and road, exposed entirely to view.

Like the over-ground Cemeteries of St. Xistus, of St. Soteris and others in Rome, l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr and other Cemeteries in the open air in Malta, must have had their commencement after the peace of the Church, towards the end of the 4th and during the 5th centuries.

A very elegant Cemetery, similar to that of St. Xistus, was met with in 1861 on the *Hotba-tal-Gisuiti*, near a small Christian necropolis of an early date. The *Cella* or chapel of the place had been destroyed long before the discovery, but the ground around was found thickly and regularly occupied by tombs in the open air and in *juxta position*.

103. The epoch of the commencement and duration of the use of l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr and other like monuments may be only ascertained by means of comparison with the Roman monuments of the same class, the chronology of which was determined by comm. De Rossi, the highest authority on the matter.

By this illustrious writer, it has been found that the use of suburban *above-ground* Cemeteries began towards the middle of the 4th century, about the time of the reigns of the sons of Constantine.

After the year 340 of the Christian Era, burying in the Catacombs began to be less frequent, though under the pontificate of Pope Liberius, 352-366, it still remained in use: from the great number of *tituli* and epitaphs found, it is calculated that one out of every three interments was carried out in over-ground cemeteries during that epoch.

By the Gothic invasion of Alaric, in the year 410, St. Jerome* says: "The most brilliant light of the world was extinguished, the Roman Empire lost its head; and in the down-fall of one city the whole world perished."

The Roman Catacombs having, in consequence, ceased to be places of sepulture at the beginning of the 5th century, except by special privilege for some bishop and a few eminent personages, the suburban above-ground cemeteries with a chapel, over or on the surroundings of the Catacombs, remained only in use.

Of this the evidences are very numerous.

In fact, from the year 426 no further mention is found of the *fossors*, who formed the clerical order of the excavators of the *loculi* and of the *cubicula* in the subterranean Cemeteries.

In the liturgical books of the 5th century are found the prayers for the blessing of tombs in the open air, without the least allusion to entombments in the Catacombs.

The stamps of the brickworkers, as also the coins, medals and glasses of the previous centuries are not met with in the Cemeteries of the 5th and 6th centuries.

There are thousands of epitaphs, gathered by De Rossi from the above-ground cemeteries existing upon the *areas* of the Calixtian necropolis, of St. Lawrence, of St. Paul, on the Esquiline and elsewhere, which demonstrate beyond doubt the epoch and the respective duration of the use of the Christian above-ground Cemeteries.

* Proleg. in Lib. I, Ezech V, 16.

The two orders of epitaphs extant, from the under and above-ground Cemeteries, are very different as to style, family nomenclature, symbols, and as to the method of reckoning dates.

The most ancient epitaphs, those of the first centuries, are laconic; they contain simple and primitive Christian acclamations like "Deposited in peace", "Live in the Lord", etc.

Their only ornamentations are the primitive symbols, the anchor, the fish, or the cross in some mysterious form, generally at the end and never in a conspicuous place.

The individuals are mostly distinguished by two or three names, among which is the name of the Roman *gens*, to which the deceased belonged.

The days of the month are computed by Kalends, Nones, and Ides, and with very seldom Consular date, up to the time of Constantine.

All the epitaphs of this order make it certain that the Catacombs, although excavated and enlarged at different periods, belong to the same epoch—the 2nd and the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th centuries of the Church.

The epitaphs from the middle of the 4th century onward are historical and verbose.

The essentially Christian names are rarely accompanied with the *gens* name, with the exception of those very few families in which the *nomen gentile* was up to then preserved.

The primitive Christian acclamations are substituted by the praises of the deceased, the dates of his birth and of his death, his rank, and the conditions of the purchase of the tomb.

The monogram of Christ, in one of its varied forms, is always in a conspicuous place, generally at the top.

The days of the month, in which the deaths took place, are mostly computed in numerical succession, and with the Consular dates.

The epitaphs of this order show that the use of the above-ground Cemeteries was rendered common from the year 358 to the year 568, i.e. for two entire centuries.

The above-ground Cemeteries began to be disused towards the middle of the 6th century, and were superseded by *intra*-mural burying in Churches.

By reason of these records, an epoch much anterior to the beginning of the 5th century, and a duration much beyond the end of the 6th century cannot be assigned to l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr.

The total absence of emblazoned emblems, observable in the *tal-Liebru* sepulchres, *plates XVIII, XIX*, and of family coats of arms, as in the case of the arches of our mediæval cemetery of St. Paul *extra mœnia*, indicate that no use was made of this Cemetery in the middle ages.

During the two hundred years of the Arabs' domination, 870-1090, the place was naturally sacked and plundered, and the translation of the relics of the faithful entombed there probably took place at the same epoch of those in the Catacombs.

104. The first attempt to revive the veneration towards the place was made by the Normans, who invited the Benedictines to found there a hermitage or monastery, as it is indicated by its still-retained old bilingual denomination Italo-Arabic l'Abbatia-tad-Deyr, meaning a monastery, and that of its district *tar-Riehu*, meaning place of the hermit or hermits.*

Comm. Abela,† in support of this opinion, quotes the following abstract from the Benedictine Martyrology of Pulsano in Puglia, commemorating St. Giordano Abbot in Malta, on the 28th February.

"Pridie Kal. Martii, Sancti Jordanis Ab. discipuli S. Joannis Pulsanensis Abbatis, qui ipsum suscitavit a mortuis in monastero Pulsanensi, postea misit illum in Melitam insulam Abbatem; illic vitam hæremiticam duxit et virtutibus coruscavit."

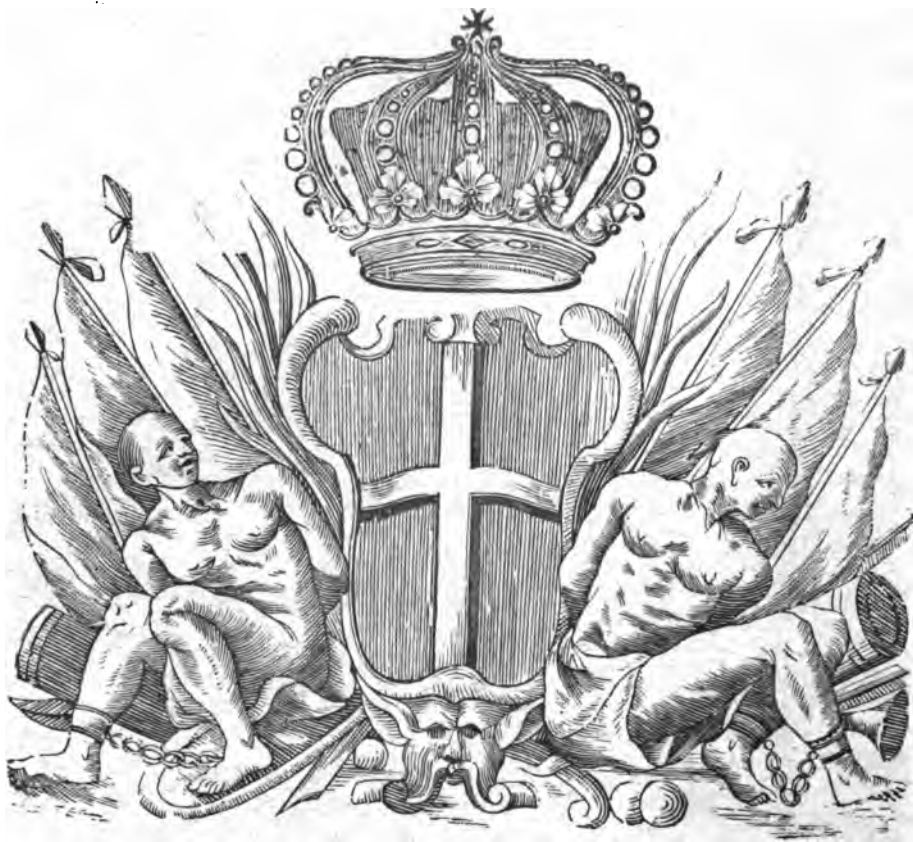
* Frammento critico della Storia Musulmana delle isole di Malta.

† Malta Illustrata, Lib. III, Not. V.

The Abbot S. Joannes, whose contemporary was St. Giordano, lived in the year 1130: this would be forty years after the coming of the Normans, and the public restoration of Christian worship in Malta.

The Knights of St. John, in whose time were painted the two pendants with the shields Aragon and of the Order of those Knights, suffered the dereliction of the place, which comm. Abela deeply deplored.

THE END.



THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

CANCELLED

NOV - 9 1988
NOV - 2 1988

279947

WIDENER

CANCELLED

9 1338

2895229

CANCELLED

BOOK DUE
JAN 18 1989
JAN 13 1989

288653

Arç 1015.221
Ancient pagan tombs and Christian c
Widener Library 004336657



3 2044 081 032 930

