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MEGALITHIC SANCTUARY AT HAL TARXIEN.

I have to report this year the discovery of an important neolithic building which enriches the unique series of Maltese monuments and, besides further demonstrating the importance of the Maltese Islands in prehistoric times, sheds a flood of light on the other monuments so far discovered.

The site on which the monument was discovered is not very far from the Hal-Saffieni Hypogeum and the Cordin stations, which can well be considered to be on the same plateau.

About half a mile to the north east of Hal-Saffieni, before getting to the village of Tarxien, one reaches the top of the flat hill which is known as "il Bajjada" or "Tal Borg". The name of "Bajjada" ("bajda" white) derives probably from the greyish soil of the district quite different from the darker and redder soil of the lower fields, and the name "tal Borg" (Borg meaning castle or mound) derives from a large mound lying a little to the north, which was probably a prehistoric building and also possibly from the mound caused by the soil heaped over the ruin now being excavated.

As the field is nearer to Tarxien Village than Casal Paula, the monument will be referred to as the *Hal-Tarxien Monument*.

In the year 1913, the tenant of the field in question, which is Government property, reported in a casual way that a few feet below the surface he had once struck some well squared blocks of stone and that whilst digging for the foundations of a small chapel in a cemetery close by, "tal Erwieh", similar large blocks were also met with.

On the 20th July 1915 a trench was cut in the middle of the field and stone blocks were met under about 2 feet (60 cms.) of soil. Following the surface of the stones it was clear that these were so constructed as to enclose a circular space. Clearing the soil, at a level with the stone blocks, it appeared that the space enclosed by the stones was not circular but elliptical, and that what appeared, at first, to be the mouth of a pit was the apse of a megalithic building formed of nine stone parallelepipeds joined end to end. By the end of the week a second apse was brought to light, at the same level with the first one and symmetrical with it.

The two apses suggested at once a neolithic sanctuary of the type of Hajar Kim, Mnajdra, and Gigantia and the excavation was conducted as if one of the above mentioned sanctuaries had to be cleared.

It was an unhoped for opportunity to find a stone-age monument of the size of Mnajdra still covered with the debris which concealed it for ages, and with the probability that the archaeological material was not tampered with. The fine material of which the sanctuary was made must, for centuries, have attracted all those who were in need of stone and the monument was utilised as a quarry from the earliest times. It was only those blocks which had been made brittle by the action of fire and those already buried by the dust of ages that were left. All the remainder were carted away for use as building stone, a scarce commodity in the Tarxien district.

Obviously, later on, further destruction took place when it came to the mind of some enterprising husbandman to turn the tumbling ruins into an arable field. Breaking down all uprights that could be an obstacle to the plough, the space between the large blocks was filled with stone chippings and other debris and over the whole dust and soil from the neighbouring fields were spread. Signs of all these operations are evident. On the northern portion of the ruins, the field soil, 2 ft. 3 in. thick, is fairly uniformly distributed and the cobbles and stone chippings fill the gaps inside the walls. On the southern portion, the pavement, close to the entrance, lies under 7 ft. 10 in. (2.38m) of material made up of 2 ft. 3 in. (69 cms.) of field soil 2 ft. 3 in. (69 cms.) of broken stones and dust, 10 in. (25 cms) of earth mixed with black ashes, and at the bottom 2 ft. 6 in. (70 cms.) of a dark brown earth remarkably free from stones.

Notwithstanding the complete and systematic destruction of the higher portions of the building the rude boors who upset and broke up the standing walls did, luckily, not care to uproot the stones that were already disappearing in the dust collected by ages nor to disturb and scatter the material of which they could make no use.

We assume therefore that under about 5 ft. (1.5m) of the field loam the archaeological material was fairly untouched by modern hands. This surmise has, so far, proved to be perfectly correct.

Having laid bare the top of the walls of the two northern apses, it was advisable to determine how far the building extended at that level. Excavations were therefore conducted so as to follow the blocks *in situ* and clear them of loose debris. The ruins were found to expand slightly both east and west, but to the south they extended beyond the field in which the excavations were initiated.

The portion of the monument so far uncovered consists, roughly, of three pairs of symmetrical apses, connected with each other by means of narrow passages, limited by large slabs on end. From north to south these apses are progressively larger in size.

To one who has a knowledge of the Maltese monuments it appears that, originally, the building consisted of only two pairs of apses of the same size and type of the northern part of the Mnaidra and of the northern part of the building of the Gigantia. These two sets of apses were connected by a narrow middle passage, in a line with the main entrance.

It appears that, at a later date, but still in the stone age period, a third pair of apses was constructed to the south, or if the southern portion was constructed at the same time as the northern part, it was improved and decorated in later days. We observe, in fact, that a niche at the back of a stone altar was constructed in a way as to completely block the passage between the first and second areas, and that the decorations in relief of the stone altars and the base stone, all around the southern apses, do not appear in the northern part of the building.

The whole monument is built on the same principles of the other sanctuaries of Malta and Gozo. The walls of the apsidal areas are made of vertical slabs topped by rows of horizontal, well squared, long blocks; these walls are supported by a thick packing of stones and earth, which completely fills the space between them and the thick boundary walls. This is made of very large slabs on end with blocks wedged in between them, the whole arrangement forming a compact mass of stones, which can only be disjoined by long and systematic efforts.

So far, the areas cleared were found to be paved with enormous slabs closely fitting together to form a smooth surface.

The first or posterior area to the north is 42 ft. (12.81 m.) long from end to end, and 16 ft. wide (4.88 m.) at the middle. Stone blocks projecting into the area separate it into two apses and a central space in front of the entrance.

The second or interior set of apses, connected to the first by a passage 6 ft. 6 in. (2m.) long, is larger than the latter, being 5 ft. 9 in. (1.7m) long and 19 ft. (5.79 m.) wide in the middle part. These measurements correspond closely to those of the northern building of Mnaidra. To the right and the left of the passage two projecting blocks or pillars constitute a recess, the left one of which is filled up by the fragments of a large stone basin. The wall of the left apse is continuous and unbroken. A peculiar feature is a large block of stone which, springing from the wall, was once supported by a standing slab, thus forming a kind of roof at the north west corner. This block, of which a good portion is missing, is now without a firm support, and may fall down during the process of clearing the apse.

The wall of the right apse is broken and its limits uncertain. A vertical slab shows that a passage once existed, which led to a space behind the wall. This space is connected with the north eastern apse by a steep flight of steps constructed in the thickness of the wall. Two more steps are cut in a loose block of limestone which juts out at the surface of the apse wall close to a patch of white, thick, beaten floor (torba floor), preserved intact to this day. Behind these steps, to the north-east, another unexplored area exists enclosed, partly, by a regular wall.

The second area has three passages opening in the southern wall; the one to the west ends in a small room containing two niches built of slabs, one in the thickness of the western wall and the other against the eastern wall. The passage to the east leads to a larger room on the southern wall of which the figure of two bulls and one sow is cut in low relief.

This room appears to communicate through a square window opening, with a space to the south so common at Hagiär Kim. The material from this room has been cleared for a couple of feet only and the lower portions of the walls remain covered with unexplored material.

The central passage to the South, though still half full of soil, appears to be blocked first by a slab standing on one of the sides and further on by the backing of a niche. The space between the back of the niche and the first stone block was cleared, and it contained cobbles and stone chippings, intended evidently to fill up the space with a heavy material to support the wall of the niche.

To reach the main entrance of the monument, on leaving this passage, one has to turn sharply to the right (west), in a space still encumbered with debris, and then through another passage formed by large vertical slabs. Before reaching this passage, a niche is found, built

of slabs and blocks and limited in front by a semicircular wall of slabs. The passage which is regularly paved, leads into the third set of apses, which is, so far, considered as a late addition to the monument. This large area to the south is divided by septa of low blocks into a central space, a semicircular apse to the east, and an irregular space to the west.

The central space, which is well paved by very large slabs, has in front, to the south, the main entrance to the building, flanked by enormous blocks of stones which have been partly destroyed and which may have served the purpose of footstones to standing slabs. In this space the main object in front of the entrance is a very elaborate niche made of well-cut slabs and a window-like opening in front. A large block of stone, in front of the niche, served the purpose of an altar. The sides of this block are ornamented with a design of spirals in low relief. The front surface, which at first appeared even and continuous, was found on closer inspection to have a semicircular opening, skilfully concealed by means of a conical stone plug bearing externally a spiral ornament so deftly continued with the rest that the line of junction can hardly be perceived. When this plug was removed, the altar stone was found to be hollow and to contain fragments of animal bones (ox, sheep, &c.) among which portions of limb bones and large horn cores were conspicuous. Fragments of good neolithic pottery and a very fine, light coloured, flint sacrificial knife, were found along with thirteen other flint implements.

Low stone blocks covered with spirals of different patterns form a septum to the east of the central space. These low blocks, which form a kind of low dado round the room, were originally surmounted by stone slabs, covered probably with sculptures and at the south-eastern angle of the room, the fragments of a colossal stone statue were discovered. Of this fine statue, which must have been more than seven feet high, only the lower portion remains, consisting of two pear-shaped legs surmounted by a doublet with fluted edge. The upper portion of the statue must have been carried away, for no fragments of it were found.

Beyond the septum, to the east, a semicircular room was cleared, of which the walls were badly ruined by the removal of stones. Within this space, fragments of two large stone troughs with ornamented surface and of a large and elaborate clay bowl were found.

The western limit of the central room is most elaborate and symmetrical, and an altar to the south of the main entrance has the front ornamented with spirals in relief. At the back of this altar a niche was constructed of which only two of the walls remain.

Beyond this altar there is a well-constructed narrow passage leading to a room and, further on, another altar, similar in all to the one just described, with a low cylindrical pillar in front, having a pitted surface and a marked concavity at the top. Further up, a third cubical block, fixed at the north-west angle of the room, is highly ornamented with spirals not only at the sides but also on the upper surface.

In the main room the base of the niche at the back of the first altar consists of a fine block of stone, on which a frieze of wild goats is beautifully cut in low relief. There are two rows of eleven goats each. The animals, measuring 6" (15 cms.) from head to tail, face to the left and have the limbs bent at an angle suggesting a slow movement; they have long, tapering, slightly curved, horizontal horns and a short tail.

In the same room, about one half of another slab, similarly decorated, measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet (1.06 m.) by 8 inches (20 cms.) in height. A row of six animals facing to the right is cut in low relief on this slab, viz. four wild goats, one fat pig and a ram with horns erected and curved at the extremity and three tufts of hair between them.

That the site was in part utilised even in Punic times can be inferred from the potsherds obtained from the surface of the field before the neolithic layer was reached.

This summary description of the building, so far brought to light, gives but a faint idea of the importance of the monument, which is the most elaborate of those discovered in the Maltese Islands. In the course of the excavation, in the south-western part of the building, at about four feet under the surface of the field, potsherds of a type not known in these islands were met with along with numerous heaps of ashed human bones. Small clay vessels of unusual type were also found with the bones, and small flat beads in tiny heaps were discovered among the ashes and some bronze and copper implements. We were here in the presence of a burial place of the bronze age. As this was the first time that traces of the bronze age were met with in these islands, the discovery could not be more gratifying, considering that the metal implements were found along with pottery and personal ornaments typical of the bronze age deposited in a building raised in the stone age. In the bronze age period this was a burial ground or better a repository of cinerary urns containing the remains of bodies cremated in the immediate vicinity, together with funeral pottery, personal ornaments, implements and foodstuffs, deposited as pious offerings with the ashes of the dead.

That the bodies were cremated in the building we can surmise from the condition of the stones against which the funeral pyres were dressed. The Malta building stone, under the influence of fire, becomes red and rapidly disintegrates. Very significant is the fact that the 1 ft. (30 cms.) layer of dark grey, ashy soil, containing bones and sherds, was constantly found at about 3ft. (1m.) above the pavement and that beyond this the bronze age material does not appear.

In the areas so far excavated, the soil, under the bronze age layer, is also quite different from that found above it; between the black layer and the pavement the soil, devoid of stones, is fine and sandy as if carried slowly by rain and wind. On close examination, the stratification of this fine, sandy layer of soil, appeared very evident in the main passage.

From all those data the following conclusions appear to be legitimate. The building in question was built in the late neolithic age and, very probably, used as a sanctuary. Before the full development of the bronze age period the sanctuary fell into oblivion and the various rooms and courts were gradually filled up with dust and other light debris as are usually carried by natural agencies. When about 3 feet of this sandy deposit had settled on the pavement and the lower parts of the building, the remains of the monument attracted the attention of the bronze age population as a suitable place wherein to burn the bodies of their dead and deposit the cinerary urns. The high walls, still standing, gave excellent shelter to the funeral pyres and the spaces, enclosed by lower walls, made a convenient depository for the ashes of the dead. The hundreds of cinerary urns may originally have been buried in earth when deposited or, in the course of time, the earth may have gradually covered them and concealed them from view. After the burial ground was abandoned and completely forgotten, the destruction of the building followed, first for the sake of the good stones it was built of and, later on, for turning the place into an arable field. Further exploration may bring to light other material to explain some features of the building, but it is hardly probable that the conjectured relation of the bronze age burials to the neolithic building can be much modified.

THE BRONZE AGE OBJECTS.

The objects of the bronze age period met with so far are all funereal. As already mentioned, the bodies at this particular period used to be cremated and the ashes placed in a large urn, in which ritual pots and objects of personal ornament were also deposited. Along with the objects mentioned, the pious hands of the relatives placed herbal tributes of wheat, peas, beans, etc., both as plants and as seeds and these, heated but not ashed, became carbonized and intimately intermixed with the objects. Most of the bronze implements found are still covered with the carbonized grasses and seeds fixed to the metal by its salts. At the bottom of many of the urns a thick layer of charred vegetable matter was found in which the stems of graminaceous plants were easily recognized.

Some of the incinerated bodies must have been dressed or wrapped in a shroud when placed on the pyre, for the ashes of some of the urns contain lumps of fine or coarse tissues which, on a close examination, show clearly the texture of the fabric. These small masses of ashed fabrics are of a dark or light reddish yellow colour and are readily distinguished in the grey ashes. The original dye must have been an iron ochre, for, on analysis, the ashes show the metal in considerable quantity. The personal ornaments and other objects were placed in the urns, presumably after the body was cremated, for these objects, although of a very delicate nature, do not show the least trace of fire. The long bones used to be broken to fit into the urn, but not the skulls, of which two were removed unbroken from the mass of the bones. The other skulls found were smashed, probably by the pressure of the heavy material heaped on them.

PERSONAL ORNAMENTS.

The personal ornaments found in the cinerary urns were mostly beads and pendants, which, undoubtedly, formed necklaces. The elements of these necklaces were varied and heterogeneous, including shells (*Cyprea*, *Pectunculus*, *Trochus*), stone almond-shaped pendants, miniature clay objects such as pots, figures of birds, etc. fish bones, carved leg bones of birds, animal teeth, small stone and shell beads and jaws of crabs. Small beads, black or white, are numerous. They are about 5mm. in diameter and 1 to 3mm. in thickness, with a hole 1.5mm. to 2mm. in diameter. The white beads are more numerous, and are usually cylindrical with smooth edges. Some of them are made of a whitish, light, porous and friable substance, not acted upon by acids, probably pumice stone. Other white beads are made of bone and others of marine shells. The black beads are made of a hard stone. They are thinner than the white beads, have slightly irregular edges, and are polished on one side and rough on the other. The hole on the smooth face is large and conical, on the other side it is smaller. These beads seem to have been cut from a tiny cylinder obtained by rolling a pebble between two harder stones. The tip of the cylinder was first rubbed to get a polished face, then drilled for a depth of 1 millimetre, when the

cylinder was filed all round, and chipped off, at this point, by a sharp blow of a flint knife. The preliminary filing is clearly recognized and the rough surface is the result of the snapping of the stone. The string, on which the beads were threaded, must have been of an organic nature as no trace of any was ever found. The beads, however, were threaded for, in some cases, tiny piles of beads, which leave no doubt about their having originally been threaded, were found lumped together in their original position. Long strings of beads must have been used for as many as 6,000 beads were obtained from one single urn. When bronze objects were contained in the urn some of the white beads took a green tinge.

The stone almond shaped pendants are mostly coarse in texture as well as in shape and finish. Most of them are of a dark grey stone resembling slate, others of a grey whetstone. They are like the stone age pendants in shape but more clumsy and rougher. Of the clay objects, drilled for threading, the more remarkable are some tiny carved jars with one handle and a few figurines of birds of which one strikingly resembles a quail.

Fish vertebrae are very common and of various sizes. The largest found measures 20mm. in diameter and 9 or 17m.m. in height, the smallest being 60mm. in height and 13mm. in diameter. One hundred and twenty-five of these bones were found in one urn.

Very curious are the bone cylinders made from the legs of birds. The largest are 60mm. long with an external diameter of 10mm. These bones are either plain or, more often, have deep ring-like incisions on the surface.

A number of peculiar objects of baked clay were found among the contents of the cinerary urns, which not having been met with, to my knowledge, in any part of the world, deserve a special notice.

These clay objects are all made on the same pattern but are differently finished and ornamented.

Each of them consists of a disc with deep incised designs on both faces, with an average diameter of 9 cms. and a thickness of 8 cms. surmounted by a tapering finger-like projection 4 cms. long. At the opposite point of the circumference is another projection, grooved in the middle and curved so as to represent two human legs bent in the sitting posture. The disc supported at the back by a band of clay jutting out at an angle can stand on this pair of legs. In some of the objects the two legs are most distinctly rendered, whilst in some others, they are more conventionally treated.

The use and the meaning of these symbolical objects are not perhaps very clear, but when all the details are taken into due consideration, one cannot fail to see the probability of their being conventional representations of the generative power of nature. Two clay statuettes were also found in the ashes. They are both made of a very coarse material mixed with white fragments of shells or of limestone, with a polished slip of finer material and of ochreous red colour on the surface. One of the statuettes is figured in a sitting posture on a kind of stool. The bust is a flat disc and has small systematical knobs to indicate the sex. The face is round with a pinched nose and a straight chin. The eyes and the mouth are represented by small holes in which white beads were inserted. The figure wears a large headgear like a south American straw hat of which the brim is curved upwards at the back. It was found broken in three pieces but was easily repaired. The feet are missing. It measures 225mm. in length, the width of the hat is 85mm, that of the chest 80mm, the average thickness of the body is 12mm, the diameter of the stool being 72 mm.

The other figurine is more fragmentary. The headgear is missing though the few fragments recovered show that it was of the shape of the one just described; the chest shows two lateral stumps meant for arms and the body ends before reaching the lower limbs. The face is more oval than the other, but the nose and chin are similar. The lobes of the ears are pierced, probably, for the insertion of earrings.

POTTERY.

The pottery of this period consisted of large globular cinerary urns with wide mouth and big handles in which the cremated remains of one or more bodies were deposited along with ritual offering, which often consisted mainly of smaller clay vessels. As to the large urns, not one was found unbroken, but the sherds are large enough to give one a clear idea of their size and shape.

Of the smaller vessels, most of which must have been votive offerings, over 16 varieties have been found.

1. The more common variety of the smaller vessels is a globular jar with a short, wide, conical neck, provided with a curved handle fixed to rim and shoulder. Of 43 vases of this shape, 6 are ornamented with deep incisions in wavy bands and hatched fillings. One of them has, under the neck, two round prominent discs, as if meant for eyes. The size of those vessels varies in height from 127 to 35mm. and in circumference, from 130 to 64mm.

II. Vases of a similar type but with short neck and double flat handles, were found varying in height from 153 to 55mm. Of 11 pieces found, 4 are plain and hand polished the rest are ornamented with incised bands and lines.

III. A peculiar type of vase, of which 9 specimens have been found, is an elongated conical bowl with small base and neck turned outward. It has an everted rim with a projection at one end and a notch on the other and a small handle on one side. Four of them are carefully ornamented.

IV. Three bell beakers were obtained with slightly everted low neck and small handle on one side. Average height 180mm. diameter 215mm. None of them is ornamented.

V. Nine graceful, duck-shaped, vessels (*vase-à-canard*) with slightly everted neck and low handle. They are mostly covered with a red slip and polished; one of them is ornamented.

VI. Eight low globular vases, with short, wide everted neck and very small handle at the side; one is ornamented with incised lines and one with little knobs.

VII. Seven elegant ring-footed vases mostly polished and ornamented with knobs and eye-like discs and a small side handle.

VIII. Five well shaped small jars with short everted neck and handle from lip to side, ornamented with knobs and eye-like raised discs.

IX. Nine wide-mouthed cups, conically shaped, with large heavy handle not in proportion to the body of the vessel which, tilted by the heavy handle, is hardly able to stand.

X. A composite vessel made of two globular jars touching each other at one side and united by a handle which, embracing their mouth, curves back and divides, before fixing itself on their back. Three complete vases of this type were found and fragments of several others. They are profusely decorated.

XI. One composite vessel consists of three low wide-mouthed cups fixed at the sides without a handle of any sort.

XII. Another pretty globular jar, 10mm. high, has a narrow neck surmounted by three handles running from lip to shoulder.

XIII. A very quaint vase, 157mm. high and 70mm. in diameter, has a globular body and a wide neck with thick rim in which six cylindrical holes are cut vertically. The holes communicate with the inside of the vase and on the outside, and give to the neck a fluted appearance. It has a handle extending from lip to side. The whole arrangement suggests a chandelier, but no trace of burning is observed on the rim.

XIV. One small dainty bowl on three tiny conical feet is well finished and ornamented with deep incised lines. It has a small handle at the side.

XV. An elongated vessel with globular base has two narrow lipped necks, welded together, and a small handle at the side.

XVI. Two globular jars with short, narrow, slightly everted neck and small side handle, 90mms. high, are covered with a red slip and are carefully hand burnished. They have in front a couple of raised eye-shaped discs surmounted by semilunar bands, recalling to mind the owl vessels of Hissarlick.

All this pottery is hand-made and hand-polished, the clay is often coarse and friable, the best pieces being covered with a slip of finer material which flakes off very easily. The ornaments are in free hand and the incisions are very deep, and worked on the moist clay. No filling, white or otherwise, is resorted to. Some of the black ware is better finished and made of finer material, but the artistic value of the pottery of this period is vastly inferior in quality, in shape and in design, to the neolithic pottery of which many remarkable specimens have been obtained in the course of the excavation.

It is not probable that other objects of the bronze age period will be met with during the course of the excavation, for the area occupied by the buried urns is limited to the southern portion of the ruins and no trace of it has been discovered to the north of the central space.

METALLIC OBJECTS.

The following metallic objects were obtained chiefly from the central space :—

I. *Daggers.* Eight daggers were obtained in various state of oxidation. The metal is of a reddish colour and is quite tender, some of the daggers having been found badly bent through the pressure of a pot lying upon them. It is very probable that the metal of which they are formed is copper and not bronze. Some of the daggers have two holes at the base and others three, with the rivets which fixed them to the wooden handle, very often, in situ. In one case, a fragment of the handle is still attached to the rivet.

II. *Chisels.* Of the eleven chisels obtained, some are bevelled and others plain at the sides. Some are in a bad state of oxidation, others have still attached to them grains and beads which were deposited in the urn along with them. Their weight varies from 49 to 332 grammes.

III. *Bronze awls.* Numerous bronze awls with bone handle, more or less charred, were obtained. Several pieces of pumice stone were found with deep grooves showing where the awls were sharpened and cleaned.

IV. *Silver.* Fragments of silver plaques, about 1mm. thick, were found on two different occasions. The thin plates are oxidised to a grey surface, and in one case, beads, buried with it, stuck to it in the course of time.

THE NEOLITHIC OBJECTS.

The objects of the stone age period, so far met with, are not very numerous for the simple reason that the archaeological material below the bronze age area has been only reached at a few points, very often unintentionally, when the removal of loose blocks of stone brought us near the floor of the building.

CARVING ON STONES.

Many of the slabs, already uncovered, are ornamented with regular pitmarks as in the case with the stones at the Mnaidra, Hagiar Kim, Cordin, etc. The peculiar features, however, of the Hal Tarxien sanctuary are the carvings in low relief of stone blocks in the southern apses and in the chamber immediately beyond the entrance. The spiral is the motive underlying all ornamentations, and the work is always conducted with the greatest freedom and the most consummate skill.

The most important loose stone objects obtained are fragments of models of megalithic buildings carved in Maltese building stone. These show the usual slabs on end on which courses of ashlar masonry are laid.

STONE STATUETTES.

The limited search in neolithic material has already brought to light fragments of at least eight statuettes of the Hagiar Kim and Halsafieni type; fat deities, nude or draped, squatting or standing. The peculiarity of some of the Tarxien statuettes is the fluted doublet which is seen in the large statue to the right of the entrance and never noticed before in Malta. One small squatting, nude, headless, figure is very graceful and shows a dignified repose.

SYMBOLICAL OBJECTS.

A very unusual group met with during the excavation is made of three pillars representing, to all probabilities, the generative power of nature. The group measures 124 mms. ($2\frac{1}{2}$ "') and has a projecting back which may have served the purpose of a handle as if it was carried about as a sacred object. A fragment of a carved slab shows two pillars resting on a pitted base which point to the same obvious meaning. This direct allusion to the generative power of nature throws light on some problems connected with our megalithic ruins, which have been, by many, considered to be connected with the worship of nature.

A few conical stones were met with, one of them, found carefully buried under a block of stone behind the statue, is ornamented with deep pittings. It has a square base and measures 170 mms. in height and 50 mms. across the base.

CONICAL STONES.

Conical stones were found which owing to their great number must have had a special significance in these sanctuaries. Some of the cones have a cylindrical base and a sharp point, others are rounded off at the point. These cones, evidently, meant to stand as an object of veneration, were abundant in the vicinity of the altars. One of them was found *in situ* fixed in corner of the space where the statue stands. Some of these cones are ornamented with lines on their upper portion, and there is evidence enough that they were originally covered with a red paint. Other conical and hemispherical stones are flatter and have a concave base. They have the appearance of thick saucers, and it is possible that their use was to carry a hot viand. They would have served the purpose of lamps, if they were a little deeper; no trace of burning was ever observed on their rims. These stones are found in a great number; over a hundred of them were found in one space some disposed in regular rows, and some lumped together by means of a lime plaster. Signs of burning were evident in this site, and one could argue that at some point of the ceremonial these saucers were thrown in a fire.

GRINDERS.

Numerous grinders of the usual type were found in various parts of the ruins. They are of different sizes, made of a black, blue lava, oval in shape, with one side flat and smooth and the other convex and rough.

FLINTS.

Numerous flint, chert and obsidian instruments were obtained. One of these is a fine, thin, brownish, amberlike knife with very keen edges and distinctly curved at its upper third.

MISCELLANEOUS SMALL OBJECTS.

Considering that the lower portion of the sanctuary has not been reached, except in a few places, it is natural that only a few of the small objects have been so far met with. Some of these, however, have a peculiar importance. The head of a clay figurine, 40 mms. high, has an upturned face and a pointed chin. The hair is done like the figures found at Hagiär Kim, Hal-saffieni and Gigantia, and is sharply cut at the level of the neck like an Egyptian wig. Several triangular jade-like pendants were obtained and some clay reels or columns one of which is pierced through its middle portion.

BONE OBJECTS.

A number of bone borers and burnishers were found, mostly concealed in odd corners and under stone blocks.

POTTERY.

The neolithic sherds are of the same type as those known in connection with the other megalithic buildings of these islands. The fine, black, highly burnished ware with scratched ornaments is abundant; specimens of painted ware are common, especially in the space L. At this point it was our good fortune to find *in situ* groups of large vessels, some whole and some smashed, but easily reconstructed.

The most important of the earthenware jars are the following:—Group of amphoræ made of a fine reddish-brown clay not more than 10 mms. thick. About half a metre high, they are very graceful and their surface is polished and carefully finished. The string holes, which may have served the purpose of handles, are probably intended merely as an ornament. In the other vases this is quite obvious.

A fine bowl with turned in neck is extensively ornamented with scratched lines. It is one third of a metre in width and perfectly finished and burnished.

A magnificent jar of a light fawn colour was also met with. The scratched ornaments are filled with red ochre which is still clinging to the lines. It has a triangular handle and small knobs to break the line of the shoulder. Three pairs of string-holes at the neck are obviously meant as an ornament.

Two bell-shaped vessel 35 mms. thick is made of rougher pottery. The surface is covered with a fish-scale pattern of ornament. It is over half a metre high and the sherds, when collected, showed that it was originally built up of bands, attached to each other before baking.

OLD CISTERN AT SANT' ANTON.

2. An old cistern, dug in the rock and covered with large stone slabs was discovered, on the 15th January 1916, in the district of Sant'Anton, not far from the "Tal Giawar" tower, to the south of Gudia, in the field called "Il ghalka il micsura". The cistern is still encumbered with stones and soil, but on rough measurement it appears to be 6 ft. deep, 7½ ft. wide and 11 feet long. It is covered by three long slabs of an average length of 10 feet and about 4 feet wide and 1 foot thick. One of the slabs is broken, the fragment being drawn aside at the angle of the cistern. The original opening through which water was drawn, was cut in this slab at the point where the fracture occurred.

CATACOMB OF ROMAN TYPE.

3. A catacomb of the Roman type, so common in Malta, was, accidentally, discovered in March 1916 when a heavy rain washed away the debris covering the entrance. The catacomb is cut in the path which from Wied Kirda, to the south of Zebbug, leads up to the district called "Il Hrieri". The side of Wied Kirda, in which the catacomb is cut, is known as "Il Hsieri".

The entrance is through a shaft in which five steps are cut. Beyond the last step, on the right hand side, an arcosolium is cut and a recess for the reception of two bodies. Opposite this, on the left, a short corridor, at right angles to the main one, contains in front another arcosolium, cut parallel to it. The loculi are also for two bodies. The main corridor ends in another one at right angles to it, in which three arcosolia open, the one on the right cut at right angles to the corridor, and the other two parallel to it. Each loculus was meant for two bodies. This family tomb was found completely rifled and full of soil carried by rain water through the entrance, from which the slab was removed, and through a large opening in the roof. All the slabs sealing the arcosolia were wanting, and even the bones, though still in the chambers, were disturbed. Nothing, except a few sherds of vessels of a common Roman type, was recovered.

The catacomb is carefully cut and its different parts are well finished, though it is devoid of decoration.

The catacomb is well worth preserving, not only because it is well constructed but also as a monument of Roman times, of which none is, so far, recorded in the vicinity of Casal Zebbug.

4. The Museum has lost, during the year, the valuable cooperation of Prof. N. Tagliaferro, who died on the 4th October 1915. His untiring energy, his love for research, his training in scientific analysis had made him, lately, a valuable student of the Maltese antiquities. He published important papers on the extinct 'fauna' of Malta, on the cave dwellers at Burmghez, on the pottery at Hal-Saffieni, on the dolmens of Malta and Gozo and on the philology of the Maltese language, his latest work being the study of words of Latin origin in the Maltese language and how to recognize them. He bequeathed to the Museum Library his collection of book and papers on archaeology and a fine bust of himself by the sculptor Moschetti.

ADDITIONS TO THE MUSEUM COLLECTION.

5. The following objects were acquired during the year :--

30 coins of the Order of St. John	1 sword of Vincenzo Borg (Braret) Commandant of the troops of Birchircara 1798-1800
1 pencil portrait by the Maltese artist G. Farrugia	
3 oil colour sketches by Salv. Busuttill (Rome 1833)	1 old seal of the Order
	1 antique head of clay statue ;

and the following books :--

1 copy Bedford's Malta, in Portafolio,	1 collection of coats-of-arms, in water colour, copied from the originals existing as a frieze in the main hall of the old Castellania in Strada Mercanti, Valletta, now the Offices of the Public Health Department.
1 copy, Les Monuments mégalithiques,	
1 copy, Numismatic Circular 1915,	
6 volumes Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana 1910-16,	
1 copy, Guida del Museo di Cagliari,	

COINS OF THE ORDER.

6. The following coins of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem have been added to the Museum collection. The coins marked with an asterisk were not known, so far, and do not appear in Can. Calleja Schembri's book "Coins and Medals of the Knights of Malta, published in 1908". The number accompanying the varieties refer to Calleja Schembri's book, the letters accompanying the numbers show where the new coins are to be included.

- * 1. La Vallette—1 silver 4 tari piece. Arms of the Grand Master and of the Order. * F. JOANNES DE VALLETA. M. HOSP. HIER. (var. 20.) Head of the Baptist in a charger. * PROPTER VERITATEM ET JUSTICIAM.
2. " 1 brass picciolo or Dinieri — Var. No. 4
3. Verdala—1 brass grano " 2
4. Garzes—1 tredenari " 1
5. Alof de Wignacourt—1 tredenari " 4
6. " " " 6
- * 7. " —1 grano * FRA ALOFIUS DE WIGNACOUR HOSPITALIS HIERUSALEM. In the centre the words VT COMMIDIUS in 3 lines, (Var. 4a.)
8. " --1 picciolo * F. ALOFIUS DE WIGNACOUR M. arms of the Grand Master Reverse—ORDO. HOSP... IERV * (Var. 3a.)
9. " —1 grano (" 5)
- *10. " —1 copper tari } Same design as in var. 1 of Calleja Schembri's }
 *11. " — " } catalogue, but legend differently arranged in both } Var. 1a.
12. " —1 copper cinquina var. 2 sub. var. 1.
- *13. " — " " 1a.
- *14. " — " " 1b.
- *15. " -- " " 1c.
- *16. Lascaris—1 copper 4 tari var. 8a. date 1641
- *17. " — " " 8b. " 1642
- *18. " —1 copper "three piccioli" piece M. M. HOSPITALI. HIERV. (var. 4)
- *19. " —1 grain—SUB · HOC · SIGNO · MILITAMV. (var. 5)
20. Adr. Wignacourt—1 grain var. 2 1694
- *21. " — " " 4 1692
- *22. Manoel de Vilhena—silver 4 tari piece (var. 9a.) M. M. HOSPITALIS ET SS. HIERUSA. 1724
24. " --2 tari piece (var. 2)
- *25. " --brass 1 grano var. 2a. F. D. AN: MANOEL DE VILHENA. MM.
- *26. " — " " 5a. F. D. AN. MANOEL DE VILHENA M.M.
- *27. " — " " 5b. FDAN: MANOEL DE VILHENA M.M.
- *28. " — " " 6a. IN HOC SIGNO MILITAMUS (no cross)
 F. D. AN. MANOEL DE VILHENA · MM.
- *29. " — " " 6aa. F. D. AN: MANOEL DE VILHENA · M.M.
- *30. " — " " 6b. M. OF MILITAMUS reversed
- *31. " — " " 6c. F. D. AN: MANOEL DE VILHENA · M.

7. OBJECTS PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM DURING THE YEAR:—

By Prof. N. Tagliaferro, I.S.O.:—

Corrado Cafici—Stazioni Preistoriche Trefontane e Poggio Rosso 1915	Histoire de l'Algérie par ses monuments Volume V. papers British School of Rome
— — Manuel des Recherches préhistoriques par la Société préhistorique de France	20 Reports of various archaeological Congresses
Evans — Prehistoric tombs of Knossos	25 Brochures on various archaeological subjects
Michaelis — Un secolo di scoperte archeologiche	5 Guides to various continental Museums
Peet — Rough stone monuments	24 Reports and brochures about Malta
Thackeray — Ancient Britain. 2 Vols.	16 Parts—Bulletin de la Société préhistorique
Dechelette — Archeologie préhistorique, 2 Vols.	7 Parts—Revue Anthropologique
Newton — Essay on Art and Archaeology	4 Parts of MAN—Monthly record of anthropological science
Zaborowsky — De l'ancienneté de l'homme, 2 Vols.	1 Part—Journal of the anthropological Institute
Wright — The book of Jonah	5 Rivista antropologica
Badin — Grottes et Cavernes	8 Water-colour views of the megalithic ruins of Gigantia, Gozo
Burrows — The discoveries in Crete	
Hyde-Clarke — The Khita-Peruvian epoch	1 Plaster bust, by Moschetti.
Colini — Valle della Vibrata	

By the Librarian of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Clerkenwell, London:—

1 cast of Shelly's Medal	1 fac-simile of a Charter of 1185
1 cast of a seal of Verdala	1 copy. THE GRAND PRIORY OF THE ORDER, a short history of the Order.

By Captain F. H. S. Stone "S. S. Isis":—

5 boards with collection of flints found in Malta	1 board with potsherds.
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By H. E. The Russian Minister for Foreign affairs:—

Two Photos of the famous Icon of the Madonna of Philermos existing in the Imperial Palace at Petrograd.

By Henry Casolani, Esq.:—

One British flag used by Bishop Casolani in his African missions.
Description of Ceremonial of the Investiture of Sir Vincent Casolani with diplomas of G.C.M.G., and other documents.

By Michael Conti Esq.:—

One life size plaster bust, on pedestal, of Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena.

By Notary C. Micallef De Caro:—

Trattato del Ufficio del Ricevitore—F. Gio. B. Spinola,	1 copy—Il Conservatorio Bugeja (Memorie)
1 print—portrait of Sir Henry Storkes 1763	1 copy—Allison—Storia dell'Europa (Malta)
2 Vols. Abate G. Zammit-Carmina	1 copy—Vincenzo Bugeja—Cenni sulla vita
1 pamphlet—The festivities to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, 1876	1 copy—Libri Corali Antichi di San Giovanni.

By the Hon. The Comptroller of Charitable Institutions:—

One marble slab with Italian inscription.

By Mr. Carmelo Testa:—

One Model penny 1848 and 1 small medal, "Princess Helena born 1846".

By the Most Rev. Dean Vassallo, C.V.O., D.D., through the Hon. Seymour Methuen:—

One silver, signet ring with intaglio on a dark stone, found in a tomb at Rabat.

8. The inscription presented by the Hon. the Comptroller of Charitable Institutions was for a long time preserved in the Comptroller's Office. It runs thus:—

PASSATE OLTRE SECURI
PER DI QUA PASSAGIERI
NE' V'ARRESTINO IL PIE' BUIORI OSCURI
SERVIRAVVI DI FARO
QUESTA CASA CHE FA LUME AL PILARO.

(Translation). Go on your way, in security, you passers by, for darkness cannot hinder you any more, guided by the light of this house which illuminates the Pilaro.

It is probable that by Pilaro is meant the Church of Our Lady of the Pillar in Strada Ponente, Valletta. The great importance given to a light put up in the street shows the utter darkness in which Valletta was left at night in the old days. There is no date on the inscription.

9. During the year under review, 9,257 persons visited the Valletta Museum whereof 2,163 on payment and 7,094 (of whom 928 wounded soldiers and sailors) free; 1,949 persons visited the Roman Villa and the Rabato Catacombs and 1,883 visited the Hal-Saffieni Hypogeum. The amount collected in connection with these visitors is £137. 16. 9 including £18. 11. 6 recovered from the sale of publications.

10. Besides Personal Emoluments (£305. 10. 0) the sum of £147. 1. 7 was spent on works in connection with the exploration of antiquities and £56. 13. 11 for the upkeep of the Museums and for the purchase of objects of antiquities.

14th July, 1916.

THEM. ZAMMIT,
Curator.