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**A 'new' capital for the safety
of European Christendom:
the building of Valletta**

Carmelina Gugliuzzo

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A 'new' capital for the safety of European Christendom: the building of Valletta

Carmelina Gugliuzzo

After the loss of Rhodes in 1522, the Knights of the Order of St. John were left without a home. In 1530, the Order accepted with reluctance Charles V's offer to create their new base on Malta. In fact, at the request of the Pope, the Emperor Charles V in 1530 decided to cede the Maltese Islands to the Sovereign and Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem, though they remained under the sovereignty of the King of Sicily. The origin of the Order¹ is to be found among the attendants of a hospital in Jerusalem who just before the Crusaders formed a group of dedicated men of rank nursing sick pilgrims and, later, joined hands in the defence of the Christians in the Holy Land². They constituted themselves into a Military Order with religious overtones, as witness their rules, which, *inter alia*, required of the knightly members the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Charles V's permission, or better "obligation", for the Order to establish itself in Malta as its new headquarters was a clever move. The Knights had just once again reaffirmed their reputation as dangerous fighters during the siege of Rhodes. The Emperor's decision, shortly after the Turkish Sultan Soliman II's military

¹ The Christian kingdoms in the Latin East ended with the fall of Acre in 1291. The Knights of the Hospital first fled to Cyprus, but they conquered the island of Rhodes in 1310. In Rhodes the Knights ruled their own kingdom and defended western Europe against the expanding Ottoman Empire. At this time the Order organized itself into the seven languages (or *Langues*): Provence, Auvergne, France, Spain, Italy, England, and Germany. Later the Spanish tongue was divided in two (Aragon and Castile-León) creating eight tongues in all. In 1480, the Knights successfully defended the city of Rhodes against a Turkish assault, but the Turks returned and captured the island in 1522.

² The first recorded master of the Order is known only by the name of Gerard. He ran a pilgrim's hospice in Jerusalem at the time of the first Crusade in 1099. In 1113, Gerard and his hospital received papal recognition as a religious order. Gradually, the order assumed military responsibilities to defend pilgrims and to protect Christian land from the Muslims. The Order of the Hospital, like the Order of the Temple, played an important role in fighting the crusades. But the Hospitallers continued to provide medical services and hospitality for travellers.

expansion in Europe was halted when he failed to conquer Vienna, was probably the best effort to close the entrance to the western part of the Mediterranean to the advancing Turks and thus protecting Sicily and Spain from them. The Order was to transform Malta into a Christian bastion against the Turkish Muslim danger³.

The Knights initially did not think Malta was a good location, citing its rocky landscape and lack of fresh water. But the Knights quickly discovered the benefits of Malta, such as its fine harbours, which sheltered and protected their ships⁴. They were led there by Grand Master de l'Isle Adam, together with their retinue (including a number of Rhodiots), their archives and treasures, and their vessels including the renowned carrack "Sant'Anna"⁵.

The island of Malta had to become Christian Europe's next line of defence against the Ottoman Turks. With the occupation of the Knights of St. John the harbour became a favourable site for a city. There were two small fortified cities in Malta when the Order arrived. In the centre of the island was the capital, Mdina. Beside the Grand Harbour was a small trading settlement – Birgu – which had grown up close to the *Castello a mare* (Fort St. Angelo). Neither town was well suited to the strategic needs of the Order⁶.

The seat of government was shifted from the heart of the island and the *Città Vecchia*, Mdina, to the Grand Harbour⁷. In the first

³ Stanley FIORINI, "Malta in 1530", in Victor MALLIA-MILANES (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798*, Malta, Mireva Publications, 1993, pp. 111-198.

⁴ The Order of St. John began playing an important role in Mediterranean politics during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The hospital of the Knights in Valletta was one of the best in Europe. See: Ernle BRADFORD, *The Shield and the Sword*, New York, Dutton, 1973.

⁵ The 'Gran Caracca' of the Order was built in Villefranche de Nice in 1523. They exist several paintings representing this vessel, one of these is present in the Sanctuary Museum of Zabbar. See also: George BONELLO, Historical Wrecks in "Grand Harbou", in *The Sunday Times*, July 12th, 1998, p. 48.

⁶ Helen NICHOLSON, *The Knights Hospitaller*, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 2001.

⁷ During the period of the Knights, Malta became a State which like none other bore the stamp of nobility, as the chief grades of the Order were open to noblemen only. As the members of the Order were celibates, and as members of the Maltese noble families were much to their chagrin excluded from its membership, new members had to be continuously provided by the cream of the Catholic families from Europe. This way of recruiting new members was rather beneficial for the Orders finances as the new Knights often arrived with a generous advance from their inheritance. Furthermore commanderies were kept in many countries, whose wealthy estates provided the Order with a steady source of income. The Knights were grouped according to their nationality, into eight Langues (tongues). The Grand Master, the head of the Order, was de facto Head of State, for although the Kings of Sicily were the official overlords of the Knights,

years the Order was engaged in fortifying Birgu (or Borgo) which lay to the east of Fort St. Angelo. Birgu became a thriving base with a church, eight *Auberges* and a hospital. The Knights had their living quarters, mostly in that part of Birgu which they called the *Collachio*. After three years Birgu, which was inhabited only by seafarers, developed extensively and more than 500 houses were built. This remedy was only temporary and the fall of Tripoli and the Gozo raid of 1551 forced the Sicilian Viceroy to take drastic measures. The design for fortifying Mount Xiberras and the opposite side of the *porto delle galere*, later Senglea, were based on earlier proposals made by Fra Leone Strozzi, Prior of Capua. Pietro Prado under the guidance of Strozzi built two forts on Senglea, Fort St. Michael and another on the tip of Mount Xiberras, Fort St. Elmo (1551-52).

But the real change for the island and for its inhabitants occurred in 1565 with the famous Great Siege of Malta⁸ which began in May with the arrival of 40,000 Ottoman Turks led by Dragut, the Governor of Tripoli⁹. The critical and decisive moment of the siege came on September 7th, 1565, with the arrival of 8,000 additional troops. The arrival of these reinforcements forced the Turks to end the siege the following day. The siege lasted four months, from the 18th May to the 8th of September. The main fighting took place in three areas – round the fort of St. Elmo (23rd May to 23rd June) at Senglea and at Birgu (6th July to 8th September). It has been estimated that the number of fighting men involved in the siege operations was 90,000 on the Turkish side and 9,100 men under arms on the Order's side, together with the civilian population which must have numbered well over 22,000 souls. On September 8th (the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady), the siege was abandoned following the arrival of a force of twelve thousand Spanish and Italian troops, who had been sent in answer to an impassioned appeal addressed by Pope Pius V to the Catholic sovereigns of Europe.

After the conclusion of the Great Siege the situation in Malta (but also for the Catholic Europe) was very serious. For the island the

the Order was autonomous and governed Malta as it believed to be right. The Order proclaimed the laws for the islands and dealt with the administration of justice.

⁸ Giuseppe RESTIFO, "Il Grande Assedio di Malta del 1565", in Giovanna MOTTA (ed.), *I Turchi. Il Mediterraneo e l'Europa*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1998. See also: Joseph ELLUL, *1565 The Great Siege of Malta*, Malta, Ellul, 1992.

⁹ Arnold CASSOLA, *The Great Siege of Malta (1565) and the Istanbul State Archives*, Malta, Said International, 1995.

after effects of the siege were immediate. According to the contemporary chronicler, Giacomo Bosio:

two thirds of the population has died partly as a result of wounds sustained or illness developed, to the extent that if we were to call in all the males there would not result more than six thousand as being capable of doing any work¹⁰.

After such a moment of deep crisis it was necessary to decide a new strategic policy of defence against the external "enemies". Jean de La Valette, the 49th Grand Master of the Order, decided to build the new capital – Valletta – after the great disaster. He realized the Knights needed a new city with strong defences in case the Turks returned.

The Maltese were convinced that in the past they had received supernatural assistance in times of national emergencies. Thus they firmly believed that during the Moorish siege of Mdina in 1428-29, St. Paul had been seen clad in armour and mounted on a steed attacking the enemy, while they still remembered how in 1551 Mdina had been besieged by the Turks and how the siege was lifted a day or two after the effigy of St. Agatha had been carried in procession to the walls of the city. They now saw no reason why supernatural forces should not intervene on their behalf as in the past. This expectation of divine help dispelled to a great extent what remained of the emotional tension that had been engendered by the invasion alarm. In the second place, it united the Maltese to their rulers. It must be remembered that the Knights, with their encroachments on the political rights and privileges of the Maltese in previous years, had provoked in the people an undercurrent of resentment and hostility against the Order¹¹.

The treatment of the Maltese by the Order has been described as having been that of a crowd of Christian slaves bound to obey all the whimsical laws of the Knights under the usual penalties of the birch, the oar and the gallows. The Maltese and the Knights thus formed two separate communities with little or no cohesive bonds between them. It is remarkable that even during the siege the Knights maintained their aristocratic outlook – they and their soldiers were *i nostri* while the Maltese civilians were *la bassa plebe* or *il popolo*

¹⁰ Roger DE GIORGIO, *A City by an Order*, Malta, Progress Press, 1985, p. 60.

¹¹ Alain BLONDY, "Un pamphlet scandaleux contre Malte et l'Ordre de St. Jean: 'L'Ordre de Malte dévoilé' du pseudo Carasi", in *Melita Historica*, 11, 1992, 1, pp. 59-76.

minuto. Religion formed the only ground on which the people and their rulers could meet on an equal footing. The Turks by threatening this common faith of the Maltese people and the Knights strengthened the religious bond between the two communities; thus people could forget their grievances for the time being and rally unhesitatingly around the Grandmaster and his Knights¹².

After the Great Siege of 1565, the Maltese people found all their fields ruined¹³. When they left their fortifications in the Grand Harbour and at the fortified old capital city Mdina, where they had taken refuge during the fighting, they had to see to the damage left by the Turks and rebuild the ruined buildings. European kings and princes, and even the Pope himself acclaimed the courage shown by the Knights in holding Malta during the siege. Their success meant they had not let the Turks continue to win more lands in the Mediterranean. Therefore, Malta was the "Fortification" that was defending Europe from the onward movement of the Turkish Infidels. So the European Kings were ready to help the victorious Grandmaster Jean Parisot de La Valette in reconstructing damaged fortifications and fortify the Maltese Islands even more.

During the Great Siege an important lesson had been learnt because the experiences of the Great Siege had shown that if any attacker got hold of the Xiberras Peninsula (as the Turks did in 1565), Malta would be lost. Therefore, Grand Master La Valette decided to eliminate this threat by constructing an entirely new fortified city on the Xiberras (also known as 'Xebb ir-Ras') Peninsula. Thus the land behind Fort St. Elmo, that is that on the tip of Xiberras Peninsula, had to be fortified. At the same time La Valette's wish to have a new centre or city for the Knights of Malta would be accomplished. So his idea was to have a new fortified city on this Peninsula which could protect better the entrance to the Grand Harbour where the Turks had found shelter for their galleys.

La Valette, a cultured man with vision, decided that the new city should not only serve as a powerful fort, but should also become a

¹² The Order was comparatively small as regards membership. Consequently, the Knights formed only a minor, though distinct, part of the population. Government may be characterized as oligarchic: a small class of imported noble men determined most developments in the islands. All sectors of the population were strictly separated from the ruling class of foreign nobles. Thus assimilation was impossible. It would not have been possible for the Knights to keep Malta if they had lacked cohesion. But the Order was a coherent unity because of the threats of Islam, its very *raison d'être*.

¹³ Paul CASSAR, "Psychological and Medical Aspects of the Siege of 1565", in *Melita Historica*, 1, 3, 1954, pp. 129-140.

strongpoint of culture, economy and politics in the world. He therefore decided that Valletta should become «a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen». In honour of its founder, it was to be known as "Valletta", dedicated to the Grand Master who had led the victory over the Turks. It was to become Malta's capital city instead of Mdina and Malta's chief town for the Knights instead of Birgu. Encouraged by Gabrio Serbelloni, one of the most capable military strategists and engineers of his time, who was sent to Malta by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, La Valette decided to go ahead with his great plan. He applied to Pius IV for the services of an expert architect well versed in town planning and design of fortifications.

Pope Pius V sent his military engineer Francesco Laparelli - one of the best in Europe at the time - to help in the design of the new city and gave the Knights a great deal of money for the building of their new city. The Pope chose Francesco Laparelli of Cortona¹⁴, who was an assistant of Michelangelo and a man with wide experience of military defenses. Laparelli arrived in Malta on December 28th 1565 and began to work on the project immediately; in fact the works on the new city began that same day. At the time the Knights were divided in their opinion whether of staying or departing. For this reason the Grand Master La Valette wished «Valletta must be unique. It is better documented, both with drawings and manuscripts, than almost any 'new town' in history»¹⁵.

King Philip II of Spain and the King Sebastian of Portugal also sent money. Other princes sent weapons. However, since all this help was not enough to pay for the new project, La Valette asked for more help.

Laparelli designed the bastions surrounding the new city. At first he was going to have winding streets. The idea was abandoned and instead he chose to have parallel streets crossing each other in the form of a grid. Work started immediately as soon as the Council of the Order approved the plan. This is because the Knights wanted to have the city ready as soon as possible for it was rumoured that the Turks were preparing another army to attack Malta again.

Donations flowed in from all over Europe and the city of Valletta soon began to take shape. Thousands of slaves together with specially chosen workers from Sicily and day labourers from the

¹⁴ Quentin HUGHES, *Give me time and I will give you life. Francesco Laparelli and the building of Valletta, Valletta, Malta 1565-1569*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press 1978.

¹⁵ See: Quentin HUGHES, "Documents on the Building of Valletta", in *Melita Historica*, n. 7, 1976, p. 1.

surrounding villages crowded the hills of Xiberras Peninsula. The area was levelled and drainage was built. Never before, had a completely new city been built in Europe straight from the drawing board, since before, towns had grown without any planning. Laparelli built a garbage disposal and a drainage system. In order to specify better his idea of the new city Laparelli wrote:

I shall make for beauty one large street in the middle of the city, the others being narrow and with a pleasant serpentine way, and this I shall do because a city in a dry, hot place must have narrow streets, whereas cities in humid climates should have wide streets so that the wind and the sun can take away the humidity. Narrow streets are cooler because they are not dominated by the sun. For windy places like Malta, it is necessary to find a way to break the wind with trees or high walls, but this cannot happen here because all the Island, and especially this place, is bare and without trees, so it will help to make the streets serpentine with sweetness like Pisa, which is fine to see and certainly was made in this way to break the strength of winds¹⁶.

Jean de La Valette and his Council and the rest of the Knights proceeded to Xiberras in great pomp and there laid the foundation-stone of the "new City" – *Urbe Vallettae* – on March 28th, 1566 at eighteen past eleven, (according to the *astrolabio* of a Syracusan mathematician, Gio Antonio Inferrera, who participated in the ceremony) which bore the Grand Master's name, on which was engraved in Latin the decree of the Council¹⁷. La Valette placed the first stone in Our Lady of Victories Church.

In order to preserve to the latest posterity the remembrance of so important an event, a number of gold coins and silver medals (with the inscription *Melita Renascens*) were thrown among the foundation stone. The words *Melita Renascens* (the rebirth of Malta) found on the new coin symbolised the hope for the future and the need of reconstruction after the long siege. This ceremony was followed by the most assiduous application to the completion of the work. Everybody between the ages of 12 to 60, without distinction of rank,

¹⁶ Cod. Lap. f. 27r. *The Codex of Francesco Laparelli*, Cortona. Private Manuscript Collection. As quoted in Quentin HUGHES, "The Architectural Development of Hospitaller Malta", in Victor MALLIA-MILANES (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798*, cit., pp. 490-491.

¹⁷ «Die XXVIII mensis Martij MDLXVI fuit incepta et inchoata Civitas ad montem Sancti Elmi, cuiquidem civitate Valletta nomen impositum fuit. Faxit Deus illud faustum ac felix», in Roger DE GIORGIO, *A City by an Order*, cit., p. 76.

was employed on this grand project. Those who could not work had to pay one *tari* for every day he kept away from work.

The importance of the foundation ceremony of this new capital was linked to many aspects: it had to constitute the symbol of Christianity, it had to strengthen the bonds of all the Knights with this territory, emblem of identity, moreover the new city had to be "European" in every respect and it had to represent the heart of a cosmopolitan society in which the Grand Harbour played a fundamental role for the Mediterranean economy and politics.

Although La Valette started the construction, he died in 1568 and did not live to see the completion of the city named in his honour. His successor Grand Master Pietro del Monte continued the work at the same pace. Pietro del Monte gave the order to transfer their administrative and residential quarters from Birgu to the New City in 1571; at that time there were very few buildings that were complete. Construction works proceeded quickly. At the peak of the city's construction it is estimated that there were more than eight thousand workers engaged on the construction of the fortifications. As result of the acute shortage of local workmen, workers were brought over from nearby Sicily and Calabria.

Valletta was the first planned city in western Europe built on a grid system: a fortress city to a height of 180 feet between two natural harbours. As was the case in Rhodes, the city was split amongst the tongues. Each tongue constructed its own *Auberge* and adjoining churches. The Knights of Malta continually refortified Valletta until its surrender to the French in 1798¹⁸.

The city was thus laid out on a regular grid-plan with broad underground ditches and channels. This meant that the inhabitants could simply throw their garbage into a pit in their courtyard and every morning an army of slaves would come round to collect and dispose of the waste. Twice a day, the ditches were flushed with fresh seawater while drain water was directed into remote parts of the sea by a separate pipe system, thus saving Valletta's inhabitants from the suffocating decay, which infested most other European cities.

Also unique, was the "grid-iron", street alignment, planned to allow

¹⁸ Alain BLONDY, "Malta and France 1789-1798: The Art of Communicating a Crisis", in Victor MALLIA-MILANES (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798*, cit., pp. 659-685. As regards the Napoleonic period in Malta see also: NLM Lib. Ms. 619, *Breve Istoria della venuta delli Francesi nell'Isola di Malta e loro modo di governarla; Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}*, publiée par ordre de Napoléon III, Tome quatrième, Paris, H. Plon, J. Dumaine, MDCCCLX.

the breezes free entry to the city, in order to lower the heat during the summer time. In the previous capital, "Birgu", the Knights of Malta had suffered greatly from the soaring heat of those summer months.

However, the plans show Laparelli's ideas on both the layout of the streets and his suggestions for a variety of buildings to be developed once he had abandoned his proposal for streets of a gentle flowing nature and substituted a regular rectangular grid-plan over the whole city site. The grid-plan was certainly not his first intention but pressure may have been brought to bear on him by some of the Knights, or by his superior, the eminent architect Gabrio Serbelloni, who had arrived from Rome. Alternatively, Laparelli having pointed out the irregular nature of the terrain of Mount Xiberras may have reluctantly reached the conclusion that the serpentine plan was just not practicable. On a confined peninsula it would have provided irregularly shaped plots difficult to develop for housing.

Just like today, Valletta had its town-planning department, which closely monitored and regulated all construction activities. Buildings were not allowed to jut out into the street, so as to narrow the passageway. Front gardens and gaps between houses were forbidden. Every building had to have a sculpture on each corner, preferably a saintly one, and each house had to be equipped with a well to collect rainwater. Most important, every house had to be connected to the public drainage system. Upon the acquisition of a site, construction had to begin within ten months and be finished not later than three years later¹⁹.

The fortification of Valletta had top priority. The most important element of this was the huge ditch, which ran between the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour, separating Valletta from the mainland. Almost 1,000 metres long, 20 metres wide and 18 metres deep, this would afford Valletta the greatest protection. Within the short space of 5 years, the workers, often more than 8,000 a day, managed to complete the imposing fortifications and bastions around Valletta that can be seen nowadays.

After Laparelli left Malta in 1570, his able Maltese assistant, Girolamo Cassar, continued the work. Cassar had spent some months in Rome, where he had observed the new style of buildings in the Italian city. He designed and supervised most of the early

¹⁹ Quentin HUGHES, *The building of Malta during the period of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, 1530-1795*, Malta, Progress Press, 1986.

buildings including the Sacra Infermeria, St. John's Co-Cathedral, the Magisterial Palace and the *Auberges* or Inns of residence of the Knights. Cassar's name, rather more than Laparelli the planner, is associated with the city²⁰.

As a masterpiece of construction, Valletta became a centre of political, economic and cultural life in Europe, in which trade, handicrafts and the arts flourished. After 1575 the Grand Harbour assumes its definite shape and features²¹. Every kind of people were required: sailors, soldiers to protect the ships, cooks, oarsmen, artisans, barbers and also surgeons for the Sacra Infermeria.

Further extensions were made over the existing fortifications. In 1634 the Valletta peninsula was reinforced from the land front. Pietro Floriani designed the extension and the town which rose was named after him. Several lines bastions and forts were built successively by Firenzuola. There were many interventions and gradually the harbour area was completely fortified. The best European military engineers contributed to this intense building project. Maurizio Valperga designed in 1670 a scheme which included a semi-circular ring of eight bastions with a circumference of 5,000 yards. These defensive works were massive and capable of sheltering 40,000 people together with their belongings and livestock. In the eighteenth century another two forts were built on the Marsamxett side, Fort Manoel and Tigne. Valletta became hub and heart of this extensive maritime network and rose as a heavily urbanized network. The street layout and planning follows the grid-iron or rectangular plan and after the fortification of the peninsula was secured the rectangular plots were filled in with *auberges*, churches and convents, houses, villas and palaces.

By the end of the eighteenth century, following more than two hundred years of continual building activity, the Hospitaller Knights had created a vast network of permanent stone fortifications. The whole harbour area had been transformed into one huge fortress with the city of Valletta as its inner keep. In 1576 the Grand Master sent to Rome for a painter who could depict the noteworthy incidents of the Great Siege and Matteo Perez d'Aleccio, a pupil of Michelangelo and probably an acquaintance of Laparelli, came to Malta where he was commissioned to paint the famous frescoes in

²⁰ For further details on the building of St. John Cathedral see: Joe DEBONO, "A Note on the St. John Co-Cathedral Marble Tombstones: The Artisans, Foreign and Maltese", in *Melita Historica*, New Series, 12, 1999, 4, pp. 387-401.

²¹ Alberto GANADO, *Valletta. Città nuova. A Map History (1566-1600)*, Malta, PEG, 2003.

the new palace. Subsequently Perez d'Aleccio had them engraved and they were first published in Rome in 1582. Amongst the engravings was an aerial view of Valletta, its outline following the coastline of the Laparelli plans.

Malta was changed from a «barren rock» into a treasure-house of fine Baroque art and architecture. The local population, who previously lived on subsistence-farming, fishing, and the cultivation of cotton, increased their job opportunities: there was also employment in connection with the Order's building-activities and ship-construction as also opportunities for sailors and soldiers. The Order had made Malta rich and it was not only the Knights themselves who stood to gain, but certain groups of the population as well because many profited from the jobs and patronage yielded by the Knights. On the other hand military service, and sometimes statute labour and heavy taxation prevented the Knights from becoming popular with the Maltese. The ancient nobility bore two grudges against the Order: the denying entry to their sons and the awarding of noble titles to their clients-"upstarts".

By 1590 there were about 4,000 people residing in Valletta. During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the city flourished into a monumental Baroque city. The catalysts for growth were various, but there were two principal reasons. The first one was that the population in Malta was at that time mainly concentrated around the harbour towns of Valletta and the Three Cities that were located on the south-east side of the Grand Harbour. As the population increased, so did the demand for housing in the new capital. The second reason was that the Knights sought to project Valletta as a monumental urban showpiece by which to impress both upon its subjects and also to other European states the Order's growing status and prestige.

The fortified city of Valletta represents one of the few Renaissance ideal cities to be built. Planned from the beginning and constructed on virgin ground, it follows a rigid gridiron scheme that is an exemplar of Neo-platonic planning principles of the age of humanism and constitutes a model of modern urban design²².

In conclusion, in spite of every expectation, a tragic event, such as the Great Siege of 1565, brought an unexpected richness to the Knights and to the Maltese people. The building of the new capital required a strong number of local and foreign handiworks. The

²² Thomas JÄGER, "The Art of Orthogonal Planning: Laparelli's Trigonometric Design of Valletta", in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 63, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 4-31.

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improvements and the development of the harbour infrastructures rendered this port-city a cosmopolitan reality. In fact in a few decades the fame of this new fascinating city attracted a lot of foreign travellers who contributed to the cultural exchanges among the Euro-Mediterranean societies.

