

REPORTS

ON THE WORKING OF

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR

1904-5.

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THE MUSEUM

Valletta, 10th May, 1905.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit the annual report on the Museum for the year ending 31st March 1905.

2. The collection has been arranged on the broad lines laid down in last year's report, and the Museum may now be opened to the public.

3. Important additions have been made to the collection during the year. A good number of objects were sent by various Government Departments, others were acquired from private sources and a few others were presented to the Museum.

4. The Public Works Department contributed largely from finds obtained in cutting open the streets of Notabile and Rabat, in connection with the drainage works of that district, in consequence of which the Museum became richer by the contents of two Phœnician tomb-caves of a late period, consisting of pottery, glass and a number of brass plates which were used to secure wooden coffins. Here and there buried in the soil, fragments of stucco, pavement tiles, marble slabs and statuettes were met with. The best finds were a large cylindrical earthenware jar, a Roman marble statue, natural size, a marble statuette, one small marble capital and a short slender marble column. The Superintendent of Public Works sent also coats-of-arms of Grand Masters De la Sengle, Verdala and De Rohan, carved in stone, and a fine seventeenth century Majolica fountain.

5. The Comptroller of Charitable Institutions sent 24 old blue pharmacy jars (time of G. M. Vilhena, 1722-36) from the collection at Santo Spirito Hospital, 34 coloured pharmacy jars from the Central Hospital and 39 pieces of silver plate formerly in use in the hospitals of the Order.

6. The Collector of Customs sent a set of standard weights and measures with the arms of Grand Masters Vilhena and De Rohan, from a collection preserved in the Customs Department.

To

His Honour

The Lieutenant Governor

and Chief Secretary to Government.

7. The Librarian sent two bank-notes in use at the time of the French occupation of Malta.

8. Many objects of interest were found in the Has-saffieni hypogeum at Paula. An important find was also made not far from that hypogeum. A large number of egg-shaped stones of various size were discovered, regularly arranged in the soil under a cement floor. The stones appear to have been intended for slings, and a number of them are pierced at one end. They were presumably stored and kept as a stock in case of emergency. 195 of these stones have been acquired for the Museum and a much larger number was carted away and destroyed before we came to know of the discovery.

9. An interesting marble capital, of the Norman period, richly carved with figures of saints, was acquired from a private gentleman. The capital is supposed to have been in Notabile, but no further details could be obtained of this valuable relic.

10. A large tomb-stone of exceptional interest has also been added to the collection. It was taken from one of the tomb galleries in the field "Tal Bâr" at Rabat. On it are represented in relief a number of tinsmith's tools accurately drawn and very neatly arranged. The real significance of these symbols can so far only be conjectured.

11. Among the objects of minor importance acquired during the year, is a carved stone coat-of-arms of the Maltese Bishop Cagliares (1614-33) and the following marble fragments: two Roman capitals, portion of a column, one large medallion and five busts of the late Roman period.

12. Some digging done at Haġar-Kim brought to light three flint stones and numerous fragments of pottery of a peculiar type, which may possibly throw light on the age of our megalithic ruins.

Excavations in a field on the way to the Boschetto led to the discovery of a peculiar set of tombs, which have been duly surveyed. In the same locality, under a large rectangular stone, which in all probability formed part of a great wall, four Phœnician coins were found.

13. Of the presents made to the Museum during the year, the most important is a collection of 9 specimens of Roman pavements found in the Island, a gift of Dr. J.S. Galizia, and some pottery given by Father Magri S. J., found by him at Nadur (Il Kortin), and at Rabat (Haġġarija). Mr. Lorenzo Falzon gave a table showing in detail the military expenditure in the Island for the year 1789.

Two Christian Roman earthenware lamps were presented by Mr. Simeone Sammut, of Musta, and other earthenware articles by Mr. Albert Cachia, teacher in the Government school of that village. These articles were found in a Roman family tomb at Benwarrat (or Bârmarrad) at the foot of the hill on which the small chapel of "*San Paul il Mileghi*" is erected. This locality is well known on account of Roman relics met with on several occasions, and local tradition has always connected it with early Christianity. Through the kindness of the owner of the site, Mr. Simeone Sammut, the tomb was cleared and surveyed. Along with many human remains a few objects were found, and some of these, as before stated, were kindly presented to the Museum. This discovery of Christian pottery in that locality is of peculiar interest.

14. As mentioned in another part of this report, the digging done at Rabat has brought to light many interesting objects. The Honourable the Superintendent of Public Works, Mr. P. Busuttil the Chief Engineer, and the other officials connected with the drainage works of Rabat, deserve every praise for the care taken by them to ensure the safety of the antiquities met with in the course of the work. A good number of single and family tombs were discovered, and a map is being prepared to record the finds. It was, of course, impossible to preserve all the tombs met with; but sketches and plans were made of the most important ones and a few family tombs were preserved and these will in due time be made accessible to the public.

15. The Notabile Museum has also received a good deal of attention. New show cases have been provided and the collection of Roman objects will shortly be shown to better advantage.

16. Although, as already stated, the additions made to our collection have been during the year undoubtedly very considerable, and, we may also say, quite exceptional, there is little probability that this rate of increase will be kept up; it may be hoped, however, that the interest already roused in the public will not readily die out.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

TEM. ZAMMIT,
Curator.