

**ST. PAUL'S SHIPWRECK TRADITION
ON THE MALTESE ISLANDS
at the heart of Malta's Identity**



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A. Abstract

This study will set out to investigate how much is known about the established St Paul's shipwreck's religious-tradition and the long history of this Saint Paul's connection with the Maltese islands.

The purpose of this study is to question how much the public and the tourist already knows and if they wish to know more about the artefacts and sites that are found in Malta that have a connection with St. Paul in some way. This study will focus and will investigate the main artefacts and sites and their documented relationship with the biblical tradition. These sites and artefacts have been documented since before the arrival of the Order of St. John in Malta in the sixteenth century. This suggests that the religious tradition existed in Malta since the medieval period. The study will look into how the Order of St. John used this already established veneration to strengthen the Order's position within Catholic society. The study will survey a number of tourists, locals, hotel concierge, main excursion operators and tourist guides to find if there is a need for a more updated collated experience for the visitors to portray this important veneration as part of the Maltese identity. It will try to identify what is known about this veneration's traditions and history, vis-à-vis the myths, existing sites and available artefacts.

This study has showed that though the general biblical tradition is generally known by locals and tourists, not much is known about Malta's medieval history linked to it. Also it is interesting to note that much of the rich artefacts are not known by tourists even though these items and subject have been studied profusely by scholars. It also concludes that many of the excursions are designed within a limited timeframe and considering the distance in arriving to each particular artefact or site, many items are left out. It also finds that much of the traditions' myths are hardly known or displayed to anyone.

This study shows that this veneration has the possible potential to become the focus for faith-centered tourism in Malta. It will also conclude that by using a few of the available artefacts with their St. Paul shipwrecked iconography available at museums, a more exciting tourist experience could be designed and portrayed for today's citizens to portray Malta's religious Identity in a modern way.

This will imply further study in heritage interpretation and possibly generate further study on using this tradition as the focal point of faith themed niche market by providing easier concise information for both travelers and excursion operators promoting the islands.

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D. Introduction

This study looks into what is known today about the veneration and biblical story of St Paul's shipwreck in Malta by the general public and tourists. We were all thought the well-known biblical tradition as per the Acts of the Apostles (Acts of the Apostles xxvii 37-44, xxviii, 1-12) of St. Paul's shipwrecked on our islands and the Maltese people firmly believe this tradition as the reason for Malta's Catholicism. This study's background commenced whilst visiting the main sites and museums related to St. Paul's shipwreck and noticing a certain apathy about its vast role in Malta's art history amongst curators and guides.

This study is important because it takes the biblical story of 'The shipwreck of St. Paul's on the Maltese islands identity and investigates its relevance and knowledge amongst today's society. It looks at this well-known biblical story not with the aim to verify its roots and truths but with the objective to investigate how its traditions, art & myth developed alongside Malta's history & religious tradition. The first objective of this study is to investigate this religious veneration's main iconography, traditions and locate the sites and artefacts linked to it around the islands.

Its secondary objective is to assess the interest in this veneration and its history by tourists interested in faith-based traditions. This study tries to assess what is known about the biblical traditions and the early sites and artefacts.

The study aims to show how the tradition and the connection between the historical sites, artefacts and myths had already existed among the local population prior to the arrival of Order of St. John in Malta in 1530. The study also focuses on how the Knights of St. John used the established pilgrimage route and traditions and myths linked to this faith-themed tradition to strengthen the Order politically within seventeenth century Catholic Europe in a time of newly found religious fervor, following the counter-reformation and the decrees of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

When analyzing existing tours in Malta related to St. Paul's Shipwreck, it was noticed that the museum displaying the precious medieval art and artefacts which in a way affirms the connection with St. Paul's shipwreck on the Maltese Islands prior to the arrival of the Order of St. John in 1530, is not on the main route for tourist tours. What is the reason behind this choice and lack of interest? Was it due to location and time or costs? This study will map sites and list prices of museums with artefacts related to it to identify issues.

In conclusion, this study briefly tries to see if conferences/discussions related to faith-themed tourism have been organised to discuss initiatives to increase this type of niche tourism towards our islands. Could the biblical tradition of St. Paul's shipwreck in Malta become a focus of national identity for faith based tourism?

E. Literature Review

The religious tradition of St. Paul's shipwreck as mentioned in the bible has been described as '*possibly the strongest backbone of a certain Maltese identity in early modern times*' (Freller, 2010).

This study focuses on the well-known biblical story as per the Acts' of the Apostle's (Acts of the Apostles xxvii³⁷⁻⁴⁴, xxviii, 1-12) of St. Paul's shipwreck on the islands of 'Melite' as the site of the saint's shipwreck on Malta (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010).

'And later we learned that the island was called Melite. And the people who lived there showed us great kindness, and they made a fire and called us all to warm ourselves...' (Acts of St. Luke in Acts of the Apostles xxv¹¹⁻³⁷⁻⁴⁴, xxviii, 1-12).

The traditional story of the Saint's shipwreck is based in the northern island of St. Paul (see Figure 1) where the saint was thought to have shipwrecked in February 60AD, and the area St. Paul's Bay Church known as 'tal-hgejjeg' (see Figure 18), where he is believed to have been welcomed by a warming fire, bitten by a venomous snake but miraculously nothing happened to him as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (Bonanno, 2010). Then St. Paul took refuge out of the Roman acropolis, Civita Vecchia, to a cave today known as St Paul's Grotto (see Figure 2) and is believed to have healed the father of Publius, the Roman Chief in Malta. After the saint healed his father at his' residence at San Pawl Milqi (see Figure 12), it is believed that Publius in awe, converted to Christianity and became Malta's first Bishop. Afterwards Malta is believed to have become the first Roman Municipality to embrace Roman Catholicism in the first century AD (Bonanno, 2010)

The intricacies of the argument in favour or against the location of the biblical historical tradition of St. Paul shipwreck in Malta in February 60AD, has been discussed by many a scholar such as Pliny the Elder's Natural History of 23-79AD and other classical authors arguing this geographical fact other than that mention in the Acts of the Apostle (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). Some have argued that the location of the shipwreck in 60AD

is wrong as other islands with similar names existed at that time such as Melede, Croatian Coast (Freller, 2010) (Buhagiar, 2007). Others argue that the veneration towards St. Paul's Shipwreck emerged with the Norman re-Christianisation of the Mediterranean littoral, as artefacts linked to St. Paul's Shipwreck already existed on the islands of Malta by the fourteenth century in the Mdina and Rabat area (Buhagiar, 2007) (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010).

No exact proof has been concluded about the traditional stories related to the sites mentioned (Buhagiar, 2007) (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) (Bonanno, 2010). The University of Rome's Missione Archeologica 1960s report erroneously stated this site's links to the cults' existence. However Scholars including Bonanno all point to this wrong statement, (Buhagiar, 2007) (Fiorini, 2010) (Freller, 2010) (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010).

On the site of San Pawl Milqi, we have archeological evidence of a Roman dwelling from the first century AD with oil manufacturing tools such as the trapetum and presses for milling of olives at an area today known as the San Pawl Milqi site (see Figure 12). Inside it, early artistic representations of the St. Paul iconography such as the grafitti depicting a sailing ship, a crude bearded man, an incised Greek form name Paulus and a built cistern associated with the baptismal rite on this site, were all thought by Cagiano de Azevedo as proof of St Paul's tradition during the Roman era in Malta (Bonanno, 2010) (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) refers to (Cagiano De Azevedo, 1966) (see Figure 11) . However this has not been proved and could easily be from a later era (Buhagiar, 2007).

Another artefact from the Roman period is an anchor today displayed at the Maritime Museum in Birgu. It has the Egyptian god Isis embedded on it and has been dated it to be from the same period as St. Paul's Shipwreck as told in the Acts of the Apostles of 60AD . This due to the lead found in it which was used during that period (Gatt, 2017). This artefact shows the Maltese Roman naval past and how ships from this era and harboured and Roman era ports functioned.

The Maltese are thought to have kept their religion till today (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010), this besides during the Arab era, 8th to 11th century, when re-Christianisation of this side of the Mediterranean occurred by Catholic Normans was needed to re-establish a national Latin identity to the inhabitants after the Arab period (Buhagiar, 2007).

The first actual documented mention of St Paul's shipwreck is in the early middle ages of 1366 in Bishop Elenio Ylario's Apostolic Visitation mention of St Paul's cemetery (Buhagiar, 1997) (Buhagiar, 2005). The evidence in artefacts linked to the medieval Mdina Cathedral and this veneration shows that the tradition was introduced at this time. From this early middle age, we have the first images of the tradition's iconography that of the snake, fire and long sword and the bearded saint (Buhagiar, 2007) on a stone roundel found in St Paul's Grotto Wignacourt Museum (see Figure 3) and on a painting of the bearded saint at St Agatha's Catacombs (See Figure 8). This iconography is evident on many medieval artefacts and has been adopted to other later artefacts.

Once the knights established themselves in their new city Valletta, they looked into strengthening their position within the community and within Christianity. The 17th century counter-reformation brought with it a new need to strengthen the catholic devotions in Europe (Janson, 2008). A decline in interest in Catholic pilgrimage to Rome, Palestine and Santiago de Compostela was recorded (Freller, 2010). Probably since the establishment of the Order of St John in Malta and possibly because of their victory of 1565, and the security felt, a new interest in Malta and the St. Paul's Grotto (Freller, 2009) attracting visitors from mainland Europe (Freller, 2009) was created. A new pilgrimage route formed. This was a time of a new interest in Humanism in the classical and Hellenistic philosophical ideals (Janson, 2008), a time when anew phenomena of well-travelled gentlemen wanted to see with their own eyes and experience locations directly and not through old scripts. Travelers included famous persons such as Gian Battista Leoni the author of the seventeenth century *Relazione dell Isola di Malta* amongst many others mentioned the Grotto in their travel diaries. Hans Christian Anderson mentions it too during his travels in the eighteenth century (Freller, 2009).

The religious Spanish Juan Benegas de Cordoba, known as a pilgrim hermit, was the first recorded 'operator' of pilgrimage travel to Malta and St. Paul's Grotto in early seventeenth century. Grand Master Wignacourt gave him permission to travel to pilgrimage sites and discuss the Apostolic route to Malta with the Vatican (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) (Azzopardi, 1983) (see Figure 13).

Freller argues that though Malta had been justified as the location of the shipwreck by historians prior to the early decades of the sixteenth century with the locations of the sites where the saint performed miracles on the island. But that it was only after the Spanish noblemen and Juan Benegas de Cordoba had transformed the cave known as St. Paul's Grotto in Rabat as an important pilgrimage site, that this cult attracted the Order's attention (Freller, 2010). It was then that Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt sought to include the Grotto in the order's domain. Infact by April 1617 Pope Paul V gave his permission to take over the administration and guardianship of the grotto known as St. Paul's Grotto and the church close by. In 1620 Pope Paul V issued another Papal Bull stating that Malta was indeed the island of the Apostle's shipwreck, this was again confirmed by yet another papal bull in 1727 by Pope Benedict XIII (Freller, 2010). The Title of Apostolic See was then awarded to the Maltese Islands. This title is awarded to those cities where an actual saint lived or was proven to have visited and resided. This title and having a pilgrimage site dedicated to St. Paul the Apostle, anchored the Order as a truly Holy establishment, elevating the knights and its Grand Master in Catholic hierarchy automatically to second to the Pope (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) (Freller, 2010)

The veneration to St Paul's was brought to its acclaimed height during the Knights period. Having their head-quarters as an Apostolic Site became central to the Order of St John's need to enhance their political position in Europe to 'market' Malta as a Pilgrimage sight in the Holy Empire second-only to St. Peter's Rome (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) & (Buhagiar, 2007).

As part of the pilgrimage route created by the Order, religious amulets called *Terre Melitensis* were sold like sort of religious souvenirs to common people and gifted to prestigious friends around the world (see Figure 15). These were exhibited in 2010 during a Pauline Exhibition organized at the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). Malta in the seventeenth century was not a location site for general pilgrimage because there was not space for vast accommodation needed to host such an endeavor but more a site for those rich gentlemen following the Grand Tour as Malta was very far to travel too for the common European (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). These so called souvenirs were either *Terra Melitensis* amulets made of Maltese limestone from St. Paul's Grotto and limestone fossils known as 'Snake tongue Cure' (see Figure 14). When bought even a certificate of authentication was given to the buyer to further proof its miraculous effect (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). They were used as antidotes for poison or snake bites in an era before medicine advances (Zammit Maempel, 1990). This myth of miraculous cure has been discussed by various scholars however it was only in the 1990's that a pre-modern medicine chemical attraction/reaction between acids was studied and agreed that the limestone reaction to certain poisons could have been the cause of a so called cure (Zammit Maempel, 1993), (Zammit Maempel, 1990).

This study tries to locate a few of these amulets and how their traditions and myths became focal point, during a time of a new found religious fervor, post counter-reformation. It investigated the myth of the saints' non-fatal snake bite and the tradition of using Snake Tooth amulets and '*terra melitensis*' made from stone from St Paul's Grotto. These type of antidote to poison were a common artefact in European life as protection from evil and poison.

Over the years the religious tradition of St. Paul's shipwreck, has been central to many traditions of folklore and myth maybe inspired by faith combined with the patriotism of a saint who protected the Maltese. The visual language and the diffusion of this veneration spread throughout the baroque period to exemplify the spirit of that time. Today the feast is still celebrated in Valletta and Mdina and is at the core of Malta's religious identity

F. Research Methodology

Review of Data Collection Methods; a mix of research through published studies and literature and fieldwork at local museums related to the religious veneration towards St Paul's Shipwreck was investigated. An analysis of on-site open ended interviews and closed questionnaires were carried out to understand the level of knowledge about this veneration and if there is a need for a more concise form of visual representation. Through on site visits and published literature, a catalogue of existing sites and artefacts was built which could be a good collection for future exhibitions related to this topic (Barnet, 2008).

Secondary Data - an analysis of the history of the biblical veneration

Published studies such as those related to the iconography of St. Paul by art historians Profs. Mario Buhagiar and Profs. Keith Sciberras, related to the St. Paul's shipwreck tradition in Malta's history by Anthony Bonnano, by Thomas Freller, Dr. Timothy Gambin, Dr. S.Fiorini and Dr. Zammit Maempel and Rev. John Azzopardi curator of the Wignacourt museum where used in the analysis of the supporting data in this research.

Primary data , interviews ;

- **with** Rev. John Azzopardi, curator of Wignacourt Museum local historian specialising in St. Paul's shipwreck tradition on the Maltese islands.
- Dr. G. Zammit Maempel, doctor specializing on the snakes myth vs Science
- Ft. Edgar Vella, curator of the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum

This study chose open ended interviews so as to gather more information and to let the interviewee express his point in their studies and allowing more time with these local tour organisers. For the questioners with tourists and locals closed questions were chosen so as to determine the exact answer in the shortest time available for the respondents (Bryman, 2018).

Analysis of the present knowledge about it and if there is a need to know more

Type: Closed Questionnaires

Size of cohort: tourists x 20.

Location: On site at St. Paul's Grotto and Metropolitan Cathedral Museum;

Choice of site: These sites were chosen because they attract those interested in St. Paul's Shipwreck in Malta, in the islands medieval and ecclesiastical history.

Type: open ended questions

Size of Cohort : 9 respondents

Location: telephone.

Method of interview: These were done by phone because each one asked for an appointment, quickly asked if we could speak over the phone as they were busy. (Winstanley, 2010), (Bryman, 2018)

Interviewees: Tour Operators, Destination Management Companies and 5star hotel concierge personal. These roles were chosen because of their main role in booking excursions for tourists. This is known through 20 years of experience working in Hotel Sales and my past studies in Hotel Management.

This study was limited in number of twenty questionnaires. This study planned to interview around 40- 45 persons, however not enough tourists were available on the two days planned. Many tourists were also on a tight schedule so were not allowed to join by their tour leaders. Few individual travelers were available. Four hotel concierges did not seem interested in taking part in such a survey because they booked through their preferred Tour Excursion companies when they had requests.

G. Analysis and discussion

This study discusses the St Paul's Shipwreck tradition through Malta's History and as representative of Malta's religious identity since Roman times when Malta is said to have become the first Roman Municipality to embrace Roman Catholicism in the first century AD (Bonanno, 2010); the twelfth century re-christianisation of the islands after the Norman Conquest and its dedication at the Civita Vecchia's old medieval cathedral; to this veneration becoming the focal point of the Order of St John's propaganda within Catholic Europe.

This study searched for the first images or documentation related to this saint's veneration. It found that though the biblical story links many sites to the tradition supposedly from the Roman era, these sites cannot be actually verified. Through its cataloguing of artefacts, related sites and historian research, it concluded that its first mention is of 'Sancti Pauli di Cimiterium' of 1366 in Bishop Elenio Ylario's Apostolic Visitation (Freller, 2010) who mentions the existence of an early rock-cut church in San Paulu di Fora, at Rabat, which probably was central to the St Paul veneration and that it was built above a cave (Buhagiar, 2005) & (Buhagiar, 1997).

The iconography of St Paul's Shipwreck, of a bearded saint holding a long sword, a book, with a snake and fire close to his hands or feet has become associated with the Maltese St. Paul's shipwreck aesthetic. One of the first probable representations is on a stone medallion now displayed at the Wignacourt Museum seemingly inspired by the same iconography of the Romanesque statue at the Museum of the Basilica of St John Lateran (Buhagiar, 2005) (see Figure 3) Another probable early representation of the saint on Malta is found in the rock-cut church of St Agatha's catacombs in Rabat of a bearded saint fresco probably St Paul of a late medieval Siculo-Byzantinesque style, dated to the thirteenth century (Buhagiar, 2005) (see Figure 8)

The first verification that the religious veneration of St. Paul shipwrecked on the Maltese Islands existed during the medieval period was in 1299, with the building of the Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral dedicated to it (Buhagiar, 2007) (see Figure 4). In the middle ages, a new prosperity had been found, following the Norman Conquest generated from cotton-growing Mediterranean trade. This is reflected in the new Catholic cathedral complete with prestigious artefacts (Buhagiar, 2005) during a time of Catholic revival (Fiorini, 2010). The many artefacts, we have of this era are proof that this catholic tradition existed from the 12th century onwards (see Appendix ii). The cathedral's free standing bell tower was built in the late 12th century- 1370 and its bell survives at the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum (Buhagiar, 2005) (see Figure 6). On it a Byzantinesque image of a standing St. Paul in Maltese iconography of bearded caped man with fire, snake and sword. The iconography is also depicted on the medieval cathedral's great west door, possibly dated to the 1530's (Buhagiar, 2005) now part of the Sacristy's door (see Figure 7). The medieval white alabaster Baptismal Font of Sicilian origins attributed to the bottega of Domenico Gagini dated to the early 15th century and today found at the Gharb Church Museum in Gozo also depicts a fine example of the saint's Maltese iconography (Buhagiar, 2005) (Vella, 2013) (see Figure 10 and **Error! Reference source not found.**). This item was originally used at the medieval cathedral and is today housed at the Gharb church museum with limited access to tourists.

The cathedral's medieval altarpiece, the St Paul Retable is probably the most fascinating and artistically appealing medieval work we have on the islands (see Figure 9). . It was the main altar piece of the Cathedral until the renowned Italian artist Mattia Preti was commissioned the 'St. Paul on the Road to Damascus' altarpiece in 1682 (Sciberras, 2012). It dates to the early fifteenth century Catalan-Aragonese school of Luis Barossa attribution. In commissioning such a work from Catalunya, the Maltese of the time show that they were culturally knowledgeable and affluent enough to buy artefacts of such finesse (Buhagiar, 2005).

Another most valuable artefact from the Mdina's medieval cathedral is the Mdina silver cover for the Codex Evangelarium linked to Sicilian silversmith Scarpa dated to the early 16th century (Buhagiar, 1987) (see Figure 5). Its typical Maltese St. Paul's iconography also shows it was commissioned specifically for Malta and probably from prestigious silversmiths working also for the Royal palace of Palermo (Cruciata, 2016).

These artefacts were probably experienced by those visiting the islands and the medieval town of Mdina until late seventeenth century, when the new baroque cathedral was built and these items slowly replaced them. Their presence in Malta shows that the iconography of St. Paul's shipwreck in Malta were already existent before the Order of St. John arrived in Malta in 1530 because works with St. Paul's shipwrecked, snake and sword iconography were being commissioned by the Maltese Catholic church by the early mid fourteenth century, showing the importance of this Saint on the islands (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010) (Freller, 2010) (see Appendix ii).

From the sixteenth century, when the Order of St. John, established themselves at the Castrum Maris, Jean Quintin D'Autun, chaplain of the Order, records the St. Paul's Grotto as having five altars. During the first Apostolic Visitation of Mgr Dusina of 1569 it is also recorded (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). These mentions in historical documents prove that the veneration had already existed pre-arrival of the knights too (Freller, 2010).

The fervent adoration of this veneration and its tradition on the Maltese islands grew during the knights era, manifesting in some fine examples of fine Baroque art, sculpture and architecture, such as the present altar piece dedicated to the St. Paul's by Mattia Preti at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mdina (Sciberras, 2012). The building of the existing 17th century baroque church of San Pawl Milqi commissioned by Grand Master Wignacourt was built as part of the effort to boost traditions connected to St Paul's Shipwreck (Freller, 2009) (see Figure 12). The Graffiti found inside this site traditionally believed to be from the Roman saints' period where probably ex-voto representations of a later era (see Figure 11). They are presently being studied further.

The church of St Paul's Shipwreck known as 'tal-hgejjeg' was also built at the same time instead of a smaller earlier church recorded by Dusina in 1570s (Buhagiar, 2007) (see Figure 12). It was destroyed during WWII and rebuilt afterwards.

These main sites linked to the biblical story became part of the pilgrimage route of St Paul's Shipwreck in Malta (see Map appendix iii).

The myths linked to St Paul's shipwreck related to snakes and the venom antidote 'terra melitensis' seem to have only emerged following the arrival of the Order of St John in Malta (Fiorini, 2010) (see Figure 14 & Figure 15). St. Paul's Grotto was the centre of the cult's tradition with these medieval amulets' tradition and production linked to it (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). The so called religious souvenirs were probably used by the order of St. John to their benefit in an era of baroque extravagances and pre-modern medicine. They were produced profusely and gifted by the Knights to European aristocrat families and clergy as an antidote to poisoning (Fiorini, 2010). Azzopardi has mentioned these artefacts in his studies of 2007 and 2010 after Dr Zammit Maempel verified the nature of these amulets as natural fossils. In the last decades of the twentieth century, with medical advancements, it was found that they were triangular fossils probably shark teeth or simply calcic globigerina limestone which chemically reacted to some poisonous chemicals (Zammit Maempel, 1990) (Zammit Maempel, 1993) (see Figure 14). Apart from in G. Maempel and Azzopardi in 1993, no other mention of these amulets' locations have been found in the literature this study surveyed. An effort has been made to locate a few exhibits of these amulets, however only a few at Rabat's Wignacourt Museum's reserve collection were found. Casa Buonaroti in Rome is documented to hold some of these artefacts (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010). Was it because the new scientific knowledge of the twentieth century and modern advances in medicine proved that these amulets were just myth?

The only precious artefact linked to these amulets representative of the snakes tooth myth found at one of our museums is a rare late medieval coral and silver tree dated to

before 1575, used for their display at the Cathedral Mdina's altar (Cruciata, 2016) (see Figure 16). Up to the mid twentieth century it was used on the Mdina Cathedral altar during mass and to hold the so called 'serpent's tongues' at venom detectors (Zammit Maempel, 1993) (Cruciata, 2016). This artefact is testament of Malta's tradition of myths links to St Paul's Shipwreck is now displayed in a corner of the Cathedral Museum without a mention of its fascinating history. Another similar work is displayed in Vienna Museum (see Figure 17) showing the profusion of such artefacts in Catholic Europe. These works (see Figure 14 & Figure 15), could be displayed together with the tree like amulet holder found at the Cathedral Museum (see Figure 16) with possibly a virtual display of how they were used. Their exhibit would show the extent of the strength of faith traditions from the medieval era to the baroque era on the Maltese islands.

Another artefact with a lot of interesting attributes to it is that of the St. Paul's Statue at St. Paul's Grotto. This is the site most frequented and known (see Table 3). However few know that the sculptor the statue is generally attributed to in most tours was originally planned and designed by one of Malta's forthcoming sculptors who died prematurely (Figure 19) Fra Juan Benegas deCordoba had decorated St. Paul's grotto with Sicilian wooden statues representing the saint and other reliquaries and religious artefacts (Sciberras, 2006), their beauty described on seventeenth century history books of Gio.Francesco Abela. Once Grand Master Wignacourt established the St. Paul's Grotto under the Order's guardianship, a new St. Paul's statue was commissioned to the Maltese sculptor Melchiorre Cafa by the chaplains of the Grotto (see Figure 19 & 20), later it was finished by Ercole Ferrata following the death of the artist (Sciberras, 2006).

This study found that it is these details that the tourists are interested in knowing more about (see Table 2) and which is lacking in our museums and probably general tours.

During the baroque era, the established iconography of the saint previously seen during the medieval period continued to be used such as the fire and snake carvings on the bell tower spires of the seventeenth century Metropolitan Mdina Cathedral designed of Lorenzo Cafa' (Sciberras, 2012).

This iconography continues to be carried forward throughout Malta's history and its art related to the saint. Such as the nineteenth century prominent statue of St Paul of a height of four metres and an eight meter stand totaling a twelve meter height and visible from the mainland (see Figure 22). This work is by the Dimech brothers Sigismondo (1780 - 1853) and Salvatore (1805-1887) and was commissioned in 1843 by various Maltese nobility and personalities at a cost of over one thousand and five hundred scudi. St. Paul is standing with his left hand holding the Holy Bible and the right hand high seemingly blessing those who pass by. At his feet lies the legendary snake coming out of the fire. The monument was inaugurated in 1845 by clergy from St Paul's Collegiate Church in Valletta and the locality of Mellieha. (Farrugia Randon, 2002). This statue is seen from the roads on the coast by those driving in the vicinity of St. Paul's islands and has become an icon.

Knowledge on the veneration of St. Paul:

This study's secondary objective was to assess the general knowledge of the veneration of St. Paul's Shipwreck on the Maltese islands (see Appendix i.). It interviewed, closed question type survey, 60% Maltese nationals and 40% European tourists with 70% of them with tertiary education.

This study found that not much is known about the artefacts and tradition and myths linked to this tradition of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Malta (see Table 2: the biblical tradition and how much is known). It seems that there is a need for it to be retold because important aspects of its journey through Malta's fervent history are being lost.

This study also interviewed tour excursion organisers and front line booking agents (see Table 4.) It found that most of the tours including the St Paul's shipwreck theme solely include the biblical story with St. Paul's Grotto being the focal site shown, unless a specific St Paul's Shipwreck tour is booked where St. Paul's Grotto, St. Paul's statue in Mdina' Gate, the Metropolitan Cathedral and its museum, San Pawl church in St. Paul's Bay known as 'tal- hgejjeg' are included. If one books a tour of Mdina including St. Paul's Shipwreck a stop is made at St Paul's islands, at St. Paul's Grotto, the statue of St. Paul on the inside of the Mdina's Vilhena Gate (see Appendix iii).

Through interviews this study concluded that many excursion companies and Hotel Concierge do not have a high percentage (less than 10%) of requests of tours specifically with a religious theme unless from specific niche market groups (see Table 5.) Of the many artefacts connected to the religious tradition of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Malta found at the many sites, when asked about their existence, none of those tourists surveyed knew these works existed. A low percentage of 10% of those persons interviewed knew about the snake myths traditions. On the other hand the basic story about St. Paul being shipwrecked in St. Paul's Bay and the snake biting him was known by nearly all participants. An 100% interest to know more was recorded with many preferring a mixture of museum, tours and books. (see Appendix i). This survey shows that although the biblical story of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Malta is well known in general, there is minimal knowledge about the iconography, the traditions and myths development through Maltese history. On one hand there are the tourists who wish to know more and the agencies who seem to not have many bookings for this type of faith based excursions.

This study found that it seems that much of what is known about this tradition's myths, sites and artefacts needs to be retold to tourists, those surveyed, as important aspects of its journey through Malta's fervent history are being lost.

Since there is a new interest experienced in the Mediterranean of Faith based tourism (MTA.Com, 2017), this study discusses briefly if this veneration's two thousand years of history and traditions linked to Malta's religious identity could become a central point for future faith based tourism opportunities.

H. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concluded its research on how Malta's rich religious history linked to St Paul's Shipwreck manifested itself in art artefacts, sites, myths/traditions and written documents and through the survey conducted if there is a need for more knowledge by means of a permanent exhibition focusing on the tradition of St Paul's Shipwreck in Malta. This study looked at this traditional Roman Catholic veneration as told in the Bible and how it evolved historically, culturally and in art. From early Christian iconography, medieval artefacts and myths related to snakes and stones, to Malta as a Pauline pilgrimage site. It did this by collating the main visual arts, sites and myths linked to it.

Through the read historical research it concluded that the veneration existed prior to the knights however though the general knowledge about the biblical story is known by those interviewed, not much was known about the sites, artefacts and myths linked to it. They are however documented profusely by the many local and foreign scholars interested in this subject.

It concludes that the knowledge about the tradition, the many artefacts and myths and the documented moments depicting the varied eras of Malta's history evolution related to this veneration are not experienced easily by the general public and tourist. Much of this tradition is on written historian references or documents

These are somehow lost to the traveller because the general tourists cannot and do not have the time to review these documents. This also because there is not a focused site in Malta where the island's history linked to St. Paul's shipwreck can be told in a modern concise format.

This study suggests further investigation into the idea of setting up a museum or a permanent exhibition connected with St. Paul's Shipwreck in Malta and its history. This tradition is imbued with the epitome of Malta's history and according to this study deserves to be portrayed in its totality and not fragmented and scattered around the island (*Table 1 – Map of artefacts & sites*). Local traditions, myths and travel documenting and writing by famous eighteenth and nineteenth century travelers on their Grand Tours

of Europe, included the intriguing use of snake antidotes and 'terra melitensis', the Tree to hold them and the scientific study behind it could be for example an interesting part of a modern museum. It could be part of portraying Malta's religious identity as part of its history.

This study concludes that since there is an interest to know more (see Table 2), however probably due to the far-spread locations of each related artefact, the large museums, the time and logistics needed to travel to them in the short visits tourists spend in Malta, the distance & travel is a hindrance (National Statistical Authority, 2018) (see Table 7). Due to time constraints other major historical sites such as St. John's Cathedral are given priority for tours. On the other hand the individual tourist guides participating in this research confirmed an interest in this subject from the special interest travelers. Tour excursion organisers and hotel concierge participating confirmed that they do not have much interest from the general tourists in the subject and that possibly through more marketing and dedicated religious tourism events could create such a need.

This study has showed that the St. Paul's Shipwreck traditions in the Maltese islands throughout our history, should be marketed to show the history, beliefs and myths of Malta's religious identity for the purpose of faith-based tourism market as discussed during 2017 Faith Based Tourism Conference held in Malta in 2017.. '

'...the faith-based tourism market is experiencing substantial growth worldwide and pilgrimage centre of different religions have been reporting increasing interest.. in the last decade or so' 2017 Faith Based Tourism Conference (Malta Tourism Authority, 2017).

Could we, like the Order of St. John before us, use an already established veneration to market Malta for today's modern generations and for further expansion into faith-based niche tourism segment? Today's museum visitors and modern tourists are mainly after 'the experience', about capturing the identity of a place. Further investigation and study of costs and feasibilities in creating the right format to display this part of Malta's Identity would be needed. Possibly the use of Virtual Reality technology and Prominent Films could be one of the tools (Paul Apostle of Christ, 2018).

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J. Appendices

i. Survey undertaken, summary

The survey's data was divided into four sections including;-

- the demographics and level of education. Table 1.
- the biblical tradition and how much is known about Malta's link to it. Table 2
- St Paul's Grotto knowledge. Table 3
- How many of the respondents wish to know more: when asked if the tradition of St. Paul's Shipwreck is important for Malta's history, 60 % answered in the affirmative. 80% of the respondents wanted to learn more about the faith themed traditions on our islands with the full cohort mentioning a museum of a mixture of books, excursions and museums.

Table 1: Demographics and gender

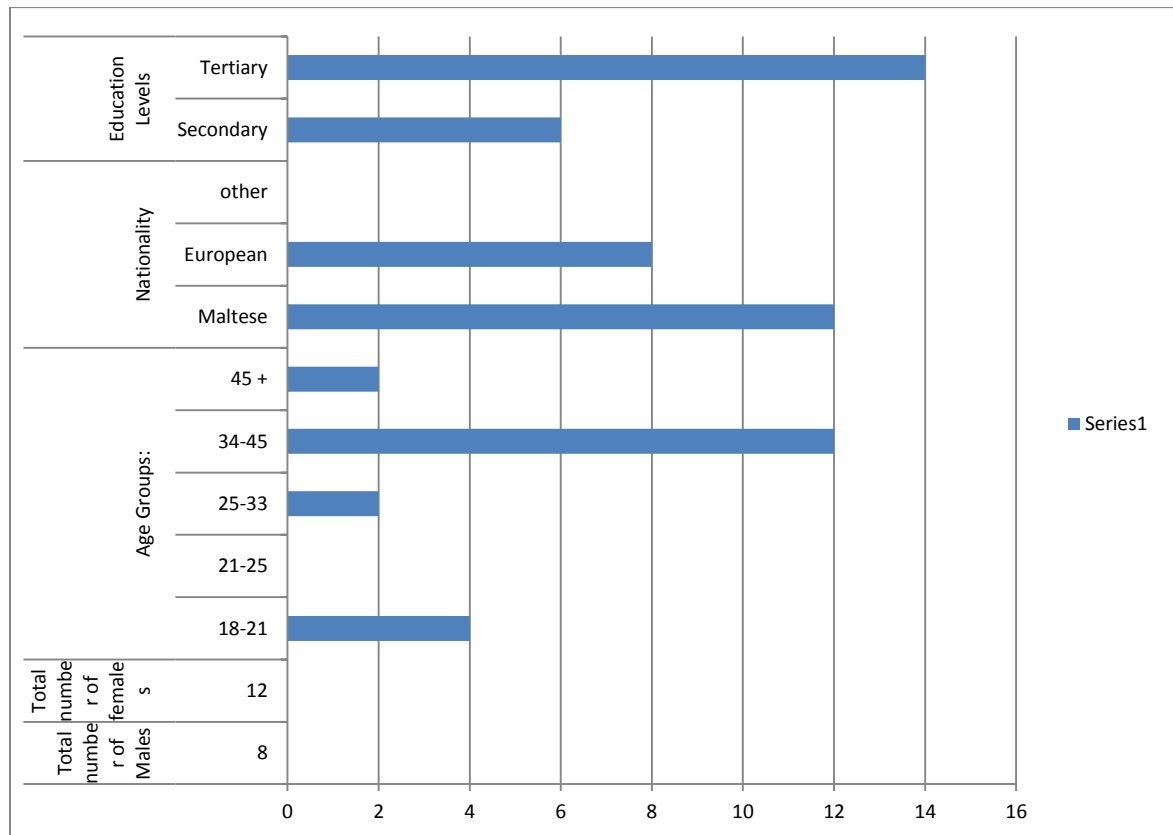


Table 2: the biblical tradition and how much is known

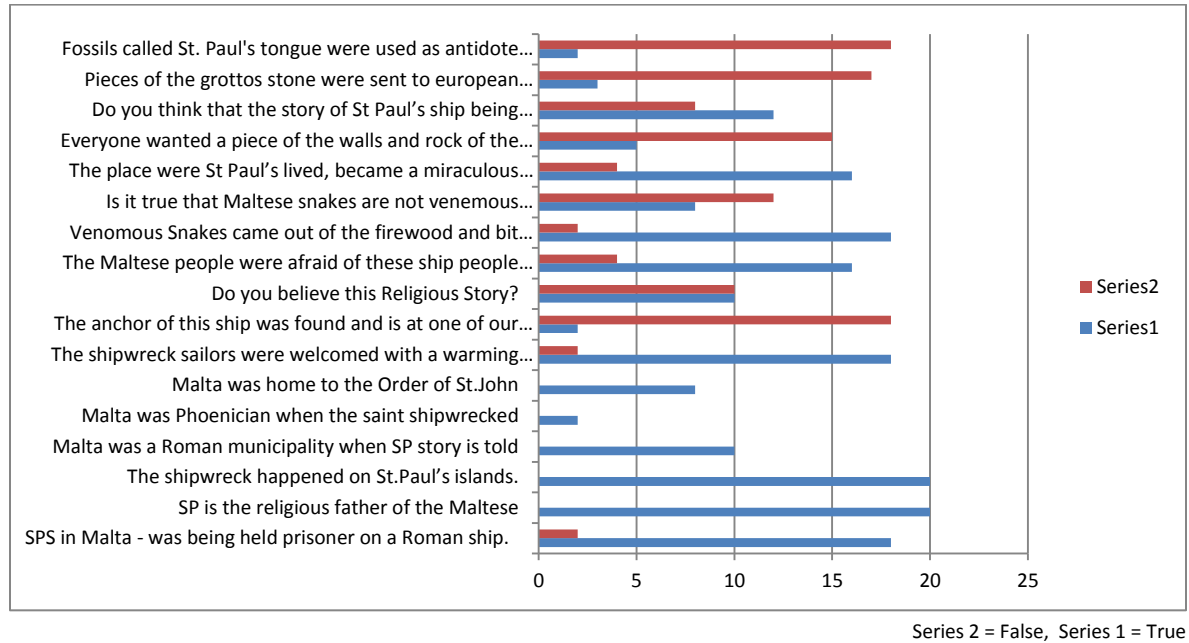


Table 3: Survey about St Paul's Grotto frequency of visits by those visiting.

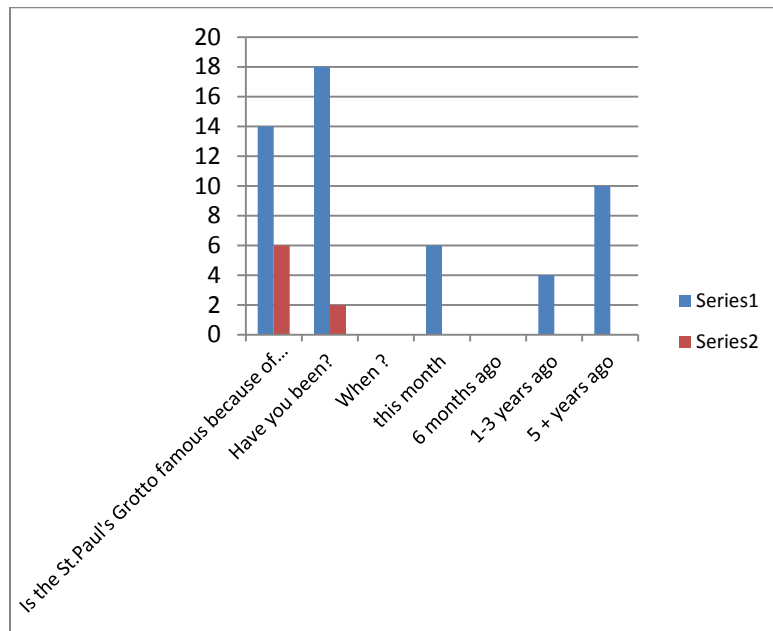
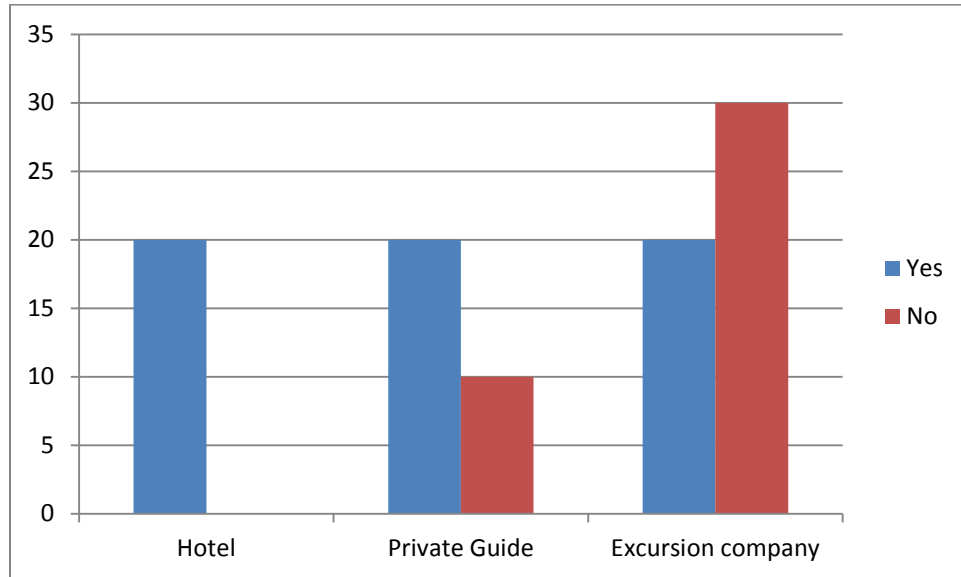


Table 4: Tours related to St Paul's Shipwreck



(% of total 9 respondents)

Further detail on Telephone interviews with Excursion organisers, guides and hotel concierge:

- of the leading tour companies asked, 40% answered yes and 10% said in group format
- interest is low at 60% , with a higher interest with the private guide segment
- if there is a better infrastructure to showcase the saints history in the limited time 70% of these companies felt interest might increase

Table 5: Interviews, dates and interviewee:

- May to July 2018 x 3 interviews: Ft. John Azzopardi, Curator of the Wignacourt Museum. Discussed St. Paul's Shipwreck, iconography and pilgrimage
- May to July 2018 x 4 Telephone Interviews: Hotel concierge at Hilton Malta, Intercontinental Malta, Corinthia Palace & Westin Dragonara. Excursion Organisers; MiMalta, MaltaRama, Arrigo Grp, SMS Travel. Guides x2 Citwalks

ii. Catalogue of main sites, art and artefacts related to St Paul's Shipwreck



Figure 1
St. Paul's islands



Figure 2
St. Paul's Grotto



Figure 3
Limestone Medallion of St. Paul's Shipwreck,
Dated probably 1530, (Buhagiar, 2007)
Wignacourt Collegiate Museum & St. Paul's Grotto



Figure 4

Picture of the Old Medieval Cathedral dedicated to St Paul

Found on Perez d'Aleccio great siege cycle fresco, Grand Masters' Palace, Valletta



Figure 5

Silver Cover of the Codex Evangelarium Melitensis

1519, Silver panel, Attributed to prob. Sicilian artist, Giovanni Scarpa (Cruciata, 2016)

Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina



Figure 6
Bell with image of standing St.Paul's shipwreck Maltese iconography
dated 1370 , bronze
Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina



Figure 7
figure on left of St. Paul's shipwreck Maltese iconography,
1535, Panel from Chestnut west door of the medieval Cathedral
Metropolitan Cathedral of Mdina
(St. Paul stands on the left and St Peter on the right)



Figure 8

Frescoes, one set includes a male figure probably probably St. Paul,
Siculo-Byzantinesque School, male saint detail
Dated to c. 16th century,
Church of St. Agatha Rabat (Buhagiar, 1987)



Figure 9

The St Paul Retable
c.mid 15th century, attributed to Circle of Luis Borassa
Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina



Figure 10

Baptismal Font

Marble alabaster, c. mid 15th century, attributed to the Bottega of Domenico Gagini
Gharb Church Museum, (Vella, 2013).



Figure 11

Graffiti

National Museum of Archeology , Reserve Collection
From San Pawl Milqi Church in Burmarrad



Figure 12
San Pawl Milqi, Church
Burmarrad



Figure 13
Portrait of Fra Juan Benegas de Cordoba
Oil on Canvas, 132 x 90cm , Pietro Erardi (c.1675 – 1727), brother of Stefano erardi
Wignacourt Museum, Rabat. (Freller, 2010)



Figure 14

Shark Tooth Cure' amulet, *known as glossopetre*

Fossil or shark tooth, of around 1.75-2cm long

Tooth fossil, at the Wignacourt Museum reserve collection, (Azzopardi & Pace, 2010)



Figure 15

Terra Melitensis amulets

Reserve of the Wignacourt Museum, (Azzopardi, 2013)

Geology Society of London, (Macgregor, 2012)



Figure 16
Silver and coral amulet stand
Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, Mdina. (Cruciata, 2016)



Figure 17
Tree of Jesse
c.14th century
A langueir made of gold and coral
Vienna Schatzkammer museum



Figure 18
 Knisja tal-Hgejjeg
 Rebuilt post WW2, St. Paul's Bay



Figure 19
 St Paul statue
 1609, Marble statue, anon
 Wignacourt Museum, Rabat. (Sciberras, 2006)



Figure 20:
 Statue of St. Paul
 Marble, 1666 -1669
 Autograph work of Melchiorre Cafà, finished in the 18th C. by Ercole Ferrata. (Sciberras, 2006)
 Grotto of St. Paul's, Rabat.



Figure 21
 St Paul's statue
 Autograph work by Melchiorre Cafà', (Sciberras, 2006)
 St Paul's Shipwreck Collegiate Church, Valletta



Figure 22

The St. Paul's Shipwreck statue

Marble, 4m high & 8m pedestal, 1845, Attributed to the Dimech brothers
St. Paul's islands.

This catalogue does not include painting by renowned artist Mattia Preti or other baroque era sites as paintings are well documented and evident at related church. And also due to word count limitations.

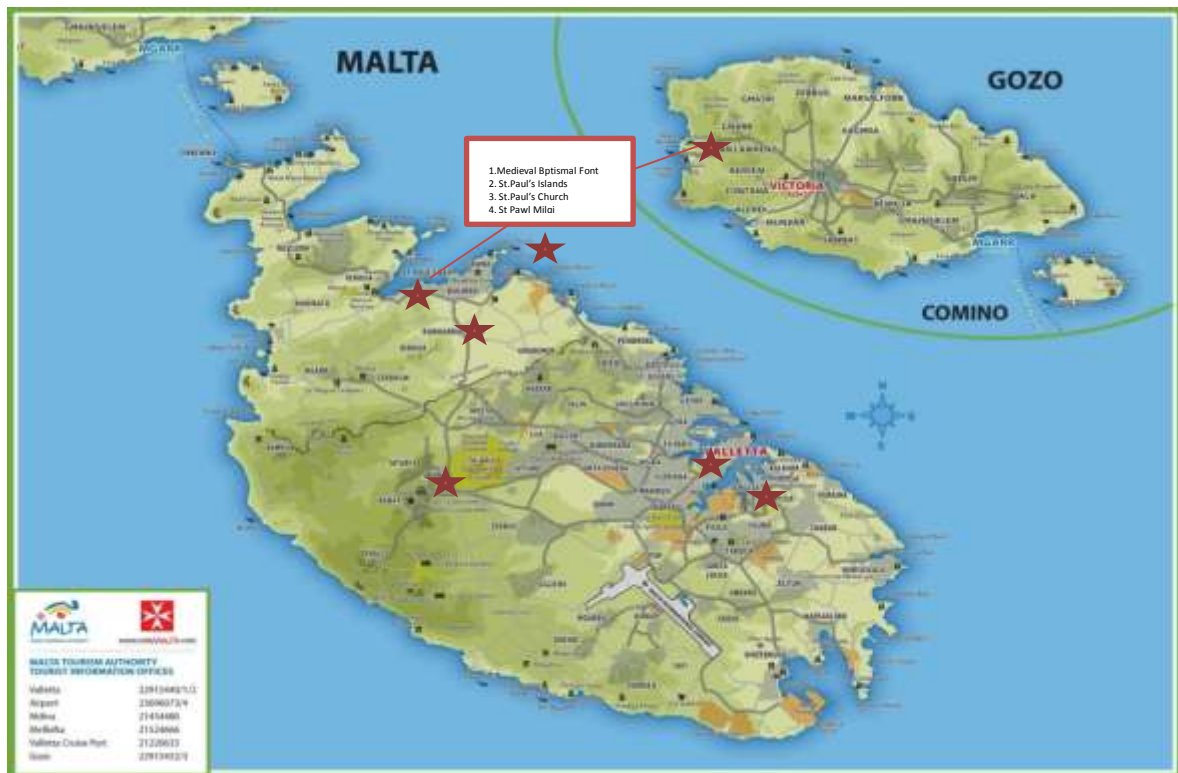
iii. Pricing and Locations of sites and artefacts

Table 6: List of prices at museums linked to St. Paul's Shipwreck

prices are for groups of 20 persons and over:

- <u>Wignacourt Museum</u>	<u>euro 3.50 per person</u>
- <u>St. Paul's Grotto</u>	<u>euro 0</u>
- <u>Metropolitan Cathedral Museum</u>	<u>euro 5.00</u>
- <u>San Pawl Milqi</u>	<u>donation</u>
- <u>Roman Domus</u>	<u>euro 5.00</u>
- <u>Maritime Museum</u>	<u>euro 6.50 per person</u>
- <u>Gharb Church Museum</u>	<u>by donation</u>

Table 7: Map of location of related sites and artefacts



iv. Tour - on the trail of St. Paul's Shipwreck sites artefacts in Malta

We will see how during the Roman Period Malta, lived a well to do community, and how Roman Catholic Tradition recounts how St Paul and St Luke, on their way to Rome as prisoners against the Roman Emperor, where shipwrecked on the islands of Malta. We will look at the location of the shipwreck, where they were welcomed and where the miracle of the Viper possibly happened. We will look at how this Catholic belief developed in Malta till today. Iconography, symbols, precious art, Roman era, snakes myths, religion, traditional feasts.

<u>St Paul's Islands</u>	photo moment	900 – 0930hrs
<u>St Paul's Bay church;</u>	where the first fire was lit (time permitting)	945 – 1000hrs
<u>San Pawl Milqj;</u>	Home of Mayor whose father was healed	1015 – 1045hrs
	Roman olive oil manufacture. Pilgrimage site.	Permission is needed.
<u>St. Paul's Grotto & Wignacourt Museum</u>		1100 - 11145am

- Iconography of Maltese St Paul, x 2 Romanesque style images.
- Terra Siggilata and Vipers Healing tooth, Ft De Venegas Portrait.
- Baroque paintings

<u>Metropolitan Cathedral Museum</u>	1200 – 1300
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- Iconography of Maltese St. Paul's Shipwreck on medieval font and bell
- Medieval artefacts & altarpieces, Baroque Art & silver statues

Metropolitan Cathedral

- Medieval baptismal font, the Preti titular painting
- Medieval Baptismal Font, near doorway
- Sacristy Door, original Medieval Cathedral Door

Not included:

Rabat, Roman domus explain Roman Rabat/Melite (time permitting)

Roman Anchor in Birgu.

Gharb Baptismal Font, attributed to bottega of Sicilian artist Gagini.