

Black Magic in late 16th Century Malta: Practitioners and Patrons

**A Long-Essay submitted to the
Institute of Tourism Studies
in Part Fulfilment of the requirements for the
Higher National Diploma in Tour Guiding.**

**by
Elizabeth Jane Cutajar**

May 2020

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY FOR HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA STUDENTS

Student's I.D. /Code _____

Student's Name & Surname _____

Course _____

Title of Long Essay

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Long Essay and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another qualification of this or any other higher education institution.

I hold the Institute of Tourism Studies (Malta) harmless against any third party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.

Signature of Student

Date (DD/MM/YY)

ABSTRACT

Black magic and witchcraft are an integral part of every society, and Malta is no exception. Witchcraft practices can be traced back to antiquity, culminating in the witch-hunts of the Early Modern period. In Malta, the use of black magic was by far, the most common crime prosecuted by the Inquisition. This study aims to understand the local witch-craze phenomena which took place in the late 16th century. Building on existing work by local historians, it looks into the anthropological aspect of witchcraft and seeks to answer the following questions: What are the main factors which compelled individuals to recourse to witchcraft practices? What do we learn about the existing community through such choices?

Based on a review of literature and trial records of the Inquisition, two case-studies of arraigned witches are chosen. Analysis of primary and secondary sources demonstrate that women, specifically unattached female healers, were more at risk of being accused of witchcraft. Results indicate that witchcraft practices were a result of social elements which were present in the late 16th century society. On this basis, it is concluded that witchcraft trials of the Inquisition provide a wealth of information for the study of social behaviour and a basis for historical interpretation. Thus, recommendations for further anthropological studies of historical documentation are put forward.

**To my Husband
Joseph,
My Pillar of Strength**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In presenting this research, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the undermentioned persons who have given me assistance to successfully complete the study.

My supervisor, Ms. Tara Portelli, for her support through each stage of the process. Her continuous guidance and priceless advice made this research possible.

All my lecturers at ITS, who made my learning experience a memorable one, and who fostered in me a love for guiding.

The course co-ordinator, Ms. Ruth Azzopardi, for her constant support and availability.

The dedicated personnel at the Cathedral Archives in Mdina for devoting their time to assist me in my research.

The librarian, Mr Christopher Cilia, for his sincere enthusiasm and patience.

My greatest debt is owed to my loving husband, Joseph, for his moral support and continuous encouragement, and to my wonderful son, Matthew, who provides unending inspiration.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Declaration of Authenticity	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
Abbreviations	vii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Contextualising the Study	2
1.2 Objective	2
1.3 Structure	3
2 Literature Review	5
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 The Local Scenario	7
2.3 The Roman Inquisition	7
2.4 Popular Healing and Witchcraft	8
2.5 Conclusion	9
3 Methodology	10
3.1 The Study	11
3.2 The Sample	11
3.3 Data Collection and Analysis	11
3.3.1 Primary and Secondary Sources	12
3.3.2 The Qualitative Data	12
3.3.3 The Case Study	12
3.4 Limitations	13
3.5 Conclusion	13
4 Analysis and Discussion of Results	14
4.1 The Period in Question	15
4.2 The Increase in Denunciations	16
4.3 Resorting to Witchcraft: the Practitioners and the Patrons	16
4.4 Misogyny, Women and Witchcraft	17
4.5 The Case-Studies	18
4.5.1 Betta Caloiro	19
4.5.2 Isabetta Caruana	20
4.6 Concluding Observation	22
5 Conclusion	23
5.1 Conclusion: Witchcraft in Late 16 th Century Malta	24
5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies	24
5.3 A Final Thought	25
Bibliography	26
Appendices	
Appendix 1 Betta Caloiro: Copy of Original Sentencing Document signed by Inquisitor Verallo	30
Appendix 2 Isabetta Caruana: Copy of Original Sentencing Document signed by Inquisitor Hortensio	39
Appendix 3 Synopsis of Guided Tour	45

ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	Archives of the Inquisition, Mdina (Malta)
fol./s	folio/s
Proc Crim	Criminal Proceedings
v.	verso (left hand folio)
Vol.	Volume



Introduction

1.1 Contextualising the Study

The study of Black Magic and the Inquisition in Malta is relatively a recent one. The opening of the Archives of the Inquisition in 1968, granted access for research on the subject, kindling a remarkable interest in the Inquisition and its predominant control over profane activities. Besides serving as a source of information on the institution itself, Inquisitorial documents offer opportunities for anthropological research, particularly during periods where, despite rigorous suppression by the Inquisition, an increase in witchcraft-related cases is evident. Social, cultural and religious beliefs of the community can be better understood by studying the records of the Inquisition. Through the study of the accused - the practitioners and the patrons - one can understand ethnological characteristics of society at the time.

The first serious clampdown on witchcraft in Malta appears to have taken place in the 1590s, a period which witnesses the infliction of rather harsh punishments. Nevertheless, despite the fact that “contemporary people were terrified by the prospect of being tortured” (Gambin, 2004) by the Inquisition, people were not dissuaded from practicing such beliefs. A sudden increase of witchcraft-related cases in the 1590s, specifically after the terrible outbreak of plague in 1592-1593, reveals that, despite the fear spawned by the Inquisition, society still resorted to banned practices related to witchcraft.

1.2 Objective

Analytical studies have shown that Inquisitorial documents, “may serve as the primary source for study of matters which are not directly connected with the history of the institution,” (Cassar, 1996). By studying the records of the Inquisition, one can better understand the way of life of the community, their fears and their beliefs. Though the practice of witchcraft and magic was consistent, we see an escalation of cases in certain periods, specifically in the last decade of the 16th century. This research addresses this phenomena: understanding the increase in witchcraft-related cases from an anthropological point of view.

The Inquisition, its tribunals and its punishments arouse a great deal of curiosity. Equally interesting is the study of the accused and the intention of performing the crime. Besides the author's ardent interest in the subject, the topic of witchcraft and the Inquisition is one which generates the interest of many, locals and foreigners alike. The author aspires to get to know the people behind the crimes and give meaning to their choices.

The purpose of this study is to use historical documentation to bridge the gap between historical facts and anthropological familiarisation of the individuals behind the accusations. It aims to evaluate why society resorted to the use of Black Magic during a period in which Malta was predominantly controlled by Catholicism and the Inquisition. The research aspires to identify the main factors that compelled individuals to recourse to banned practices such as witchcraft and sorcery in the late 16th century.

1.3 Structure

This study identifies and defines reasons behind witchcraft accusations in late sixteenth century Malta adopting an anthropological approach. The aim is to understand better the perception of society at the time and to get to know the people behind the accusation, bringing them to life. The study will serve as a source of innovative information for guided tours, giving visitors an alternative, yet authentic experience through unconventional commentaries in connection to the Inquisition in Malta and also Dark Tourism as a niche market.

The first chapter gives a background of the study, underlining the importance of studying historical documentation from an anthropological point of view, in order to acquire knowledge about social behaviour during the period in question. The chapter also highlights the objective of this study and summarises the structure of the research.

The second chapter provides a critical analysis of existing literature and contains theoretical perspectives from different scholars. The literature review forms the foundation and drives the refinement of the objective and research methodology as described in chapter three.

Chapter 4 gives a descriptive analysis of the research findings and presents the results with reference to the concepts outlined in the literature review. Subsequently, a discussion and interpretation of these results ensues.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion, whereby accomplishments and findings are noted. It also explains the limitations encountered and recommends alternative ways of studying this topic.



Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

“Our ancestors lived in a world of spells and counter spells, of belief in magical relationships, in demonic apparitions, benign spirits, angels and so on.”

(Cassar, 2000)

Witchcraft, sorcery and popular beliefs are rooted within the history of modern societies. Though generally tolerated ‘as part of the social fabric of daily life’ in the early medieval period, the perception of witchcraft took on an entirely different meaning in early modern Europe (Martin, 2002). Witchcraft was suddenly viewed as a threat and the attempt to control witches led to the persecution and mass executions of between 50,000 and 100,000 people in Europe (Cassar, 2000).

The term witchcraft is not easily defined. Historians question the connection and differences between witchcraft and religion; two social realities which are distinct yet so easily intertwined.

“Has witchcraft [...] preceded religion? Or is it [...] the other way round? Is there any fundamental difference between the two social realities, or does witchcraft form part of all religious systems, even of the most highly developed?”

(Ciappara, 2001)

The witchcraft phenomenon can be regarded as a belief in the supernatural and thus, easily knotted with religion. Witchcraft was not viewed as ethically condemnable by the larger population, but rather as an instrument which could be used for good intentions - to cure the sick, to unearth hidden treasure and to foresee the future (Cassar, 2000). On the other hand, the Catholic Church regarded these beliefs as ‘ignorance and superstition’ of common simpletons. As early as 1591, Bishop Gargallo declared these magical practices as sin, and that *maleficos*, *incantatores*, *sortilegos* and *striges*, (wizards, sorcerers, fortune tellers and witches) among others, were to be reported to the Inquisition (Ciappara, 2001).

2.2 The Local Scenario

In Malta, witchcraft denunciations correspond to the height of the 'witch-craze' in Europe, reaching their peak in the 1590s. Data analysis of three Roman Inquisition Tribunals in neighbouring Italy, provided by Geoffrey Parker, confirm this increase in witchcraft trials:

" ... trials for sorcery or superstition were rare until the 1580s [...] but, thereafter, heresy cases fell to around ten per cent, while each of the three courts spent almost half of their time searching out and persecuting superstition, magic, and sorcery ..."

(Parker, 1982)

Similarly, witchcraft was markedly the most common 'crime of faith' prosecuted by the Inquisition locally. During the same period, thirty percent of all trials in Malta were related to witchcraft, compared to seven percent in mainland Spain and eight percent in Sicily (Gugliuzzo, 2017). Equally interesting is the indication that women were more likely to be accused of witchcraft than the male sex. Inquisitorial records demonstrate that, similar to European countries, the persecution of women in Malta erupted dramatically in the late sixteenth century and "may be considered as a clear example of misogyny in Maltese history" (Cassar, 2008). Women's physical, social and economic power, as well as their role in everyday life, made them more susceptible of being accused of *maleficum*, particularly through acts related to magical healing, love magic, protection against the "evil eye", black magic and divination. These acts of witchcraft were perceived as a religious offence and fell under the authority of the Inquisition throughout the period of its jurisdiction.

2.3 The Roman Inquisition in Malta

The term Inquisition is often linked to a tyrannical institution that exercises heinous torture in an 'oppressive, unjust and cruel manner', (Bonnici, 1998). In its significance, however, the term Inquisition is associated with a tribunal or a judicial court carrying out investigations. In the time of its operation, the Inquisition induced great fear among many and used to 'strike terror in the hearts of the Maltese', (Bonnici, 1998).

The birth of the Inquisition takes us back to 1184, when the Catholic Church's preoccupation to eradicate heresy increased, and a new approach to investigate and prosecute crime was introduced (Martin, 2002). Until the arrival of the Order of the Knights of St John, Malta was under the jurisdiction of Inquisition Tribunal administered by the Bishop of Palermo. It was only in 1574, with the arrival of the Apostolic Visitor and Inquisitor Mgr Pietro Dusina that the Roman Inquisition tribunal in Malta became disconnected from the Bishop and an authority unto itself (Cassar, 2008).

As in the rest of Europe, the early Inquisitors in Malta aimed to control heretical behaviour such as blasphemy, bigamy, apostasy, sacrilege and illicit sex (Ciappara, 2001), and it was only in the early 1590s, after the famine crisis succeeded by the terrible plague, that the Inquisition turned its focus to witchcraft. The publication of Pope Sixtus V's bull against witchcraft in 1585-1586 is highly noteworthy in this setting, possibly leading to the sharp increase in witchcraft cases in the last decade of the sixteenth century (Cassar, 2008). Amongst the many acts condemned as sorcery, the Inquisition waged war on 'superstitious healing' and the belief in popular healers.

2.4 Popular Healing and Witchcraft

"Witch beliefs became widespread when medical knowledge proved inadequate, while magic was always put forward as an explanation."

(C. Cassar, 1993)

The common practise of magical healing in early modern Malta can be attributed to the ineffectiveness of learned medicine and inapt physicians. Many historians agree that learned medicine and magical healing "substantially overlapped and both were powerless to heal serious illnesses," (Di Simplicio, 2006). Physicians had little knowledge of the functioning of the human body; their diagnosis was, very often, erratic and their prescribed medical treatment was little better than that of popular healers (Cassar, 2008). This, together with patient's inability to pay the physician's charges, made the latter an unpopular choice in case of illnesses, with commoners opting to consult the local wise woman instead.

Popular healing practices were an accepted daily occurrence which “provided a source of healing at a time when [...] pre-modern medicine was of little efficacy,” (Gentilcore, 1995). The housewife was expected to provide much of the care in the household, which explains why popular medicine was associated with the female sex. Older women’s ‘expertise’ was sought, especially during childbirth, whether they were midwives or not. Typically, midwives were old, illiterate and untrained women, who gained a reputation “based on their own mothering experience”, (Cassar, 2004). In such cases, a combination of midwifery experience together with healing activities containing practical magical techniques were employed. Remedies included use of herbs with alleged healing properties, together with prayers, charms and incantations. This, together with the high mortality rate of infants during childbirth, predisposed midwives to accusations of witchcraft practices.

2.5 Conclusion

‘Perhaps society is best known through its heretics and dissenters...’

R. E. Greenleaf, 1969

Inquisitorial trial records provide opportunities for anthropological study enabling the understanding of existing societies. Late sixteenth century documents of the Inquisition indicate that, despite the domination of Christian religion in Malta, and despite the people’s piety and dedication towards Christianity, thousands denounced themselves or accused others in front of the Inquisitor (Bonnici, 1998). Contemporary people were not dissuaded from practicing popular beliefs, even though they were terrified of the prospect of being tortured and “in extreme cases ... needed to be dragged to court after being arrested”, (Gambin, 2004). Regardless of the relentless dominance of the Inquisition, witchcraft related cases increased. The unyielding persistence of the community to resort to witchcraft presents better understanding of the social, cultural and religious beliefs of the accused – the practitioners and their patrons – and the society in general, in late sixteenth century Malta.



Research Methodology

3.1 The Study

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.”

C. Wright Mills, 1959

The main focus of this research is based on witchcraft in late sixteenth century Malta. In the previous chapter, the author attempted to define the term witchcraft and explain this historical phenomenon locally, in relation to happenings overseas. What follows is the methodology of the research, explaining the procedures and techniques employed to answer the following question: ‘What are the main factors which compelled individuals to recourse to witchcraft practices and what do we learn about the existing community through these choices?’

3.2 The Sample

The Inquisition of Malta under the Knights’ of St. John operated over a span of 237 years and was responsible for prosecuting individuals accused of a wide array of crimes related to heresy. For the purpose of this study, the research focuses on one specific area scrutinised by the Inquisition in a specific period; the use of witchcraft and sorcery in relation to ‘popular healing’ in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The choice of sample selection was determined by two factors; the author’s ardent interest in the topic, coupled with historical evidence, through Inquisitorial records, of an increase in witchcraft-related cases in the last years of the sixteenth century.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Due to the nature of the research, the method applied to acquire data is the Content Analysis Approach. Information is obtained through systematic reading and observation of primary and secondary sources, in order to examine and analyse patterns in social phenomena (Snelgrove & Vaismoradi, 2019). Two case-studies of renowned ‘witch-cum-healers’ are studied to substantiate research findings.

3.3.1 Primary and Secondary Sources

The study employs historical documents as well as a wide array of bibliographic literature as basis for research. Records of Inquisition trials (AIM) are a primary source of data collection. The researcher also followed the work of local historians considered to be pioneers in the field, namely Prof. Carmel Cassar, Prof. Frans Ciappara and Fr. Alexander Bonnici. Primary and secondary resources are studied in view of bringing to the fore the witchcraft phenomena in the local context, as well as to plan and create a half-day tour (refer to Appendix 3), whereby participants will experience and appreciate the social aspect of witchcraft practices.

3.3.2 The Qualitative Data

A qualitative data approach is a technique in which the researcher takes the role of an observer and attempts to gain an understanding of the significance of social relations or processes for the subjects being observed (Cohen, 2000). Historical research through qualitative data is concerned with identifying relationships of past happenings and assisting the understanding of human culture through observation of subjects (Berg, 2001). By adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher studies social patterns related to 16th century witchcraft and interprets the data which was collected from these observations. Thus, the data collected in this study is presented in the form of a qualitative report with use of quotes from primary and secondary sources to substantiate findings.

3.3.3 The Case Study

To optimise the research, two case studies of notorious witches are examined, with the aim of providing examples of real people in real situations (Cohen, 2000) and give research results a more 'human' face. The purpose of the case studies is to investigate and analyse the events and circumstances that constitute the life of the subject, "with the view to establishing generalisations about the wider population" to which the subject belongs (Cohen, 2000).

3.4 Limitations

Potential study limitations should be noted. Trial documents from the AIM are one of the major sources in the research. Possible limitations presented by these sources are (1) the partiality of these records, which were written by the scribes of the Inquisition, and are therefore subject to bias; (2) the paucity of the historical record, which, even if totally accurate, represents only a small portion of what essentially occurred during the period; (3) the issue of language interpretation. Court cases of the Inquisition are written in Italian. Language is constantly changing and words, which may have had a particular connotation at the time in question, may have changed meaning completely at this present day and age.

3.4 Conclusion

The research methods adopted in this study portray how the researcher aims to reach a high level of reliability and validity. The following chapter contains the results and the analysis of the data which was gathered through the research methods described in this chapter.



Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.1 The Period in Question

The late 16th century period marks a rise in witchcraft cases in Malta, a phenomenon which corresponds to the increase of similar cases in Europe. This was by no means a coincidence. Cassar (2008) argues, that the local witch-craze took off in the 1590s, since by that time, the Inquisition had managed to control the spread of Protestant heresies, an issue which was by far a principal worry. Having suppressed Protestantism, the Church directed its energy towards educating its followers within its folds, thus shifting its attention from anti-Protestantism to anti-witchcraft. This phenomenon is also discussed by Ciappara (2001) who asserts that during this period, illicit magic, such as love magic, healing magic and the evil eye, was “by far the single largest category of religious deviance handled by the Inquisition”. Thus, one can argue that the increase in witchcraft cases was not necessarily a result of an increase in witchcraft practice, but a result of the tightening control and rigorous investigation of the Inquisition at the time.

Furthermore, historical transformations taking place in Malta at the time need to be taken into consideration. The building of the new capital by the Order of St. John brought about a wave of new settlers who migrated from rural areas to the new cities in the harbour, in search of a better lifestyle. These newcomers, unaccustomed to the urban life, did not abandon their peasant practices and beliefs. Cassar (2008) states that people found it difficult to adapt, resulting into a “clash of mentalities” which may help to explain the rise in prosecutions in the 1590s. This, together with the infiltration of foreigners, such as travellers, traders and slaves in the harbour area, contributed to this ‘mentality clash’ and increase in denunciations.

4.2 The Increase in Denunciations

The shift in the role of the Inquisition is a central element for the escalation in denunciations and witchcraft trials. The inhabitants of the island were encouraged to report individuals suspected of witchcraft, even by local parishes. Cassar (2018) states that there are numerous instances where confessors refused to give absolution to penitents unless they reported their denunciations to the Inquisition, be it self-denunciation or reports against suspects. Furthermore, unlike Civil Court procedures,

proof of a person's guilt was not required by the Inquisitor; suspicion of transgression was enough. Thus, many of those who approached the Inquisitor were not accused of crime, but did so to denounce others (Bonnici, 1998).

Gugliuzzo (2017) observes that these denunciations can be seen as a reflection of village conflicts and tensions. Personal quarrels and village enmities were pursued to great extremes and people were willing to lie and falsely accuse others in order to get even. Gugliuzzo further claims that the Inquisition was constantly faced with perjury, a common tendency among the Maltese who "had no scruples about spreading false information to taint the names of honest people". Such disputes conceivably played an important role in witchcraft accusations.

4.3 Resorting to Witchcraft: the Practitioners and their Patrons

Despite the Inquisition's suppression, witchcraft continued to be a regular practise sought by the island's inhabitants. It was a source of livelihood to many, particularly to elderly-widowed women who were "frequently driven to the margins of society", (Cassar, 2002). To the common folk, charms and incantations were considered as a form of assistance for their safety; "as a source of relief to the problems and tensions they encountered in their everyday existence", (Cassar 2008). And whereas the educated sector of society outgrew their belief in magic, the lower classes did not give up their old beliefs just as easily.

Bonnici (1998) argues that essentially, the Maltese were pious people who turned to God in their hour of need, but "because of the low level of education, they could not distinguish between faith and superstition". Very often, magic practices overlapped with religious beliefs. Trial documents show how incantations involved prayers to saints: "*con un certo profumo d'alcune misture dicendo il Pater Noster et l'Ave Maria a bassa voce*" ¹, and even doing rituals whilst attending mass:

¹ "...with a certain perfume of some mixtures saying the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria in a low voice..." (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 497)

“...sentir una messa et che mentre il sacerdote era per elevar il Santissimo Sacramento dovesse voltar la faccia in dietro et dir che egli se ne mentiva, con calzoni in mano...”²

Common folk were genuinely motivated to perform these rituals for all sorts of divine interventions, particularly for healing purposes. The village healer or ‘wise woman’ provided remedies for various illnesses, ranging from common ailments, to more unconventional disorders, such as removing the “*malocchio*” (evil eye), and infidelity, which was also seen as an illness:

“curarlo con molti remedij di diverse misture [...] rafreddato del suo amore per conto d’altre donne...”³

Cassar (1996) affirms that one cannot make a distinction between magic, medicine and religion; healing rituals overlapped with faith and official medicine, and the inhabitants of Malta, be they practitioners or patrons, resorted to witchcraft when they were in desperate need.

4.4 Misogyny, Women and Witchcraft

“Witchcraft accusations were culturally constructed, primarily meant to control women's activities.”

(Cassar, 1993)

Women’s role in the late 16th century was specifically defined within the domestic sphere; that of being a devoted wife to her husband and family. In this conservative mode of thought, the wife was always subservient to her husband, and it was unthinkable for the learned and the elite to consider a woman’s social role, other than that of marriage. Consequently, unmarried women and widows were seen as immoral and noncompliant to the norms of society, and hence, more susceptible to attack. Unattached females were

² “...hear a Mass and while the priest was about to raise the Blessed Sacrament turn her face back and say that she was lying to herself with trousers in hand...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 497v)

³ “...treat him with many remedies of different mixtures [...] cooled down by his love on behalf of other women...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 497)

seen as weak, “peculiar, unprotected and suspect” (Midelfort, 1982), and so, predisposed to witchcraft. If a woman did not conform to this social standard it was seen as an act of defiance, of social imbalance and an inversion of morality, all of which formed part of the witch stereotype. Cassar (1998) claims that witchcraft accusations were part of social control; by being accused of witchcraft, women were constantly reminded to conform to conventional standards.

Furthermore, a woman’s role was that of a care-giver. Women nursed the sick and tended to children at a time when hygienic conditions were poor and diseases were widespread. Sudden deaths were common and at times, magic or *maleficium* seemed the only justification for such events. This connection between women and healing, linked females to witchcraft. Moreover, the conviction that females were likely to “succumb to any man” and were “particularly prone to sexual desires”, strengthened the notion that women were essentially immoral and were “capable of the worst treason against man and God” (Cassar, 2008). Consequently, many women suspected of witchcraft, were described as a ‘whore and a witch’; “*una donna trista et magara*” (AIM Proc Crim 147A Case 83 fols. 56, 56v).

This hostility towards ‘defiant’ and ‘nonconforming’ women was shared by society in general. The notion that women were more likely to engage in witchcraft appears to have been widely accepted and this is reflected in the number of Inquisition trials of the late 16th century period.

4.5 The Case-Studies

The rationale given thus far encapsulates significant elements which conceivably, contributed to the overall rise in witchcraft cases in the late 16th century. Consequently, it analyses the issue in question: the reasons why inhabitants still resorted to witchcraft practices during this period of rigorous investigation by the Inquisition.

Practising magic as a form of livelihood, perjury and a low level of education are some of the elements that are manifested in trials which took place in the late 1590s. What follows is the analysis of two case-studies of notorious witches, namely Betta Caloiro and Isabetta

Caruana, which demonstrate the elements discussed so far. A copy of the original Inquisition sentencing documents of the two case-studies can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

4.5.1 Betta Caloiro

Betta Caloiro (1519 – 1608) appeared in front of Inquisitor Fabrizio Verallo in 1599. She was then a widow, aged 80 and was known as *mineichiret*, owing to the fact that she had a twisted nose. From her deposition in front of the Inquisitor, we learn that as a child, Betta lived in Burmola near the garden of St. Helen. Typical of women her age, Betta had a reputation of being a healer-cum-witch. She was accused of practising ‘*magaria*’ (maleficent magic) and for consorting with the devil *Farfarello*, whom she revered and invoked with the words: “*o farfarello salomone vien qui*”⁴, followed by a recitation of the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster*. Her relationship with *Farfarello* started at the age of twelve, when, as she describes, she was hit by a strong wind in the neck, fell ill, and immediately saw six young boys wearing colourful clothing and led by *Farfarello*. From then on, she treated *Farfarello* as a saint and summoned him whenever she was in need of his help:

*“fosti solita a recitare il pater noster et l’ave maria quando invocavi il detto farfarello drillando a lui le dette orationi come santo, per riverirlo et ringratiarlo et accio venesse presto et ti facesse del bene”*⁵

Betta was also accused of having consorted with the said *Farfarello* to provide her patrons with cures for several ailments. Unsurprisingly, these accusations included remedies for sexual impotence, the *malocchio* (evil eye) and infidelity, all of which were considered as illnesses, and treated as such. Most of the cures involved reciting incantations whilst holding items of clothing belonging to the ‘sick’ person, such as *calzoni* (trousers) and *camicie* (shirts), after which these items would be burnt and thrown into the sea. This done, the unfaithful husband would return to his wife, “*et no haria potuto conoscere*

⁴ “*Oh Farfarello Salomon come here*” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 499v)

⁵ “...you used to recite the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria when you invoked the said Farfarello by devoting to him the said orations as a saint, to revere him and to thank him and summon him quickly to do you good...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 500v)

carnalmente altre donne"⁶. Other remedies for unfaithful husbands "*perse dietro le puttane*"⁷, included concoctions made out of a mixture of herbs, such as rosemary, mint, laurel leaves and salt amongst others, which had to be burnt and spread around the house. Another remedy, which this time was to be ingested, included milk from seven lactating mothers, donkey's milk and flour from three married women, among other things. The mixture had to be served to the husband in his meal.

The above denunciations were written and recited in the sentence giving. Following the trial, Betta was willing to repent: "*hai dimandato perdono e misericordia, dicendo che sei pentita d'esser cascata in tal'errori*"⁸. She was convicted to eight years imprisonment, ordered to recite the rosary every Saturday and to confess every month for two years. Despite her contrition, she was, at times, overheard invoking *Farfarello* while incarcerated. Betta died in 1608, aged nearly 90, still in prison.

4.5.2 Isabetta Caruana

Isabetta Caruana (née Cafor), widow of Joanello Caruana and a resident of Gozo, appeared in front of Inquisitor Antonio Hortensio in May 1599. She was then aged fifty, and earned a living through midwifery. Her reputation as a witch was well-known: "*...una donna magara per fama publica...*"⁹ Isabetta was accused of witchcraft, heresy and of worshipping the devil: "*...supecta d'heresia... d'haver adorato il demonio...*"¹⁰ These accusations were repeatedly denied by the accused. Denunciations against Isabetta were many, but perhaps the queerest accusation was that of having been seen flying on a broomstick at night accompanied by another woman, presumably her daughter Romana:

*"...esserti ritrovata sens alter hore di note nel rabato del Gozzo a cavallo sopra un lasta dal mezzo in su di tua persona nuda...accompagnata da un altra donna correndo di qua et di la..."*¹¹

⁶ "*...could not have known other women carnally...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 497)

⁷ "*...lost to whores...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fol. 498)

⁸ "*...you have asked for forgiveness and mercy, saying that you have repented of falling into such errors...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 19B case 46, fols. 500v, 501)

⁹ "*...a publicly-famed witch...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78)

¹⁰ "*...suspected of heresy...of having worshipped the devil...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78v)

¹¹ "*...seen in the early hours of night in Rabat of Gozo, riding on a broomstick, naked from the waist up... accompanied by another woman running here and there...*" (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78)

This strange denunciation was put forward by a certain Valerio Cauchi, an inhabitant of Gozo. Cauchi accused Isabetta of being *“una trista donna et magara”* and of having witnessed the accused riding the said broomstick at night together with another woman, whom he identified as Isabetta’s daughter. Isabetta denied the accusations, and explained that her occasional night trips were due to her duties as a midwife:

*“...alle volte occorse che alcuna donna volesse parturire di note fosti chiamata et che sei andata come mammana...”*¹²

Cauchi’s second deposition in front of the tribunal reveals a plausible motive for such a fabricated accusation. Cauchi accused Isabetta of being a procuress, a matter which was confirmed by several other witnesses, and of having attempted to procure the services of his thirteen-year-old stepdaughter to a Knight. As a result, the girl’s reputation was tainted and the possibility of marrying her was scant. This enmity between Isabetta Caruana and Valerio Cauchi helps to explain the extent of such a denunciation.

Another accusation was that seven years before, Isabetta had been seen dressed as a male Muslim: *“...vestita d’uomo et sola ed un turbante in testa...”*¹³ This was treated as a serious charge, since associating with Muslims signified “the antitheses of anything Christian” (Hoe, 2015). Furthermore, Isabetta was also accused of teaching distorted rudiments of Christianity to younger girls:

*“...tener che nostro Signore Gesu Christo no fosse nato dal luogho naturale della Santissima Madre ma da’petto et che fu crucifisso che era di quattro mesi solamente...”*¹⁴

Unlike the first two accusations, which she continuously denied, Isabetta admitted to these charges since it “never crossed her mind that her belief, or indeed her teaching, was wrong” (Cassar, 2004). This clearly demonstrates the low level of education of the

¹² “...at times it so happened that some woman needed to give birth at night so you were called and that you went as a midwife...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78)

¹³ “...dressed as a man and alone with a turban on her head...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78)

¹⁴ “...hold that our Lord Jesus Christ was not born of the natural place of the Holy Mother but from the chest and that he was crucified when he was only four months...” (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78)

accused, leading her to misinterpret Christian teachings, as described by the Inquisitor Hortensio, "*per vera ignoranza*" ¹⁵ (AIM Proc Crim Vol 147A case 83 fol 78v).

Isabetta was subjected to torture on the *strappado*¹⁶ in order to confess. In the sentencing, she was found guilty of witchcraft practices and heresy. She was forced to admit her errors and was punished with a number of spiritual penances, including attending Mass at the High Church in Gozo, during which she was to remain on her knees holding a candle in hand.

4.6 Concluding Observation

Inquisition documents and witchcraft trials provide an exceptional opportunity for anthropological study. Through these records, one perceives a particular world view and way of life which made these practices and beliefs persist for so long, despite the predominant control of the Inquisition.

The rise in witchcraft cases was essentially a result of a series of historical events, together with socio-cultural elements present in late 16th century Malta. Deliberate criminalisation of witchcraft practices can be seen as part of a larger purpose: to exert moral and social control over weak members of the community. However, despite rigorous attempts to suppress them, witchcraft practices and beliefs persevered well into the centuries that followed, right until the end of the Inquisition's operation.

¹⁵ "...from true ignorance..." (AIM Proc Crim. Vol. 147A case 83, fol. 78v)

¹⁶ Method of torture most commonly used by the Inquisition.



Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion: Witchcraft in Late 16th Century Malta

Archival documents confirm that in the final decade of the 16th century, witchcraft-related cases increased in spite of relentless attempts to quell such popular beliefs. This research aimed to identify the main factors which compelled individuals to resort to witchcraft practices despite the rigorous suppression posed by the Inquisition, and thus, to understand the prevailing community through these choices. Through systematic study and analysis of primary and secondary sources, this research has shown how the predominant factor which led to an increase in witchcraft cases is primarily attributed to the tightening grip of the Inquisition in the period in question. The escalation in cases does not necessarily correspond to the increase in the practice, but reflects the primary concern of the Inquisition to eradicate popular beliefs, which consequently led to an increase in prosecutions.

Based on a qualitative approach of historical evidence, the research reveals the factors which propagated the witchcraft phenomena in late 16th century Malta. Witchcraft and sorcery were a constant daily occurrence in the local scenario. Fear of misfortunes, superstitious beliefs and a desperate need for divine protection, very often led the common folk to appeal to God or the supernatural in their hour of need. Ecclesiastical rituals were given a folkloristic twist whereby magical practices mingled and borrowed from 'official' religious rituals (Cassar, 1996). Furthermore, through the analysis of case studies, the study reveals a link between witchcraft, women and healing practices. Unattached females who performed healing rituals for a living were perceived as 'immoral' witches and were predisposed to accusations, indicating a misogynistic stereotypical behaviour towards women who did not conform to the 'rules' of society.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

Based on these findings, further research is recommended. This study focused on the analysis of two witchcraft cases in late 16th century Malta. One recommendation is to use this research as a scaffold to study additional cases of witchcraft that took place in the same period, thus extending parameters for comparative purposes.

In addition, since this study was directed towards the active role of women in the field of witchcraft, a second recommendation is to study the practice of magic from a male perspective. Examining the involvement of men in the field of magic provides opportunities to assess and differentiate male and female domains.

A final recommendation for future research is the impact of foreigners and their religions. The Maltese were devout Catholics and their lives revolved around the teachings of the Church. However this did not stop them from seeking the help of foreign individuals, typically Muslim slaves, who were renowned for sorcery. This is another area which requires further study.

5.3 A Final Thought

The Archives of the Inquisition have unleashed a myriad of information on the social beliefs of a bygone society. Documents of the Inquisition shed light on the unconventional culture that dominated the Maltese islands; doubts, suspicions, worries and ultimately, the way of life of the existing society in early modern Malta. The Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition was feared by many. Nevertheless, the Inquisition's efforts to eradicate magic and witchcraft in the late 16th century were unsuccessful. Witchcraft practices remained engrained in the local social structure and persisted as a constant remedy for many centuries.



Bibliography

Books

- Berg, B. L., 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 4th ed. US: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bonnici, A., 1986. The Ministers of the Inquisition Tribunal in Malta. In: *Hyphen, Volume 5, No. 1*. Malta: Upper Secondary School Valletta, pp. 1-18.
- Bonnici, A., 1989. Medieval Inquisition in MALTA 1433 - 1561. In: *Hyphen, Volume 6, No. 2*. Malta: Upper Secondary School Valletta, pp. 61-75.
- Bonnici, A., 1998. *Medieval and Roman Inquisition in Malta*. 1st ed. Malta: PEG Ltd.
- Cassar, C., 1996. *Witchcraft, Sorcery and the Inquisition*. 1st ed. Malta: Mireva Publications.
- Cassar, C., 2002. Of Illness and Cures: Concepts of Health in Early Modern Malta. In: *La Storia della Medicina Come Ponte Culturale nel Bacino del Mediterraneo*. Malta: Apes, pp. 169-183.
- Cassar, C., 2006. Malta. In: R. M. Golden, ed. *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition, Volume 3*. California: ABC-CLIO, 2006, pp. 723-726.
- Cassar, C., 2018. The Enemy Within: The Roman Inquisition and the control of Protestant practices in Malta: 1561–1575. In: FIORINI, STANLEY AND ZAMMIT, WILLIAM, ed, *Ecclesiastical Archives in Malta. Crossroads of Culture and Religion 1968-2018*. Malta: The Cathedral Archives, Mdina, Malta, pp. 171-195.
- Ciappara, F., 2000. *The Roman Inquisition in Enlightened Malta*. 1st ed. Malta: PIN Publications.
- Ciappara, F., 2001. *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta*. 1st ed. Malta: PEG Ltd.
- Cohen, L., 2000. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th ed. UK: Routledge.
- Di Simplicio, O., 2006. Medicine and Medical Theory. In: R. M. Golden, ed. *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition, Volume 3*. California: ABC-CLIO, pp. 742-747.
- Evans, J. & Read, S., 2017. *Maladies and Medicine: Exploring Health and Healing 1540 - 1740*. 1st ed. Great Britain: Pen and Sword Books Ltd.
- Gambin, K., 2004. *Torture and the Roman Inquisition*. 1st ed. Malta: Heritage Books.
- Greenleaf, R. E., 1969. *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century*. 1st ed. USA: University of New Mexico Press.
- Hoe, S., 2015. *Malta: Women, History, Books and Places*. 1st ed. UK: Oxford: Women's History Press.

- Martin, L., 2002. *The History of Witchcraft*. UK: Old Castle Books Ltd.
- Midelfort, H. C. E., 1982. The Social Position of the Witch in South Western Germany. In: M. Marwick, ed. *Witchcraft and Sorcery*. Middlesex, England: Pelican Books, pp. 181-182.
- Savona Ventura, C., 1997. *Outlines of Maltese Medical History*. 1st ed. Malta: Midsea Books Ltd.
- Savona Ventura, C., 2004. *Ancient and Medieval Medicine in Malta before 1600AD*. 1st ed. Malta: PEG Ltd.
- Wiesner-Hanks, M., 2006. Midwives. In: R. M. Golden, ed. *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition, Volume 3*. California: ABC-CLIO, pp. 762-763.
- Wright Mills, C., 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. 1st ed. UK: Oxford University Press.

Journals

- Cassar, C., 1993. Witchcraft Beliefs and Social Control in Seventeenth Century Malta. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 3(2), pp. 316-334.
- Cassar, C., 2000. Witchcraft, Women and the Malta Inquisition Tribunal. *The Beacon*, Volume 5, pp. 16-19.
- Cassar, C., 2008. The Witches of Malta. *Journal of the Institute of Tourism Studies*, Issue 2, pp. 17 - 27.
- Cassar, C., March 2008. Medical Pluralism and its impact on illness in 16th and 17th century Malta. *Malta Medical Journal*, 20(1), pp. 44-48.
- Gentilcore, D., 1995. Contesting Illness in Early Modern Naples: Miracolati, Physicians and the Congregation of Rites. *Past & Present: Oxford Journals*, Volume 148, pp. 117 - 148.
- Parker, G., 1982. Some recent work on the Inquisition in Spain and Italy. *Journal of Modern History*, Volume 54, p. 529.
- Snelgrove, S. & Vaismoradi, M., 2019. Theme in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20(3), p. Art. 23.

Internet Sources

- Buttigieg, E. & Gauci, L., 2019. *Jum fil-Hajja ta' Betta Caloiro, Programm 6* [Sound Recording], Malta: Campus FM, Malta University Broadcasting. Retrieved October, 2019, from <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/42075>

Cassar, C., 2004. *Magic, Heresy and the Broom-Riding Midwife Witch - the Inquisition trial of Isabetta Caruana*, Malta: Malta Historical Society. Retrieved August, 2019, from <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/22298>

Gugliuzzo, E., 2017. *Roman Inquisition and the Social Control in Early Modern Malta*, Malta: K. Cassar. Retrieved August, 2019, from https://www.academia.edu/33314932/ROMAN_INQUISITION_AND_THE_SOCIAL_CONTROL_IN_EARLY_MODERN_MALTA

Manuscripts

Archives of the Inquisition of Malta, Criminal Proceedings: Vol. 19B 1600-1605, Case 46 [Manuscript]. At: Cathedral Archives of Malta, Mdina

Archives of the Inquisition of Malta, Criminal Proceedings: Vol. 147A 1599-1600, Case 83 [Manuscript]. At: Cathedral Archives of Malta, Mdina

Appendix 1



Betta Caloiro:

**Copy of Original Sentencing Document signed by Inquisitor
Verallo**

107

Noi Fabrizio Verardo Refrendario della Santita di Nro S. nell'una e l'altra
 Signatura General Inquis. In queste Isole de Malta et Gozzo et Aglicola

Et sendo Tu Betta figliuola di Giuliano Caloiro Maltese dell'eta tua d'Anni
 Ottanta In circa. stata denunciata in qto S. off. di Malta auanti la nra venuta
 quindi che hauendo una certa donna suo marito impotente per spazio d'un anno con
 sospetto di qualche maleficio fosti richiesta da lei per darli qualche remedio et ha-
 uendoti fatto sapere il suo bisogno prendesti i calioni di suo marito et dicendoti al-
 cune parole a bassa voce per un breue spazio li dicesti tuo marito e sciolto siccome
 con effetto dall'hora in poi la conobbe et ch'hauendo un'altra donna un mal nei
 occhi ti fece intendere il suo male accio che tu la guarissi et dicendoti tu che
 era addorchiata comincisti a curarla con molti remedij di diuerse misture
 incantate e con un vomero infotato et smorlato dentro un catino pieno d'acqua
 poso sul capo d'essa inferma con diuerse altre obseruationi superstiziose aduer-
 tendola che bisognaua dar credito a detti remedij et che no li douesse dire al
 confessore perche altrimenti non sarebbe guarita et gl'ordinasti di portarsi
 quindici pelli di piombo di rete da pescare col quale li dicesti che gl'haresti
 fatto un medicamento che gl'harebbe dato la sanita et volendo ella sapere come
 lo voleui comporre li dicesti che era di bisogno che d'notte fosti andata a cata-
 stia nel mancamento della luna et a quell'hora buttassi sul foco detto piombo
 et ch'haueria fatto gran strepito perche l'haueresti fatto andare in aria et
 il tetto della stanza et che per questo bisognaua farlo di notte et in quella ma-
 niera sarebbe andato via il suo male, ma hauendo hauuto sospetto che queste
 cose fossero sospette di magia no ti lascio farli altro, et per certificarlo
 di questa tua esperienza li dicesti che hauui dato molti remedij a diuerse
 donne per diuerse occisioni et in particolare per diuertire gl'animi dei mariti
 loro. Et ch'hauendo un'altra donna un suo amico quale molto amaua et ha-
 uendolo visto rapredato del suo amore per conto d'altre donne non potendo cio
 venirle da lei et hauendoti esposto il suo bisogno gli dicesti perche non li
 faceuo qualche cosa accioche non la lasciasse et mostrandoti ella molto brama-
 di farli alcun remedio a proposito t'esibisti di farghilo per virtu del quale co-
 suo amico no haria potuto conoscere altre donne et le ordinasti che ti portasse
 la sua camicia come fece, quale hauendo tu incantato con alcune parole gli
 la desti dicendoti datighila a vestire che gia egli e' legato et reso impotente in
 maniero che no potra conoscere carnalmente altre donne, eccetto che te, si

497

103
 dopo hauesti tenuto in giugno l'alzarsi in sui et buttando su una tualda in modo di
 giocare di dadi doppo li tirasti di una in una con un uco et haueudole finalmente
 congregate insieme, dicesti che detta donna era ammaga da una sua parente
 che anco confirmasti quando l'haueui visitata soggiogendo che la detto magaria
 liro stata fatta da qualche persona che no' voleua che il suo matrimonio haueu
 haueuto effetto. Et siccome l'haueui curate col giuramento di te da peccare con superer
 parole a bassa voce et a capo di pochi mesi la rendesti sana Et che haueudo un
 altra donna un suo parente perso dietro le puttane sospettandosi che fosse da
 quelle ammaga et volendo diuertirlo da questa mala strada ne raggiorsi
 con una tua sorella, quale li disse che non s'intendeva di queste cose di magarie
 ma ch'haueua trattato con una hebraica, la quale gl'hauebbe saputo dare qual
 che remedio, et fra pochi giorni essendo detta donna chiamata da lei a casa tua
 come informata del tutto gli desti un puo di belgion, mastica, incenso et ar
 moniaco con i quali insieme li dicesti che in giorno di lune, marce, et gioue qu
 la luna e piena douene sfumare le quattro cantonate della stantia la persona
 et i vestiti di detto suo parente, et anco il letto doue dorme et li ordinasti di
 portarsi latte da sette donne che allattano sette figliuole femine et anco latte
 di un'asina, un puo di farina da tre donne maritate de primo matrimonio
 et un puo di terra d'un monumento abbandonato con un'herba detta li feleni
 me fece; da dette herba et terra in poi che no' sepe curarli con le quali
 cose li facesti una compositione et gli la desti, ordinasti doli che la desse da
 magnare a detto suo parente nei macaroni o, altre, quando fuorché nei
 tagli et carne di porco, li desti anco la terra del monumento derelicto di cui
 vole che la douene spargere inanti la porta dell'amica di detto suo parente
 et li facesti anco sapere che tu haueui anco mandato a spargere di detta
 terra al detto luoco li desti anco del rosmarino, puleggio, fiori di satira fo
 gli di lauro, cimin, gro et sale ordinandole che l'abbrugiasse tutte insieme
 et che spargesse doppo la loro poluere per la casa et cortile doue habita detto
 suo parente si ne fece, et essendo ritornata da te per farti sapere che detto
 remedij non haueuano fatto giouamento alcuno allora l'offeristi di darsi
 un altro noio remedio et piglaste noue para di fauc in mano et in alban
 doli per tre o quattro volte et parandole con le mani dicesti alcune parole
 di sopra a bassa voce et doppo con un coltello le mouesti d'una in una, pigliati
 sopra un puo di sale et l'abbrugasti sul foco gli desti una breccia nera quanto

498

un suo poro getta questa prima incantata con certe parole tra le quali folti in-
 testa dire e far fare il ordinandoli di metterla nell'acqua per dar da bere di
 quella a detto suo parente et gli ordinasti di trauar un'asino et che li trasportasse
 se alcuni pelli della coda et che li lauasse la testa con acqua. Eoe et intanto ne
 dette cose li mandasse, il che hauendo fatto, et essendo ritornato da te gli den-
 ti detti pelli d'asino et una mistura di ~~farina~~ ~~impastata~~ con la sopra ~~mentata~~
 uando et con un pelle di nottula ordinandoli che i detti pelli li mettessero sopra
 la persona di detto suo parente et la detta mistura gli la mescolasse in qualche
 cosa da magnare, gli detti anco un'altra pietra nera, certa herba et un filo
 con quindici gradi dicendoli che li facesse portare addosso da sua wife, gli detti
 anco un chiudo attaccato con filo dicendoli che lo dovesse ben piantare nel li-
 mitar della porta, et battendo dicesse ecco tale che t'inchiudo le mani, ecco che
 t'inchiudo i piedi, ecco che t'inchiudo il cuore aduertendola sempre che a ni-
 uno dovesse dire queste cose e che neanco le dovesse insegnare, perche sarai ve-
 nuto presto il giubilo dell'anno 6^{to} col quale sarebbe stata assoluta senza
 dirlo al confessore Per il che d'ordine del nro predecessore folti incarcerata nelle
 carceri di questo 6^{to} officio et costituita in giudizio giuridicamente dritti
 di non conoscere diuna delle predette donne neanco hauerle curate non sa-
 pendo queste cose e che se li sapessi curaresti te stessa, ma confrontata con
 che insegnasti: magari per ligare l'amico suo sul principio
 di conoscerla et in cio apertamente variasti, ne sapessi rendere sufficere
 di tal variazione, et perseverasti nella neffitia circa tutto il fatto na-
 lei, et perche molto arditamente ti sosteneua per vero quanto haueua a po-
 non hai saputo altro che dire per dar colore alla tua negatione, eccetto che colui
 doueua hauer imparato le dette magari da un'altra donna che ~~era~~ ~~si~~ ~~suba~~
 et bandita da quest'isola dal detto nro predecessore, onche fu molto temo-
 che detta donna confesse hauer fatto fare le dette magari da te et par-
 allora che tu eri per negare ogni altra cosa contro di te, e questo dedotto, folti
 anco confrontato con un'altra donna la quale era stata mediatrice per i reme-
 di che haueui dato alla sopradetta donna maleficiata et doppo molte moniti-
 hasi confessato di hauer curato la detta donna col sopradetto piombo di ~~colui~~
 liquefatto, e doppo buttato dentro un catino pieno d'acqua Eoe, et con un certo
 profumo d'alcune miscele dicendo il pr nro et l'ant maria a ~~far~~ ~~vol~~ et

104
 Dicesi che il suo male non era altro che un'aggravia, patenti
 di suo marito, perche non voleuano che si maritasse con ella lei, et che fra doi mesi in
 questa maniera l'haueui guarito, et dicesi haueui imparato detti remedi in
 un'ora, et che credesi di darsi la sanita per virtu di Dio con l'orationi sudette
 et con l'oratione di s^{to} Anastasia uice s^{to} Anastasia in mezzo della porta sedia,
 rassauo d^{to} s^{to} Anastasia in lei, la mia testa mi dole, veni qua, e' imparo l'ora-
 tionem a s^{to} Antoni leuami dalla testa questi dolori, et recitasti anchor due altre
 orationi vanissime quali fosti solita dire quando urauai de te infermita eroe
 virgo gloriosa tam formosa come la rosa, q^{ui} Dios che uo nascer alas terras por
 esser uirginio l'Angelo san Gabriel pregando su pastora haueui fondato un figlio pa-
 reo Mario con tanta allegria todo il modo saluaria sino il peccato nel giudicio mi
 s^{to} Gesu dopo messo nelle manos los clauaros la corona l'espina et sprecio
 sangue, l'altra chittaros, s. Maria la limpia da s. Maria non fagas esto sin
 consogno, sin conflagua haueui da passar passamo di d^{to} andar ueni san
 Martin con gran dolor partio lo manto de color, medio a s^{to} medio su peccatore,
 Rouera uita, tu uia gadagnas comeria y erio inuentado y erio illechiada
 sino il feter del paradiso sino il feter del inferno resurrexi. vita eterna
 amen. doppo recitasti l'altra dicendo uerbo consiglio, re uerbo di H. B. miso
 in legno della croce per noi peccatori con tanta bella, spacio in cielo l'altra
 in terra quanto d^{to} Aglio chi dice fo di grandi il peccato, ueniti nesci di
 piccioli e grandi trenta tre anni uasi chiagli ueniti et noni mar-
 tura s. Luceo respondi san s^{to} beata Maria uo uerbo io quella quattro vol-
 ti uia la morte resurrexi vita eterna amen et non uolesi dire che cosa uia
 significassero quelle parole incognite, ma dicesi che ti sono insegnate da un pre-
 stese essendo tu di s^{to} anni, et dicesi che quando si dicono le dette orationi sem-
 re Christo sta in la palla e non uie timore di sp^o maligno, et doppo dicesi che
 un medico biacese haueui insegnato il detto remedio del pianto col quale in-
 un'ora donna, ch'era bisogno che fosse di rete cioe l'haueui tocco il mare per-
 che dicesi che fonte che fu benedetto da H. B. et quanto a quell'altra donna che
 hebbe date i detti remedi per diuertire suo parente dala mala strada haueui
 preterato di non conuerla ne trattato seco d'isto aluna, fosti con Ma lei
 conuenuta quale al principio dicesi di non conoscerla, ma vedendoti assente
 ta molti interrogatorij confessasti d'haueui la ueram^{te} conosciuta con occasio-
 ne che il mesi adietro venne d'istatua riuolgendoti di farli qualche remedio

499

accio un suo parente. Diminire pero detta donna, et pero li delli non puo di delgno
 in, incanto, maffio et dell' armonico qual solo incantasti invocando un demone
 chiamato farfarello dicendoli o farfarello salomone vieni, ma che pero l'altre
 cose non l'incantasti, ne sei solito incantare perche se uono et entrano in chiesa
 et li dicesti che con dette cose s'fumasse le quattro cantorate della cantoria di detto
 suo parente et dicesti che qñ l'uoriti questo demone sempre viene, et che se l'ha
 invocato che non sia venuto, et che ti vuol comparire in forma d'un puto di sei
 anni incirca vestito di panno di diversi colori, ma che pero no l'invoriti uero,
 se no qñ t'occorre il bisogno, et dicesti hauer ordinato ala detta donna di lavar
 con l'acqua la testa d'un Arino et di portarli insieme con detta acqua i peli della sua
 coda, quali incantasti dicendo o farfarello salomone vien qui, e fa che il tale
 douenti come un asino et li delli doppo detta acqua per spargerla nella casa
 di detto suo parente et che li peli l'abbruciante et la cenere mescolasse con
 detta acqua et che gli delli un pebbo di farfalla per darne da magnare a detto
 suo parente per farlo andare come un detto uello sopra il quale dicesti hauer
 detto il pr et l'auemario, et gli delli anco una breccia quale tu chiami la pio-
 tosa et l'incantasti dicendo pero in maltese o, piatosa calasti del cielo in terra
 ti pari N.º donna s' hauria cussi come ij piatosa cussi fa che douenti et l'ha
 me ordinandoli che la mettesse nell'acqua et di quella ne desse da bere
 suo parente, et dicesti che quella mistura della farina batta da tre donne
 maritate di pur o matrimonio et latte di sette donne no gli inuoriti
 re nei, caoli in la carne del porco, perche c' tutta l'altre viuande
 oprato, da quella in poi anzi dicesti che l'haui fatto impallare se l'haue
 se mescolato, con i, caoli, et dicesti d' hauerli dato della terra d'un mo
 derelitto, quale prima incantasti con certe parole dane et gl'ordinasti che
 la spargesse auanti la porta della casa di detto suo parente, et anco dell'
 suo, et dell' istessa terra dicesti hauerne dato a un'altra persona per se
 uisione et fare che un suo aduersario no lo molestasse piu in una di ch' ho
 uena seco et che n' hauerui visto l'effetto di detto remedio, gli delli anco
 con quindici nodi quali incantasti per fare che tutti membri della persona
 fossero nodati accio che no potessero oprare et confessasti d' hauer
 fatto tutti quei altri remedij che la detta donna ti disse alla tua prima et d' ha-

105

nell'anno detto che quelle cose non si facevano, e che per non ti re-
cordavi d'haverli detto che il giubileo dell'anno 8.^o era vicino, e con quello pri-
mo assoluto senza confessarlo; et dicesti haver imparato questi incanti et fatture
dalla tua cortigiana siciliana che è morta molto tempo fa, confessasti
anche che la notte mai non dormivi perche ordinariamente sei dal campo
dei sei anni sempre fuori solita vedere forme, ^{come} figliuoli ma che sono
demonij in gran numero ballando dentro la propria stanza, et costituita
di nuovo di tanti d'noi per cavar da te la tua mala intentione et credulita dicesti
che il principio di questo fu che una sera di notte mentre stavi alla barbuta
fosti mandata da tua madre a un luogo dove ti comparsero sei figliuolini vestiti
di diversi colori et con essi un loro capitano con una mazza in mano et ch'essi
vestiti da essi una gran lotta al collo come una perizoma di gran vento et che fosti
male per quattro mesi, et che nella medesima sera hauevi reposita una fornata
di pane in una cassa, et dormendo sentesti bussar gagliardamente dentro la
cassa, et destata dal sonno sentesti dinnoo un strepito di magnare in modo
che pareua esser un gran n.^o di gente che magnaua, et fattosi giorno non ri-
trovasti il pane nella detta cassa, et che allora andasti da una tua vicina et
comandole questo ti disse che coloro erano spiriti, et che per li douesti appa-
riare la tavola con la sabiera un piatto di miel bruccio, una pagnotta, un
coltello, vino et acqua, il che hauendo fatto nella seguente mattina poi ritro-
uasti tutto il pane che mancava; et dicesti che questo fu il prin-
cipio della familiarita con detti spiriti, la quale continuò, in uno a tanto che
fosti chiamato da questi spiriti, et dicesti che con detti spiriti non haueui sca-
tuto ne patto ne trattato, ne anco gli haueui offerto ne promesso cosa al-
cuna, e ben vero che i haueuano detto che li douesti tenere apparecchiato
la tavola tanto di giorno come di notte se uoleui hauer del bene da essi loro,
et che gli la preparaua, et che i haueuano detto di piu, che a coloro i quali
non faceuano il simile non faceuano del bene, et dicesti che questo era li fa-
tore di giorno et di notte per honorarli accio non i haueuero fatto del male
et gli la preparaua con gl'ornamenti che dicesti di sopra; e ben vero che
la sabiera gli la metteui bianchissima siccome i haueuano ordinato, ne
uoleui confessar d'hauerli offerto altro, non parendomi verisimile. Et di

500

cetti che per virtù de' incanti che fagiani dicendo il p^r n^o et l'aucmaria ^{irilla}
 te sempre a far fare illo credenti che i sopradetti remedij operassero et che anco
 fosse solita recitare il p^r n^o et l'aucmaria q^u invocaua il detto farfarello. ^{dis}
 Zando a lui le dette orationi come santo, per viuere et ingrattarsi et
 auere venene presto et ti facesse del bene, et quello che desidera, et che crede:
 ui che meritasse detti honori per hauer uolto con esperienza il bene ^{di far}
 a' quei tali che l'honorauano, sapendo pero molto bene no esser lecito far vi-
 mili honori al demonio ne drillar a esso l'orationi come dote di beni, ma al
 S^o Dio et suoi B^{ti}. Et che hai creduto et credenti sempre, che detti incanti et re-
 medij potessero sporcare et necessitare il libero arbitrio dell'huomo, in fa-
 re qualche intendenti ala tua morte, sapendo pero che il contrario teneua
 la B^{ta} madre chiesa catholica, ma che il diavolo ti permase a crederlo et
 come bestia ti lasciasti ingannare, pero dicesti che per l'auuenire sei risoluto
 di voler credere et tenere tutto il contrario et di ^{no} voler mai piu far fare
 viari, et incanti et anco ^{mai piu} familiarita et commercio di detto farfa-
 cello et compagni et di dimandarti perdono et assolutione di questi errori.
 Et hauendo noi visto et diligentemente considerato nella n^{ra} ^{con} tutte le
 cose predette et alie, e da uiderci et considerari insieme con tutto il
 formato in questa ^{ia}, vertente in questo B^o Aff^o. tra il Dottor Gio: Don-
 zabattista ^{procuratore fiscale} da una parte e de Betta predetta ^{reo}, in-
 sito, processato, e per tua confessione et ^{speciale} ^{ritrattata} si siamo
 luti col consiglio de Dottori theologi e can^{onici} diuenire alla l^{upa} ^{sentenza}
 Inuocato adunq^{ue} il nome di N^{ro} B^{no} Iesu xpi et della sua gloriosissima ma-
 dre sempre vergine maria per questa n^{ra} diffinitiva sentenza
 sedendo pro tribunali proferimo in questi scritti ^{noi} ^{promouiamo}
 sententiamo, et dichiariamo de Betta predetta ^{per} ^{tua} ^{confessione}
 stato, et esser heretica, et che percio sei incorso in ^{le} ^{pene}
 c^{he} ^{che} ^{dalla} ^{sacri} ^{canoni} ^e ^{constitutioni} ^{g^{ra}li} ^e ^{particolari} ^{con} ^{simil}
 delinquenti imposte, e promolgate, e che percio sei obligata ad aburrare ^{le} ^{dette}
 heresie insieme con ogni altro errore et heresia contrario alla ^{predetta}
 B^{ta} chiesa.
 Ma perche hai dimandato perdono e misericordia dicendo che sei ^{per} ^{la} ^{tua} ^{causa}

106

cato in tal'errori, et di voler apurarsi e far la penitenza che ti sarà dato, et
per non venire voler vivere cattolicamente come contenti assoluti dalle con-
danne ecc. che per te incorse et ammetterti nel grembo della S.^a Madre Chiesa
Romana, purché col cuor sincero e fede no finta ritorni, et abiuri,
maledicendo i delitti tuoi heresie nel modo e forma che da Noi ti sarà data,
fatti però dell' habito della penitente ornato del segno della S.^a croce
con una candela accesa in mano in segno di reconciliatione.

Caccio che questi tuoi gravissimi errori no restino totalmente impuniti, ma
sia esempio a gl' altri, che s'astenghino da simili delitti ti condanniamo
d'esser immurata in una carcere da eleggerci da Noi per otto anni. Et alio-
che da N. B.^e ottenghi più facilmente misericordia e perdono di questi tuoi
errori per penitenta salutare c'inquingemo che debbi per doi anni gestimi
confessarti una volta il mese et per detto tempo recitare la corona ogni
sabbato et così dicemo pronunciamo sententiamo dichiaramo condanna-
mo et penitentiamo In questo et in ogni altro miglior modo et forma che
di ragione potemo et douemo.

f. Vercallus Inq.

Inquis. mensis Julij 1697 lata fuit exst. supradicta sententia per
tributum Ad. Jussu S. M. J. Anno Inquis. rem. pro tribunali se-
dentem et decisi ordine et mandato lecta et publicata per me
magnum noscitur alac et intelligibili voce. In vey ecclesia dice
marie Annuntiationis victorisae civitatis Alalte dora regerario
multitudine populi videm pnto rstante pnto de supradicta betta
calvo per n. flexis audiente et intelligente, ad per instantem
gli asedi dno dd He dominici testa ferrata l. v. d. pro
notaris fiscalis S. offi pseris Instantis pseris de pro
notaris sps dno Heciano furdo I. v. d. mto noto ad
Holoferenti, et dno Jo Francisco vassallo
Ita est Nos des luas Gauj ni nos b. Offi mltien

501

Appendix 2



Isabetta Caruana:

Copy of Original Sentencing Document signed by Inquisitor Hortensio

del suo cuore perseverando d'averire che la tua opinione era buona
delle quali due cose era negata d'esser vera che d'haver detto che non
era fosse crucifissa & me: quattor e l'altra d'esserti haver la tenes
e si spara d'Altri perche credi per me Ignoranza che fosse più
gloria di noi. ^{et} Il order che miracolosamente fosse uscito d'altra lingua
che dal luogo naturale dicendo d'haver concetta opinione d'ate et non
d'haver mai saputo che la tua chiesa tenesse altrimenti et rendedoti più
subito d'alcuna la detta opinione et tenere la vera cioè che sia uscito dal
luogo naturale e comune. Dico tutti l'altri erano per l'heresia tua la
tua Ignoranza ^{et} ~~non~~ ^{per} ~~relazione~~ ^{relazione} ~~da~~ ^{da} ~~questo~~ ^{questo} ~~offo~~ ^{offo} senza alcuna penitenza
et ~~apparentemente~~ ^{per} ~~tenendo~~ ^{tenendo} ~~vi~~ ^{vi} ~~ard.~~ ^{ard.} Lentamente considerato nella mia congre-
gatione tutte le cose predette et altre da vedersi e considerarsi. In nome
di Dio il process formato in questa causa concernente le due materie
vertente in questo ~~offo~~ ^{offo} tra il dottor Gio: Domenis ed i fratelli pro-
mota fissata d'una parte et la Isabella predetta rea in questa et pro-
cessata come sopra da l'altra, ci siamo resciuti al consiglio de' dottori
Theologi et canonici di venire all'infra sentenza —
Inscritto dunque il nome di Dio sopra ~~offo~~ ^{offo} et della sua gloria spira-
zione sempre vergine Maria per questa nostra diffinitiva sentenza
quale vedendo pro tribunali proferimus in questi scritti dicimus pro-
nunciamus sententiam et declaramus te Isabella predetta per questo
costo contra dite, esser ~~Ueniente~~ ^{Ueniente} sospesa d'heresia cioè d'haver
fatto professione di causalzar con diavolo, heretico come fanno le sortilegi
et magore et consequentemente d'haver donato il demonio et d'esser
li pronta ad obediare et a piacere in tutto per ottenere le tue voglie
et che perciò sei incorsa in tutte le pene et censure da sagr'canoni
et constitutioni generali e particolari contro em. l. de Inquanti-
detta heresia in secreto come per questa sentenza nostra comandiamo
abjuratione et amò contenti ass. tuerti dalle censure et pene
etc. nelle quali per le predette cose sei incorsa et a diche.

32

quelli tua delitti non restino impunite ma se uno di essi
agli altri che s'habbia d'obediencia da i miei Deputati e questi si
condanniamo che la domenica prossima mentre l'Ugual sarà cinge-
rato nella chiesa maggiore del gorgo de bbi stare inginocchiato sopra
in un luogo alto & una candela accesa in mano per più che prima
la messa maggiore et per salutar penitente e imponemmo che debba
stare se volle l'anno codi consigli del suo Signore debbi ricevere
il santissimo sacramento dell'eucharistia cioè la pasqua di resurrexio
lo pentecoste alla festività di S. Joanne bti l'assunzione della madona
d'Agoilo et la festa di tutti i santi et la festa di nascita di nro. S. C.
Dies xpi et per un anno continuo ogni settimana il versari. Poi
dicemus pronuciamus sententiam declaramus suspendimus condennamus
et penitemciam in quello et in ogni altro meglio modo e forma che
di ragione potemo e dicemus.

A. Hartenwig maj?

Die xxj. Mensis septembris 1799. lata fuit rescriptum supra dicta sen-
tentia perhibitu ad: Nos et magistrum Inquisitorem
pro tribunali sedentem et se eius ordine et mandato
verba et publicata per me deputatum loco m'i notij s' officij
adnotat Instanz spūs dñi fr̄s dominici testaperrada pro
motoris fiscalis hora vesperarū in domo palatii s' offi-
cij p'te dicta Isabella caruana de nobz floeis corā du-
ro m'o dño, Presidibz et fr̄s patribz fr̄e dominico Not-
fr̄e mariam casarella m'o noes fr̄esimo setuna
et Julio balzan ac alijs plurimis restibz

Haest. Nov. 1. Festina, Gaudi. 17th Nov.

[illegible]

Io Elisabetta sommersa ho abiurato, giurato, promesso e mi sono obli-
gata come in forma e in fede del vero, ho fatto in pieno della
sua Croce di mia propria mano nella già ceduta di terra a Vienna,
ne in Malta Nel Palazzo del S. R. di questo di 22. Agosto 1791.



Die 27^a Mensis septembris 1599. facta fuit coram vobis
abjuratio per Johannem Sabellum caruana terra ves verana
In lamiera galatij & filij Genovesis flexis genibus & d. M.
vobis dno inquitore pro tribunali sedente, natus: v.
m^o notario p^{re}s. & officij legente ea vero alia intelligit;
vobis dicitur abjuratio proferente de verbo ad verbum
ut supra facta esset & ipse dⁿⁱ fr^{at} dominico testatur
rata promotore fiscalis & hisce. Præter que Sabellum
vobis fuit per Tribunal^{em} Roman^{um} datum inquisit^{us} & accusatus
allegans iocundis, Presidib^{us} & testib^{us} h^{ab}itis patrib^{us}
fr^{at} dominico Ros et fr^{at} alariano Catarella ordinis s^{an}c
Sic^{il}iani reliquis m^o not^{is} fr^{at} limone delucina co
ny Julio Balzan et alijs unde

Jacob Koss
 5. officij deputatus Lemn

Appendix 3



Synopsis of Guided Tour

Synopsis of Guided Tour

One of the main intents of the research is to use the compiled data to organise a tour that focuses on 16th century witchcraft, with special reference to the examined case studies. The tour aims at giving the audience a realistic and authentic view of witches. Narrations and anecdotes used dispel the classic ‘myths’ revolving around witches and bring the characters to life, by portraying them as regular individuals who practiced their trade for a living. The audience is invited to step inside the shoes of a witch or a sorcerer and walk in their footsteps, thus understanding where and how they practiced their trade, why they were denounced, and follow their journey from arraignment, to trial and to punishment. Hereunder is a synopsis of the tour.

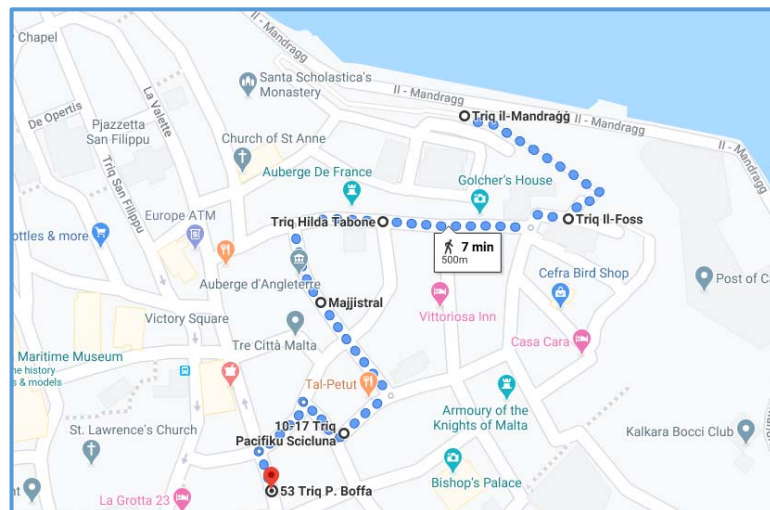


Figure 1: Map of proposed Tour

The tour commences in the harbour area of Birgu, specifically in **Triq il-Mandraġġ**. The street is named after the *Manderaggio* or *Mandrachio*, a sheltered area of the Birgu harbour where small galleys and fishing boats were once moored. The commentary begins with the arrival of the Knights of St. John in Malta. It highlights the revolutionary changes that occurred to the harbour area following this event, which led to an influx of locals from rural villages to the maritime city of Birgu. People from all walks of life, including renowned witches, flocked to the harbour in search of financial gain. An explanation of what was considered to be witchcraft follows, thus introducing and defining the topic of the tour.

Moving to **Hilda Tabone Street**, the commentary focuses on the concept of the Collachio, the area which was exclusively reserved for the Knights of St. John, especially after dark. Here, the idea of black magic and prohibited practices is further explored, with comparisons between the strict and pious life of the knights, to the poor and profane life of the commoners. It accentuates how popular beliefs and superstitious acts were frowned upon by the authorities, and anyone associated with such practices was brought to justice, thus introducing the term Inquisition.

The tour proceeds through Triq il-Majjistral and then through Triq Paċifku Scicluna, to stop in front of the **Executioner's House**. Here the link between witchcraft and the Inquisition is further explained through the description of the executioner's job, and his association with the Inquisitor's Palace and the Law Courts of the Order.

From this point forth, the tour continues inside the **Inquisitor's Palace**. The usual commentary connected with the Inquisitor's Palace is given a twist, centring on the witchcraft phenomenon that took place in the late 16th century. The commentary includes fresh narratives and peculiar curiosities disclosed in this study, to animate the tour and to entertain the audience. Amongst other things the commentary includes:

- the witch craze phenomenon in 16th century Europe and Malta
- examples of accusations and inquisitorial trials of witches
- ingredients used in potions and examples of incantations
- the combination of religious prayers and witchcraft
- references to demons and evil spirits
- discrimination against unattached females
- false accusations against innocent victims

Throughout the tour, special attention is given to the two characters studied in this research i.e. Betta Caloiro and Isabetta Caruana. The story of these two renowned witches unfolds in the rooms of the Palace, with different aspects about their life, trial and punishments, narrated in the different sections of the site. By the end of the tour, the audience gets to know the real women behind witchcraft accusations, shedding the stereotypical label 'witches' living in late 16th century Malta.