



REPORT
on the working of the
MUSEUM DEPARTMENT
for the year
1968

NATIONAL MUSEUM,
Auberge de Provence,
Valletta, Malta.

February 2, 1970.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the Annual
Report on the working of the Museum Department for
the year 1968.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

C.G. Zammit
Director of Museum

The Hon. Minister of Education,
Culture and Tourism.

The Director had the honour to welcome His Royal Highness Prince Charles at the National Museum on July 5 and on two subsequent days to conduct the Royal Visitor on tours of the Citadel and Ġgantija temples in Gozo and the Hypogeum, Hagar Qim, Mnajdra and St. Paul's Catacombs in Malta.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SECTION

Mr. F.S. Mallia,, Curator of Archaeology, attended a symposium convened by the International Council of Monuments and Sites in Tunisia from June 7 to 17 in his capacity as member of the National Committee of ICOMOS. The meeting was concerned with "Particular aspects of the improvement, restoration and use of the ancient North African and Asiatic cities of the Mediterranean region". Besides participating in the conferences and tours of inspection held in various historic centres of the host country from Tunis to Sfax, the Curator visited the museums at the Bardo (Tunis), Carthage, Sousse and Sfax and a number of Punic and Roman sites.

As from the Session 1968-69, the Royal University of Malta introduced the study of ancient Mediterranean civilization for first degree students in the Faculty of Arts, and the Curator was invited to inaugurate the project by giving a course of lectures on the meaning of archaeology and the pre-history of the Maltese islands.

There was only one change in the staff during the year under review: Mr. W.C. Camilleri, Assistant Custodian and Official Guide, left the Museum with effect from August 20 to take up a clerical post at the Public Library.

The human osteological collection was consulted by a local external student of the

University of London while preparing to take an examination for the M.A. degree in Anthropology. The student, Mr. Philip Tortell of Sliema, also assisted with the excavation of Roman tombs at Rabat on three occasions.

Project for the National Archaeological Museum

In February the Government received Professor Franco Minissi's report on the re-organization and display of the archaeological collections in the Auberge d'Italie, Merchants Street, Valletta, where they will be transferred from their present location in the National Museum after the Auberge d'Italie will be vacated by the Superior Courts of Law. Professor Minissi had earlier been commissioned by Unesco to conduct a study of the project in conjunction with the Director of Museum and the Curator of Archaeology.* The gist of his recommendations regarding the future use of the Auberge d'Italie can be summarised as follows:-

Basement: stores - technical services.

Ground Floor,

outer circuit: lecture hall - temporary exhibition hall - committee rooms - megalithic temple elements and sculpture - educational services - laboratories.

inner circuit: didactic museum.

First Floor,

outer circuit: public museum.

inner circuit: study collections.

Second Floor: public museum - administration.

Third Floor (to be inserted): records - library.

* see M.A.R. 1967, p. 3.

In effect, the project would provide for three museums under one roof, each having its particular usefulness for specific types of visitors. Firstly, anyone wishing to be informed generally and rapidly about the ancient history of the Maltese islands would visit the didactic museum on the ground floor, where a comprehensive display of visual aids (illustrations, diagrams, models and explanatory texts) would be at his disposal.

The usual run of visitors would be catered for by an extensive exhibition of representative archaeological material on three levels (ground, first and second floors).

Finally, scholars would be allowed access to the remainder of the archaeological collections, i.e. such material as will not be on permanent or temporary display, records and the reference library.

EXCAVATIONS

The year was unusually productive of chance discoveries brought about by the intensive building development taking place in many parts of the country. The yield consisted of a mixed batch: 10 single-chamber tombs from eight different localities; a group of 18 tombs from Tal-Virtu', Rabat; another more numerous group originally forming part of the great necropolis at Taċ-Ċaġhqi, also in Rabat; and lastly, from a field nearby, 12 empty burial chambers (and 10 access shafts) of more or less the same type as was recorded from the locality way back in 1906.*

* see M.A.R. 1906-07, p. 2, para 6.

Rabat In January the chambers of two rock-cut tombs were exposed immediately inside the south boundary wall of a villa plot along the Rabat-Buskett Road at ix-Xaghri tal-Virtu' (M.R. 4572 7020). Both chambers had previously been damaged and rifled, only one, that on the west, being worth surveying: it had a rectangular plan, 2.45 x 1.40 m., and was 1.27 m. high; a lamp hole was cut high up on the north wall in the north east corner of the chamber. The ceiling was worked to a fine herring-bone 'pattern'.

Paola A Punic tomb was discovered in February near the round-about in Cospicua Road, the eleventh which the locality had yielded so far (M.R. 5587 7057). Recent digging for the foundations of a house had obliterated the access shaft, but Museum personnel were in time to find the sealing slab still in its original place and the contents of the chamber - of irregular shape - practically untouched. Inside the chamber were found the skeletal remains of two individuals, two bilychnis lamps, two dishes, two oinochoai, a two-handled jar and an oval amphora. The dishes, one of the oinochoai, the jar and the amphora were decorated with thin circles of reddish-brown paint.

The Museum excavation team led by the Curator of Archaeology was frequently in the field from April to August dealing with casual discoveries on building sites. A two-handled dish was salvaged from a rifled Roman burial - with rectangular shaft and chamber - at Hal Bajjada, Rabat in April (M.R. 4554 7056). The disappointment was even greater in two further cases of rifled tombs - one at the Department of Agriculture reservoir site near Mount Carmel Hospital, Attard in June (M.R. 4901 7155), and the other on a farm adjoining Tal-Providenza Sanctuary, Siggiewi in July (M.R. 4907 6666) - because no finds were recorded.

The features of the tomb at Attard are worthy of note: the oval shaft had a low platform or step on one of its longer sides from which entry was provided into the chamber by an arched opening. Immediately behind this and parallel with it was a draining pit flanked by two shallow hollows, originally for round-based vessels to stand in; while further in and beyond a narrow raised ledge, the chamber had a semi-circular plan with a low shelf along one of its shorter sides.

The battered remains of a Christian catacomb were discovered during rock-cutting operations for the extension to the Power Station at Ta' Ċejlu, Marsa (M.R. 5484 7120). For a very long time this area had suffered considerable disturbance through industrial use and therefore any vestiges of ancient times had only the flimsiest chance of survival. The chambers found on the site had in fact been cut up in many places and their contents must have been taken away or dispersed many years ago; a hoard of human skulls located in a narrow trench nearby helped to make this more than a probability.

In the circumstances very little of archaeological value could be gleaned from the site, but it was noted that two arched entrances to burial chambers were carved in the shape of a scallop shell, two simple crosses had been scratched on the walls of the passages, while a search in the debris around produced three North African red-ware lamps in a good state of preservation.

Gudja In the last week of August a Roman rock-tomb was found in the garden of premises No. 2 Alley 7 (M.R. 5515 6747). It had a rectangular shaft, 1.7 m. x .88 m. x 2.52 m. deep, and a rough rectangular chamber about 1.32 m. deep and 1.70 m. wide, slightly less than half of which was taken up by the pit situated behind and transversally with the entrance; the sealing stone was missing.

Although this strongly suggested that the burial had been tampered with previously, several items of tomb furniture were salvaged from the debris and soil filling the chamber. The list of intact pottery finds comprised: 1 lekythos, 1 small jug, 2 cups, 2 saucers, 1 small unguentarium, 3 bilychnis lamps, 1 spouted lamp; in addition the chamber yielded a glass unguentarium, the fragmentary skeletal remains of some two individuals, and signs of a cremation in the middle of the pit.

Rabat A group of 18 rock tombs discovered on a building site at Tal-Virtu' (M.R. 4577 7047) was investigated at intervals between the end of April and the beginning of June. With one exception - a singularly fortunate one as it turned out - all had been practically emptied of their original contents at some indeterminable time and their shafts and chambers refilled with soil and rubble. It was however decided to carry on with the digging out of this large volume of unproductive material when the first two tombs to be excavated yielded a few intact specimens of Roman cups, lamps and unguentaria, obviously left-overs from the earlier rifling. 11 shafts with chambers and 6 shafts were dealt with in this manner and later on measured for record purposes.

The exceptional find from the site consisted of a rectangular shaft (2.24 m. x .64 m. x 1.62 m. deep and aligned in a N-S direction) in which a jar 1.29 m. long and containing the remains of a child together with its "feeding-bottle" had been deposited horizontally at a depth of .85 m. This jar coffin had a cylindrical shape with a diameter of .32 m. and bore shallow corrugations on its lower outside surface, terminating in a rounded base and knob. At the other end the vessel carried two handles and its walls narrowed and then formed a flat inturned rim; below the handles the jar had been neatly cut in two unequal parts before firing. The skeleton was lying in the

outstretched position with the skull nearer the mouth of the jar and a spouted lekythos next to it; on the inside of the jar at this point was an inscription of 4-5 Phoenician letters which had been engraved in the clay before firing and which probably served as a kind of potter's mark to indicate the funerary use of the vessel. In the N-E corner of the shaft and on the same level as the jar burial were the fragments of an oval amphora which had evidently been over-fired and which had collapsed when the site was at first being cleared by a mechanical excavator. The amphora was later restored.

Concurrently with the excavations at Tal-Virtu' the Tač-Čaghqi area yielded further evidence of the vast cemeteries which covered the locality in classical times (M.R. 4574 7095). About four dozen rock tombs and a small catacomb were discovered and investigated before work on the foundations of an extension to the Government school could proceed. The majority of the tombs, mostly of Roman date, produced a great amount of archaeological material which it would be more convenient to deal with in a separate publication. Graphic and photographic records of the tombs at this site and at the field nearby (see p. 3) were compiled with this object in view.

Żebbug The chamber of a Roman tomb was discovered by accident under the front wall of a new building in St. Roque Street early in December (M.R. 4994 7047). Its main features were an irregularly shaped area immediately behind the sealing slab and a shelf all along the wall at the back. The disturbed material filling the chamber yielded a saucer, a bilychnis lamp, a second lamp with spout, 5 unguentaria, 2 miniature jugs, and a

8.
St. Julian's During the same month another Roman tomb turned up at a building site in Birkirkara Road (M.R. 5347 7439). Although the shaft even in this case could not be investigated because it had already been destroyed, the condition of the contents was slightly better than at Żebbuġ. The chamber had a nearly oval plan and consisted of two levels about equal in area, each accommodating an adult skeleton. With the burial on the left-hand side, i.e. at the lower level, were associated a two-handled dish, a cup and a bilychnis lamp.

Gozo Workmen from the Public Works Department continued intermittently with the preliminary examination of the Citadel ruins under the supervision of the Curator of Archaeology. On most occasions they were engaged in removing the top layer of

3 no. points, one axe, and an assortment of other artifacts.

(donated by Miss Catherine C. Carpendor of
Wilmington, North Carolina, U.S.A., in 1967
and 1968 respectively)

A Punic tomb group consisting of an oval amphora
65.5 cm. high and with a potter's mark on one of the
handles; two fragments of stone columns 21 cm. and
11 cm. high and maximum diameter 11.5 cm. and 10 cm.
respectively; one bronze pendant, 4.85 cm. high, in
the shape of a Horus figure with sun disc; and a
Phoenician-inscribed papyrus fragment, roughly 7 sq.
cm., found inside the pendant.

(donated by Dr. Daniel Micallef, B.Pharm., M.D.,
of Tal-Virtu', Rabat)

23 no. small stone arrowheads, points and flakes from
the Fezzan, Libya.

(donated by Sir Rolf Dudley-Williams of Plymtree,
Nr. Cullompton, Devon, England)

Bearded male head, modelled in reddish clay and finish-
ed with a white-yellowish slip, 6 cm. high; published
in Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta, Campagna
1964, pl. 68, 1.

(donated by Fr. Felix Sammut O.F.M. Conv., of the
Friary, Burmarrad, St. Paul's Bay)

FINE ART SECTION

During the year under review, although efforts were made to purchase old masters, fine specimens of antique furniture and other objects of artistic merit worthy to be added to the museum collections, great difficulties were encountered and only to a very limited extent the goal was reached.

During the last decade or so, fine works of art have been becoming scarcer every day, and in the last few years it would not be exaggerated to say that such works have disappeared from the local market. I am referring, of course, to objects of a high artistic quality worthy to be acquired for the National Museum in order to serve as sources of spiritual enjoyment as well as for their cultural values.

The best specimen the Department has succeeded in securing for the Picture Gallery of the National Museum is the canvas by Filippo Falciatore, a painter of the Neapolitan school, active during the second half of the eighteenth century and whose works are not easy to encounter on the open market.

The said canvas acquired during the year under review can compare quite favourably, as far as its artistic quality is concerned, with the well-known painting in the San Martino Museum in Naples.

Regarding the restoration works conducted in the laboratory of the Department, efforts were not spared in cleaning and restoring pictures from various Government palaces and churches and works destined for the Cathedral Museum which was due to open in Mdina early in 1969.

Amongst the paintings which gained considerably after cleaning, one may mention the two small elliptical works by Jan Frans van Blockman which turned out to be very fine specimens by this Flemish

APPENDIX I

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX II
RESTORATION OF PAINTINGS

National Museum

Italian school XVIII century: allegorical subjects,
a pair.

S. Erardi: Immaculate Conception.

M. Preti: Glory of St. Francis.

French school XVIII century: Portrait of De Chalvet.

Maltese school, end XVIII century: Portrait of an
architect.

A. Riccio: Virgin of the Fleet.

Brown: View of Naples.

Italian school XVIII century: Portrait of a Knight
in Armour.

Magisterial Palace, Valletta

Italian school: Portrait of Vasconcelos.

After G. Romano: Victory of Constantine.

Italian school XVIII century: Naval Battle
(large lunette).

Verdala Palace

Italian school XVIII century: Departure of Galleys.

Italian school XVII century: Portrait of a Cardinal.

Auberge d'Aragon

Anonymous artist, XVIII century: Naval battles,
a set of four.

Anonymous, XVII century: St. James.

Cathedral Museum, Mdina

J.F. van Bloemen: Views, a pair.

A. Favray: Interior with Orientals.

B. Torreggiani: Landscape.

Dutch school XVII century: Landscape with figures.

School of Snyder: Animals.

Stom: Battlepieces, a pair.

A.M. Vassallo: Animals.

Attributed to Calvaert: Landscapes with saints,
a pair.

Flemish school: Four small pictures on copper.

F. Zahra: Agony in the Garden.

D. Coninck (?): Fruit and game.

G.B. Cerano: St. Francis.

School of Preti: Virgin of Sorrows.

Sicilian school, XVI century: St. Agatha.

M. Preti: Mocking of Christ.

Sarria Church

M. Preti: St. Sebastian.

M. Preti: St. Roch.

Wied Gertruda

Immaculate Conception Church

F. Zahra (?): Immaculate Conception.

APPENDIX III

ACCESSIONS

By Presentation

Presented by the Capt. O.F. Gollcher Foundation:

Silver neo-classical oil lamp, Sicilian, early
XIX century.

Veneered bureau, Maltese, late XVIII century.

By Purchase

Paintings

Filippo Falciatore: Allegory of Love, canvas,
30 in. x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Harry Alden: Sun Bathers, canvas, 35 in. x 28 in.

Antoine Camilleri: Cyclone, canvas, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Drawings

- J. Casha: Pieta', ink and wash, 25 in. x 17 in.
J. Casha: Nude, charcoal, $14\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 16 in.
G. Casha: Il-Maltija, water colour and ink,
18 in. x 24 in.

Sculpture

- J. Bonnici: Contemplation, ceramic, 18 in. x 22 in.
V. Diacono: Last steps, plaster, 10 in. in height.
V. Diacono: The couple, plaster, $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. in height.

Other Objects

Three iron 19th century bedsteads.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF VISITORS ADMITTED TO SITES UNDER THE
MUSEUM DEPARTMENT DURING THE CALENDAR YEARS 1967 AND 1968

PLACE	1967		1968	
	On payment	Free	On payment	Free
National Museum	11,881	2,295	13,654	2,093
Palace Armoury	15,964	10,459	21,048	11,474 [*]
Museum of Roman Antiquities	10,898	6,921	13,970	4,803
St. Paul's Catacombs	12,147	1,692	15,502	1,256
Hal Saflieni Hypogeum	14,099	4,717	16,027	4,849
Tarxien Neolithic Temples	7,865	2,145	9,086	2,565
Ghar Dalam Cave and Museum	4,207	1,080	5,470	2,218
Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa		1,500		1,080
Museum, Gozo	3,141	930	4,149	1,172
Ġgantija Temples, Gozo	10,397	3,215	14,397	2,949
General Day Tickets	14,407		19,093	
Total	105,006	34,954	132,396	34,459
Total admission fees collected	£7,600. 7s. 0d.		£9,482. 13s. 9d.	

* Inclusive of 5,555 visitors admitted during the
8th September Exhibition.