Spanish Influence in Late Medieval Malta

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Introduction

Charles of Anjou's (King of Sicily from 1266 to 1282) ambitions and hard-fisted regime provoked the Sicilian catastrophe of 1282 culminating in Lu Rebellamentu of the Vespers at the end of March of that year. If the involvement of Malta in the event was peripheral in the planning stages of the coup,1 it was certainly crucial in its aftermath, for the Angevins continued to resist from the Castrum Maris in Birgu which remained in their hands in spite of the decisive naval battle which the Aragonese Don Roger de Luria (1245–1305) won in the Grand Harbour on 8 July 1283. Prior to his departure, Luria stationed 300 Catalan soldiers – 200 at Mdina and 100 in the Gozo Castello – to render the islands safe against further Angevin aggression from those still at the Castrum Maris, which held out until February 1284.2

Direct Spanish contacts with Malta are evident very soon after the Sicilian Vespers, that momentous event whereby Sicily, and Malta with it, passed into a new Western Mediterranean sphere, the confederation of the Aragonese crown. Further to the 300 Catalan soldiers left here by de Luria, already in January 1283, we see King Pedro III (1276–85) granting a salvus conductus to the Catalan Ugo de Cambrilis and his party travelling to Malta from Sicily.3 De Cambrilis, who hailed from Barcelona, was a high-ranking official, sufficiently esteemed by the king to be entrusted with the intermediary role between His Majesty and the Angevins holding the Castrum of Malta, including the issuing of salvus conductus in his own hand, to the latter.4 With the final take-over of the Castrum Maris by the Aragonese, who appointed Manfred Lancia captain of the islands,5

1 G. Aquilina and S. Fiorini, eds, Documentary Sources of Maltese History (DSMH) IV/2, Malta 2005, 37.
3 G. Silvestri, De Rebus Regni Siciliae: 9 settembre 1282–26 agosto 1283, Palermo 1882, 318 doc. CCCCLXXII.
4 Ibid., docs. CCCCLXXI–CCCCLXXII.
5 G. La Mantia, Codice diplomatico dei re aragonesi di Sicilia, 2 vols., Vol. 1: 1282–1290, Palermo 1917, Appendix doc. CCXXII.
the continued presence of Catalans there remains well-documented throughout the whole of the fourteenth century.

A Catalan–Aragonese politico-economic unit

Certainly between 1316 and 1320, but possibly also outside this range, the castellan was Arnau de Solimella who may have had royal connections. A relative of Arnau, Skios de Solimella, was also granted the earliest known fief on Malta, that of Eghmieri, sometime before 1318, by which year Skios had died intestate and without legitimate heirs so that the estate had devolved to the crown. Nor was L-Eghmieri the only estate in the hands of the Solimella; Castellan Arnau also held land at the Tabrija estate in 1316. The Solimella connection was also beneficial to the Maltese islands in so far as Sibilla d'Aragona, alias Solimella, the boyhood flame of Frederick III (1296–1337), founded the Saqqajja benefice on Gozo towards the mid-1300s. Tabrija was, subsequently, enfeoffed to the Catalan Arnau Guerald of Barcelona in 1398 and inherited by his son Nicolas in 1404. It is clear that Catalan–Aragonese interest in these islands was not restricted to their military and strategic location but was also fanning out into the economic sphere and land acquisition. From the early fourteenth century we have evidence of Catalans settling in Malta, possibly from among the 300 soldiers originally stationed here, notably the Sciriha (Cat. Xerica, Cast. Jerica) family whose descendants are still flourishing in these islands today. In the late fourteenth century the Sciriha couple Symon and Prisinda, and their relatives, are known to have possessed rural land at Żurrieq and at Marsa. Another Catalan owner of land on Malta at this time was Arnau Sasaera. Luttrel so summarizes the situation at the time:

The urban patriciates of Cataluna ... were responsible for the emergence of a single economic and strategic unit, a Western Mediterranean common market in which the merchants of Valencia, Barcelona and Perpignan could buy and sell in the Balearics, Sardinia and Sicily, while at the same time controlling in those islands the safe harbours they needed along their routes to lucrative markets in North Africa and the Levant. The Catalans also needed imports, notably Sicilian grain, and this economic inter-dependence was reflected in the political structure of the union.14

15 C. Minto, Il regno dell'isola di Sicilia e delle Isole adiacenti dalla sua nascita alla peste del 1347-48, Messina 1880, 205.
17 G. Cosentino, Codice diplomatico di Federico III di Aragona re di Sicilia: 1355–1377, Palermo 1885, docs. CCCI (16,ix.1356) et seq.: Fiorini, DSMH II/1, 5 et seq.
18 Fiorini, DSMH II/1, 74.
19 Ibid., 122.
20 Ibid., 151.
21 Ibid., 159.
22 E.g., Andrea de Navarra of Gozo: ibid., 207.
23 Ibid., 254.
24 S. Fiorini, ed., DSMH II/4, Malta 2013, 166, 196.
25 Ibid., 278, 308, 327, 346, 386, 399, 423, 442, 448.
de Malta all came from the Iberian Peninsula, as did other Sephardic Jews like Benjamin and Brahimi Catalan and Abraham, Kifri, Zerach and Hiski Safaradi.

Another tell-tale detail that singles out individuals as being of Catalan origin is the prefix in- / Im- attached to a personal name or surname, being derived from the Catalan/Occitan personal term ‘En (masc.) / Na (fem.) / N’-.

Thus, in our documentation one encounters Ingallines (< En Gallines), Incoreia (< En Corvia), Imblay (< En Blay), Ingarau (< En Garau), Indalmau, Ingornes etc., some of which names and surnames, like Imbroll, Inguanes, Incoreia, Inmara and others, are still with us. In making such conclusions one has to be careful, of course, because fads in naming patterns are contagious and the use of the prefix in- in a particular case, may not be referring to an original Catalan name or surname. But even in such cases, here one still has evidence of Catalan influence. Of a linguistic nature, one can mention that the Maltese particle imb, in phrases such as wiċċ imb’wiċċ, ras imb’ras, etc. (face to head, head to head (tête-à-tête) etc.), is also derivable from the Catalan preposition amb, meaning ‘with’.

Pre-1400 Maltese documentation yields other surnames which one can, tentatively, suggest as having Iberian origin. Avoiding the common pitfall of Calleja, which is Greek and not Spanish, and Abela (possibly the same as Abella/Abegla), one encounters Alagona, Arexula, d’Aragona, (In)Cardona, Gueralda, Imbroll, Inboges, Intrigolu, Ferranti, Juvenio (de Jaén), De Osa, Plozasco, Prades, and Suria, further to others discussed above.

After the death of Frederick IV in 1377, Sicily went through a very turbulent period reflected in the virtually complete dearth of documentation, but with the re-establishment of royal rule under the Martini (1392–1409 and 1409–10), Catalan interest in Malta surfaces afresh, indicating that it had been only, at most, dormant. The island’s marine facilities are again quite evidently important as appears even in the sparse documentation of those years. In 1393, Peri Ferranti, a Catalan from Valencia, is documented as being given a galliot of 17 benches that had been abandoned by his co-national, Hugo de Santa Pau. By 1398, the Castrum Maris was again in royal hands with the Catalan Bernard Ingallines as Castellan at the head of seventy men, including twenty Catalan sergeants-at-arms being paid 9.1 uncie each annually compared to the salary of 6 uncie given to Sicilian and Maltese soldiers. This number of twenty appears to have been upped to thirty when the Catalan Laurencius Cavalcanti granted one of them a lifetime appointment. Land grants on the islands to Catalans who rendered faithful service to the King continued to be popular. Pedro Intrigolu was compensated for serving His Majesty both in Catalonia and for following him to Sicily: he was granted all alodial property in the Maltese islands that had belonged to the rebel Johannes de La Chabica of Palermo. From an incident that took place in 1396, it is clear that Catalan privateers were then using Malta as a base of operations. One of these, Bertrandus Lanza, was involved in a dispute when he attacked a Venetian vessel, taking it to Malta.

The Church

The Spanish presence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also influenced the direction the local Church was taking. As the reigning monarchs had the right to nominate bishops to the See of Malta, it went without saying that appointees were prelates who enjoyed royal favour and the way they managed to have their say in the matter was by rallying the support of the local clergy. This is evident in the appointment of the Catalan Joannes de Pino in 1393. In that year Martin and Maria instructed the members of the Maltese chapter living in Syracuse and in Lentini to appoint De Pino in order to ratify his unanimous nomination that had already taken place by the canons living in Catania. By this manoeuvring, the other contender for the See, the Sicilian Franciscan Nicolau Papalla, was left in the lurch.

These kinds of machinations were again resorted to when Queen Bianca in 1411 when she wrote to the captain of Malta to support her candidate for the bishopric. Not all such attempts were successful, such as when Martin the Elder’s protegé, Frater Andreas de Pace in 1398, not only had to contend with another Catalan candidate – Antonius Blasi, titular bishop of Athens – but had, eventually, to make way...
to Mauro Cali’s claims and bulldozing tactics. When Cali was translated to the See of Catania in 1408, King Martin again tried to push his candidate, Michael Latras, 46 exploiting the confusion that reigned during the Western Schism. 47 Spanish bishops continued to be nominated and appointed to the See of Malta down to 1530. Between 1418 and 1420 we encounter Joannes Ximenez, who was approved by the Anti-pope Benedict XIII (1394–1423) as successor to Andreas De Pace. In 1409 Martin the Elder (1409–1410), in open opposition to the choice made by his son in Sicily, had originally appointed him bishop of Malta. Notwithstanding the opposition of Queen Bianca (1410–12), he obtained Benedict XIII’s approval for his election. Pope Martin V (1417–31), whose election to the papacy healed the schism, recognized him as head of the Church in Malta. 48 Spanish bishops continued to be appointed throughout the fifteenth century and beyond: Antonio Alagona, monachus monasterii B.M.V. de Roda Cisterciensis Ordinis Cesarauagustanae dioeceses (1447–78), Petrus De Foix, consobrinus Regis Ferdinandi (1489–90), Paulus de la Cavalleria, monachus S. Emiliani de la Cogolla O.S.B. Calaguritanae dioecesis (1491–95), Johannes de Sepulveda (1514–15) and Carolus Urries (1523–28), not to extend the list beyond 1530 into the Hospitaller period, when the trend continued.

Besides the right to nominate candidates for the See of Malta, the kings of Aragon/Sicily also held the right of nomination – just patronatus regium – to various key positions in the Church of Malta, including the Vicarius Generalis and the dean of the Cathedral Chapter. 53 This control over the lower ladder rungs, 54 below that of the episcopacy, ensured more secure control at the top. An important and, as it turned out, very beneficial nomination of a Catalan to the joint post of vicar general and dean was that at the turn of the fifteenth century in the person of Bernardus de Yaner (sive Janer sive Gener). There were other ecclesiastics by that surname on the island. Already in 1365, one encounters Don Antonio de Beninato de Janer 55 and, contemporary to Bernardo, there was also his own brother, Benediticust, a Franciscan tertiary. 56 In 1402, Bernardo Yaner, who was already a canon of the Cathedral Chapter, was appointed dean of the same chapter and in 1418, he was made vicar general of the diocese. 57 It transpires from Bernardo’s will that he was not only a devotee of St Paul, but also a man endowed with a fine artistic sensibility and the financial means and acumen to look abroad, far afield, for possible sources for his patronage of the arts. 58 Against this background, it is to be noted that at this time some prestigious works of art began to appear in Malta, centre-stage being taken by the St Paul polyptych that was once the pala d’altare of the Cathedral’s main altar. With its emphasis on St Paul’s shipwreck on the island and the inlaid red-and-white escutcheon of the Maltese Universitas, this was clearly commissioned for Malta and it has been explicitly attributed to the circle of the Catalan Lluís Bordassà (1360–1426). 59 This retable is not documented, but it is worth noting that the circle of Bordassà included his student, the Catalan Guerau Yaner (c.1369–c.1410) who is known to have worked beyond Catalonia, for instance for the Cathedral of Monreale in Sicily. 60 The retable is very close in spirit to Yaner’s pala of Santa Isabel i Sant Bartomeu in the chapel of St Mary Magdalene, in the Barcelona Cathedral. The close collaboration between Yaner and Bordassà is well-documented. 61 It is up to the competence of art experts to consider the possibility of the involvement of Yaner in the production of the St Paul polyptych, given the possible family connection with Don Bernardo; this possibility is hinted at but not explicitly stated by Geneviève Bautier-Bresc. This art expert even conceives the influence of Catalan Gothic art in the later fifteenth-century Maltese frescoes, which admittedly came from a Sicilian workshop. 62 An architectural element of note in Mdina and elsewhere in Malta is the style of construction of doorways, datable to the turn of the fifteenth century. They have a marked resemblance to others in the north of Spain, particular common features of which are the slightly pointed arch, the large voussoirs starting at the springing of the arch, down to the chamfering of the edges as a softening device. Examples that can be cited from the north of Spain come from Loyola (Navarre) and Girona (Catalonia). 63

45 Fiorini, DSMH II/1, 267. Borg, I, 44.
47 Fiorini, DSMH II/2, 128.
48 Borg, I, 44.
49 Aquilina and Fiorini, DSMH II/2, 181, 183 et passim.
50 Fiorini, DSMH II/4, 184 et passim.
51 Ibid., 211, 214–5.
52 Borg, I, 91, 94.
54 A number of clerics with Iberian surnames are encountered in the documentation, cf. Borg, Balsalobre (p. 82), De Bisconis (p. 83), Catalana (p. 102), De Guverna (p. 125), Inguez (p. 126), Mavanna (p. 130), De Nava (p. 134), Bancino (p. 135), Saura (p. 140), and Udrua (Cordoba) (p. 147).
55 Luttrell, Approaches to Medieval Malta, XV, 163, doc. III (7.v.1365).
57 Ibid., 177; Borg, I, 57.
58 Details in J. Bausili and S. Fiorini, The Role of Meli (1436) and the Will of Don Bernardus Yaner (1442) in Maltesian Aron: Festspilschrift in honour of Don Giovanni Azzopardi, eds. T. Cortis et al., Malta 2002, 57–72, esp. 70.
60 The Monreale retable has not survived but it is documented as being commissioned on 4 October 1407 by the nobleman Pere de Queralt and executed between 1407 and 1409; P. Musolino, ‘Espemi di pittura scuola catalana tra i Nobili e le Madonne: Il Maestro di Migaido’, Archivio Storico Messinese, 94 (1993), 26, fn 13 citing J. Guido e I. Ricart, Pittura gotica catalana, Barcelona 1986, 52–60, 73–85.
61 For example, the monumental (4.6 x 5m) retable of the Tarragon Cathedral, now dismembered with panels at Taragona and in the Museo Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, is the fruit of this collaboration. The Resucesióni de Crist panel of this retable exhibits interesting details – the banner in the hands of the resurrected Christ and the stance of the Lord – which are reminiscent of another Resurrection scene in another Catalan panel at Malta’s Cathedral Museum (M. Buhagiar and S. Fiorini, Mdina – The Cathedral City of Malta, 2 vols., Malta 1996, 152, pl. 3/8).
62 Bautier-Bresc.
63 Illustrated in Buhagiar and Fiorini, i, 108–9, plates 2.29, 2.40.
Alfonso the Magnanimous

With the ascent to the throne of Alfonso V in 1416 the political scene of the island witnessed a marked change. Spaniards came to dominate key royal positions. On 11 July 1418 the Catalan Antoni Fabra was made Secretus in place of the local Vitichius de Livita. Alfonso’s belligerence in the face of the intensified aggression from the Hafsids brought in its wake a mushrooming of the military class. Numerous Catalan, Aragonese and Castilian families established themselves in the Maltese islands, including the Dezguanes, De Nava, Del Busco, De Guevara and others who dominated not only the military but also the political scene throughout the century. They were all essentially galley-captains who acted as entrepreneurs in the private corso and as officials of the royal armada, according to circumstances. Captains-at-arms appointed from time to time in periods of crisis before 1530 were also mostly of Iberian origin: Guillermo de Riera in Gozo (1452), Antoni Dezguanes for Malta and Andreas Navarro for Gozo (1457), Alvaro de Nava (1489), Garcia de Jaén (1510), Diego Zavallos (1510–11), Pedro de Texeira (1513), Rodrigo d’Acaña (1514), Francisco Villanueva (1516), Caesar de Jaén (1517–21), Hieronymus de Campo (1523) and Joannes Ribes Altes (1526–29).

Furthermore, Alfonso’s incessant warring against Muslim and Christian alike, in his efforts to expand the Catalan-Aragonese empire, necessitated exorbitant amounts of money to finance his various ampirias: Sardinia and Corsica (1420), Kerkenna (1424), Jerba (1432) and Naples (1435–42). His insatiable quest for funds spurred him repeatedly to resort to the pawnning of parts of his domains for hard cash. His demanial towns in Sicily, including Acì, Sutera, Naro, Marsala, Termini, Taormina, Licata, Sciacca, Reggio Calabria, and others, were all exchanged for cash. This policy had disastrous repercussions on the Maltese islands when they, like their counterparts in Sicily, were pawned to Consalvo Monroy in 1420 to 21 for no less than 30,000 florins. The reaction of the Maltese was to rebel against their new overlord and to offer to fork out of their own pockets the exorbitant sum paid for the islands in order to rid themselves of the oppressive presence and be reintegrated within the royal demanum. This meant that the Maltese had to produce – di intra li ossa nostri (extracted from our bone marrow) – the equivalent of 4,500 uncie, a sum which amounted to more than the total tax exacted from the entire Kingdom of Sicily in 1434 and 1439.

It is to be remarked that Alfonso’s policy of raising money by pawnning curial goods was not restricted to demanial towns but extended also to the pawnning of offices in an effort at scraping the barrel clean. The captaincies, secretie and various gabelles in Sicily were soon put on offer to the highest bidder. Likewise in Malta, having had to reconcile himself with the fact that these islands, as an entity, were reintegrated within the demanum, Alfonso began to dissect and cream off from it the more lucrative offices and, without any change of heart or policy, began to farm them out piecemeal on auction to the highest bidder. In 1437 the secretia was pawned to Simon de Mazara for 150 uncie. Del Busco obtained the cabella baiulacionis (bartering gabelle) and the cabella barbarie (barber surgeon’s gabelle) for 100 uncie apiece. The fief of Marsa was likewise purchased by Del Busco for 3,164 gold duccats. In this connection, a hitherto unnoticed event is the attempt by Alfonso’s viceroys, Baptista Plataomone, to pawn (to Johannes de Caro) Gozo a second time in 1440 in spite of earlier solemn promises that the Maltese islands had to remain an integral part of the demanum for ever and that the inhabitants had the right to resist manu forti (by force) any attempts at alienation even by His Majesty himself. In fact, the Gozitans faced Alfonso with precisely this right to which he immediately acquiesced.

The captaincy of Malta was pawned to Antoni Dezguanes and to his son Gerar dus for 170 uncie; the secretia was likewise usurped by the same Geraldus; the judgship of the captain’s court went to Notary Corrado d’Alaymo, Angelo de Manuele, Antoni Falzon and Friderico Calava for them to hold on successive years, thereby carving out for themselves a veritable monopoly. All these offices were subsequently redeemed, but none the less, both the castellania (captaincy of the castrum) and the secretia (finances) went to Inigo de Guevara in 1446 when, for them and for some other offices including the Gozo secretia, he was prepared to pay 1,500 gold duccats. The captaincy of Gozo, too, was similarly pawned to Francesco Plataomone and Antoni Vagnolo for them to hold on alternate years for the sum of 50 gold uncie. It is worth noting that the total amount extracted from the several pawnings came to some 3,000 florins per annum and a once-only payment of more than 4,500 gold duccats. Over ten years this arrangement procured for the king more than the initial sum of 30,000 florins, provided by Monroy, provoking far less opposition and resentment. Also worth noting is King Alfonso’s forgetfulness of his original promises, when in 1450 he made...
yet another attempt at alienating the Maltese islands, this time to the Spanish military Order of Montesa, a move that, likewise, was strongly objected to and threatened to be resisted manu forti et armatu. In fact, in 1441 the Maltese and Gozitans were already suspecting moves of this kind and pressed the king for confirmation of their privilege of non-alienation from the demanum.

No sooner had the Maltese islands rid themselves of the incubus that was Monroy and begun to recover their strength after their exertions, that another major disaster struck them as a result of Alfonso's expansionist policies. It was probably Alfonso's brother Pedro and his expedition against Kerkena in 1424 that triggered Hafsids aggression against Aragon, culminating in a massive attack on the Maltese islands that all but took the islands, carrying off into slavery no less than 3,500 captives. The documentation speaks of a savage onslaught by ‘in cani Re di Tunisi’ and his hordes and of the devastation wrought: ‘grandi dampi et ardimentum di casali et alu Rabatu et alchidimentu di bestiami grossa e minuta et guastu di vigni et arbori et prisa di genti that were caught outside the protective Mdina walls.’

King Alfonso retaliated to this attack of 1429 by leading an expedition against Jerba in 1432. On his return from Jerba, the king stopped for a short while in these islands, and tradition has it that he stayed with the Dezguanes in Mdina in whose palace a room still bears the name of the monarch. This tit-for-tat appears to have worked and a period of a fairly stable truce was established, marred only by the occasional faux pas such as when Malta's Antoni Dezguanes' piratical activities, embarrassingly for Alfonso, landed a number of Moorish captives in breach of the agreement.

But Alfonso's major amprise was only just beginning. Queen Joanna II of Naples (1414–35), at a time of crisis when Alfonso was prepared to champion her cause against Louis of Anjou, had adopted him as her heir and successor to the throne of Naples. This promise kindled in his heart the burning aspiration and resolve to reunite once again the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies that had been torn asunder by the Angevin aggression of 1268. There ensued seven years of war before Alfonso concluded his amprise successfully to re-unite the kingdom full 160 years after the Sicilian Vespers; from this time onwards Sicily and the Maltese islands began to pertain to the Regnum Ultra Farum (The Kingdom beyond the lighthouse [of Messina], that is, Sicily). During the Neapolitan campaign a number of key figures played a very active role for which Alfonso repaid them with donations of various kinds. Some of these were concessions of offices and of lands on Malta. Foremost among these were Petrus del Busco, castellan of Malta and master of a galley, who for his services was given the lands near Il-Hemsija called Il-Gżira and Il-Qattara in perpetuity and without any further obligation. On Del Busco's death, Ifige de Guevara, a Castilian knight, a connoisseur of music and the arts, acquired from Alfonso, further to the title of count of Ariano, Potenza and Apice (striped from Alfonso's arch-enemy Francesco Sforza), the castellany of Malta, both secretie and all fiefs held by Del Busco, excluding Marsa.

Conclusion

These military families that gained prominence under Alfonso integrated well in the fabric of Maltese upper-crust society through marriage, becoming the principal feudatories of the island through their defence responsibilities, and dominating the political scene through their position on the Municipal Council. Appendix 1 gives a measure of the Spaniards' penetration into Maltese society gauging the extent of their integration through marriage alliances. It is to be recalled that various capitula enshrined in the corpus of privileged of the Maltese provide for conditions under which foreigners were allowed to assume offices of responsibility in the island. These included clauses like (i) residence on the island for at least five years, and (ii) being locally married — nemo exterus possess concurreare ad officium aliquod dicte civitatis nisi ducat uxorem et habitaverit in hac civitate per quinquennium (no foreigner is allowed to compete for public offices in the city unless he is married there and has been residing there for at least five years) — and this, in order to ensure affectivity for the island. djaju esseri habitaturi di la isula et uxorari per haviri affectioni ali isula (they have to be inhabitants of the island and married there to ensure a personal attachment). For this reason one often encounters in the documentation references to persons typified by Ferrando de Messana Ispanus habitator Malef et uxoratus in Malta. As is to be expected, not everything ran smoothly and peacefully. Internal feuds existed — at times so hot that a foreign captain was actually requested by the Universitas to quell boiling animosities among leading families such as the De Nava against the De Guevara- Dezguanes axis. Very often the bone of contention was overlapping and encroachment of jurisdictions. This is illustrated in the case of the De Navas presented in Appendix 2.
None the less there is also evidence of fruitful collaboration between Spaniards who settled and the Maltese population. Educated Spaniards who, because of their facility with the language, could present efficiently the case of the Maltese and/or Gozitan Universitas before the monarch were often called upon to represent these islands as their ambassadors before the king or his viceroy. Mutually beneficial activities and common financial interests brought many Spaniards and Maltese together in commercial ventures including privateering. But doubtlessly, the single most important collective contribution was the role they played in the political sphere and the offices, like those of jurats (the list is too long to go into) held in the Municipal Government.

Appendix 1 – Marriage Alliances: An Index of Integration

The entries in each sub-section are ordered chronologically by date of document establishing the information. It does not necessarily follow that the marriage took place on that date.

Abbreviations that appear below:
- Abela
- AD Additional Documents
- AO Acta Originalia
- ASP Archivio di Stato, Palermo
- CDR Conservatoria di Registro
- CEM Curia Episcopalis Melitae
- DSMH Documentary Sources of Maltese History
- MCM Museum of the Cathedral, Mdina
- NLM National Library, Malta
- Univ Università

(i) Within the Spanish circle

- Aragona Margarita + Peregrino Jaymo (1372): DSMH II/1, 62.
- Arejula Joannes + Peregrino (1398): DSMH II/1, 232.
- Peregrino Francia + (1) Plozasco Ludovico (1418); (2) De Mazara Simon (1429): Abela, 497.
- Del Busco Pedro + De Nava Paula (1444): DSMH II/3,174,261.
- Gatt Dezguanes Imperia + (1) Zervantes Michael; (2) Ribera Petrus; (3) De Mazara Simon: NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 205v; NLM, AD 53 (Not. Ingomes de Brancato, 3.x.1509).
- Zavallos Diego + Dezguanes Antonia (1509): Abela, 547.
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- Dezguanes Clara + (1) De Guevara Tristan; (2) Stufía Ferrante (1511): NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 179v; NLM, AD 53 (Not. G. Falzon, 2.ii.1510).
- Falca Antonio + (1) De Nava Betta (1512); (2) Inguanes Enziona Angarai: NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 175; NLM, AD 52 (Not. Consalvo Canchur, 20.xii.1513); Abela, 517.
- Inguanez Calcerano + Inguanez Imperia (1512); NLM, Lib. MS. 365, f. 206.
- Inguanes Enziona + (1) Falca Antonio; (2) De Guevara Pietro: NLM, AD 52 (Not. Consalvo Canchur, 12.vii.1520); Abela 482.
- Ferriolo Agata + Stufía Petro: NLM, AD 52 (Not. Antonio Rapa, 4.xii.1529).

(ii) In the restricted group of upper-crust society

- Banyols Antonio (Vagnolo) + De Sordino Ismiralda (1419): NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 205; Abela, 539.
- Dezguanes Antonio + Gatto Imperia: NLM, AD 53 (Not. A. De Manuele, 23.vii.1452); Abela, 493.
- De Nava Giovanni + Mazara del Carretto Isabella: NLM, AD 53 (Not. Ing. de Brancato, 21.vi.1489); Abela 514 (1469).
- Banyols Lisa + De Platamone Sancho (1480): DSMH II/3, 348; Abela 540.
- Pirera Marciano + Francia Vaccaro (1486): DSMH I/1, 40.
- Navarra Antonia + De Manuele Angelo: NLM, AD 56 (Not. Pino Saliba 7.iii.1515).
- Falca Antonio + La Habica Zuna: DSMH I/1, 234 (8.viii.1487); NLM, AD 53 (Not. C. Canchur, 20.x.1513).
- Gatt Dezguanes Peruna + De Mazara Simon: DSMH I/2, 372 (15.x.1496).

(ii) Crossing into the wider circle

- Falca Antonio (sr.) + Zammit Ventura (11.v.1486): DSMH I/1, 40, 66; NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 243.
- Dezguanes Antonio Lancee + Caruana Gugliardia (1491): NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 197.
- De Guevara Manna + De Manuele Matheus (1483): DSMH I/3, 143.
- Villaviciosa Petrus + Delia Peruna (1488): DSMH I/3, 154.0.
- De Bisconis Antonio + Caraffa Joannella (1519): NLM, Lib. MS. 368, f. 198.
- Montagnes Fernando + De Manuele Imperia (1527): Abela, 507.
Appendix 2 – The de Nava as a case-study

The earliest recorded connexion of the De Nava with Malta goes back to March 1429 when Inguterra sive Gutierrez de Nava – a miles Camere Reginallis et patronus galeae in the king's service – was appointed castellan by King Alfonso, following the winding up of the Monroy affair. He contributed solidly to the fortification of the Castrum, especially by the purchase of arms and with the service of his galleys; he was in command during the islands' devastation by the Moorish invasion in September of that year. He died sometime in 1435 as a prisoner in Genoa, at a time when he also occupied the post of Secretus of Malta. Pedro del Busco, Inguterra's successor in the castellany from 1435 till his death sometime before April 1446, was a beneficiary in Inguterra's will.

In 1441 the name of Consalvus de Nava appears, coupled with that of Castellan Del Busco, both of whom were capturing galleys on royal service. At this time, another De Nava figures on the Maltese scene, the corsair Sueru de Nava, who, in 1447, sought permission to berth in the Maltese harbour, one of those incidents that was a cause of friction between the Universitas and the Castellan. The name of Consalvus de Nava re-appears in the 1460s as castellan for a short period. He was dead by 1468, but, in effect, in 1466 Viceroy D'Urrea had already appointed another Inguterra de Nava as castellan. At the same time, yet another De Nava – Alvarus, a captain of two galleys in royal service – was made beneficiary of the Maltese Secrezia. In 1486 Alvarus' income came from the fief of Benwarrad.

A third De Nava to figure prominently in this scenario was Joannes de Nava. His name appears first in the Mdina council in 1468, being entrusted with the purchase of a grain of wheat. After this and for many years, he attended council regularly, contributing actively to the debates. In 1472, he caused a row in council when he wanted to have the Dezguanes coat of arms removed from above the city gate. At the same time, he

1 DSMH II/2, 240, 352. 2 An inventory of arms existing in the Castrum Marius and purchased by De Nava from Monroy's widow, Costanza, is published in H. Bresc, 'The secretaria and the royal patrimony in Malta 1240–1450', in Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights, ed. A. Luttrell, Rome 1975, 125–52, 158–9, Doc. II; DSMH II/2, 273–5, 326.
3 DSMH II/2, 335–6, 339.
5 DSMH II/2, 373, 386, 397, 417.
6 Ibid., 390, 623.
7 Ibid., 450–7, 461.
8 Acta Jur., 5.
9 Ibid., 101, 689.
10 Ibid., 283.
11 DSMH II/3, 67. In this first document that refers to Inguterra de Nava as the new Castellan, a lapsus calami of the amanuensis gives the Castellan's name in the docket as Consalvus de Nava.
13 DSMH II/3, 24.
15 Ibid., 383, 441, 596, 635, 690, 699, 725, 738, 765, 737–8, 808, 810 (1470–81).
16 Ibid., 441 (A XI, 1472).

appears in connexion with the fief of Marsa, half of which he had purchased on condition that he provided military service. In that year, Viceroy D'Urrea appointed Joannes de Nava to the captaincy of the island for 1472–73, but the appointment was deferred and only came into effect four years later, by which time he had ceased to hold the post of vice-castellan. As vice-castellan he enjoyed various privileges, including having some debts of his to the Curia waived, in view of the services he rendered with his galleys; being granted a royal pardon for all his crimes; and being invested with the title of baron of Marsa. With his military connections he was well placed to help both the Universitas and his own pocket when he sold to the city three bombards in 1473 for 11 unci. In 1477 in council he upheld the privileges of the Universitas against the interests of the castellan, and in 1480 his old rivalry with the Dezguanes took centre-stage in council when disputing claims about lands at Selunj which had come to him through his wife.

In 1479 he was appointed captain-at-arms for the Maltese islands jointly with Joannes de Mazarra in view of an impending Turkish invasion; in the following year he was made castellan by King Ferdinand after that position had been vacated by Inguterra de Nava who moved on to become castellan of Xiglo in Calabria. Having survived a heavy storm at sea, Joannes was soon once more on the warpath against the city's captain, Carolus de Guevara, on the question of jurisdiction. Both the captain and De Nava had protested with the viceroy over an incident in which the vice-castellan and his followers attacked the captain furiously with drawn arms. Spanners in the wheels of De Nava were being thrown at this time from the direction of Mdina. In the meantime, as rumours of the Turkish attack became more alarming, the former vice-castellan Joannes Garcia was sent to Sicily to procure arms which were paid for out of De Nava's pocket as the Secretas was not forthcoming with payments of salaries and shopping bills for arms. In 1483, the viceroy ordered the town council to purchase two cannon for the defence of the city from De Nava, and in the following year the castellan personally went to Sicily to procure armaments and bombardes for his Castrum. The presidents of
the kingdom (high-ranking officials acting for the viceroy in his absence), alarmed at the threat of an imminent Turkish invasion allocated up to 400 unci for the defence of the Castrum, 50 of which were to be spent at De Nava's discretion. De Nava spent nearly another 100 unci on arms out of his own pocket. He launched a new vessel for the defence of the islands and, by April 1487, he completed the construction of the scarp called Di Santo Angilu facing Birgu in preparation for the imminent attack. Realizing that he was being overtaken by old age and availing himself of his right to nominate a successor, in July 1487 he chose his first-born son Petrus de Nava as the next castellan, with whom he shared responsibility for the remaining days of his life. At this time of crisis differences with the Universitas were quickly forgotten and he was chosen by the council as an intermediary between them and Commissioner Trovato with whom there had been a confrontation. The Turkish attack materialized in June 1488 and Birgu bore the brunt of the onslaught by the 12 vessels. Joannes de Nava's last recorded act of his life was to send a janissary, captured during the attack, to Palermo. Joannes appears to have been a religious person. He was a benefactor of St Francis church at Rabat, whose tribuna, or apse, he had had built at his own expense. He was probably a Franciscan tertiary as he left instructions in his will of 1 September 1487 that his cadaver should be buried in the Franciscan habit. He also built his own chapel of Santa Maria di Loreto in St Dominic church, Rabat.

When Joannes died on 15 September 1488, two De Navas, Alvarus and Petrus De Nava, assumed prominent positions in the Maltese scene. Joannes' first-born son Petrus took over single-handedly the castellany on the following day. Like his father, Petrus, a one-time page in Ferdinando el Catolico's retinue, was to hold the castellany for his life's duration with right of nominating his own son as successor. He was to hold this position for a good couple of decades with one brief interruption in 1490 when he and his brother Joannes de Nava were accused of murder. At this time Alvarus de Nava, who till 1489 had been castellan of Nicosia (in Sicily) and who in the aftermath of the 1488 invasion was made captain-at-arms for the Maltese islands and Pantellaria, was given the responsibility of the Castrum Maris until Petrus' fate was decided. The crime of Joannes and Petrus was forgotten after having their penalty commuted to the payment of compensation.

Petrus' brother Joannes (junior) was both a military man and interested in local politics. He was appointed captain of Malta in 1491–92 and in 1498–99, and was made Jurat in 1494–95 and in 1504–05. In 1499 he is listed among those islanders who were obliged to keep a horse for military service. He also described himself as acting captain-at-arms for Alvarus de Nava. Joannes was also captain of a vessel which, in January 1498, was pressed into royal service on a mission to Jerba.

Petrus' pugnacious character was certainly suited to his office of castellan. As to his irascible character, suffice it to mention that, in 1505, he was accused of murdering his own wife. In 1469, early on in his career as castellan, he was to clash with the captain-at-arms, Guillelmus Spatafora, on the question of jurisdiction, with Secretus Joannes de Guevara over the payments of salaries, and again over jurisdiction, including that over Żejtun villagers, with the captain of Malta, the vice-admiral and captain-at-arms, Ferdinandus de Stūnica. De Stūnica made the grave accusation against De Nava in court that he opted to solve their differences with insults and violence including the use of artillery against him. On all counts except the last, De Nava received the full support of Viceroy De La Nuça, and when De Nava thought it more advantageous, he had direct recourse to his protector, King Ferdinand.

The lawsuit instituted by De Stūnica against De Nava in 1494 was only a prelude to drawn-out court proceedings against him by the Universitas. As long as Petrus De Nava was castellan, matters would never settle down. Within the year he was appealing against the sentence and the situation was only resolved when Petrus finally passed away sometime before January 1517, when his son Alvarus first appears as castellan during a council session. Alvarus held this post till the arrival of the Hospitallers in 1530 after which most of the De Navas left the island.

34 Ibid, 426, 428
35 DSMH IV/4, 7, 20, 50
36 Ibid, 17
37 Ibid, 52
38 Ibid, 65, 136
39 Ibid, 60
40 Ibid, 56
41 Ibid, 96
42 D.F. Abele, Della descrizione di Malta, Isola nel mare siciliano, Malta 1647, 392.
43 NLM, Lib. MS. 635, f. 64.
45 DSMH IV/4, 127
46 Ibid, 141.
48 Ibid, 170–1.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 202, 405.
51 DSMH IV/4, 7, 20, 50.
52 Ibid, 56
54 DSMH IV/4, 400.
56 DSMH IV/4, 138.
57 Ibid, 310.
58 Ibid, 326, 378.
59 Ibid, 319.
60 Ibid, 378
61 NLM, Univ. 12, f. 156v.