# The Source.

## Water in Valletta.

A historical view into water sources during the period of the Knights of St. John in their new city.

Chantelle Shaw

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Picture 1. Omnibus Idem Fountain.

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY FOR HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA

Student's I.D. /Code 369480 M

Student's Name & Surname Chantelle Shaw

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## Abstract

The city of Valletta was built to withhold a possible long siege. Therefore, planning went into specific positions of where in the city was it best to harness resources.

This essay will give an overall idea of why it was important for Valletta to have a constant supply of water and to supply the various needs of its inhabitants during a time where the treat from the east was imminent and the fear was real.

Everyone seems to focus their importance on the tangible buildings and its chequered streets with its the imposing fortifications surrounding the city. Of course, the idea is not taking away any importance from the mentioned above but with this research I want to throw more light on an aspect which is mainly kept underground and taken for granted when we see water sprouting from fountains.

The study focuses on a set of catchment areas in Valletta, which were built intentionally to provide fresh water daily. The development was a constant one and the essay sheds light on various strategies used to maintain the wells, fountains and cisterns in Valletta. Water was also used as a powerful political tool as the liquid was a reinforcer to maintain good relationships and peace among the populace.

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# Introduction.

Mount *Scieberras* had a problem. Worse than other areas of the island, aridity and dryness, particularly in summer and lack of adequate fresh ground water sources made the peninsula the least contender for a possible settlement building. The area was scantly inhabited and covered with patches of arable land but was mostly rocky with shallow patches of soil. There was a single source of natural fresh water on the entire promontory. Most of the water in Malta was found in the north or the Rabat area. When an initial commission was sent by the Order of St John to assess the Maltese islands, the Knights complained about virtually everything. They really showed their discontent while they were discovering how poor the quality was in some areas and how this was going to effect them if they would have decided to eventually settle on Malta. The lack of water was described in the report by Knight Quintinus Haedus:

The water is salty and putrid but there are good springs which are probably due to rain water fallen in Winter time. The origin of these springs is not very far, they often disappear in Summer, but they always diminish in volume. One drinks generally rainwater collected in tanks or in ditches. *(Mercieca V, 1921, Archivium Melitensis, P.g 3.* Retrieved January 2019 from http://melitensiawth.com/incoming/Index/Archivum%20Melitense/AM.08(1929-1931)/AM.8(1930)2/04.pdf).

Valletta's work started on the 21st of March 1566. After Lapparelli's plans for the new works had been approved the same care and attention were given to both levels of the city as a series of deep cuts were being excavated. (Brian Blouet (1967*) A short history of Malta*. Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher, New York, N.Y, P.g 101). It was planned and built on different levels and during recent refurbishments architects were still discovering new forgotten underground mysteries. Many of these architectural wonders are hidden to the public and many times they are never even mentioned or given any regard. The city of Valletta, in my opinion, is both fascinating above as it is underground, and it is important to understand that both levels are interrelated.

The fear of a siege was then still real, and it persisted for a considerable amount of years. But it was not just fear that made the Knights take certain decisions. Certain aspects were social and reflected the concern to avoid contamination and possible diseases which would result in disaster if not taken into consideration.

Even later, Grand Masters made use and employed other architects to foresee and update the cities underground coverage. We shall be discussing some of these updates in the essay.

It was also through a set of rules and regulation from the *Officio delle Case,* who enforced draconian measures, to get everyone to comply to the strict instructions required to build a

new edifice in Valletta. '*Every house should have an underground tank for the collection of rainwater, under penalty of fifty scudi for failure to comply*'. (Manuel Sapiano1, Paul Micallef 2, Georges Attard 3, Marie-Louise Zammit, The evolution of water culture in Malta, (2008). Retrieved December 2018, from https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/21980/The_evolution_of_water_culture_in_Malta_An_analysi.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

The developers had to make sure all buildings had wells or cisterns as water catchment, together with a separate system for drainage. Valletta was built with a dual system to retain clean water and to dispose of dirty water. For that time a progressive way to build. (Brian Blouet (1967*) A short history of Malta*. Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher, New York, N.Y, P.g 103).

Initially aesthetics did not matter so much, as many of the baroque buildings we see today were renovated according to a then later fashion. The necessity to survive under a possible attack was more the legitimacy for why all precautions were being taken.

The preciousness of storing rain water is truly considered seriously and wastages were not tolerated but rather calculated. So much so that water was not constantly available during the day. Something we take for granted now a days. But there was a time when water was not available all day long in the city of Valletta and certain buildings had to wait their turn.

## Literature review.

In his book Modernisation and Urban Water Governance author and a senior researcher at the University of Geneva, Thomas Bolognesi, provides a study on water governance in France, Germany and England. He argues the importance of good governance and the relationship between the role of the state and the management of water governance, in relation to provision, development of modern implementation of water systems and laws and regulations.

The study of water preservation was seriously studied in Malta by (Keith Buhagiar, (2016) Malta and Water (AD 900 to 1900) Oxford Bar publication, edition 2829), however, he does not mention the Knights period in Valletta in much detail.

In Mercieca's book, ''*The water supply of the Maltese Islands*, (Archivium Melitensis) Vol VII National Library'', the author provides very detailed description of how water was managed and its developments during different eras in Malta. During my research I confronted discoveries with this source as it is also easily available online.

Architect Dennis De Lucca delves into the architectural interpretation from an 18$^{th}$ centuries architects' point of analyses in his book ''Carapecchia, Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta'', where his research also takes him to details of underground descriptions of Valletta. The book served as a backbone to the entire study.

The books *Hospitaller* Malta and Malta, The Order of St. John by historians and Professor Victor Mallia Millanes and Thomas Freller, provide details about the history of the Knights period while they were here in Malta and certain aspects regarding the threat of the Ottoman empire, economy, growth and the importance of the aqueduct. They do mention about the importance and aspects the Knights took in organising the city of Valletta instead the significance of having fresh water in the city and its political power meant also for the Knights keeping the balance of power in Malta.

The research goes deeper in finding the water sources in Valletta and why was it important? The source of water not only meant quenching the thirst, but it was also used a political propaganda tool and kept the city flourishing throughout the Knights rule. Many fail to understand what truly lies beneath their feet and how it kept the city of Valletta working in a holistic way. The study will give an overall idea of why it was important to have fresh water in order to have good governance and prosperity.

## Methodology.

This research was deemed necessary as although the importance of Valletta as a capital city has frequently been placed as a priority subject by many local historians, few have mentioned the importance water had in a fortified city throughout the centuries. Although the obvious buildings, palaces, squares, churches of Valletta are all relevant to the city they could not function collectively without the invisible source that merged together the below with the above.

This study will combine the both governance and power and the social dynamics of society through different lenses where water can be found stored in Valletta and later see it visually through symbolic fountains. The emphasis goes also to where water was stored within the city of Valletta and how important it was to keep a constant surveying of the system by those governing the island. Special attention is given towards how powerful water was as a political tool in the hands of the leaders. The study also focuses on the daily problems to precure water for its daily uses and how more sensible the inhabitants were towards this precious resource.

My primary sources were books, online articles and semi structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted through out the year between 2108/2019, with the curators or persons in charge of specific buildings and sights;

The Archbishops Palace; Micheal Paceross (June2018).

Monastery of St. Chaterine; Madre Michelina Mifsud OSA. (July 2018)

Heritage Malta; Christian Mifsud, BA Archaeology & Anthropology (Melit), MA Baroque Studies (Melit) (January 2019).

Fortress builders; ex-curator Edgar Farrugia (May 2018).

The semi structured interviews focused on areas such as when, who and why the cistern and wells were built? Who consumed their water? Which fountain did they lead to if any? Was the water within still consumed today? Do they require restoration? Is water still retained through rainfall during winter?

I also met with the curator of Fort St. Elmo Luisana D'Amato (June 2018), who although indicated that there are the largest known cisterns of Valletta as described by Professor De Lucca in his book 'Carrapecchia Master of Baroque Architecture in early Eighteenth-century Malta', I found difficulties to eyewitness as they are unfortunately not accessible and require restoration and thorough cleaning and very basic information was given.

I also made an exercise through a study of books and articles relating to the topic of water in Malta by archaeologist Dr.Keith Buhagiar and architect Edward Said and where I got some generic information which helped my research to contrast what was happening within

Malta during the years to how it was applied in the context of Valletta as the then new capital city of Malta.

Few information was collected within the study and when I compared it with other studies and publications written by other researchers, I discovered they were resorting to the same known sources such as 'Mercieca, *The water supply of the Maltese Islands (*Archivium Melitensis) Vol VII. National Library'.

This made it easy to compare truths and facts about the study through the collected data which I was collecting throughout the essay but made it difficult when trying to discover new findings. The research could go further as discoveries are still being made upon the subject of water in Valletta, possibly with more time at the archives, which unfortunately due to my time limitations I could not pursue further.

## The only source?

Valletta has only one fresh resource of water. The natural spring is still currently found in Archbishop street, under the building of the Archbishop's Palace designed by architect Tommaso Dingli. The building is currently property of the curia. Upon visiting it one is welcomed with a plaque listing all the Archbishops who administered in Malta until this very day.

The building has a significant political meaning as the curia was a separate jurisdiction to the one of the Knights of St John. In many occasions the jurisdiction argued with the Knights, and the Pope thought of sending a later Apostolic Delegate to mitigate these frequent indifferences. The Pope decided the Inquisitor would be his Apostolic Delegate and possibly soften relations between them.

The Knights managed to keep the unpopular Inquisitor's office out of Valletta, but the Bishop managed to get in the city and still be influential. The fact that the Archbishop still had his palace built upon the only source in Valletta shows the authority and power the Bishop had.

It is said that ''the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world'' but the same could be said for those who master the waters as they are the one who can rule the world.

The Archbishop's Palace has a spring of water sprouting through an allegorical baroque style figured head leading into a shaped stone basin. The excess water then travels down the cisterns beneath the building. There are about four cisterns which still retain a lot of water. The water goes through rock hewn canals and supplies the water required for the garden and its trees which is a special feature in the palace as gardens were not allowed in Valletta to save on water required to sustain plants. The Knights had to find other sources and alternatives to keep hold of the power that came with possessing and harnessing water.

## The Aqueduct.

All possible precautions and measures to supply enough water in the city were initially taken but the demand was getting higher than the supply. This was because Valletta was growing, and it was also becoming an important harbour for those crossing the Mediterranean. The Knights had placed Malta on the international trade route of the Mediterranean. After less than 50 years from the birth of the city, there were plans to make water more abundant and to give a further economical push towards more prosperity.

After a series of studies, failures and attempts to bring water to Valletta through an aqueduct from Rabat, the project was finally developed by *Bontadino dei Bontadin* with the finances of Grand Master *Wignacourt* (1601-1622). Grand Master *Wignacour*t built his aqueduct to bring water from Rabat to Valletta. He also built a large cistern for its water to be preserved next to City Gate or as it was known then as *Port Reale*. This was on top of the railway station and was later replaced in the 1960s during the building of City Gate and the creation of Freedom Square. (Edward Said (2013) *The mysteries underneath the Palace.* Retrieved December 2018, from http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2013-12-02/local-news/The-mysteries-underneath-the-Palace-3345252353. )

It was always clearly indicated who the benefactor or founder of the fountains would be. Embellished coat of arms featuring Fleur De Lys would be carved for all to remember who the authority and who the inhabitants had to be grateful too.

Grand Master *Wignacourt,* not only had his coat of arms with *fleur de lys* placed on everything but he went as further as to challenge any possible authority. He also wrote in Latin which was the language of the curia, so, there would be no doubt as to who was really in control on the Maltese islands. Since the inhabitants were mainly illiterate, he did not boast in writing as this would have proved useless. The fact that he wrote in Latin highlights the fact that the message was intended for the other people in authority. He certainly did not boast in writing about his mission of bringing water to Valletta for the inhabitants or for the illiterate populace, in my opinion he wrote in Latin as to challenge any questionable authority on the island. The official language of the Knights was Italian, but the curiae was Latin.

The inscription below describes how important the event of the aqueduct was for the city of Valletta and how intelligently the message was written to revere the position of the Knights above any other, ‘’So far Valletta was a corpse, now, the spirit of water revives her; as once the first spirit moved on the water, so now, that water has been led to her, the spirit returns. ‘’ (Vassallo (2015), Valletta, Malta history and heritage. Retrieved May 2019, https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/.)

Fountains were the expression of benevolence, prosperity, development and good governance. The inauguration of water through the aqueduct in the capital was on the 21st April 1615 with a three-shell shaped tier fountain in the middle of Piazza San Giorgio in front of the magisterial palace (M.Galea, Aloph de Wignacourt1601-1622, Malta 2002). It is said a great celebration was celebrated and water flowed in Valletta's buildings like blood through veins. One can still find this fountain in St Philips garden in Floriana as it was removed during the British period to make space in St. Georges square for parades.

There was a weakness in this project, In the event of an attack by the enemy, the major defect of the aqueduct was that it was very prone and very visible for an attack, thus placing Valletta and its supply of water in the hands of the enemy, making it very vulnerable. The risk of sabotage was high. Valletta would have had to still manage and resist any siege with the water it stored in its undergrounds, in its cisterns.

Picture 2. File: Wignacourt Aqueduct Birkirkara Malta.jpg

Picture 3. File: Wignacourt coat of Arms and Latin inscription.jpg

## Cisterns.

Valletta the epitome of Europe was under the administration of its defenders, *La Congregatione di Guerra. Per la conservation della Sua Sacra Religione e I suoi popoli,* who was entrusted with the up keep and requirements of the cities defence. (Dennis De Lucca (1999) *Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta.* Valletta Malta, Midsea books LTD. Pg. 174).

What we find below the buildings still amazes us today. How military engineering developed such techniques of tunnelling underground through live rock with such basic tools and highly developed skills with such determination. Architect Edward Said says about the Palace of the Grand Master ''*The palace basement is full of mysteries – a sort of underworld, it is easy to become disoriented down there, because you quickly lose track of which direction you are facing''.*

In Malta, the knowledge combined with the stone brings out the unparalleled beauty of men's capability through masonry to carve and mould the globigerina and coralline as it needs. There is a considerable number of underground cisterns below the streets of Valletta. From a military perspective these would have been the best solution as catchment to preserve rain water and later to store all excess water brought in by the aqueduct.

The uses of rock cut cisterns had been used from ancient sources dating to thousands of years back in many different parts of the Mediterranean including those found in Naples hewn during the Roman times, therefore we see the same western philosophies utilised in the city of Valletta. Cisterns are not simply cut stone but an architectural wonder. They are cut deep into the rock but then strengthened by tight arches and water proof walls. Filtering water with settling of sediments and avoiding growth of algae.

Although they were originally built in the initial stages of Valletta they were kept constantly up to date. In fact, it was later in the 18$^{th}$ century, architect Romano Carrapechia, who was entrusted to further survey the original cisterns in Valletta and give advice on possible requirements to further improve on the cisterns bellow the streets, why we come across so much information.

He was invited to Malta by Grand Master Perellos (1697-1720). The title which was then bestowed upon him was *Architteto or Direttore delle Fontane*. (Dennis De Lucca (1999) *Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta.* Valletta Malta, Midsea books LTD. Pg. 177).

It is really thanks to this architect that such detailed information has been obtained. His work was meticulous and not only helped the Grand Master at the time to take necessary steps for cisterns, *gebbie* and fountains but also managed required renovations and later even Grand Master De Vilhena (1722-1736) made him carry out a preliminary survey of all

public water cisterns within the fortified enclaves. Therefore, the Knights of St. John had a detailed account of resources in case they required them in time of dire need.

The cisterns found in front of the law courts are a proof of such depths the Knights were prepared to go. They are no longer in use and the cisterns lay beneath the streets unobserved. It is believed it would have supplied the buildings before the current law courts, the now lost Auberge of Auvergne. I have personally been to the one across of the current law courts, in Great Siege Square. The shape is that of a cathedral as it has an arch for support. One remains in awe when going down to such depth. It is extremely high, and the area is dark but not unpleasant. It is also possible to see the markings of the pick axes carved into the stone. This makes one wonder who were the people working. Where they Maltese or could they have even been slaves?

At present although damp, the cisterns can still retain some water. They are no longer in use and are encrusted with long tree roots which still make their way to nurture on the water found at the bottom.

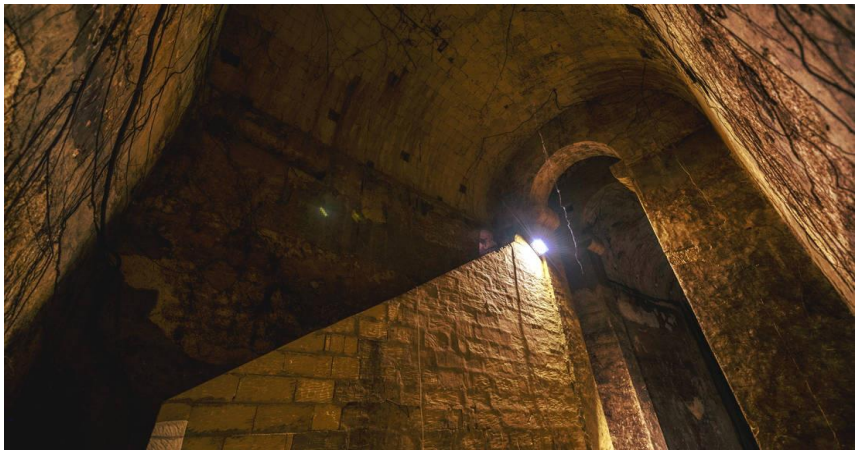
Areas which are confirmed to have cisterns include, under the Opera House before the Opera House, in front of St John Cathedral and in front of Queen square and St Elmo. It is said that in order to cross the cisterns in St Elmo one was required to do so by boat as they are so large. (Vassallo (2015), *Valletta, Malta history and heritage.* Retrieved February 2019, https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/.) But cisterns were not the only storage areas of the city, even before the creation of the city we have documents telling us that the scattered farmers made use of wells before the building of the city.

*Survey of water storage facilities carried out by Romano Carapecchia in 1723.*

*Quantity of Cisterns, 40.*

*Capacity - (botte) 39,584.*

*Fort St Elmo 6 Cisterns Capacity - 4,762.* (Dennis De Lucca (1999) *Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta.* Valletta Malta, Midsea books LTD. Pg 174)



Picture 4. Cisterns under Great Siege square.

## Wells.

*Xgharet Mghewija*, as the promontory was originally known to the inhabitants, had two wells. The wells were known as *Bir Gellux* and *Bir Gellief.* These wells could have possibly been used by the Knights who poisoned several of these on the island when the Siege was in place in 1565. (Vincent Zammit, (2018) *Assedju Grajja ta' Qlubija*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Santa Venera, Malta. P.g 156).

De Vallette during the Great Siege gave orders for many wells on the island to be poisoned to cut a lifeline for the Ottomans as without fresh water the chances of survival would become slimmer. ( Noel Grima (2011), *The secret underground Valletta,* retrieved February 2019, from https://dinlarthelwa.org/dlh-news/the-secrets-of-underground-valletta/).

Wells were cut in a bell shape form. Very typical in the Mediterranean, we find similar wells where the stone can be easily carved. The rock extracted would have been later utilised to build the construction above. A perfect example can be currently found open to the public in Casa Rocca Picolla in Republic Street. However, another interesting hidden well is that of the Monastery of St Catherine right across Casa Rocca Picolla. As mentioned previously the houses and buildings had to comply with a set of rules set out by the *Officio delle case*, '*Every house should have an underground tank for the collection of rainwater, under penalty of fifty scudi for failure to comply*.' (Manuel Sapiano, Paul Micallef, Georges Attard, Marie-Louise Zammit, *The evolution of water culture in Malta,* (2008). Retrieved January 2019, from https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/21980/The_evolution_of_water_culture_in_Malta_An_analysi.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

Another prominent well which belonged to the Langue of Italy can be sometimes veiled by the majestic baroque arch which can be found on top of the well. The arch was designed by architect *Romano Carrapechia*. The Langue of Italy in Merchants street is an interesting building as it features practical with esthetical beauty. The well is located a few meters from the entrance in the yard. The Architect had a very strong connection with what was happening underground in the wells as much as what was above ground in the palaces, *Cararapechia* not only manged to contribute his knowledge with regards to what was happening below but made aesthetics of public fountains a mirror of power, connecting them through beautiful fountains with a message of power.

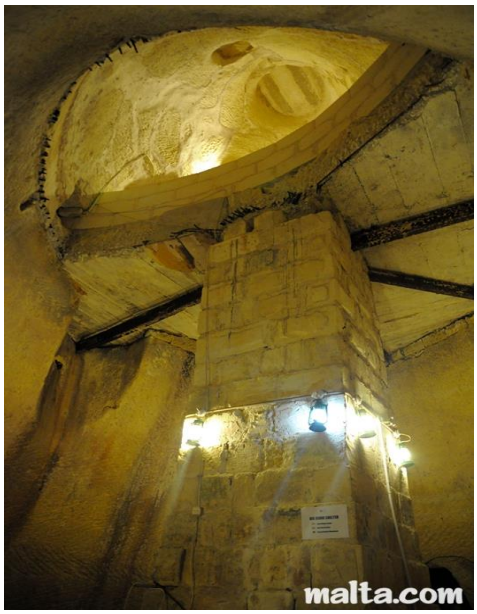
Local Architect Dennis De Lucca gives us a very detailed description of *Carrapecchia's* work. It included the measuring of water, improving the pipes and making sure they were not being disturbed by contamination from possible leakages from the sewer tunnels, suggesting further recommendations, and the Knights in many cases complied

According to De Lucca's, the wells in Valletta could contain the amount listed below.

*Survey of water storage facilities carried out by Romano Carapecchia in 1723.*

*Location: Public wells 13.*

*Valletta 1,637 Private wells Capacity - (botte) 146,702.* (Dennis De Lucca (1999) *Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta.* Valletta Malta, Midsea books LTD. P.g 174)




Picture 5. Well in Casa Rocca Piccolla.

## The Public Fountains.

As previously mentioned, fountains were an expression of benevolence, prosperity, development and good governance. Valletta was transforming into a baroque city, it could then be enriched with a number of fountains which embellished every city of Europe at that time, especially Rome, the ideal of every city in the west.

The aqueduct also supplied water to the fountain found in *Piazza del Erba*, the market's square were its water was used to wash and clean the produce brought in to sell by the farmers and the shop owners of the *Suq.* The fountain had a lower base were animals could be given to drink and water flowed in a separate basin. It was a place where many people gathered to do business, sell and buy. This required strict rules of the use of water were exercised to discourage contamination. The regulations were stricter as the sellers of fish, vegetables and meat used the water and required a constant clean supply. There was a time were the rules were not being observed and the fish mongers were the possible culprits of contamination. During which in 1722, the regulations became stricter since the food was being directly cleaned in the fountain, contaminating the water. The fish mongers later decided to relocate.

The economy in Malta was based mainly on agriculture but the markets were benefitting immensely with the infrastructure provided in Valletta. The markets sold products and at times the demand was so high the farmers brought in their goods both in the morning and in the afternoon to meet with the city's demand for food. All this required an adequate water supply. Also, according to the knowledge of architect Christian Mifsud, the market in Merchant's street or as it was known at the time *Strada San Giacomo*, provided such facilities. The market was doing well because of the harbour activity. It is said Valletta had 26 fountains, of which we only still have 12 surviving.

The aqueduct also supplied a fountain which was situated at the entrance of the Grand Harbour. The Neptune fountain or as better known by the locals as *il-Ggant* (the giant). The king of the seas upon his pedestal greeting all those entered the Grand Harbour and it was also the place where water could have been procured. (Dennis De Lucca (1999) *Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth-century Malta.* Valletta Malta, Midsea books LTD. P.g 148).

The white marble cannon shaped fountain at the bottom once said,

''Why are you afraid little boat?
There is no fire here, but water instead of shot.''

The inscription gives the reader the sense that peace brought prosperity and until water flowed there was nothing to worry about. The harbour had become an important mercantile environment with its industrious, cosmopolitan merchants' hub, stopping for the supply of especially water and food. Workers actively toiled with daily chores of transferring goods from ships to stores or from shore to ships. The *Corso* also made the harbour a busy place. The licence for pirating was common in the Mediterranean and generated a lot of work. The transfer of goods in the harbour to be shared according to the Knights regulations could be seen regularly in the harbour area. Many would be preparing and suppling for new adventures. (Liam Gauci, (2016*), In the name of the Prince, Maltese Corsairs*. BDL, Malta, P.g117)

Picture 6. File: La Fontana Nuova, Valletta, Grand Harbour, 1664.jpg

The fountain known as *il-Biccerrija* fountain which is found next to the palace of the archbishop was used by the locals in the area. Although, the name implies it was used by the meat slaughter house this was not the case. What is clearly seen however is the difference in social class, those who used to use this fountain would have been associated with the lower class, unlike the adjacent building were the Bishop resided.

People met there daily and made use of the water to clean their houses, do their washing and prepare their food with it. Since many in the *Manderaggio* area did not have their own well or fresh water supply. The utility of water was primarily for drinking. Most of the poor people living on the Maltese Islands used water to drink and to water their livestock. In many cases the water for local consumption would be blended with some drops of wine to remove the possible foul taste. (Dr Noel Buttigieg, Kenneth Gambin, (2003) *Kultura ta l-ikel F' Malta,* Publikazzjoni Indipendenza, P.g 131).

However, the upper classes would not often drink water as wine was more at their disposal and they preferred its palate. The upper classes on the other hand used water to wash their hands in a bowl before dinner. (Dr Noel Buttigieg, Kenneth Gambin, (2003) *Kultura ta l-ikel F' Malta,* Publikazzjoni Indipendenza, P.g 174).

## Conclusion.

The buildings of Valletta serve as monuments to the heritage left by the Knights of St. John in Malta. We have seen how their knowledge and endeavour went beyond what the eye can see. The construction of the city meant that they would resolve the challenges of having a bastion in the south of Europe. The Knights succeeded through implementing their knowledge and finances to conquer these challenges with the building of an elaborate system to supplement the daily fresh water.

The development of the city represented the power which was intertwined with the existence of the religious order. Life depended upon the protection of the divine, religious rituals, chivalry, honour and a strict hierarchy, which persisted for the entire administration of 268 years as their main purpose. Their role of protecting Europe. They carefully kept the balance of the old powers until the wind of change was blowing from a different direction.

We see the knights sending out their political message through Latin inscriptions and coat of arms upon everything they had financed to make sure they would be seen as a generous ruler.

At the end of the Knights reign, when Napoleon first arrived in Malta, water was the excuse he used to enter the grand harbour. He ironically asked for the supply of water from the grand harbour to be made available for his ships on his way to Egypt as he manipulated the water source for the gain of the entire island the Knights could not refuse. The Knights never suspected the enemy would come from within and tactfully ask for water, which would later result in the loss of Malta and a complete change of their own faith. Valletta the city built to defend and built with precautions in case of a siege through an offence was lost by the Knights through a political blunder.

We see how precious and powerful water could be, a source so underestimated but yet so vital to make a powerful order capitulate. It is no surprise then, that after the Knights left, many coats of arms were defaced as the new in power wanted to remove the collective memory of those who preceded them.

This study was aimed to help the reader rediscover the power, fragility, value and the social aspect which water has had in its role in shaping the daily lives in Valletta. Therefore, when in Valletta's remember that there lies the source down beneath its streets and although it can't be always seen, it's the soul of the city which has shaped its life. The source which we should all be indebted to, water.

# Illustrations.

Picture 1. Omnibus Idem fountain Retrieved 15th April 2019.

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Picture 2. Aqueduct, Retrieved 15th April 2019, https://www.google.com/search?q=aqueduct+malta&client=firefox-b-d&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiEho3NtdXhAhWMzKQKHUyDDq8Q_AUIDigB&biw=1280&bih=584#imgrc=o9eZirycbljpmM:.

Picture 3. Coat of Arms and Latin inscription, Retrieved 7th May 2019.

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Picture 4. Cisterns The cisterns in front of the Law Courts in Valletta
Photo: Jason Borg. retrieved 20th March 2019, https://valletta2018.org/news/final-chance-to-visit-vallettas-underground-cisterns-and-pixkerija/.

Picture 5. Wells, Casa Rocca Piccolla. Retrived 15th April 2019, https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&biw=1280&bih=584&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=EDu2XNnEPNCtkwXTkqaICQ&q=The+underground+of+casa+rocca+piccolla&oq=The+underground+of+casa+rocca+piccolla&gs_l=img.3...39952.65108..65555...2.0..0.109.6201.62j7.....2....1..gws-wiz-img.....0..35i39j0j0i67j0i8i30j0i24.N69AGw1-Eho#imgrc=aPAqbblN1O8uPM:.

Picture 6 - La Fontana Nuova, Valletta Grand Harbour. Retrieved 15 April 2019,
Author Willem Schellinks (1627-1678) 17th-century view of Valletta's Grand Harbour, Malta, 1664, graphite pencil, brown ink, sepia wash.

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# Appendixes.

## The tour.

The day starts with the entrance from the main gate of Valletta, pointing out at the previous cisterns under the theatre, we walk toward the right were we find the monuments of the city architects adjacent the restored Wigna court fountain after we make our way towards Castille pointing out at undergrounds and the labyrinth under the place of Castille. Merchants street, the Auberge of Italy, inside the court yard where we shall see the well and the baroque arch designed by architect Carrapechia and the well. The walk continues down Merchants street in Piazza del Erba, entering the Suq we, go down the escalator to see the original foundations of the original building. Heading towards St Georges square where we see De Rohan fountains, the original place of Wigna court fountain, which is no longer there, entering the palace of the grand Master where we see the triton fountain and behind it the Perellos fountain. Out of the palace court yard we head towards archbishop's street, were we enter the Palace of the archbishop to see the water source and the cisterns of the building. Back up to Republic Street we walk in Casa Rocca picolla building and go inside the well/shelter. The tour finishes at fort St. Elmo where we visit the entrance for the largest cisterns in Valletta.