

**Gender, Politics and Ritual
in the Construction of Social Identities:
the Case of *San Pawl*, Valletta, Malta**

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For Graeme

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and is the product of my own work.

Signed:

Date: 6th Dec 1995

Abstract

Based on ethnographic research in St Paul's parish, Valletta, Malta, this thesis examines the *fešta* ('feast') of St Paul's Shipwreck. St Paul is both the local patron saint and the national patron; his *fešta* is therefore also both the local and national. This thesis investigates the relationship between local, national and personal identities in the administration and performance of the *fešta*.

It contributes to current arguments in social anthropology concerning the nature of public rituals in Mediterranean Europe, and their significance in the construction of social identities. Where others have seen the primary function of such rituals as being the expression of local identity in the face of modernity and globalisation, it is argued here that as a ritual of identity, *fešta* is more potent than that. *Festa* does serve as a symbolic representation of local identity, but in doing so, it also serves as a means of elaborating other types of identity, based on gender, political party allegiance, social class and nation.

In Maltese society, these identities are hotly contested, because of the rapid social changes that have affected the country since its Independence from colonial rule in 1964. Anxiety about the future leads to antagonism between different social groups in the parish, over how to define these identities. The *fešta* involves a fleeting moment of symbolic resolution that ties together these otherwise antagonistic groups. But the activities that surround it are also the primary media for the communication of this antagonism. *Festa* is therefore simultaneously an expression of solidarity, and a vehicle for the expression of conflict. It differs from other public rituals in that the symbols it invokes - of family, community, religion and gender - are fundamental to Maltese conceptions of self-identity. This is the key to its effectiveness.

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Note on *Malti* - the Maltese Language

Malti, the Maltese language, received a standardised orthography in 1924. There are thirty- one letters in the alphabet, which is a modified Roman script. The following is a list of those letters, with examples of how they are pronounced:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a - <u>ma</u> n | ġ - <u>gi</u> raffe | m - <u>ma</u> n | s - <u>si</u> n <u>g</u> le |
| b - <u>bi</u> g | h - (silent) | n - <u>na</u> me | t - <u>ti</u> me |
| ċ - <u>che</u> a <u>p</u> | ħ - <u>ha</u> nd | għ - (silent) | u - <u>bu</u> o <u>t</u> |
| d - <u>de</u> a <u>l</u> | i - <u>bi</u> t | o - <u>bo</u> ttle | v - <u>ve</u> st |
| e - <u>be</u> st | ie - <u>nie</u> ce | p - <u>pa</u> in | w - <u>w</u> e <u>t</u> |
| f - <u>fe</u> a <u>st</u> | j - <u>yo</u> u <u>ng</u> | q - (glottal stop) | x - <u>sh</u> oo <u>t</u> |
| g - <u>gi</u> rl | k - <u>ke</u> rb | | ż - <u>ze</u> bra |
| | l - <u>la</u> mb | r - <u>re</u> st | z - <u>bi</u> ts |

The structure and basic vocabulary of *Malti* are Semitic, and therefore related to Arabic. There are, however, many borrowings from Italian, French and English - both nouns and verbs, which are conjugated according to the Arabic pattern. Throughout the text, when I refer to terms in *Malti* they are italicised, with translations in English. The English loan words are also italicised, but without translations. For example, *training*, and *hobby*.

Introduction

Malta as an Island City State

The Maltese islands comprise a five-island archipelago. Three of the islands, Malta, Gozo and Comino, are inhabited. Malta is by far the largest island, in both physical area and population. It is on this island that I conducted fieldwork for this thesis, from summer 1992 until spring 1994.

The conceptual focus of the research was the social and political identity of the Maltese, and how these were debated and discussed by the Maltese themselves. The ethnographic focus was the *festa* ('feast') of St Paul's Shipwreck (hereafter, *San Pawl*)¹ held annually in the parish of the same name (hereafter, St Paul's), in Malta's capital, Valletta. The *festa* commemorates the shipwreck of the apostle Paul on the island of Malta in 60AD,² and his subsequent conversion of the Maltese to Christianity. The *festa* is of particular significance for the Maltese, because St Paul is the national patron saint. This thesis explores the significance of the event for the people who in the early 1990's were involved in organising, participating in, and enjoying it - the *Pawlini* ('supporters/followers of St Paul'). In doing so, it locates Malta, the Maltese, and Maltese identity in the performance of *San Pawl*, and traces the various themes that emerged from my examination of the *festa*.³ These themes are introduced and contextualised in this Introduction.

The methods used were those of ethnographic fieldwork involving participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, statistical, literature and media reviews, and demographic surveys. Throughout the fieldwork, I tried to maintain what Marilyn Strathern has called a "cultural imagination" (1992: xvii). The term connotes an open-ness to the implications and interconnections of different areas of social and cultural life, and for this reason, the thesis is broad in its scope. The wide range of topics stemmed

¹ When referring to the actual saint, I shall use the English St Paul, and for the parish, St Paul's. The Maltese, *San Pawl*, I shall use to denote the saint's *festa*.

² As I am dealing with an entirely Christian (Roman Catholic) context, I use the designations BC and AD when referring to the eras before and after Christ, rather than the less ethnocentric PE (Previous Era) and CE (Current Era).

³ I mainly use the past tense throughout because although the events of my fieldwork occurred in the recent past, their continuity cannot be assumed. However, for abstractions, and practices (such as *festa*) which are repeated, and thought of as being repeated by Maltese themselves, I use the present tense. This tallies with Davis's (1992) view of the 'practical' uses of tense in ethnography.

from the concerns of my informants, and what emerges is a thesis rather in the model of a traditional ethnographic monograph, which looks at the inter-relation of various aspects of Maltese life.

Of particular concern was the relationship between public culture and face-to-face communication. The term public culture was introduced by Appadurai and Breckenridge in the first edition of the journal of the same name. They describe public culture as “a zone of cultural debate” (1988: 6 - emphasis in original) which has drawn such economically marginal places as India “into the cosmopolitanism of the rest of the world.” (5). The ways it achieves this are not uniform. Thus, “every society appears to bring to [this] form...its own special history and traditions, its own cultural stamp, its own quirks and idiosyncrasies.” (5). The idiosyncrasies of Maltese public culture are of particular concern in this thesis. I am especially concerned with the extent to which public and personal modes of discourse are blurred, and debates in public culture articulate with those of a face-to-face nature. This is partly a function of the small size of Malta, but also more significantly because of its political culture, based on the politics of patronage (see below).

The fieldwork centred on the national capital city, Valletta, where I lived for most of my stay. The city was referred to by Maltese not as Valletta, but as *Il-Belt* (‘the city’); a term which suggests the city is somehow central, or pivotal, to Maltese life. It was not simply *a* city, but *the* city, and as such was a familiar locus of everyday life.

The city was built by the Order of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, who controlled the islands from 1530 to 1798. It did not exist prior to 1565, and is packed full of historical buildings which reflect the illustrious history of the Order in Malta. As well as the Order’s administrative buildings (the Grand Master’s Palace, the Order’s *Biblioteca* (library) and *Auberges* of the different *Langues*⁴) are numerous church buildings (there are no fewer than 24 Catholic churches in Valletta) and residential buildings including both high-status aristocratic *palazzi* (‘palaces’) and relatively low-status sixteenth-century *kerrejjet* (‘tenements’). Built on a grid system to the classic Greek design of Hippodamos, it was the first ‘new town’ in the world, predating New World planned urban settlements by over 100 years. It was built for the Knights by the Knights - “that city built by

⁴ The Order drew its membership from the noble families of Continental Europe. Each region of Europe was represented by a *Langue*, of which nobles from that region were a member. Each *Langue* had its headquarters, or *Auberge* in Valletta. When there, the members of the *Langue* would stay in the appropriate *Auberge*. In 1530, there were eight *Langues* to the Order: Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, Castille, England and Bavaria. After the Reformation, the English *Langue* was disbanded: the Order acknowledged the authority of the Pope. (Cavaliere, 1960)

gentlemen for gentlemen" (Luke, 1968: 65), and has served as the seat of Maltese government ever since.

Sitting as it does on the Xiberras peninsula (see map 2), between the two massive natural harbours (Grand Harbour and Marsamxett) that enabled Malta's development as a maritime centre, Valletta is the best known of all Maltese settlements. It is also the best-used by the wider Maltese population. Although its population in the early 1990's was only a little over 8,000, it was estimated that over 40,000 people entered the city every day (*Il-Mument*, 21/11/93: 26).

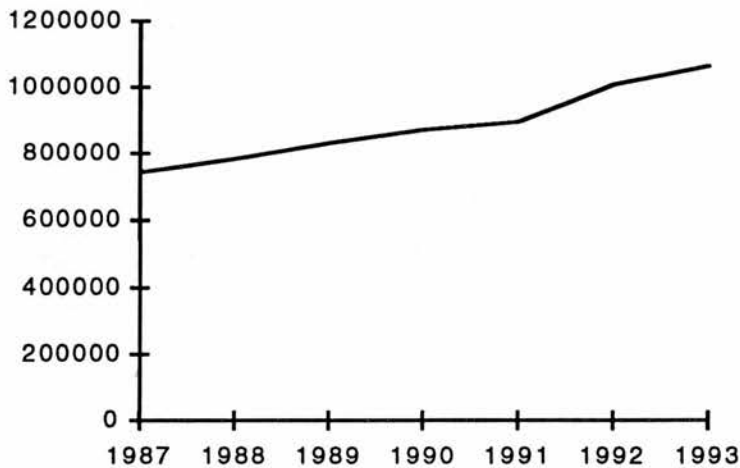
People's regular engagement with the city meant that it was a fully integrated part of their mental geography of the Maltese islands. This is the case with all state capitals, but - to jointly paraphrase Said (1977) and Anderson (1983) - for the Maltese, the mental geography was less imagined than in other nations. Because the Maltese regularly engaged with their capital, the recognition of its streets and landmarks was less self-conscious; its use was habitual use, analogous to that by a suburban of the 'downtown' area in a larger urban settlement. Indeed, Valletta can be seen as the decaying centre of an island city state. The rapid decline in its population over the past thirty years has raised concern in the local population, who often refer to Valletta's 'good old days', and call for the city's rehabilitation. This is particularly important for a local population who often seem swamped by the daily influx of workers, shoppers and tourists.

According to the 1993 *Malta Year Book*, the population of the Maltese islands in 1991 was 359,543. The islands have a total area of 316km², which means that Malta's population density was 1,130 inhabitants/km², one of the highest in Europe (European Commission, 1993).

Based on the 1985 census data, there are four reasons why this is perhaps a rather conservative estimate. Firstly, because this census came between the end of a phase of mass emigration by Maltese, and the beginning of a counter-trend of return migration. Secondly, as a consequence of emigration, the phenomenon of long-term holidays to Malta by emigrants or their offspring has developed. Although nominally residents of their new countries, if they hold Maltese passports such people can freely enter the country without being accounted for. A third factor affecting the population figures is the increasing number of refugees and immigrants (legal or otherwise) who have turned to Malta over the past few years. Finally, the numbers of long-term foreign residents on tourist visas, and the numbers of shorter-term tourists, radically affect the numbers of people in Malta at any

one time. The numbers of tourists visiting Malta has steadily increased over the past few years (see fig 1), topping the one million mark for the first time in 1992.

fig 1 - Tourist Arrivals by year: 1987-1994



(Source: National Tourism Organisation of Malta, 1994)

What with increasing return migrants, immigrants and refugees, tourists and ex-migrant holiday-makers, I would suggest that the numbers actually present in Malta at any one time in the early 1990's ~~were~~ closer to half a million than 360,000. This means that the official figures for population density should likewise be estimated upwards. The intense pressure for physical space, and the persistent coming-and-going of people of various nationalities gave Malta as a whole the character of a city-state, with Valletta as its downtown area.

This is the way that Malta and Valletta were used, by both permanent and temporary inhabitants. Malta has a very automotive culture, with high levels of car ownership. It is not uncommon, for example, for every adult member of a family to own a car. Those who don't own cars used the very efficient bus service, which spreads out in a broad network from Valletta, incorporating all the villages. Visitors are equally mobile, with holiday car-hire a thriving business at all times of the year.

All this means that the relatively short distances from place to place in Malta are traversed easily and regularly by resident and visitor alike. When the maximum car journey is 45 minutes, the experienced driver soon builds up a comprehensive mental geography of the whole island. The mental horizons, therefore, lie well beyond the limits

of the environment immediately surrounding the home. The limits of the Maltese world are the limits of the seashore. Very few places remain unknown.

Ritual and the Politics of Identity

My fieldwork was centred on the best known place, Valletta, and particularly the parish of St Paul's Shipwreck, where I lived and worked for most of my stay. The patron saint of St Paul's is also the national patron, and this thesis concentrates on the commemoration of the saint, in the *fešta* of *San Pawl*, held annually on 10th February. It constitutes an attempt to explain the significance of this particular *fešta*, and its implications for Maltese social identity. These implications are manifold, which means that the thesis touches on a wide variety of issues, emphasising throughout, their interconnectedness.

Festa denotes a form of ritual centred around the commemoration of the life - or death, in the case of martyrs - of a particular saint. They involve five or more days of activities that include solemn liturgy, lively brass band marches, and emotional processions. The Maltese are fervently Roman Catholic. Ninety-eight per cent of the population are members of the Catholic church, of whom 85 per cent practice their faith on a regular basis. *Festa* is perhaps the most significant popular manifestation of this faith. Outside the weekly cycle of confession, mass and atonement, it is the most common ritual form.⁵

David Kertzer has argued that because ritual is a type of symbolic action, and symbols are by definition multivocal, they are a particularly potent medium for the communication of political messages (Kertzer, 1988: 11). The messages with which this thesis is concerned relate to social identity.

The suitability of rituals for portraying political messages about social identity is the assumption behind Boissevain's 1992 collection, *Revitalising European Rituals*. In his introduction, he makes some general observations about the marked increase in scale and numbers of public rituals in late twentieth century Europe (1992a: 8-10). He relates the revitalisation of ritual to the creation of social identity through the symbolisation of boundaries, particularly in places that are marginal to, or dependent on, the global political economy. The increase in ritual is linked to a widespread critique of post-war industrialisation, and a consequent valorisation of 'tradition'. Increased affluence and

⁵ There are 63 parishes in Malta and 15 in Gozo. Each celebrates at least one *fešta* each year. This means that the *fešta* is not only symbolically, but also numerically, significant.

leisure time has freed resources to enable the organisation of rituals, he argued, and an overall climate of state tolerance towards popular cultural forms has meant that they were free to expand. The increased demand for traditional rituals from tourists and migrants was fuelled by their unprecedented exposure in the mass media, particularly television. This meant that the escalation of ritual forms was directly related to the globalisation of culture, and demographic changes resulting from expanded communications networks. In the face of these changes, and the resultant Creolisation (Hannerz, 1987) of culture both in the cores, and particularly the peripheries, of the European economic system, the rise of ritual became a means by which boundaries of identity were reasserted. New appeals were made to the 'authenticity' of 'traditional' ritual forms which emerged as a means of identifying, strengthening and asserting the uniqueness of particular social - usually local - groups (Boissevain, 1992a: 11).

In his own contribution to the edited volume, Boissevain (1992b) himself traces this trend in the Maltese village of Naxxar, where he sees the development of a Good Friday procession and expansion of the *festa* of St Lucy. These are seen as rituals that promote local identity in the face of increasing tourist numbers, creating a kind of Durkheimian solidarity that Turner (1969) has more subtly glossed as *communitas*:

"Maltese celebrations have been growing because they express the desire of people buffeted by waves of radical change and political divisiveness to play and so re-establish their identity and contact with one another and to achieve, momentarily, the peace of *communitas*." (Boissevain, 1992b: 152)

This argument is based on a number of assumptions about ritual and identity, central to which is that the main feature of such rituals is the communication of localism in the face of globalisation. Boissevain portrays the local, peripheral populations of places such as Naxxar, as the objects of a globalising process that they resist by demonstrating local identity through ritual. Based in the central parish of St Paul's, Valletta, my research suggests that *festa* does not only portray localism, but also other elements of personal and social identity - some perhaps more significant than others, for the actors involved.

Debates in the anthropology of ritual have revolved around the extent to which ritual, as a form of rhetorical communication, is resistible. Early accounts, drawing on Durkheimian ideas, saw ritual as a direct representation - in action - of *conscience collective*, which itself is a reflex of social structure (Durkheim, 1915; Radcliffe-Brown,

1952). Ritual therefore serves to represent society to its members. In the case of Malta, we might want to argue that *festi* represents locality to its members.

Maurice Bloch (1989) has criticised the assumed harmony of society that this model presents. He argued that ritual is a kind of ideology which serves to conceal the inequalities of everyday life. Because ritual is highly formalised, it is said to restrict debate about the nature of society. Again, in the Maltese case, we might say that ritual represents an idealised version of what the local community is, to members of the community who are structurally or materially diverse.

Both these models of how ritual works are problematic, because they imply that the participants in particular rituals have no say in the way the ritual is conducted or interpreted. They appear as either the pawns in the relentless self-representation of society, or as dupes in the ideological creations of false (collective) consciousness.

The model I adopt here is practice-oriented, but not to the exclusion of a notion of ideology. If Bloch implies that the 'audience' of ritual communications are inevitably convinced by the mystification of ritual ideology, this does not mean that we should reject the idea of ritual as ideology altogether. It is central to my argument that there is an idealised, ideological content in ritual communication. However, the problem does require a rather more sophisticated model of ideology. This I draw from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and particularly his concept of *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977: 164).

Doxa is described by Bourdieu as the system of classification which produces *habitus*; his short-hand term for the cultural logic which orients social action without determining it. *Habitus* is the "durably installed generative principle" (78) of social action. *Doxa* is the ideological orientation of this principle. It is the mechanism by which the arbitrariness of culture and society are naturalised, such that they appear self-evident (164). It is therefore a principle by which the unselfconscious living of traditional practice is ensured. It is a characteristic of what Habermas would describe as pre-modern society (see below).

However, *doxa* in practice contrasts with its two discursive forms: orthodoxy and heterodoxy. These are the points at which the ideological framework of *doxa* becomes recognised by the people who live it:

"...orthodox or heterodox belief imply...awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs." (164)

Where orthodox beliefs are revealed, as official ideologies or approved versions of particular classifications, this merely draws attention to the fact that they can be contested, in heterodox versions. For Habermas, this self-consciousness is a property of modernity, and for the purposes of this thesis, it is also a property of Maltese society in the early 1990's. If we apply the notion of *doxa*, and its two discursive manifestations heterodoxy and orthodoxy, to the case of Maltese *festas*, we can investigate the extent to which it represents the official ideology of local community life. This is achieved particularly through the metaphorical association of community and *festas* with the household. However, we can also, and consequently, explore the extent to which this official ideology - as a type of orthodox discourse within the realm of *doxa* - also draws attention to the potential for heterodoxy. In other words, we can recognise that the *festas* does not determine the way in which people think about their locality. Rather, it gives them a space within which to conduct debates about how the terms for identity within that locality are constructed. It also allows them space to contest other forms of identity than local community, through the same cultural manifestation. In this formulation, ritual does not determine people's ideas, either positively - à la Durkheim - or negatively - à la Bloch. It serves as a locus for debate about the ways in which identities are constructed - only one of which is local identity.

Ritual and Local Identity

The image of Maltese rituals as localising strategies depends on a particular concept of the local. Throughout the history of Maltese ethnography, the local has primarily been seen as a rural local. Boissevain is himself the principal ethnographer of Malta, and since his early research in the late 1950's, his analysis has been forged on a concept of the local village community. This was not the isolated village community outlined by Redfield (1965), that became an archetype or blueprint for much Mediterranean ethnography, but was nevertheless to be treated as a unity which had relationships with, rather than necessarily being part of, the 'outside world'.⁶ The preoccupation was therefore with 'the village and the world'; the two sides of this equation being treated as articulated, but discrete.

⁶ A path can be traced in Boissevain's work from his monographs *Saints and Fireworks* (1965), and particularly *Hal-Farruġ* (1969), which are recognisably 'village studies', through work which explicitly highlights the relationship of the village and broader processes - for example, 'Maltese Village Politics and their Relation to National Politics' (1962) and *Beyond the Community* (1975), edited with John Friedl - to the more recent concern with villagers' localising strategies.

Where other ethnographers examined urban areas, the focus was equally one of 'community', which was a by-word for moral integration, marginality from the state and traditional social structure. The main attempt to examine the complexities of urban life in Malta (Mizzi, 1981) did so by looking at the harbour town of Senglea. This was the most economically depressed area of Malta, and had a reputation in Malta as a major centre for drugs and prostitution. Mizzi tried to get to grips with the complexities of women's lives in Senglea, but ended up reinforcing the images of marginality she set out to counter. Despite emphasising female agency by demonstrating women's influence over key areas of life - household economy, kinship, local morality - this agency was ultimately subsumed under a set of thematic categories which created Senglea as stereotypically Mediterranean. 'Honour and shame', 'gossip' and 'matriarchy' become the mechanisms by which the Senglean women's positions as marginal Mediterraneans was asserted.

Michael Herzfeld has traced the extent to which such categories - and particularly the invocation of an 'honour and shame syndrome' - have served to essentialise and marginalise the people of the Mediterranean, creating a 'Mediterraneanism' akin to Said's orientalism. He uses the term Mediterraneanism to "suggest the reification of a zone of cultural difference through the ideologically motivated representation of otherness...[which]...legitimises the representation of the ancestral core of Europe as a sufficiently exotic subject of anthropological analysis." (Herzfeld, 1987: 64). The "sufficiently exotic subject" lives in a unified moral community for whom it is assumed the boundary between 'insider' and 'outsider' is the most significant (see Cohen, 1985). However, the exotic other, despite being outside the community, is also, significantly, 'our own', such that both the creation of the Mediterranean other by academic anthropologists, and the demarcation of local boundaries by Mediterraneans themselves, depend on a recognition that the boundaries are both conceptual and permeable (Herzfeld, 1987: 197). This throws into question the assumption of an isolated, or 'as if' isolated community, as manifest in the everyday lives, or the ritual symbolisations, of Mediterranean people.

My choice of field site in Malta was motivated by a wish to avoid the essentialisation of such concepts of local identity through the idea of an isolated community. After a short 'exploratory' trip to Malta in 1990, the inappropriateness of the concept seemed obvious. Maltese villagers simply didn't *behave* as if their villages were isolated and discrete, and people in Valletta even less so. Many *Pawlini* ('supporters of *San Pawl*') live outside the city, but visit frequently, to participate in its administration and execution.

The high levels of mobility mean that the notion of a discrete local community, with a discrete local identity, is unsustainable as an empirical entity. Even as early as the nineteenth century, Maltese life revolved around Valletta to the extent that a rigid rural-urban divide was absent. Carmel Cassar (1988) has shown that although most village-dwellers were employed in agricultural production, many took daily trips to the city for work. Even then, Valletta and the villages were integrated and inter-related as a single, urban unit. This much does not contradict Boissevain's thesis that ritual presents local identity in the face of globalising process. Indeed, we might suggest that precisely because of this widespread practical use of Valletta by outsiders, the conceptual boundaries were asserted through such mechanisms as *festi*. But my research shows that although it was clearly a factor, the local as a conceptual entity was not the only thing being communicated through Maltese ritual. The question depends partly on how we define identity, and partly on how we think the politics of identity has developed in relation to modernity.

Richard Handler has argued that identity is a unique product of the late twentieth century Western world (1994: 27). Miller (1994), after Habermas and Hegel, has linked this to a shift in perceptions of temporality that was one of the major consequences, and characteristics, of modernity. The shift was a consequence of the juxtaposition of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the discovery of the New World. In this unique historical moment, the idea of time as successive moments of the present, which contrast with past and future, replaced a Medieval notion of time as eternal religious truth. Whereas the earlier epoch had seen past and present fused, with the future as a world yet to come (on the last day of judgement), the dawn of modernity brought with it the possibility that the future was actually unfurling before our very eyes, through the successive passing of presents:

"Whereas in the Christian west the 'new world' had meant the still-to-come age of the world of the future, which was to dawn only on the last day...the secular concept of modernity expresses the conviction that the future has already begun: It is the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future." (Habermas, 1987: 5)

With this switch, therefore, the present became a moment of becoming, which led in turn to the proliferation of ideas of progress, development and advancement (Miller, 1994: 61). The separation of present from past has significance for the study of identity, as it marks the end of an unselfconscious living of tradition, and the recognition that tradition, continuity and identity are projects to be achieved and developed. The

recognition that modern people are subjects of, rather than subject to, history meant a consequent preoccupation with the criteria for constructing identity (Giddens, 1991). This in turn meant placing the identity-possessing self within the wider scheme of historical development:

“One’s own standpoint was to be brought to reflective awareness within the horizon of history as a whole.” (Habermas, 1987: 6)

The notion of identity that has emerged out of this historical self-consciousness is, according to Handler, based on historically and culturally situated notions of sameness and boundedness (Handler, 1994: 28-31). He therefore warns against its unproblematic use as a category for cross-cultural analysis, arguing rather that we should focus on a deconstruction of the ways in which identities are formed in specific socio-cultural settings. Doing this can undermine the hegemonic use of the category ‘identity’ to classify and thereby subordinate the marginal (37). To this extent, he conforms to the now well-established social science tradition of disclosing the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). However, disclosing the hegemonic nature of identity is not without its dilemmas. Not least is the fact that although it is an historically situated process, the construction of identities within this model is extremely prevalent and of tremendous importance to the people engaged in it. For example, in the Malta of the early 1990’s, a veritable identity industry emerged, to debate the essence of Malteseness. Public fora were held on radio and television, at which prominent politicians and academics were asked to discuss *L-Identità Kulturali ta’Malta* (‘Maltese Cultural Identity’); two books were published with the subject as their theme (Cortis, 1989 and Frendo, 1995); and debates emerged in the press. To deny the tremendous importance of the issue for the Maltese at that time is to simultaneously negate their reasons for engaging in such a debate. As Handler put it, disclosing invented traditions often serves “to deconstruct notions of cultural identity at precisely the moment when the disempowered turn to them” (Handler, 1994: 38).

It is significant that so much of this debate was carried out in public culture (see above). The implications of this emerge if we view identity in a slightly different way. Calhoun has suggested that rather than being about the construction of boundaries per se, the process of identity is concerned with constructing the terms for the construction of boundaries. In other words, the construction of social identity is all about “what sort of individual identity qualifie[s] one to participate in the public discourses that shaped policy and influenced power.” (1994a: 2). Public discourse on identity is discourse about constructing the terms for public discourse, or who is competent to participate in it. Thus,

rather than laying down essential, bounded units such as the local community, identity can be seen as a dynamic process of debate about the nature of political decision-making. Fragmentation takes place within such units because of the self-consciousness of identity that is characteristic of modernity. By the late twentieth century, this took a turn towards the self-consciousness of different types of identity (Calhoun, 1994b). The recognition that identity is a project also necessarily entails the recognition that the project can be contested, criticised and over-thrown, to form new conclusions about who is allowed to participate.

In the context of this thesis, therefore, ritual in Malta becomes not only about portraying a single, unified local identity against the encroaching processes of global culture. Rather, it is seen as a significant site for debates about the different types of identity that define the conditions or criteria for participation in those debates. It became a locus for debate and contest about the criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the Maltese public world. These criteria were based on gender, social standing, political orientation, and age, as much as locality. Moreover, in each case, a variety of conclusions were drawn about them. This thesis therefore situates the *festa* of the early 1990's at a particular moment in the development of modernity in Malta, when various types of social identities were being contested.

San Pawl as a Site for the Contest of Identities

The site of this contest was the *festa*, which as argued above is perhaps the most significant ritual form in Malta. It is also the most potent in the elaboration of identities, both because of its generic form, and because of the unique significance of the particular *festa* I examined.

Because of its form, the *festa* had particular resonance in debates about household, gender and community. Like the household, the *festa* was conceptually divided between 'inside' and 'outside' celebrations, which were brought together at its climax. Because these categories have connotations of private and public distinctions, which are also gendered, the bringing together of inside and outside can be seen as a symbolic manifestation of the idealised complementarity of genders represented in official images of the family, or dominant gender ideologies. I explore these issues in chapters two, six and seven, which deal respectively with issues of gender and household, respectability, and the relationship between gender and *festa*.

As suggested above, a frequent preoccupation of anthropology in the Mediterranean has been the invocation of a gender-based system of 'honour and shame'. This has been seen as the quintessential moral code of the Mediterranean, and a definitive feature thereof.⁷ 'Honour' is seen to define a person's - usually a man's - reputation or prestige, and is related to that of their household. Household reputation is in turn said to be defined by the reputation of the women who live there, and particularly their possession, or demonstration, of 'shame'. In order to maintain household honour, women have to demonstrate appropriate shame by avoiding contact with men outside the household; particularly contact that might imply sexual impropriety. The honour and shame syndrome therefore relates to notions of female chastity, and the dual importance of ensuring that men marry virgins, and preventing them from being cuckolded once they do (see Mitchell, forthcoming, a).

Nancy Lindisfarne (1994) has argued that the invocation of this gender-based moral system serves to elevate a particular dominant stereotype of Mediterranean gender relations to the level of an analytic tool. She argues that rather than *the* Mediterranean moral code, honour and shame is just one - perhaps the dominant one - of many competing and contested versions of who men and women are. Thus, although I allude in chapter seven to Maltese concepts which approximate both 'honour' and 'shame', my focus is primarily on specific gender categories. I examine the roles and definitions of 'man' and 'woman' given to me by different informants, and the extent to which those informants debate and contest these categories in particular contexts. The primary context is that of the *fešta*, which is seen as a mechanism for the maintenance of a particular dominant vision of gender relations, in the face of contest from a variety of newer options.

The *fešta* was particularly effective in this context because of the formal and categorical homology between notions of inside and outside as they referred to the *fešta*, and the same categories as they related to the household. The *fešta* can be seen as a symbolic resolution of the tensions between these two categories, in the context of a community celebration. Community, in turn, was associated with family, such that the resolution of inside and outside in the community *fešta* can be seen as a resolution of the same categories as they applied to the family and household.

In official versions of the family and gender relations, women were associated with a domestic domain inside the house, and men with a public domain outside. This in turn meant that the *fešta*, as a representation of complementarity between inside and

⁷ See, for example, and in particular, Gilmore (1982 and 1987).

outside in the community, was also a representation of complementarity of genders in the family. However, the process was accomplished in a context dominated by men. Men were the principal actors in the administrative organisation, and execution of the *festa*. This illustrates the extent to which the *festa*, like official versions of the family, served to mask the inequalities of Maltese social life. In Calhoun's formulation, this relates not only to degrees of participation in public life, but also to the process of agenda-setting for public debate. If female identity in the official version of the family, was domestic, then this prevented women from setting public agendas. However, agendas are not fixed, and the terms for agenda-setting can be contested. For example, in chapter two I examine the extent to which domestic violence emerged in the early 1990's as a potential topic for public debate, despite the tendency of official gender ideologies to mask such gross inequality.

Notions of the household, family and gender had resonance for debates over local identity. Although localism was not the only form of identity portrayed by the *festa*, it was nevertheless an important factor. This was because the concept of household, and the division between inside and outside, were expanded, metaphorically, to encapsulate an indigenous idea which approximates the anthropological notion of community. In the context of St Paul's, this was achieved in people's memories of a previous 'community'.

Part of the modernisation process of post-war Malta, like that of the rest of Europe and North America, was a concern to eradicate sub-standard housing in urban centres. Common to slum clearance projects was the development of a kind of nostalgia for the old slum communities once their occupants have been displaced. For example, Young and Wilmott's celebrated example of the slum clearance of Bethnal Green demonstrates the nostalgia for old community life of people who moved to the suburb of 'Greenleigh' (Young and Wilmott, 1957). A similar process was observed by Granada Television in Oldham (1984), and Fischer points toward national speculation about the death of family and community as a result of urban clearance and suburbanisation in USA (1984: 260).

In St Paul's, slum clearance occurred with the razing of an area known as *L-Arċipierku* ('the archipelago') in 1972, after which a nostalgic community was created, and described in the metaphorical terms of the household. In chapter three I trace the significance of memories of *L-Arċipierku* for the *Pawlini*, looking at the various aspects of the area that people remembered, and the mechanisms by which its memory was constructed.

The appeals to a nostalgic community related not only to an image of idealised kinship relations, it also had consequences for debates about political identity, both specifically party-political, and more generally. *L-Arċipierku* was considered a stronghold of the Christian democrat *Partit Nazzjonalist* (PN - 'Nationalist Party'). Its demolition was seen as a deliberate and vindictive response to this party political allegiance by the socialist Malta Labour Party (MLP) government of the 1970's. It therefore related the local identity of people from *L-Arċipierku* to the specific policies of party opponents. But it also related to more general political relations. The demolition of *L-Arċipierku* was also presented as an example of the disenfranchisement of the people who lived in the area, in comparison to the well-connected politicians who were nominally their representatives. It therefore became an exemplar of the political identity of a subaltern group who saw themselves as largely excluded from the sphere of public decision-making. Chapter four describes the extent to which memories of *L-Arċipierku*, and concepts of political action, contributed towards the identification of a subaltern group in St Paul's.

The term subaltern is used in deliberate reference to Gramsci, and has been used with increasing popularity in anthropological writing that concerns inequality. In general, anthropologists use it to denote inferior rank. As Guha put it, 'subaltern' is used "as a name for the general attribute of subordination...whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way." (Guha, 1982: vii). In this formulation, Maltese women could be referred to as subaltern. But I reserve the category for the specific dynamics of the Maltese political system, which is based on patronage. This seems closer to Gramsci's original concept than the 'catch-all' definition offered by Guha and others.

Patronage politics is a category familiar to the anthropology of the Mediterranean. Indeed, like honour and shame in the moral domain, it has been seen as a defining feature of Mediterranean social life - in this case political life. Classically, patronage denotes the relationship between politically superior patrons and their inferior clients. The basis of the relationship is the assumption that the patron has, and controls, access to political economic or cultural resources to which the client requires access. The requirements of a client may be practical needs such as food or shelter. But they may just as often be requirements defined by the patron himself. For example, the provision of 'protection' by mafia patrons is only a requirement for the client once the patron produces the need.⁸

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the production of protection by the mafia, see Gambetta, (1993).

The client can only gain access to resources via personal relationships of reciprocity, particularly by honouring the patron through gift-giving or political support. Thus, although the relationship is asymmetrical, it is assumed to be mutually beneficial (Roniger, 1994: 3). As John Davis has put it, patronage exists “whenever men [sic] adopt a posture of deference to those more powerful than they and gain access to resources as a result.” (Davis, 1977: 132). As with honour, it is most often men who are implicated in the relationships of patronage. In Malta at least, although women could be, and frequently were, political clients, they were less frequently patrons, because they less frequently had control over public resources. Women’s employment in Malta in the early 1990’s was generally confined to temporary unskilled or semi-skilled work (Abela, 1991: 39).

Patronage politics in the Mediterranean has been linked to an evolutionary model of the development of democracy. It was seen as the result of a dysfunctional state bureaucracy. Where the state failed to provide universal access to resources, it was argued, patrons emerged to control what access there was. For example, Anton Blok (1974) linked the rise of the Sicilian Mafia to that province’s marginality in the Italian state. Where the state failed to provide adequate protection in marginal rural areas, the Mafia emerged in the late nineteenth century as mediating brokers⁹ between landowners and peasants.

Placing patronage political systems conceptually at a particular moment in the development of state democracy implied that the emergence of civil society and full democracy would lead to its disappearance. As Ernest Gellner put it, “where power is effectively centralised, or on the other hand, well-diffused, patronage is correspondingly less common.” (Gellner, 1977: 4). The foundations of this assumption have been challenged, particularly because of a shift in focus from the personalised nature of patronage relations, to their structural implications.

Michael Gilson has criticised the focus of much research on patronage in the Mediterranean, on the dyadic, personal relationships between patron and client. He suggests that rather than the ‘vertical’ relationship between patron and client, the most

⁹ Robert Paine (1971) argued for a more systematic discrimination between categories of broker, patron and client. He argued that where patrons adopt a superior position in order to further their own political interests, brokers do so to maintain the interests of a third party. The Mafia therefore, as mediators, appear to be brokers, rather than patrons. However, the mechanisms by which their legitimacy as mediators is assured, are recognisably those of patronage. I therefore maintain the category ‘patronage’ when referring to both patrons and brokers.

significant structural relationship in patronage politics is the 'horizontal' one between the stratum of patrons and that of clients (1977: 182). In other words, he suggests - with LiCausi (1975) before him - that patron-client relations are class relations. This returns us to Gramsci's concept of the subaltern group.

Amsbury has pointed out the extent to which Gramsci's categories - taken subsequently to apply to class relations - were formulated at a point in Italian history when class relations were patron-client relations:

"...a better translation of Gramsci's meaning is patron-client relationship. Similarly his word 'subaltern' refers to a position of clientage and his 'hegemonic' refers to positions of patron grade." (1995: 614)

Subaltern, therefore, refers to people who are disenfranchised, or of inferior rank, specifically because of their structural position as clients. Gramsci frequently refers to the ethico-political nature of hegemony, arguing that a simple economic determinism will not explain the complexity of class relationships. It is, above all, his concept of consent which demonstrates that his theory of the relationship between subaltern and hegemonic classes can also be interpreted as a theory of political culture, and particularly the political culture of patronage (Gramsci, 1988; Eagleton, 1991).

In Malta, there was a degree of self-consciousness of the subaltern position, manifest in the indigenous category *poplu* ('people'). *Poplu* is an inclusive, horizontal category that suggests a strength of solidarity, and therefore supports Gilson's idea that patronage politics is class-based. This would seem to tally with Gramsci's use of 'subaltern', if we take him to mean a stratum of clients, related structurally, horizontally.

The idea that it denotes a structural, rather than personal, relationship brings into question the assumption that patronage is a property of the dysfunctional, or incomplete state. Indeed, research has suggested that this developmental theory is empirically unsustainable. Just as patronage has persisted in well-developed democracies such as Canada and USA, so too it has emerged alongside, and complementary to, other political forms in the new democracies of the former Soviet world (see Roniger & Günes-Ayata, 1994 - particularly contributions by Vorozheikina, Clark and Fletcher). Rather, the recognition that patronage is structural presents the relationship as a long-term feature of a particular political culture.

In the Maltese context, because the category *poplu* transcends the immediate world of personal relationships, so the system of patronage itself, must likewise be seen as a property of an enduring cultural system. *Poplu* has similar connotations to the Neapolitan category *popolino* (lit. 'little people'), who are poor, lack access to resources, but are nevertheless self-conscious of their structural position, and therefore of their identity as a reproducing social group (Belmonte, 1989: 40). Belmonte, with Gramsci, sees this self-consciousness as the first glimmer of more radical class-consciousness, manifest in antagonism towards the patron strata (1989: 127). A similar antagonism is revealed in my chapter four, where the significance of *poplu* and the dynamics of patron-client relations in Malta are discussed in detail. The tensions emerged between those who regarded themselves as the disenfranchised, subaltern *poplu*, and those who were regarded as well-connected and influential.

The antagonism between the subaltern group and those more able to participate in the public sphere is further explored in chapter five, in conflicts surrounding the one significant area of public life over which the subaltern group did have control: the *festi*. The debates over the nature of the *festi*, and particularly how it should be represented in public reveal the tensions between local and national concerns, as well as between the politically influential and the relatively less so. Once more, the debates and contests over identity become debates over participation in the public definitions of identity - of how to present and define a key moment in the national and local calendar: the *festi* of the national patron.

A full description of the *festi* waits until the last two chapters of the thesis. The build up to this description represents a background to the various threads which run through it, and the various elements of identity which it represents, and which go towards its representation. These include identities of gender, class, political allegiance and age, as well as locality and nation. Each element is inter-related and manifest in a variety of forms. Most significantly, each element was of vital significance to the people with whom I conducted research, and this importance was demonstrated by their - at times impassioned - debate over them. The importance of these issues was a function of the times in which they were living, as agents in the construction of their own identities; subjects of their own historical trajectories.

Malta in Space and Time

The first step in presenting the background to the *San Pawl* of the early 1990's is a more comprehensive historical survey. History, inevitably, relates to both economy and geography.

The Maltese islands lie more or less in the centre of the Mediterranean. The nearest point of Europe (Sicily) is 93km to the north, and the nearest point of North Africa (Tunisia) is 288km to the south-west. They are 1,826km east of Gibraltar and 1,510km west of Alexandria. It is not surprising, then, that Malta has gained the epithet "cross-roads of the Mediterranean".

Not only has Malta's position gained it this title, however. The amount of traffic that has passed through Malta over the centuries also suggests a veritable cross-roads of activity. Archaeology shows that there were settlements on Malta as early as 5200BC, and suggests successive waves of civilisation from then until the Phoenician arrival in the first millennium BC (see Appendix One). Following the Phoenicians, there was a Roman colony on Malta which remained, despite decline after the Punic Wars (264 to 146 BC), until the ninth century^{AD} when the islands came under Arab dominion.

During the Roman period, Malta seems to have been a rather affluent corner of the empire (Laferla, 1939: 33). There is evidence of grand rural villas, and a large Roman city on the site of present-day Mdina. It was during the Roman period that Malta is said to have become Christian.

St Paul's shipwreck on the islands is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, and treated by most Maltese as evidence of the islands' continuous Christian history since 60AD. Because of the significance attached to this continuous Christian tradition, some controversy surrounds recent suggestions that the *Melite* referred to in early Greek Bibles is not Malta. This debate is addressed in chapter five, where I examine how the argument emerged in the Maltese press, and relate the identity of those engaged in the debate, to the issue of participation in the public sphere. As indicated above, debates about identity conducted in the public sphere, are simultaneously arguments about who is permitted to participate in it.

Similar controversy surrounds the so-called Arab period (870-1090/1270AD). It is maintained by some scholars that, during this period, the Maltese populace, such as it was, was converted to Islam. Contemporary historical sources show a preponderance of

Islamic names, which are seen as evidence of this (Wettinger, 1989). Such an argument throws into question the notion of a continuous Maltese Christian tradition, started by Paul and lasting to the present day. Recent scholarship suggests that the population that greeted Count Roger the Norman's legendary arrival in either 1090 or 1270,¹⁰ was almost certainly of Sicilian Moorish origin. In his reading of Al-Himyari, Brincat (1991) argues that during the years that have been eponymously bracketed as 'the Arab years', the islands were effectively uninhabited. Perhaps there were one or two thousand people living a subsistence lifestyle, but almost certainly no institutional framework which linked them with the rest of the world. During the Norman conquest of Sicily, however, thousands of Moorish Moslems were displaced, and many of them fled southwards, finishing up in Malta. This means that if/when Count Roger arrived in Malta, he was almost certainly greeted by an entirely Moslem population, not an oppressed Christian one. The effect of his arrival, therefore, was conversion, not emancipation.

If Maltese life in the 13th/14th centuries involved a reconversion, this was well under way by the time the first Christian religious orders moved to the islands in the 1300's. During the succeeding centuries, more and more religious found Malta a congenial resting-place, until the islands finally became a theocracy under the Knights of St John in 1530. Prior to this, there had been a long period of indeterminate rule, with the title of the islands being handed back and forth among various Southern European nobles.

Throughout the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, the Maltese economy moved from one of subsistence agriculture to an increasing reliance on the cash crops of cumin and cotton (Blouet, 1993: 41). This led in turn to the development of a small class of minor merchants who sat alongside the local and absentee Sicilian landowners as the island's elite. Some local peasants owned their own land, but most leased it from these elite landowners, who had something of a reputation for despotism (Montalto, 1979: 20). The epoch is still popularly known as the 'time of the tyrants'.

¹⁰ Not only is the date of the Count's arrival open to question, but so are the nature of the event and even its existence. Local traditions see the Count being welcomed into the then capital of Malta, Mdina, with huge and grateful crowds waving palm branches (Cassar Pullicino, 1975: 100). The reason for the joyous celebration is the suggestion that Roger had come to save the God-fearing Christians from two or four hundred years of Islamic rule. The account is clearly vital to the maintenance of a tradition of Christian continuity. The Maltese were not converted, but lived a life of secret worship. But the legendary arrival of Roger may well be a fabricated trace, an historical imagining (see Paine, 1994) of the conditions of the (re-)arrival of Christianity.

The Sicilo-Maltese tyrants were displaced by another largely external authority; that of the Order of the Knights of St John. Set up as hospitallers in eleventh century, the Knights of St John became a military order on their ejection from the Jerusalem. When their new headquarters on Rhodes fell to the Turks in 1511, they were eventually given the islands of Malta by Charles V of Castille, from which to launch their reconquest of the Holy Land. They had a most profound effect on the Maltese historical topography, providing a veritable 'golden age' of secular and religious architecture - in a Baroque style - against which modern Maltese judge the buildings of the present.¹¹

The 233 years of the Order's rule (1530-1798) expanded the Maltese economy exponentially (Blouet, 1993). They brought in huge amounts of money from their continental estates and stimulated trade as a consequence. The large expansions in population fuelled by the Order's demands for labour in both building and shipping soon meant the islands were almost entirely dependent on imported foodstuffs. This has remains the case today. In 1992, for example, Lm74,107,000¹² worth of food products were imported (*Malta Year Book*, 1994), compared with the local production of Lm17,684,210 worth (European Commission, 1993).

After the Order's rule, which among other things ensured the Maltese church's allegiance to Roman Catholicism, came a brief but significant French occupation. The French Revolution had led to the seizing the Order's land in France, which created something of an economic crisis in Malta. Moreover, the intellectual influence of the *philosophes* became popular among the Knights, many of whom were French. This influence led, in the late 18th century to the development, in Malta, of a rudimentary language-based nationalism, particularly because of the intellectual achievements of Mikiel Anton Vassalli. Then regarded as a dangerous freemason, Vassalli is now seen as the 'father of the Maltese language'; a pioneering national figure (Bonavia, 1993). During this period, the self-conscious development of Maltese language and culture first began. It was to re-emerge with volatile consequences in the party politics of the early 20th century.

At the time, it provided a window for French ambitions in the Mediterranean. Napoleon stopped in Malta on his way to Egypt in 1798, and annexed the country without bloodshed. It is argued that pro-Revolutionary Knights allowed the coup to proceed unhindered (Montalto, 1979: 340). Within two years, however, the French had been

¹¹ For a detailed account of the building of Valletta, see DeGiorgio, 1985.

¹² The main unit of Maltese currency is the Maltese lira (Lm), which comprises 100 cents. During fieldwork there were roughly 50 cents to one pound sterling (£).

ousted, to be replaced by the British, who were colonists until 1964 and Independence. Whether or not the Maltese people's uprisings against French domination were a cathartic process in the development of a national consciousness, or simply the manifestation of a more developmental process set in motion by Vassalli and others like him, it seems clear that by the early 19th century, the concept of a Maltese national identity was in place:

"By the time the Maltese found themselves on the threshold of their long British colonial experience, a value-system, expressing the deeper aspirations of the people, had already been identified. The forces of nationalism had been set in motion." (Mallia-Milanes, 1988: 15)

The reasons for Britain claiming dominion over Malta were, and remained, primarily strategic. It was clear as early as 1800 that allowing any of its enemies to control Malta meant effectively surrendering the Mediterranean. Keen to protect trade and other interests, Britain occupied Malta, and remained there until even after Independence. The character of the British colonial period reflects the *realpolitik* of its incorporation. The situation has been called "fortress colonisation" (Frendo, 1979), in which the British offered certain, limited, participation in decision-making to the Maltese, provided they did not interfere in any way with their military and strategic aims. This had two consequences. First, it led to the emergence of an elite of doctors, lawyers and priests who were involved in the political process and therefore in position to subsequently become political patrons. And secondly, it meant that the colonial authorities were entirely uninterested in providing social services or education for the local population. It was a commonly expressed opinion during my fieldwork that the British had deliberately kept the Maltese poor and ignorant, because it served their interests.

The representative legislature offered to the Maltese was seen in various forms from 1821 to 1964, and its presence allowed the development of the political polarisation that characterises twentieth century Malta. Party politics in Malta developed in the late nineteenth century, when the *Partit Nazzjonalist* (PN - Nationalist Party) was set up. At that stage it was rather unclear to which nation this name referred, however, as Maltese Nationalism developed out of the Irredentist movement which arrived on the islands during the Italian Risorgimento. Early Nationalists, and indeed some modern Nationalists, were strongly pro-Italian and a persistent trend in the Party has suggested the need to (re)integrate the Maltese islands into the Italian state.

The Italianate leaning was a consequence of the class interests of those who created Maltese Nationalism and their own self-conceptions of ethnicity. Early Maltese

Nationalists were mainly lawyers, priests or wealthy merchants - all members of the established bourgeoisie. These strata of society were often from aristocratic families or semi-aristocratic families, and had strong links with Italy. This is not least because of the powerful social control they could exert by maintaining Italian as the principal language of church and state (Frendo, 1979: 208). In a largely illiterate country where the main language of communication was Maltese, the maintenance of Italian as the main language in churches, law-courts and the legislative assembly (a semi-autonomous form of local government seen in various guises and periodically revoked by the British Governor between 1848 and 1964) created a dependent populace. As Boissevain (1965) has suggested, the origins of Maltese rural patronage lie in literacy.

This powerful Italianate group saw a danger in the British presence in Malta, who they believed threatened not only to Anglicise the state, but also to Protestantise the church. Protestantism was associated with the linguistic proto-nationalism of Vassalli, so the promotion of the Maltese language itself was connected to Anglicisation and freemasonry (Sant, 1992). This framed the principal line of debate between emerging political parties at the end of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, Nationalists supported the development of Italian culture and greater links with Italy. On the other hand, British authorities produced commissions suggesting the development of indigenous culture and language, and through that, the use of English. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Maltese trade union movement that developed around the dockyards took on this commitment to Anglicisation, as it took on the struggle to improve the lot of the Maltese worker (Zammit, 1984: 15).

The debate crystallised in the 1930's around the issue of language and education. Whilst Nationalists wished to develop Italian and forge greater links with Italy, some even suggesting an integration of Malta with Mussolini's fascist state, the Constitutional Party that emerged as the champion of British interests argued for the development of Maltese, and through it, English (see Hull, 1993).

By the 1950's, the Constitutional Party had been replaced by the Labour Party (MLP) which continued the policy of developing Malta's cultural and linguistic discreteness whilst forging links with Britain. This came to a head in 1956, when the MLP government of the time tabled a referendum proposing that Malta be integrated into the United Kingdom (See Austin, 1971). The PN, and particularly its church allies, strongly opposed the suggestion, as it threatened the Italian-ness of the nation and the pre-eminence of the church. This marked the beginnings of a period of church-MLP antagonism

that culminated in the severance of relations with the 1961 interdiction of all Labour Party members.¹³

The referendum was defeated, and the MLP dropped their pro-British stance, opting for a radical particularism that was in many ways much more genuinely nationalist than that of the Nationalists. In the meantime, the PN also abandoned hopes of integration with Italy, and Independence from Britain came in 1964, during a Nationalist administration.

Although the PN claimed this was the final deliverance from colonial subjugation, the MLP disagreed. Keen to establish not only Malta's discreteness from its colonial patrons, but also its independent standing in the world nations, the Labour Party campaigned for republic status and the ousting of British troops. Despite the administrative withdrawal of 1964, Malta was kept as a naval and military base by the British forces. Given the preferential leasing conditions enjoyed by the British, that made the rents of Maltese territory very cheap, the MLP argued that the colonial era had not really ended.

When it came to power in 1971, Labour immediately began plans for republican status (achieved in 1974) and to establish more lucrative terms with the British forces. Protracted and hostile negotiations went on throughout the early 1970's, with the Labour prime minister, Dom Mintoff, first ejecting NATO's Mediterranean headquarters in the interests of 'proper' neutrality; then demanding an increase of rents for the use of naval facilities. The crisis of national interest that ensued provoked a symbolic rapprochement between church and MLP, as Archbishop Gonzi was sent to London to assist with negotiations (see Attard, 1988).

Finally, however, the British resolved to withdraw their military interests, and in 1979 the last ship left Grand Harbour bound for Portsmouth. The 1980's saw the MLP government developing the concept of the Mediterranean as a peg on which to hang national identity. Opposed to Europe to the extent that it acknowledged the North African/Arabic/Semitic roots of the Maltese character, the concept emphasised Malta's role as a bridge, between north and south; east and west.

For Nationalists, this concept, and the new role it suggested for Malta, represented a denial of Malta's European roots. Moreover, it led to several years of protectionist

¹³ For a more detailed treatment of these events, see Koster (1984) and Hill (1986).

socialist economics and stronger links with Gadaffi's Libya and Soviet Russia. What for the MLP was a legitimate pursuit of neutrality was for the PN an attempt to turn Malta into a communist state. Needless to say, a party that had its roots in merchant capitalism, professional semi-aristocracy and the Catholic church, reacted violently - vocally and physically.

Politics during the 1980's became an increasingly dangerous game, with riots and shootings common in the leads-up to general elections. There were also accusations of gross abuse of power by the government, and by the time of the 1987 election, even many Labour supporters were prepared to vote tactically against what was turning out to be an increasingly tyrannical administration.

The PN won that election on a manifesto of democracy, justice and pro-Europeanism, consolidating that victory with a second mandate in 1992. Since then, politics has been without such divisive crises, although the debate over Malta's status as either independent-Mediterranean or European persisted. Not least since the PN's 1990 application to join the EU, which was fiercely opposed by the MLP, and received rather coolly by the European Commission.¹⁴

The tension between a Euro-focused PN and a relatively isolationist MLP was central to the question of Maltese national identity. It also had implications for the various trends running through the *festas*; gender, community and subaltern identities. The issue related the identity of Malta in the early 1990's, to the past. This was interpreted in two contrasting ways.

The first was an emphasis on a long and deep indigenous tradition, autochthonous and untouched by the succession of colonial masters. The logic of this theme is that Malta stands apart, as a unique national entity, without need to kow-tow to the surrounding authorities. The second, however, is a tradition of connectedness and dependence on surrounding authorities. More clearly acknowledging Malta's debt to its significant others, this theme sees Malta's natural place in the world as connected to the Vatican, EU, and NATO.

¹⁴ The Commission's *Avis*, under the title *Commission's Opinion on Malta's Application for Membership*, was published in June 1993. Opinions conflicted - largely along party lines - as to how the report was to be interpreted. It seemed clear, however, that the conditions placed on Malta's proposed entry would require considerable adjustments of the economy and political structure.

This exposition of the two central themes roughly sketches out the Maltese political division, between an isolationist MLP and an integrationist PN. But the division runs deeper than party politics, into the very essence of Maltese social identity itself, permeating notions of identity at every level.

Debates about the different conclusions one draws from the Maltese past, and where to go in the future, were particularly sensitive in Malta. This was because of an overall feeling of vulnerability; both strategic-military and economic. The military concerns relate to Malta's proximity to North Africa, and particularly Gaddafi's Libya. The feelings of vulnerability were vindicated in 1980, when a submarine was sent from Libya to stop a Maltese oil rig from drilling in contested waters. The occurrence was used by the PN opposition to criticise the MLP government's links with Gaddafi.

Vulnerability also related to people's memories of the second world war (see Mizzi, 1992). During the war, Malta was blockaded by the German fleet, and savagely bombarded (Vella, 1985). Because the island was incapable of self-sufficiency, the supply of food was severely rationed. Older informants referred to the war as *żmien il-guħ* ('the time of hunger'), and the memory of these hardships persisted into the early 1990's, creating a feeling that Malta was vulnerable to the vagaries of international military diplomacy.

Malta was also thought of as being vulnerable economically, however. Malta cannot and does not stand on its own. Its geographical position and historical legacy have dictated an island dependent on the outside world. This is particularly so because of Malta's geographical environment. There is little in the way of fertile ground, which means that it cannot support a very high population, even on subsistence levels. This means that there is no cushion from economic recession. When the economy goes badly, economic problems become acute. This has happened periodically over the last two hundred years or so, leading to mass emigration and extreme hardship (Tonna, 1993: 16-17).

Malta is essentially a rock of limestone surrounded by sea. The natural resources it has are its stone, which is used for all the building work that is done, its climate, which is excellent for tourism but little else, and the sea. This is likewise a big tourist asset.

plates 1 and 2



View of the Dockyards from Valletta



View Across Maltese Conurbation, from Mdina towards Valletta

The sea is also a potential resource for economic exploitation. The Maltese fisheries, however, were entirely geared towards the tourist trade. Because holiday-makers associate a Mediterranean holiday with eating sea-food, all hotels were more-or-less obliged to offer fish as a menu choice every day. This, in turn, meant that the price of fish for the local market was exorbitant, when compared to the price of imported meat.

Like all economic practices based on the exploitation of natural resources, the Maltese fisheries faced further challenge. Like many of the world's seas, the Mediterranean is heavily over-fished. In particular, large-scale drag-netting by Japanese trawlers, has seriously depleted the Mediterranean stocks. As well as these large-scale concerns, middle-range vessels from Italy and Sicily compete with Maltese fishermen for what little is left. The Maltese fisheries, then, must be regarded as supplementary, rather than central, to an economy whose mainstay is tourism.

Although there were disagreements, largely party-political, about the precise extent to which the Maltese economy depended on tourism, its share of the GNP is significant. Tourism expanded in Malta in proportion to the withdrawal of colonial rule and the British military. It was explicitly targeted by governments of the 1950's and 60's as a potentially lucrative replacement for the loss of income the troops' withdrawal represented. Government investment and publicity increased through the 1970's and 80's and into the early 1990's.¹⁵ By that time tourism comprised a substantial proportion of the Maltese economy. In 1991, for example, the gross income from tourism was Lm175.3 million out of a total GNP of Lm635.7 (Department of Information, 1992: 18).

Ship-building and ship-repair work in the dockyards of the Grand Harbour were also a significant feature of the Maltese economy immediately after Independence. However, the maintenance of the dockyards became a political issue during the 1980's, with the PN opposition criticising the MLP government for apparently running the yards at a loss to curry favour with their main voting constituency. Disagreement continued into the 1990's as to whether or not the docks were a profit-making concern, and after their administration was decentralised by the incoming Nationalist government of 1987, it seemed clear that the industry was vulnerable to changes in international requirements.

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the development of Maltese tourism, and particularly tourism policy, see Mitchell, forthcoming, b.

Despite the vulnerability of the Maltese economy, there was considerable expansion in the 1980's, and through to the early 90's. This in an economic context of recession throughout the rest of the world. It was due in part to increased investment of foreign exchange reserves by the Nationalist government, and partly to aid and grants from USA, EU and Council of Europe. Hence, even economic success was achieved in a context of dependency. This was openly, and frequently, acknowledged by the Maltese Prime Minister, Eddie Fenech Adami, who in 1993 argued that Malta, like Singapore, should develop through an integrated national strategy, as a trade and communications hub (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*: 27/06/93: 1). This has led to attempts to develop Malta as an offshore financial centre, and to expand and invest in entrepot trade. In particular, a huge project for the development of a Malta Freeport was begun in 1987.

Clearly, the success of entrepot trade, and the development of financial institutions is dependent on people wanting to use them. Hence, amid the talk of positive economic growth and firm policies for the future, there was a recognition that the Maltese economy was still highly dependent on those that surrounded it. This inevitably meant that policy plans were hotly debated, particularly when it came to issues relating to the application for EU membership.

EU membership was seen by supporters of the PN government as a necessary and inevitable move to ensure protection from the vagaries of the international economy. By the MLP it was seen as an unnecessary surrender of sovereignty. It therefore related not only to economic policy, but also to the more fundamental question of Maltese national identity; of where Malta was, where had it come from, and where was it going. These are necessary background issues for my exploration of the ways in which identity is created, and debated, around the *fešta of San Pawl*.

Situating Valletta within Malta

Valletta is divided into three parishes. The oldest two are St Dominic's and St Paul's, which date from the sixteenth century, and the third, St Augustine's was set up in the 1960's. There is considerable debate in Valletta as to which of the two older parishes was the first to be established, and so which is worthy of being known as the 'original' Valletta parish. As my fieldwork was focused on the parish of St Paul, I would have to argue that this was the first parish of Valletta, although it is far from certain.

The two parishes were founded within a year of each other, in 1570 and 1571, when permission was granted by the Pope. The necessity presented itself five years after

the foundation of Valletta, for a parish to deal with the needs of the local Valletta people. Originally, it had been intended that no common people would live in Valletta, it being reserved for the Knights alone. But it soon became clear that the sheer numbers of people working on the new building development, with its fortifications and ambitious projects to level off the steep slopes of the Xiberras hillside, would require a permanent, resident workforce, who could subsequently provide services for the Knights. This resident population needed spiritual guidance, and a parish church. But in the eyes of the Pope, a second church was also needed, as the Valletta seat of the Bishop of Malta.

On the one hand, the parish of St Dominic's was set up to care for the people of Valletta. Run by a convent of Dominican fathers, it became known as the people's church. To this day, it continues to focus its efforts on the social problems caused by life in a Mediterranean port town. On the other hand the parish of St Paul's Shipwreck was established. A collegiate church since the seventeenth century, this became known as the church of the Bishop. Its image being less to do with the harsh realities of life in an urban centre, and more to do with the displays of wealth and respectability that permeated polite society in Valletta and beyond. As a focus for the authority of the Bishop - and hence the Pope - over the new capital city, it became the church from which the *fiesta* of St Paul's Shipwreck was organised. It is therefore a national focus during the commemoration of the national saint.

Valletta's third parish was set up in the 1960's when the city's population was at an all-time high and the pastoral problems associated with the port-town were becoming too large for the two parishes to cope with. In 1968, St Dominic's was divided into two, and the convent of St Augustine turned into a parish church. This can be seen as a move to calm the antagonisms between the two original parishes.

The parishes of St Dominic and St Paul, and particularly their two *festi* had long been involved in the kind of *pika* rivalry described in a village context by Boissevain (1965). This was largely framed, as in Boissevain's model, by rivalry between the two Valletta brass band clubs: the King's Own and La Valette. Both were set up around the turn of the century, and each is associated with one of the two parish *festi* in Valletta. King's Own is associated with the *fiesta* of St Dominic, and La Valette with *San Pawl*. The two band clubs, and their supporters, had fought violently during the first three-quarters of this century. Band marches became opportunities to demonstrate the strength of support, and violent clashes were commonplace. By the time of my fieldwork, however, the rivalry was at once more peaceful and more jovial. *Pawlina* would laughingly mock the supporters

of St Dominic, who would return the favour. During each other's *festi*, where in earlier times deliberate attempts would be made to disrupt proceedings, by the early 1990's there was a policy of avoidance. My *Pawlini* informants would simply not go out during the *festa* of St Dominic, or would make sure that they left town. Similarly, a mood of co-operation prevailed between the parishes and band clubs at an administrative level. In 1992 a single Committee was created that combined the *festa* Committees of both St Dominic and St Paul, and in 1994 King's Own and La Valette performed together for the first time. There was a mood of reconciliation between band clubs and *festa* organisations. However, the enduring memory of violent action, or conflict, maintained a level of rivalry. It was widely felt that relations could never be more than polite between the two band clubs, and the two *festi*.

The rivalry was not merely related to local divisions of *festa* allegiance, nor to arbitrary decisions about allegiance to a particular band club. Rather, the divisions between King's Own and La Valette, and by extension St Dominic's and St Paul's, were also political divisions. This was impressed upon me by one man, who explained the links between allegiance to *festa*, band club and political party:

"If you're with St Paul, you just don't go down to St Dominic's feast. You don't go to the King's Own either. It's a kind of tradition, I suppose. That's the way it is. You stay with your own feast and your own band...There's a touch of politics in it, too. Actually, more than a touch of politics."

La Valette was the band club associated with *San Pawl*, and its club house at the top end of Republic Street was a frequent haunt of my *Pawlini* informants. Particularly on a Sunday night, they would go there to have a drink, often *en famille*. The club is set in a rather grand house that was once the palace of a Knight of St John. The central courtyard had been glazed over at the top, so that the ground floor bar was bright and airy, with a wrought iron balcony running around it at second-floor level. Above the bar area are the club rooms, where trophies and memorabilia are kept. Here, there is a long list of the club Presidents, since the club's inception in 1897. It reads like a roll-call of prominent PN parliamentarians. Many of those mentioned had also been leaders of the Nationalist Party. It was clear that La Valette and the PN were inextricably linked. The converse was true of the King's Own. They had deep and lasting links with the Malta Labour Party.

Thus, what would seem the most neutral of institutions, a brass band club, was politically partisan; the local rivalry of band club or *festa* had implications for the national conflict of political parties. These party political implications spilled over into

debates between the *festi* associated with each band club. *San Pawl* was considered a Nationalist *festa*, and *San Duminku* ('St Dominic's') a Labour celebration. This means that my research was predominantly conducted among Nationalists, and talking to Labour supporters was often difficult.

The antagonism persisted into the 1990's, despite a new atmosphere of conciliation in the city. Supporters of one club were still unwilling to enter the club-house of the other, and marches that involved the opposing band were rigorously avoided.

Valletta in the 1990's

Since the 1960's, the population of Valletta has rapidly diminished. The figures fell from 15,279 in 1967 (Piano, 1989) to just over 9,000 in 1993. This was a major concern for the people of the city. As well as decreasing, the population was ageing, and a general fear was regularly expressed about what was going to happen to Valletta and its traditions - particularly the *festa*. As with the broader issues of Maltese identity, discussion fora were convened, and lively debate went on in the press.

It was not only a public concern, however, but also a private anxiety for many of my informants. They were worried about how Valletta would be in the future, and this anxiety provided a constant backdrop to my research there. Concern with the future is a central dilemma of modernity, in which the process of identity-formation looks constantly backwards and forwards at the same time, in order to situate the unfurling present. The present, meanwhile, can be seen as a kind of hinge between the past which went towards creating present identity, and the future implications of where that identity might be going.

The dilemma, and the anxiety it presents, is most adequately summed up by an informant called Lawrence, who was the proprietor of the local bar that provided a locus for much of my research:

"Look at Valletta - Valletta is dying. All we've got left are traditions. If you take off traditions and the *festa*, we've got nothing. If you take it away there'll be nothing left for our kids."

Lawrence's bar is introduced in the next chapter, which provides a more detailed introduction to St Paul's parish and how I began there. It also introduces the public spaces of social life in the parish, which are predominantly associated with men and

masculinity. This is the context in which issues of maleness were discussed and debated; and the place where the *festa* was organised.

Chapter One: Locating Public Spaces: Fieldwork, Masculinity and Public Opinion

This chapter introduces the main contexts of my research, pointing out the contrast between the domestic situation in which I lived with a Maltese family, and the public spaces where I discussed social life with people outside the house. This latter context was primarily one of male sociality, in the bars of St Paul's parish, and particularly that of Lawrence, who I introduced at the end of the last chapter. Here, male identity is a major topic of conversation, and defines the terms for participation in the public domain of male sociality, which in turn is the basis of *fešta* organisation, the band club and political debate. This chapter, therefore, concerns the constitution of masculinity, and its role in the creation of the public sphere.

Finding a House

Despite the recent depopulation of Valletta, it was very difficult to find accommodation in the city when I first arrived in Malta. Although many properties lay empty most of them were run down and uninhabitable, or kept empty by the people who had rights over their tenancy. As well as empty dwellings under tenancy agreements, many properties were left empty without tenants. This is due to the laws of inheritance that surround rented properties. All living heirs of an original renter are entitled to sign new rental agreements based on a 99 year fixed period. As a result of this legislation, many owners would rather leave their properties empty than involve themselves in tenancies that were effectively irrevocable.

Even if owners were prepared to rent out their property, the problems could be further compounded by the policy of forced low rents on older properties (see Boswell, 1994: 138). Of the people of Valletta, or *Beltin*, I knew in the early 1990's, many paid annual rents of less than Lm100 (£200). In an old city such as Valletta, this meant that owners seldom made enough money to properly maintain their properties. Although many Valletta tenants were keen to maintain the properties to a high standard, others could not afford to, particularly when major repairs were needed. This meant a gradual decline in the quality of housing stock, and the numbers of properties available for rent. Many older properties became unrentable, because uninhabitable; the result being that many lay empty in a bad state of disrepair.

People were reluctant to give up tenancies on property, even if they had no use for them. Of the *Beltin* I came to know during my two-year stay in their city, several had two or three houses which they used for various purposes. They were sublet to foreign visitors,¹⁶ let or used as store-rooms for domestic or business items, or simply left empty. In many cases, the informal payment of key money was asked of anybody wishing to take over the rental, and this was often so prohibitively high that nobody wanted to take it on. For the sitting tenant, it was worthwhile maintaining control of a property with a low rent of, say, Lm30 (£60) per year, on the off-chance that somebody would come along who was prepared to pay the asking price of Lm3000 (£6000) for the key.

All this made life difficult for me when I first arrived in Malta. I initially rented a room in the cosmopolitan suburb of Msida, but knew that I wanted to stay in Valletta, and particularly in St Paul's parish. Residence is a prerequisite of research by participant observation.

As well as moving into Valletta, another early priority was to establish competence in *Malti*, the Maltese language. This was of vital importance not only to allow the development of rapport between myself and my Maltese informants, but also to enable me to fully understand the modes in which the Maltese represent their identities.

For the first few months of fieldwork, I took lessons in *Malti* from Joseph Vella, a former Jesuit priest and accomplished linguist. I met with him on a daily basis for the first two months of fieldwork, working through the course he had designed to teach foreigners the language.¹⁷ Joseph was an important contact in this early fieldwork. He is an example, of which there are many, of an influential *ex-Belti* whose nostalgia for the city was strong. Although not from St Paul's parish, he was committed to the idea that I wanted to conduct fieldwork there. I explained to him that I was interested in the identity of the Maltese, and that one of the most interesting areas to research would be the extent to which it is constructed with reference to the national patron, St Paul. To do this I had to live and work with the people who inhabited his parish in Valletta, and talk to those who organised his *fešta*. Joseph helped me find accommodation in the city.

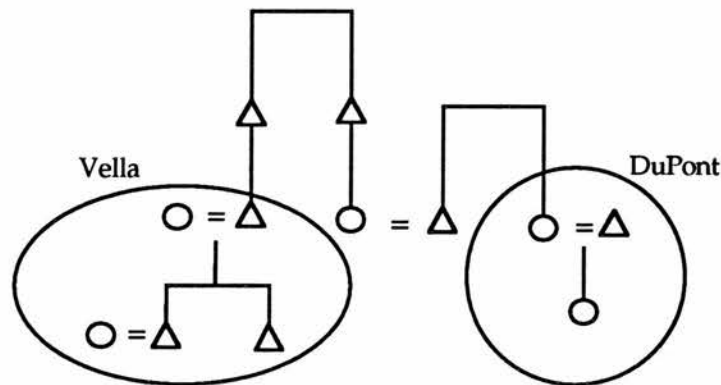
¹⁶ In contrast to the considerable rights of a Maltese tenant, foreign tenants effectively have no tenancy rights. They are therefore a preferred sector for house-owners wishing to let their properties.

¹⁷ This was later published (Vella, 1993).

It soon became clear that I would not find anywhere to rent on my own, so I turned my attention to trying to find a place as a lodger with a family. This would provide an opportunity to experience a Maltese household 'behind the scenes', so to speak. Aware that this was relatively unusual for a young male anthropologist in the Mediterranean, although not uncommon for women researchers, I was interested to see the extent to which my views of domesticity and gender identities would be shaped by direct experience of family life.

Initial enquiries were discouraging, but eventually through the network of Joseph Vella's kin, I found a place in Valletta. It was with the DuPont family, who lived in St Paul's parish. Mrs DuPont was the sister of the husband of one of Joseph's cousins (see fig 2), and was persuaded to take on a paying foreign guest, as a favour to the Vella branch of the family. I recognised the process from the literature on networks in the Mediterranean. The access to resources via the manipulation of family obligations and personal relationships is the cornerstone of patronage politics (see Boissevain, 1974).

fig 2 - Genealogical links between the Vellas, the family of my Maltese tutor, and the DuPonts, with whom I lived in Valletta



I lived with the DuPonts for a total of ten months, with greater and lesser degrees of integration into their household. The household comprised the parents, Ray and Mary, their adult daughter, Gabriella, and myself. Gabriella was 24 at the time of fieldwork. Her boyfriend, John, was also often at the house, although he never stayed the night.¹⁸

My bedroom *Għand DuPont* ('at the DuPont house')¹⁹ was on the roof, with a small door letting out onto a wide terrace that provided a perfect spot for sunbathing on summer mornings. It was also somewhat separate from the main living space of the house. This enabled me to 'escape' from the family when needed - either emotionally or to write up fieldnotes. The house was on the steps of Old Theatre Street, near its corner with East Street, so that the terrace overlooked the latter. It was an old building, dating back to the seventeenth century, and Ray DuPont took great pride in revealing that its rooms had formed part of a Knight's Palace. The Palace was far from intact. Like much of Valletta, the block in which the house was situated had been partitioned in seemingly arbitrary ways, giving a higgledy-piggledy plan to the house. Staircases rose and fell from unexpected places, and rooms were encased, on three walls, ceiling and floor, by other people's property.

When I moved to Valletta, Joseph Vella was keen to show me the parts of the city where he and thousands like him had spent their childhoods. Born in St Dominic's parish prior to the war, his family were evacuated during the height of the bombing of Valletta, and never returned. He had vivid memories of playing football on the open ground in front of Fort St Elmo, and of running from his tenement home to watch the German aircraft as they flew over towards the dockyards.

For him, and others like him, Valletta and *San Pawl* were symbolic of particular elements in the historical development of Maltese social identity. He seemed as committed to my exploration of the social significance of these symbols as he was to my learning the Maltese language. We went on to become good friends, and met frequently throughout my fieldwork to discuss contemporary issues. It was from him that I gained a perspective on Valletta from the outside in, so to speak. But it was also through his teaching that I developed the facility to investigate Valletta from the inside out. In order to do this, I needed to learn *Malti*.

¹⁸ In summer 1995, with John and Gabriella engaged and working on their matrimonial house, John did start sleeping at the DuPont house.

¹⁹ The preposition *għand*, like the French *chez*, means 'at the house of'. It is used ubiquitously when referring to houses, but also in reference to shops or bars (see below).

Malti as a Marker of Maltese Identity

Malti, the Maltese language, is perhaps the ultimate marker of identity; of inclusion and exclusion. The extent to which argument about language learning in the early twentieth century contributed towards political debate about national identity has already been discussed. Language use is therefore politically, symbolically charged. To speak Maltese is to demonstrate allegiance to a particular view of Maltese identity. The extent to which *Malti* is a marker of exclusivity has been discussed by Gullick (1975) and emphasised by Sant Cassia (pers comm).

Malti is unique to Malta, which therefore leads to pride on behalf of many Maltese at their having a language of their own, despite being such a small country. One informant who worked at the airport said that he always used to tease American tourists. They were such a big country, but didn't have a language of their own. Malta, on the other hand, was tiny, but did.

The idea that *Malti* is unique implies an independent and autochthonous tradition that is roughly commensurate politically with the Labour Party's emphasis on separateness of the nation. This was certainly the case during the turbulent years of the 'Language Question', when support for developing Maltese over Italian was associated with socialism (Hull, 1993: 54). However, despite being a unique language, *Malti* bears the marks of Malta's history of external influences. Aquilina has called *Malti* a document of Maltese history (1989). It has many links with other languages, both European and Arabic.

The structure of *Malti* is Semitic, and therefore related to Arabic. Much of the basic vocabulary is also very similar to Arabic. However, there are also many words that betray romance influences of Italian and French. This means that although the uniqueness of *Malti* might appeal to the politics of independence and separation espoused by the MLP, the romance influence also appeals to the Euro-focused PN. Indeed, die-hard Nationalists have argued to me that the talk of *Malti's* Semitic origins is left-wing propaganda; *Malti*, they said, is romance.

As well as these symbolic implications of the use of *Malti*, it is also a pragmatic marker of identity. In a situation where the country is over-run by tourists for much of the year, it achieves a kind of closure from the rest of the world. It allows the Maltese to speak among themselves without being heard. This was made clear to me soon after I moved to Valletta.

The earliest figure outside the DuPont household with whom I established a rapport, was the sacristan of St Paul's church. He was called Freddie Sciberras, and his family were from the lower part of St Paul's parish, known as *L-Arċipierku* ('The Archipelago' - see chapter three).

Freddie was not the first Sciberras to be sacristan of St Paul's. His uncle (FB - see Appendix Two) Guzi had occupied the post before him. Guzi was a career sacristan, having worked first at the smaller church of *L-Erwieñ* ('All Souls') before moving to St Paul's. However, when his family, and particularly the elder of his three sons (27, 21 and 17 in 1993), fell on hard times, he was forced to leave church employ and find more lucrative work in a plastic bottle factory. This new shift-work was hard, but the hours were regular, and the pay better. "They don't own you", he once said to me, implying that his previous employers had treated him as if they did.

The responsibilities of the sacristan are similar to those of a verger in the Anglican church. Freddie made sure that the church was clean and tidy at all times, ensured that the correct vestments were laid out for priests to wear and changed the decorations of the church (altar fronts, candlesticks etc.) to fit the requirements of each day's saintly dedications. He also made sure that the church was open during the day to admit tourists, and for this he was allowed to set up a small stall in the sacristy which sold photographs and small trinkets. This supplemented his rather meagre income. For a seventy or eighty hour week, Freddie would receive the minimum wage of Lm33 (£66).

On one particular occasion I was standing with Freddie, next to his stall in the sacristy. It was mid-morning, and groups of tourists began to climb down the three steps into the sacristy, to look around this historic church. After a while, he turned to me and, referring to a small group who had just come in, said in *Malti*:

"What do you think, Jon? Germans or Dutch? Or maybe English?...Mind you, no, [I think they're] Germans. Because they're always fat, like these."

I was astonished that he'd turned to me and began to talk in such derogatory terms about groups of people who were in the same room. But he was certain of the fact they would not understand. To be Maltese is to have a secret language with which to communicate to other Maltese and maintain a critical separation between yourself and the ever-present *barranin* ('outsiders').

Barranin, the plural of *barrani/ja* derives from the stem *barra*, which means outside, and is used in the context of both household and *fešta*. It literally means 'outsiders', although is translated here as 'foreigners'. Foreigners in Malta were an ever-present reminder of the country's dependence on tourism. In general, they were tolerated, although host-guest friction occasionally surfaced. It occurred most frequently over the use of space, and particularly the intrusion of tourists into 'private' spaces. In particular, Boissevain (forthcoming) tells of tourists entering Maltese houses during *fešti*, as if they were museums. But the presence of the tourist other was also significant in public spaces.

The Gendered Division: Public and Domestic Space

The intrusion of foreign tourists in the sacristy was particularly significant, as this was a major domain of male sociability. During the late afternoon and evening it was common for groups of men to congregate in the church sacristy, awaiting meetings or discussing issues connected with the *fešta*. Men would also congregate here to meet before going out, to eat or drink in another part of the island. It was therefore something of a social centre for men.

As a site, one would not necessarily consider the sacristy of a church to be gendered, and it was not explicitly termed a 'male domain' of activity. However, judging by the way it was used by people of different genders, I would argue that it was such. As a site for sociability, the ways in which it was used made it very much a male domain. This is also true of other public spaces. These are spaces referred to in Malta as being 'outside' the house (*barra*), in opposition to the more frequently-used, and in many ways more suggestive term *ġewwa* ('inside').

The connection between the category *barra* and the demarcation of a public domain requires some explanation. In Malta, the term *pubbliku* ('public') refers to the public of political representation. *Il-pubbliku* ('the public') are those who are represented by politicians in parliament, and to whom politicians rhetorically refer in their speech-making. *Il-pubbliku* are the electors. But the term also refers to a discursive sphere of public opinion. This sphere is the public with which politicians gauge the responses of *il-pubbliku* to new or proposed policies. In comparison with other legislatures, this sphere of public opinion is a more immediate reality for Maltese politicians (see chapters four and five). This is partly because of the small size of Malta and partly because of the personalised nature of politics and political canvassing, itself a consequence of a patronage political system.

This public sphere is carried out in everyday contact and conversation - mainly between men - in spaces outside the house. The sphere of public opinion is therefore associated with the category *barra* ('outside'). It is carried out in the public bars and cafes of Valletta and other places, but particularly in the small *pjazza* ('square') outside the law-courts in the centre of Valletta, which serves as a locus for the creation and dissemination of public opinion. These are the places where canvassers for political candidates will meet with particularly well-connected and influential people, to try and mobilise public opinion behind their candidate. Participation in this sphere of public opinion was not entirely equal. Certain people considered to be influential or well-connected were better adept at having their opinions heard than others. The dynamics of this relationship between a relatively well-connected, and a disenfranchised subaltern, group, is discussed in chapter four. Similarly, although women were not officially excluded from these spaces, they often appeared, and indeed confessed to me, to feel uncomfortable in them. These spaces are therefore what I term the public domain of male sociality.

These male public spaces can be contrasted with two other domains. Firstly, a female public domain, which although no less politically significant, is not acknowledged to be such. These are the public spaces of grocery stores and front doorsteps, where women will congregate to exchange information, through the process known in the literature as 'gossip' (see Gluckman, 1963, Paine, 1967 and Szwed, 1966).

The extent to which women's sociality, through the mechanism of gossip, can substantively contribute to social formations, and particularly political alliances, is the subject of much feminist literature. In particular, Jill Dubisch (1991) has demonstrated the extent to which female sociality goes towards the construction of Greek social structure. Female sociality in a female public domain is a critical element in the creation of society. But in Malta, this is often denied, both by men and women.

Secondly, the male public spaces can be contrasted with the domestic spaces 'inside' the house. In Malta, these are ideally spaces characterised by a harmonious complementarity of genders, epitomised by the image of the Maltese family, and symbolised by the house itself. Within this "core symbol" (Schneider, 1980), the figure of authority is the male household head, but the principal actor, and Mizzi has argued the person with the most *real* power, is his wife (Mizzi, 1981). This argument has led some writers on the Mediterranean to suggest that male participation in the public sphere, conceived indigenously as real power relations, is in fact related precisely to men's lack of

power over the central institution of social life: the family (see, for example, Pina-Cabral, 1986; Papataxiarchis, 1988).

From this perspective, the complementary nature of men's and women's relationships within the household emerge as cultural categories of difference, which although complementary can nevertheless be unequal. The Maltese household is supposed to be a family domain of gender complementarity, but as in many circumstances, it is more closely associated with women than men (see Du Boulay, 1974; Rosaldo, 1974: 39-40). The image of complementarity in the family, therefore, emerges as a mechanism by which women's relative restriction to a domestic sphere of influence, is masked. What is ideally a domain that represents two equal genders, is most commonly associated with women. This association is concealed under an ideology of complementarity. These issues are dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

The image of family complementarity assumes the same function in the male public domain. For example, women in St Paul's parish tended only to use the church and sacristy when their presence there was directly connected with a religious service or activity. As is argued in chapter six, these activities are more closely associated with the domestic sphere of influence, because they involve the female role of maintaining the family's spiritual well-being. Women's responsibility for the moral health of the family is a feature common to many Mediterranean societies (Davis, 1984).

After mass on Saturdays and Sundays groups of women could be seen passing through the sacristy and talking, but women's use of this social space was defined by the fact they were only comfortably present here before and after mass. Married women were normally accompanied by their husbands and children, thus further circumscribing their presence, through their identification as mothers and wives. Hence, their presence in this male public space was unequivocally associated with their role as family members, both by their association with a spiritual role, which is also a domestic role, and by their linkage with husband and children. The family domain of the household was therefore extended out into the male public, in order to legitimate the women's presence.

Men, on the other hand, would spend time in the church and sacristy throughout the week, for social purposes. Even during church services, it was common for groups of men to congregate in the sacristy, outside the main body of the church, to exchange information and conviviality. The sacristy became one of a number of public sites where I would spend time talking to the various people that came and went.



Locating Male Sociality

Outside the house, my principal research problem, as with much anthropological fieldwork, both urban and rural, was how to make my life intersect with those of other people (see Frankenberg, 1957; Grillo, 1985; Talai, 1989). In this context, I maintain that Malta can be treated as an urban society; an island city state. The challenges of urban ethnography are outlined, among others, by Ralph Grillo (1985). For him, the problems of investigating the lives of North African migrants to Lyon was initially one of locating them. In the absence of a clearly demarcated spatial unit such as that encountered in more traditional village ethnography, a new approach was needed. His turn to the bureaucratic institutions which 'deal' with them was one way of solving the problem. Via the institutional framework, he could gain access to a primary 'node' in the network of multiplex relationships characteristic of urban life.

Another technique of urban anthropology, outlined by Ulf Hannerz (1980) and put to good use by Salole (1982), is to spend time in local bars. In an urban setting, this is frequently where - at least male - sociality is played out. In St Paul's, such a function is provided not only in the sacristy of the church, but also in the bars and 'wine-shops' - nowadays abbreviated to simply 'shops' (*ħwienet*, from *ħanut*, shop). They are the places where men meet to discuss politics, football or the local *fešta*, and also where minor deals are struck; where help can be found for almost any problem, whether it requires the loan of human, technological or financial resources. Much of my fieldwork was conducted in such public spaces, listening to conversations and discussing politics, religion and *fešta*. To this extent, I spent much of my time dealing with masculine sociality, created in a public (as opposed to domestic) sphere of action.

Finding male sociality in St Paul's, then, began with finding the right bar/s, the place/s where the male members of the social group I had come to spend time with in Malta interacted with each other. This activity outside the house, in places characterised by male sociality, lay in contrast to my experience of the domestic situation within the DuPont house. Here, my contact with women contrasted with the male bias of my life in public.

At the time of fieldwork, there were 20 bars or cafés within the area of St Paul's parish. They varied in character, from cafés that attempted to emulate the exclusive atmosphere of the élite Valletta cafés, to lowly wine-shops, where facilities were basic and often rather dirty. The former were places where both men and women could rest from

the day's tasks to enjoy coffee and a small snack. They would normally only open whilst the shops were trading, closing at 7pm when the streets began to empty and people caught their buses home. To this extent, they served the passing trade of shop customers, as well as shop-workers, who marked their breaks with a little refreshment.

Like the sacristy, they were not categorically gendered spaces, but there was a tendency for men and women to separate themselves for using the cafés. Certain of them were more likely to have women in them than men, and these were most commonly the cafés characterised by a great deal of movement. Rather than finding groups of men staying together to talk for lengthy periods of time, one would see women come into the cafés for one coffee, and then move on. Moreover, it was only in those cafés that were markedly more feminine than masculine, that substantial numbers of women would enter alone. In general, women would go into a café with a friend or close female relative, using the café as a place to rest during their Valletta shopping expedition.

By contrast, most bars in Valletta were considered to be more-or-less masculine domains. Women would say they were *tistħi* ('ashamed', from the verb *staħa*, to be shy or ashamed) to enter on their own, and on the rare occasions they did enter, their presence was usually mediated by the men they were with. This was not least the case for the bar which Ray DuPont suggested I frequent. This place became my primary field site; a place where information could be gleaned about all aspects of Maltese society.

When I moved into the DuPont household, I explained my intentions were to get to know as many people in the immediate vicinity as possible. In particular, I was interested in the groups of people who involved themselves in the *festa* and other locally-based activities. I was directed to the small bar called *San Paolo Naufrago* ('St Paul's Shipwreck'), but more commonly known as *Għand Lawrenz* ('Lawrence's Place'). This stood on the steps of St Lucy's Street, just opposite the parish church. Here, women tended only to enter on Sunday mornings and during the days of *festa*. At these times, women would sit in the small side-room used during the week for draughts matches (see fig 3), and have drinks brought to them by the men they had come with. Their presence in this public place was therefore mediated, by the presence of men. As with women's use of the male public^{space} in the church sacristy, their entry into the bar was circumscribed by their definition as wives.

plates 3 and 4



Men Drinking Għand Lawrenz



Outside Għand Lawrenz during the Festa

At other times, particularly on weekdays, women who worked in the nearby shops would quickly go into the bar, to buy a drink or a sandwich, but seldom stayed there to eat or drink. Whilst they were in the bar, they would strictly avoid eye-contact with anybody but those serving. It was clearly an uncomfortable moment, and one which frequently led to them being teased by Lawrence, the proprietor. Some women preferred not to enter at all. They would stand outside the open front of the bar and try to catch the attention of somebody who would buy whatever they needed. So long as they avoided crossing the threshold of the bar, it seemed, they were happy.

The bar acted as a kind of club-house for the *Pawlini* ('Paulites'). The term *Pawlini* broadly denoted supporters of *San Pawl*, be they locals to the parish or outsiders. More specifically, however, it marked out members of the organisation that was set up in the early 1970's to oversee the administration of the *fešta*, the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* ('Association of *Pawlini*'). More specifically still, it denoted the group of men who were at the centre of the *Għaqda*, who bore the greatest responsibility and contributed the most work, to the *fešta*. The events leading to the establishment of the *Għaqda* are discussed in chapter five, which also examines some of the tensions in the organisation.

The *Għaqda*, although not limited to men, was dominated by them. It was not until 1991 that the *Kumissjoni tan-Nisa* ('Commission for Women') was introduced, providing a seat for one woman on the central *Kumitat* ('Committee'). Women on the Commission saw their principal role as fund-raisers, rather than active participants in the decision-making process that surrounded *fešta*. The one woman on the Committee during my fieldwork had her position of authority circumscribed in a similar way as those women who entered the public domains of church and bar. By her unequivocal identification as a wife, her exclusion from the sphere of public opinion was achieved in the same way as women's exclusion from the male public domain. The woman in question was Doris Montford, who was the Committee member of the Commission for Women from its inception. Her role within the Committee was circumscribed by her identification with the rest of her family. Not only was her husband a member of the Committee, but also her son. She was therefore constantly associated with these men, and defined in the context of this public, decision-making office, in terms of her identity as wife and mother.

This exclusion of women from full participation is true in all spheres of public office. If, as argued above, the creation and elaboration of public opinion was carried out in bars and other male public domains, then women were *de facto* excluded from the process of

canvassing opinion. This was a severe handicap to the project of creating public connections, and swaying public opinion in one's favour. Pauline Miceli has argued that the character of Maltese politics as a face-to-face business in which men group together to create public opinion, inhibits women's willingness to participate in politics. They are unwilling to participate because of domestic responsibilities, which tie them to the domestic domain. The lack of women politicians in Malta would seem to support Miceli's claim that "'good' women do not come forward" (Miceli, 1994: 87).²⁰

'Being a Man'

Public bars in Malta are not only the places where masculine sociality creates public opinion, to the exclusion of women. They are also the places where male reputations are debated, and men's identity as men is created. This is part of the process of determining the terms for participation in the public sphere. If the public sphere is primarily a male domain, then participation in it is clearly dependent on masculinity.

The study of masculinity has emerged over the last fifteen years as a key element in gender studies. As with examinations of different kinds of identities, studies of masculinity have increasingly focused on the examination of different types, contested types, of masculinity. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), and particularly Bob Connell (1995), have argued that as well as dominant, hegemonic, notions of masculinity, new types of masculinity exist that can threaten, or subvert the dominant version.

My discussion concerns principally the dominant notion of masculinity, as it was presented to me *Għand Lawrenz*. However, this dominant form, as we shall see, was dependent on the acknowledgement of other, variant forms of masculinity, based either on sexual orientation or age.

In the bar, much of the conversation revolved around the notion of manhood and masculinity. It was a major preoccupation. In particular, the phrase *tkun raġel*, 'be a man', was often used, and in a variety of different contexts, as a form of sanction against behaviour or attitudes that were not considered properly masculine. Most often it was used in arguments, when it was felt that one of those involved had lost, and should concede the fact. At this stage, bystanders often interjected; *tkun raġel* - admit that you're wrong. The implication was that to be a man is to be sufficiently resilient - to have fulfilled enough of the criteria for manhood, and for these criteria to be publicly accepted - that defeat on this occasion would not be a threat.

²⁰ In the parliament elected in 1992, there was only one woman.

The dominant male ideology is based essentially on five criteria: heterosexuality; reciprocal sociality; trustworthiness; sociability and fatherhood. I shall deal with each in turn.

HETEROSEXUALITY

Being a man, first and foremost, involved being heterosexual. A most common and offensive insult, as for the Andalusians of Stanley Brandes' 'Like Wounded Stags' (1981), is to question this heterosexuality. This is most often done with the phrase *mur ħudu f'sormok*, which literally means "go and take it in the arse". As Brandes has suggested, such an insult implies the adoption of a passive sexual identity, although I would disagree with him that this necessarily implies a feminisation. In Malta, perhaps in contrast to Andalusia, there is an open acknowledgement of different sexualities. The dominant model of masculine heterosexuality is therefore not only constructed in relation to feminine, but also to the relatively large numbers of male homosexuals (both overt and covert), and a few trans-sexuals.

During my fieldwork in Valletta, there were two trans-sexuals in particular, who lived round the corner from *Għand Lawrenz*, and enjoyed a fairly amicable joking relationship with its denizens. They were both young with long dark hair, and habitually wore short skirts. One of them, who I had assumed was a woman when I first saw him, was reputed to have been to England to have a sex change. When I was first told s/he was not a woman, this caused some confusion. *Dak raġel*, said one informant, "that's a man", *Kien raġel*, responded another, "he was a man". Whenever they passed by the shop, men would shout, as they sometimes would when an attractive woman passed, *haw' sabiħa* "hey, beautiful (feminine form)", thereby acknowledging the overt display of sexual dissidence.

Alongside the handful of Valletta trans-sexuals, there is a much larger number of homosexual men in Valletta. Indeed, some members of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* itself were believed to be homosexual. In general, this was quietly ignored, and said to be the private concern of those involved, but occasionally the subject was openly discussed. Some expressed their misgivings that homosexuals should be involved with the *Għaqda*. It was felt as a disgrace to the *Pawlini*, and more broadly to the memory of St Paul himself.

Others were downright homophobic, referring to homosexuals as *imġienen*, ('madmen'), who should be avoided at all costs. Others still were more charitable, including one man who explained the situation as follows:

"*Imsieken* ('poor things') I call them. It's not really their fault that they're born like that."

This spectrum of opinion makes it clear that homosexual and trans-sexual were discrete categories, against which masculinity could be judged.²¹ Thus, rather than feminising the man to whom it is addressed, the insult *ħudu f'sormok* ('take it in the arse') implies their homosexualisation. Homosexualisation and feminisation are not necessarily commensurate.

Further evidence that the category homosexual serves as a reference point for masculinity relates to the use of the term *pufta*. This is the most common term for homosexuals. Although it refers strictly speaking to transvestites, *pufta* is used in a variety of contexts where men are seen to transgress the boundaries of acceptable masculine behaviour.

RECIPROCAL SOCIALITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Two further characteristics of the ideal man are that he should participate reciprocally in male sociality, and be trustworthy (see Papataxiarchis, 1991). Men who refuse commensality, or neglect to reciprocate in the rounds of drink-buying are referred to as *pufta*, as in some contexts are men who are regarded as untrustworthy, with either material goods or information.

Men who betray trust are referred to as well, as *ħaxxej* (lit. 'one who runs after women with evil intent', but can be glossed as 'fucker'). For example, several years before I arrived in Valletta, Freddie, the Sacristan of St Paul's had become friendly with a man known as *Iż-Żigi* ('Ziggy').²² From time to time, Freddie used to ask *Iż-Żigi* to help out with running his souvenir stall in the sacristy, in return for a few drinks. On one occasion, Freddie had to visit his father in hospital, and so asked *Iż-Żigi* to tend the stall. When he returned from the errand, he found the stall locked, and when he opened it all the money was gone. It amounted to well over Lm100 (£200).

²¹ For a discussion of the construction of multiple genders on the basis of sexual orientation, see Trumbach, 1991; Shapiro, 1991.

²² In Malta, people are often known by nicknames rather than proper names. This is a common feature of the European Mediterranean (see Cohen, 1977; Jacquemet, 1992; Pitt-Rivers, 1961).

From that day, Freddie had not spoken to *Iz-Zigi*, and habitually referred to him as both *pufta* and *ħaxxej*. Both terms imply a transgression of acceptable male behaviour, metaphorically transferring the transgression of trust into a transgression of sexuality.

ħaxxej implies the same questionable sexuality as *ħudu f'sormok*, but this time portrays the recipient as protagonist; the active agent in a homosexual encounter. Thus, *Iz-Zigi* was not the passive, and disgraced, receiver of homosexual attentions, but was the active party. He was not only a 'fucker', but had 'fucked' Freddie. The term was used not just for material untrustworthiness, however. It also referred to those who used information malevolently.

Herzfeld has suggested that there is a common contrast in European thought, between male rationality and female gossip (1987: 96). Where men discuss politics and public opinion in rational terms, women debate reputation. In St Paul's, however, the male trade in gossip was every bit as strong as the female. It had direct political and economic significance. The exchange of male reputation was part of the mechanism by which political allegiance and economic relations were constituted. This political economy of gossip was acute. I was constantly being told by well-meaning acquaintances that under no circumstances should I let them know about my private affairs. To do so would be dangerous, even with particularly close friends.

Different bars in Valletta are associated with different cliques of men, or *klikek* (sing *klikka*) which are considered by their members to be the smallest and most intimate level of social grouping. Referred to metaphorically as *qaqoċċa*, or artichoke hearts,²³ men will demonstrate the closeness of their *klikka* by taking the fingers of one hand and squeezing them together. The other hand is then wrapped around this cluster of fingers, to resemble an artichoke heart. Arching the shoulders slightly, this is a gesture which involves the whole upper half of the body, to demonstrate togetherness. Then adopting the quiet tone of voice which demonstrates seriousness, they affirm:

"We're a small clique, like an artichoke heart"

Klikek are invoked at a variety of levels, including the political, religious, and sporting. Men who enjoy the same interests were drawn to each other to form a *klikka* together. Men involved in a relationship of committed solidarity are referred to as

²³ The same metaphor is used of people who are well-connected. They are said to be members of the artichoke-like, close *klikka*. See section 3.

belonging to the same *klikka*. Members of a *klikka* spent most of their leisure time together, in one activity or another. Ideally, they would protect and defend each other at any time.

The existence of *klikek* in Valletta was seen by many informants as a distinguishing feature of life in the city, which separated them off from the relatively privatised existence of what they saw as village life, and life in the more fashionable suburbs. There, people did not spend time in their local bar, it was asserted. People went home at the end of the day, shut their door, and that was that. They had no contact with each other. The complement to this privatised attitude was that neighbours did not interfere with each other's lives. For some, this was considered a negative feature of life in Valletta. People were too concerned with each other's lives; too intent on the spread of gossip. But for many, it was part of the pleasant conviviality of urban life.

The notion of *klikka* was also used rhetorically. I heard it used on more than one occasion to refer to a togetherness that went beyond the apparent divisions of a particular context. To this extent, the boundary of the concept *klikka* was a flexible one.

In some respects, the denizens of *Għand Lawrenz* divided into three *klikek*. The full significance of these distinctions will be brought out in chapter five. The first comprised the older, more established *Pawlini*; *festa* enthusiasts par excellence. The second was a younger group who were also involved in the *festa*, but in a slightly different way. The third were also *Pawlini*, but less interested in direct involvement with the mechanics of the *festa*. Rather, their *ħobby* was football, and they played on a weekly basis for various local teams. There was inevitably some cross-over between these three *klikek*, but in the most general terms, these were the groups who would refer to themselves as separate *klikek*.

However, the term did not only refer to these apparently special and small groups of friends who spent nearly all their time together and were supposed to trust one-another. It also referred to groups which for the purposes of any particular discourse, could or should be referred to as such. Thus, on many occasions, the regulars of *Għand Lawrenz* would refer to themselves as *klikka waħda* - "one clique". This despite the occasional antagonisms, and enduring tensions between different groups.

This highlights the ideological nature of the concept *klikka*. For although ideally the members of a *klikka* should trust each other and help each other in any way required, it was also acknowledged that this was not the case.

The different groups spent a lot of time together, and I spent a great deal of time with them. In particular, I became friendly with the *klikka* that were most closely associated with the *fešta*. At the core of this group was Vince Farrugia, who had not only been on the Committee of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, but was also heavily involved with Confraternities at the parish church, and the Franciscan church of *Ta'Giezu* ('Our Lady of Jesus'). He was roughly my age when I did fieldwork, and we became quite good friends.

I would meet up with him and the other members of his *klikka* on a daily basis, at the church or *Għand Lawrenz*. Conversations would be long and intense, but despite this there was a very clear demarcation of subject matter that meticulously excluded personal matters from being discussed. Even when it seemed clear to me that personal issues were affecting people's demeanour, no effort was made to discuss them. On one occasion, for example, Vince had failed to turn up on Sunday morning, which was the most popular time for drinking and socialising. He arrived *Għand Lawrenz* the next day, but made no effort to join in with conversation. It seemed that coming was more of an obligation than anything else, and he was keen to leave as soon as possible. I wondered what was wrong, but none of the other members of his *klikka*, ideally one of mutual trust and support, asked him if everything was alright. They simply ignored his uncharacteristic behaviour, and continued as usual, discussing the *fešta*. When he had left, I asked what was wrong with Vince. His assembled friends simply shrugged their shoulders. They did not know, they said, and it was not really any of their business to ask.

Later, I asked about this. What status did the friendships of a *klikka* have, if problems of a personal nature could not be discussed? I was told that this was not the place to discuss such matters. Rather, problems of a personal nature should be discussed with either family members or a priest. Under no circumstances should they be made public amongst a group of male friends. To do so would be to invite its abuse in local gossip. Of course, it is possible that the other members of Vince's *klikka* did know what was wrong, and were simply uncomfortable discussing it in this context. Either way, their reactions demonstrate the bracketing of acceptable subject matter for debate in the public sphere of male sociality. This suggests that, just as male sociality is played out in the public domain of the bar, the actual subject matter of this sociality is itself public. There is no

externalisation of matters of private or domestic concern in this context. To do so is dangerous.

There was an almost constant discourse of mistrust within *Għand Lawrenz*. Members of all three *klikek* referred to it as a place where one should not discuss one's private life. Exposed personal knowledge can be used to one's detriment. As one regular once pointed out to me:

"Not everyone who strokes you, loves you. Be careful."

By this he meant that although people might seem to be generous or friendly, trusting them because of this was a mistake. All men, including kinsmen and members of a particular *klikka*, were potentially *ħaxxej*.

In terms of the bar space *Għand Lawrenz*, things to be discussed in private between two men were generally taken outside onto the street. It would be dangerous to discuss everything inside the bar, as information could get into the wrong hands. Such secret information usually referred to the asking and delivery of favours, which were regarded as a personal contract between two men. When, however, the confidence of one of the parties was broken, the perpetrator was referred to as *ħaxxej*.

For example, in the lead-up to the 1994 *festa*, a group of *Pawlini* decided that, for the *festa*, they would have printed matching t-shirts with a photograph of the statue of St Paul on the front. These they would wear during the band marches, and would be entirely original. An appropriate photograph was taken, and a local man contacted to do the printing. They told him to be discrete about the job, as they wanted to be the only group who had such elaborate *festa* gear.

Two days after they got their t-shirts back, they heard that other groups in the parish had copied their idea, and gone to the same salesman to get their shirts printed. Rumours began to circulate that the salesman in question had printed up hundreds of the shirts, and was going to sell them during the *festa*. This would spoil their attempts to have the most striking shirts of *San Pawl* 1994. The salesman was quickly dubbed untrustworthy, *ħaxxej*; somebody who had betrayed their contract by letting information flow too freely.

In other contexts, men are dubbed *ħaxxej* if they do not give information freely enough. People refer to manipulators of information as *ħaxxej*. For example, one man who was involved in the Good Friday procession habitually referred to its organisers as *ħaxxej*. He had been a *reffiegh* ('statue-carrier') during the procession, until several years previously when he had had to pull out during the procession and go to hospital. He had never been allowed to try again, and was annoyed about this. But his main complaint was the way in which information about the administration of the event was kept away from him. He wanted to help, he told me, but the *klikka* at the centre of Good Friday kept him in the dark:

"They don't tell me anything; they're all deceitful fuckers"

SOCIABILITY

A further characteristic of masculinity is related to sociability, and is the ability to take a joke. Once more, the suggestion is that men should be sufficiently masculine to be able to deal with goading either by ignoring it or by making witty retorts. A great deal of time is spent creating the situation where such witty retorts are necessary, and they are framed as a kind of social drama. As things get more heated, and remarks both more cutting and more humorous, all conversation will stop so that people can listen to the entertainment. Indeed, there is a tradition in Malta of such encounters, in the folk music *għana* (see Sant Cassia, 1989, Fsadni, 1993). One form of *għana*, known as *spirtu prontu* ('impromptu spirit'), comprises song duels between antagonistic singers who try to outwit each other. This has been interpreted as a formalisation of a more spontaneous tradition for settling disputes in village Malta.

Entertainment comes both from the wit displayed by particularly adept adversaries, but also by the reactions of either one of the parties as they become too heated and resort to simple insult, shouting or absenting themselves. At this point, the assembled 'audience' will chide, "come on, be a man", *tkun raġel*.

Some seemed to make it their life's career to goad people and create such scenes. A messenger called Marco Montanaro was particularly adept at provoking a reaction. He was known as a *xewka*, a 'thorn' who would habitually try to prick the others. His most common victim was his best friend Robert Abdilla. He once said to me with pride that he could get Robert to the point of violence within three minutes, and then proceeded to demonstrate, to the pleasure of all those present.

FATHERHOOD

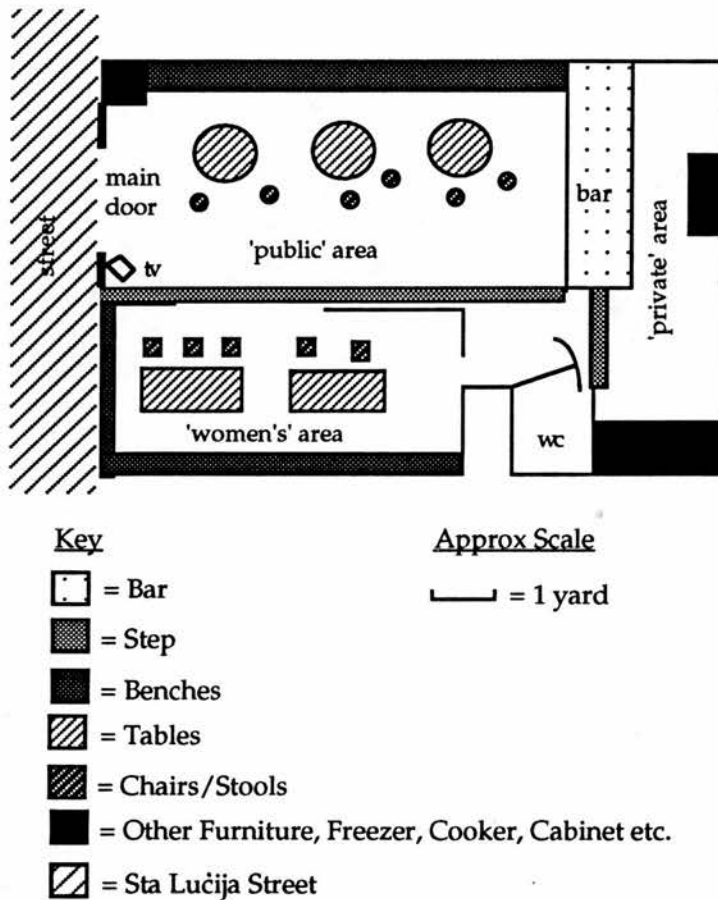
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, being a man is related to marital status. Here, being a man confers responsibility and authority. Married men are responsible for household and family. To this extent, they are recognised as important, being responsible for the single most important institution in Malta. When asked, most Maltese would agree with this. Even younger Maltese thought of the family as the corner-stone of Maltese society.

Authority and marital status were represented in the use of social space *Għand Lawrenz* (see fig 3). The first few occasions I went to the bar I was struck by how people seemed to move freely between the main room and the area behind the bar. In most bars, both in Malta and elsewhere, the boundary between that part of a bar private to the proprietors - the area behind the bar itself - and that part open to the public, is rigidly adhered to. Although bars are 'public', this public is always tempered by the presence of an off-limits, private zone that lies beyond the counter and through the door marked 'private'. This mirrors what Marilyn Strathern has observed about the management of the public, and the manipulation of hospitality, in English bed-and-breakfast hotels (Strathern, 1992).

Għand Lawrenz, the usual boundary between public and private, which one would expect to coincide with the line of the bar and the vertically-oriented step on my plan, was often transcended. This was done most often by younger, unmarried men, and the only two women who were in the bar on a daily basis: Miriam, Lawrence's wife, and a local woman called Lela. One would expect Miriam to spend time behind the bar, as she worked there with her husband, but Lela's presence had twofold gender implications.

Firstly, the fact that she came into the bar at all, was augmented by her rather indeterminate gender. She was regarded by many as being decidedly masculine in appearance. Secondly, her language was considered scandalously masculine at times. Surrounded by men *Għand Lawrenz*, she would not hesitate to use the same gynaecological expletives as them. This to the delight of the assembled men.

fig 3 - Plan of Għand Lawrenz



Every day, she would come into *Għand Lawrenz* before lunch for a drink, and then again in the evening. She would walk straight into the bar, through the main room and into the apparently private space behind the counter. This is the second gender consequence of Lela's presence. The fact that, although she had perhaps adopted a masculine identity, she nevertheless stayed behind the bar, where the only other woman, Miriam, was also happiest. This suggests that this is perhaps a more feminine, or certainly less masculine, domain of the bar. Here, Lela would help herself to a bottle of beer from the large fridges underneath it, and leave the money on top. The implication might well be that, as a woman, she was better placed to transcend the supposed boundary between the public and private areas of the bar, and effectively help herself to its hospitality. This coincides with the notion of being an 'insider' to the household (see chapter two). Being an 'insider' is to enjoy unquestioned access to the private domain, and is associated particularly with female kin.

But it was not only she who felt able and willing to enter this supposedly private space. The boundary was also routinely transcended by the young unmarried men who spent their time *Għand Lawrenz*. Of these there were perhaps ten who regularly spent time in the bar. This meant that on Sunday mornings, which was the most significant social occasion of the week, the space behind the bar was very cramped indeed. Unlike Lela, they were less likely to simply help themselves to their drinks or snacks, and would always ask first. They nevertheless clearly felt both comfortable and welcome in this small, private space.

The fact that the younger unmarried men had a greater tendency to occupy this space is significant. It was men who were actively or potentially in the process of looking for a partner who were implicated, rather than those who had resolved their sexuality, and hence their adult personhood. To see married men, older unmarried men, or men who expressed a lack of interest in courtship, behind the bar, was rare. This suggests that the bar, in replicating, via Lela, a gendered division of space between the public and private domains, also replicated the sexual careers of the men who spent time there. Indeed, perhaps more broadly, it replicated their passage to adult personhood, adult masculinity.

As well as occupying this ambiguous position behind the bar, the younger men involved in courtship were also generally more mobile than the older ones. They would pull up in cars outside *Għand Lawrenz* and run into the bar, straight to the back, and quickly order a drink. They would often only stay for one, before moving off to other places where there might be young women. Particularly popular were the bars of Paceville. This is a coastal area on the north shore of Malta, where most of the tourist accommodation is. It is also where most of the entertainment facilities are. Here, courtship is conducted between large groups of men and women who meet together at weekends to drink, dance and strike up liaisons.

Because it is a long way from Valletta, and the buses stop early (11pm), a car is essential to participate in the weekend at Paceville. It is also useful for courtship itself, because when young men and women meet they often have nowhere to go. Leaving the natal home before marriage is rare, and social mores are such that young people cannot go home together. This means that people's first sexual encounters often take place in cars parked at some secluded spot, after a night out in Paceville.

The mobility of the younger men *Għand Lawrenz* leads to a certain scorn from older regulars. They often question the commitment of these younger, more mobile, men, to the

local social groups - the *klikek* and the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* (see chapter six). It also contrasts with the solidity and stasis of men who have achieved their masculinity through marriage.

The most important way in which this masculinity is achieved is by becoming the married head of a family and household. Family life in Malta is portrayed ideally as a complementarity between the genders, centred around a single, child-producing household. This complementarity is manifest in a distinction between female domestic work on the one hand, and male work in the public sphere, on the other. Male participation in the public sphere is dependent on the criteria for being 'a man', but at its base is the assumption that men's participation in public sociality rests on its complementarity with a female domestic sociality. For men, this complementarity demands a balance between participation in public, male activities and those associated with the household and kin.

Complementarity is reinforced by state and religious rhetoric, in both public and personal domains of communication. In May 1994, for example, Archbishop Joseph Mercieca delivered a key sermon on the role of the father, which was reported widely in the media, but also became the substance of more intimate counsel from the priests of St Paul's to their male parishioners. In particular, one or two of the more involved *Pawlini* were told that they should not allow their enthusiasm for the *fešta* to interfere with family life.

In keeping with Pope John Paul II's post-Cold War preoccupation, much of the Archbishop's sermon concerned the creeping dangers of materialism:

"God forbid that our workers should be...enslaved by materialism and consumerism...The essence of the beauty of family life is not a luxurious house...[but]...the parents, united to each other and to their children." (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*, 1/5/94: 80)

This was a common concern among men, who argued that if they were to provide their family with a decent home with appropriate fittings, a reasonable standard of living, and good schooling for their children, then they would have to work long hours. Indeed, many Maltese men take on two, or even three jobs, to pay for the costs of running a household.

Spending too much time outside the home, however, was widely considered problematic. In another context, a man known as *In-Nono*, a familiar face *Għand Larenz*

but more associated with the football team than the *festa*, was criticised for not spending enough time at home. In order to raise funds for his children's education, he had started gambling, but the activity had become compulsive. Whenever he saw a gaming machine in a bar or arcade, he would become engrossed, spending many hours - and lots of money - feeding it.

To the *Pawlina*, this was a disgrace, not just because the money would have been better spent providing for his family, but also because of the time he spent away from home, as a consequence. Concern was expressed for the man's family, and one or two men tried to tell *In-Nono* that he was not living up to his proper role as husband and father.

The husband-father role, then, was associated with spending enough time at home to participate in domestic life. This was the main thrust of the Archbishop's sermon: the extent to which men and women should be seen as complementary parts of the family unit, with the father not only providing finance for, but also supporting, the nurturing role of the mother:

"The father must not mistakenly believe his only role is that of earning the daily bread...[nor that]...his responsibility is equal to that of his wife in the work which is necessary for the daily running of the home." (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*, 1/5/94: 80)

Complementarity, then, is framed as men recognising responsibility in the process of reproducing the family, the household, and ultimately, society. This requires striking a balance between domestic responsibilities and responsibility for organising and administering communal activities such as *festa*. Ultimately, then, it requires a balance between public and domestic sociality.

Domestic sociality is associated with nurturance, and reproduction, which explains the necessity for men to be heterosexual. The importance of reproduction was emphasised by the church, as evinced centrally by the Papal opposition to abortion and contraception, reproduced locally by clergy and laity alike.

Mary DuPont would often refer to the difficulties she had had giving birth to Gabriella, and hoped that her daughter would be spared any problems. She would also state explicitly that the purpose of marriage is to have children, and interpreted this as the reason for Gabriella's comparatively late interest in marriage. "I think she's not

ready to have children yet", she would say, as if marriage and children go together, and an unwillingness to have children were sufficient to ward one off marriage.

For the clergy this was equally the case, and a friend of mine from the University would entertainingly relate the occasion when he went for his prenuptial audience with the St Paul's Archpriest. The priest had been keen to impress upon him the importance of having children, "he's obsessed with children", my friend said, "it's ridiculous; I didn't get married to have children".

Being head of a household, and particularly being a father, and therefore reproducer, was significant in being a man. It defined social status, social standing, and was a prerequisite for the creation of reputation. It also defined position in a spatial sense, however, as it was the main criterion for the use of social space *Għand Lawrenz*.

As outlined above, social space *Għand Lawrenz* was divided. Behind the bar, in the space which should have been private, were women of both determinate and indeterminate gender, in the form of Miriam and Lela. But there were also men of indeterminate sexuality - because not yet socially sanctioned through marriage. These were men who had not yet achieved the full potential of their gender, as married men. Men who were still associated with their natal household, not having established their own. These were young men who had not yet 'become' public, as 'real men', and were still in the process of trying to resolve its difficulties.

The process involved not only the significance of marriage for male personhood, but also the importance of age and engagement in the courtship process. Marital status was important in being a man, but was not the only way in which the resolution of manhood could be achieved. The area in front of the bar was usually occupied by men who had resolved their status as men. Many of them were married, but there were also those who had effectively disengaged from the courtship process. Some of them were too old to be considered sexually predatory, and it was assumed that they would be sexually experienced, and hence sexually resolved, through the use of prostitutes, or previous liaisons. Others were men who had expressed themselves disinterested in the pursuit of their sexuality. In general, these were men who pursued social standing by some other means than marriage and sex. They talked more often about local or national politics, and sought office in local religious Confraternities, and/or the organisation of St Paul's *fešta*. This was characteristic of the *klikka* I got most closely involved with, and included Vince Farrugia. They had not all demonstrated their masculinity by marital status, but were

men because of their commitment to the *festa*. Indeed, to the extent that the organisation of the *festa* was dominated by men participating in a world of public decision-making, their involvement in the *festa* made them 'men' by definition. This was demonstrated not only by taking office in the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, and working long hours in preparation for the *festa*, but also through carrying the statue of St Paul on *festa* day itself.

The connotations of this are discussed at greater length in chapter seven. Before that, I shall move on from discussing the criteria for masculine involvement in the public sphere of decision-making about politics in the *festa*, to a discussion of female identities. In many ways, these are the opposite of the male, being centred around the domestic context of house and household. Again, a dominant version of gender identity is identified, in the form of an idealised notion of family complementarity that centres on the household as a unity of reputation. This, in turn, is related to household consumption patterns and the relative respectability of different types of consumption. However, I also identify contested female identities, and particularly public, political criticisms of the central ideology of family complementarity, that emerged in Malta in the early 1990's.

Chapter Two: Locating Domestic Spaces: Femininity, Reputation and Consumption

If the dominant model of the 'ideal man' revolved around the image of the complementary family, and therefore the house, this was no less the case for the ideal woman. This chapter explores women's roles inside and outside the house, and how the performance of these roles contributes towards household respectability. It also examines other means by which respectability is asserted - particularly through the consumption of foreign goods. The increase in consumption has led to a perceived breakdown of 'traditional' gender roles. Younger women increasingly participate in the workforce, and have different expectations. But challenges also come from the recognition that traditional gender roles are exploitative, and serve to conceal men's frequently violent domination of women.

The dominant image of femininity can only be understood in terms of the principal cultural categories that are used to refer to the house - those of 'inside' and 'outside'. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, these do not only refer to the household, but also to other units of identity. They are therefore central to an examination of Maltese social identities.

Inside and Outside the House

The threshold of the household is the boundary between the opposed categories of 'inside' and 'outside', *ġewwa* and *barra*. These categories do not only apply to the demarcation of physical space, but also the elaboration of social space, or the constitution of social groups. Of particular significance is the defining of the group referred to as *ta'ġewwa* ('insiders' - lit. 'of the inside'), who have particular claims and particular access to the domestic space, whether they are household members or not.

My view of household boundaries, and the significance of household insiders was gained from living *Għand DuPont*. Here, I examined the use of space within the house, and how differences in use conformed to differences in the definition of insiders. In particular, I spent a great deal of time talking to Mary DuPont about the significance of the category insider, and how this related to notions of domesticity and femininity. These discussions were supplemented by similar discussions with other women, and my conclusions are informed by comprehensive knowledge of several other households.

After Easter, 1993, in order to 'introduce' myself to the parts of the parish where I had not yet met people, I decided to accompany the parish priests during the annual *tberik* ('blessing of the houses'). This involved going to a different part of the parish every morning with Freddie the sacristan and one of the parish priests. At each house, a prayer was said, the house blessed, and data checked for the *status animarum* ('state of the people'). This is a kind of census conducted in all Maltese parishes, in which information is collected about who lives in which house, and how they are employed. The St Paul's parish archives contain volumes dating back to the late sixteenth century, and the records are a valuable resource for researchers (Fiorini, 1983). I made use of the more recent volumes when checking genealogical data.

In the past, the *tberik* was associated with church surveillance. It was an opportunity to make sure that all parishioners were baptised and confirmed, and took holy communion at least once a year at Easter. Each person was given a special card during the Easter mass service, which was collected again during the *tberik*. Families that did not have the full quota of cards were refused the blessing. This practice had been discontinued by the time I accompanied the *tberik* in 1993. By then, the priests said that the purpose of the exercise was to maintain close links with the parish's families; to encourage a sense of belonging, rather than to keep an eye on them.

During the *tberik* I noted down information about the structure and decoration of the houses we visited, and collected a more-or-less random sample of telephone numbers to contact people for interview. I was keen to supplement my knowledge of the male public domain and the DuPont household with other people's views of domesticity. In particular, I wanted to talk to women about their homes, their lives and their social situations. Thus, although this chapter mainly concerns the DuPont house and household, it is informed by a wider knowledge of the house and household in St Paul's parish as a whole.

The DuPont house occupied three storeys. On the ground floor, the front door led into a long corridor that ended in a small, windowless room which was used as a workroom. Halfway along the corridor, to the left, were the stairs leading up to the main living space. At the top of the stairs, there were three doors which led to kitchen, living room and bedrooms respectively. From the kitchen, a further flight of stairs led to another bedroom, which I occupied. This led out onto a roof terrace (see fig 4).

For the DuPonts, the most frequently-used rooms were their bedrooms and the kitchen. Both Gabriella's and Ray and Mary's bedrooms had televisions in, as did the

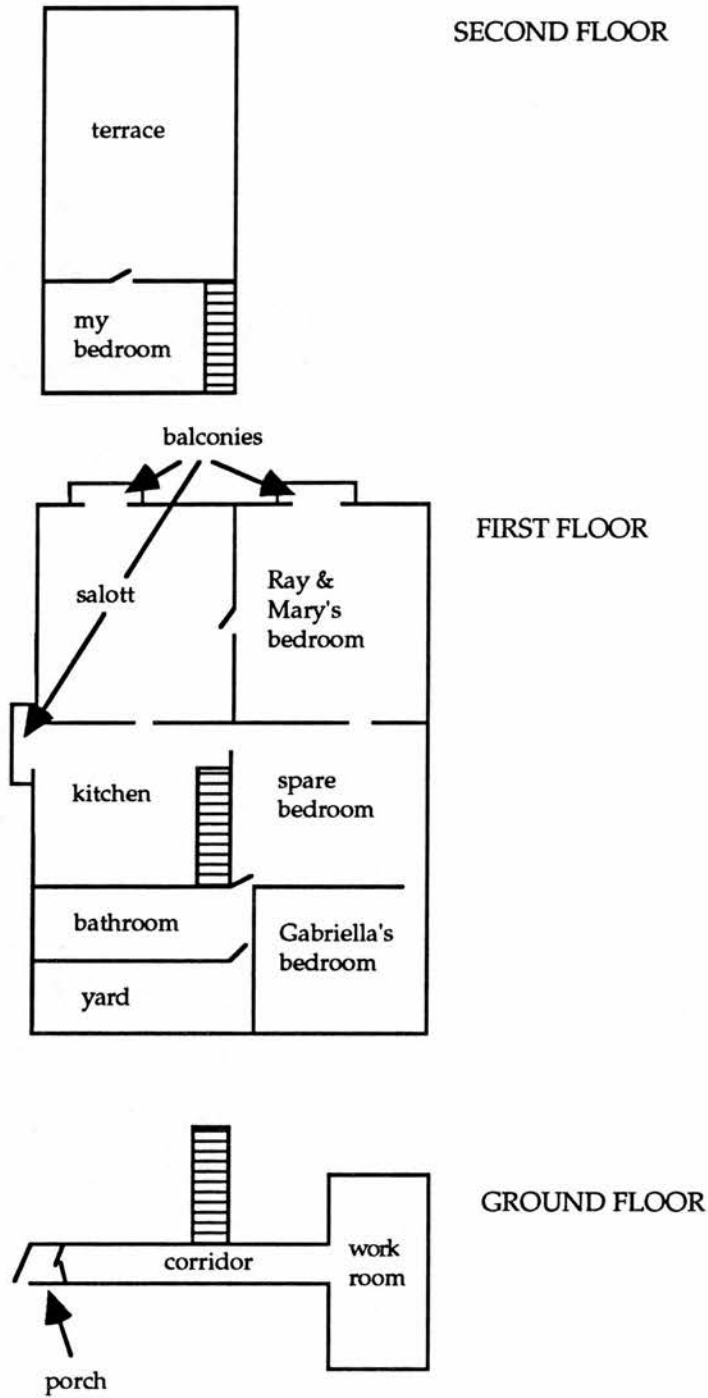
kitchen, which was also the main dining room. It was in these rooms that they spent most of their time when at home. The *salott* ('living room'), as with most of the houses I saw in Valletta, was reserved for special guests. During the *tberik*, it was into this room that priests were invariably invited, when they entered houses. It was therefore this room that received the blessing. This suggests that the *salott* in some way represented the household as a whole. The *salott* was often entirely separate from the rest of the house, such that its nature as a display area, or 'showroom' was further emphasised. Here, precious gifts or family heirlooms were kept, to be shown to the illustrious visitor.

The DuPont *salott* was seldom used except on occasions when special visitors came. Struck by how little the *salott* was used, I asked Mary why this was the case. She replied that this was the way things were done in Malta. People who were important visitors, or who one felt "less comfortable" with, were always entertained in the *salott*. This is the case not only in Malta, but also in a variety of other settings, for example, Britain (Young and Wilmott, 1957) and Norway (Gullestad, 1993). In Malta it is particularly the case with guests who hold some form of public office. Not only priests, but also visiting politicians, are entertained in the *salott*.

The *salott* can therefore be seen as the public face of the household, where people coming from outside are entertained, in a space between the outside proper, and the more familiar, intimate spaces of kitchen and bedroom. This demonstrates the bifurcation of the house itself into a public zone used to entertain 'outsiders' and a more intimate one in which 'insiders' lived. The *salott* operates in a similar way to the *salon* of eighteenth century French bourgeois society, which was a public room in a private dwelling demonstrating the extent to which "the line between private and public sphere extended right through the home" (Habermas, 1989: 45), incorporating divisions not only of social class, but also of gender.

Beyond this line are the kitchen and bedrooms, which *Għand DuPont* were used on a daily basis by members of the household, and for the everyday entertaining of other visitors, who although not actual residents were nevertheless defined as *ta'ġewwa* ('insiders'). Broadly speaking, these were people who could turn up at the house uninvited, and would be welcomed in without ceremony. They would be seated in the kitchen, which was open to the bedrooms. There were no doors between the kitchen and the bedrooms, although there were doors between the *salott* and the bedrooms. People could therefore move freely between the kitchen and the bedrooms, and indeed see from the kitchen into the spare bedroom.

fig 4 - Plan of Għand DuPont



The people who visited most frequently, were defined as *ta'għewwa*, and were always entertained in the kitchen, were Mary's kin. Her widowed mother, Tessie, and her two brothers, Tony and Mario - both of whom had families with small children - would visit several times a week. They seldom arranged these trips, but as insiders they were welcome nonetheless. Ray's kin were more problematic. His sister lived in Catania, Sicily,

and he had fallen out with his brother over a political argument. They now supported opposing political parties, which meant that his brother was seldom contacted. This contrasted with the welcome Mary's kin were given, and is not insignificant. It highlights the female orientation of Maltese kinship.

Having examined the central opposition between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to the household, I shall now move on to examine the dominant female gender roles. These revolve around the domestic domain, 'inside' the house.

Kin Work, Religious Work, Paid Work

Malta has been described as a strongly matrifocal society (Sant Cassia, pers comm), and research has even suggested it is matriarchal (Mizzi, 1981). As with Greek kinship, the mother-daughter bond is such that one might describe it as the 'elementary unit' (Dubisch, 1991).

In the DuPont house, Mary's ties with Tessie were particularly close. They would communicate on the telephone several times a day, and see each other at least every other day. This was a common pattern. Despite increasingly neolocal residence patterns in Malta, the maternal household was of major significance in people's lives. Not only daughters, but also sons, would maintain close and frequent contacts with their mothers, dropping in to see them, and telephoning for extended periods. These people, although they no longer live in the maternal household, are still regarded as being insiders, *ta'ġewwa*.

I first learned of the category *ta'ġewwa* in connection with the death of Vince Farrugia's aunt. She had died suddenly, and his family were particularly upset by the death. Not only his mother, who was the dead woman's sister, but also Vince himself was shocked. It turned out that this had been the reason why he had been preoccupied and withdrawn on the occasion described in the last chapter. Nobody else asked him about it, but when I broached the subject, he explained to me how he felt:

"It's depressing.²⁴ She died very suddenly. And we all feel it. Particularly my mother. You feel it, especially when it's somebody *ta'ġewwa*. She used to come round every day. She only lived round the corner. She really was *ta'ġewwa*."

²⁴ Here, he used the term *dwejjaq*, which literally means 'boredom', but also conveys the notion of sadness and depression.

Being *ta'giewwa*, then, was associated with familiarity and frequency of visits. In the DuPont, and other households I knew, these criteria were most often fulfilled by female kin or particularly close friends of the wife. If it is mainly female kin who are 'insiders', this reveals the first, and major, role of the ideal woman. What Micaela di Leonardo (1987) has called 'kin work'. This is the work associated with maintaining kinship links which can be used to structure social action and mobilise support through obligation. Maltese women maintain these links via telephone and through contact with visitors; they remember birthdays and organise the household's calendar of attendance at these and other significant events.

Like much of the "hidden work of everyday life" (Wadel, 1979), this is largely unrecognised as an act of constituting the social, but is of major importance in the creation of Maltese society. It is nominally domestic work, because it revolves most strongly around the category of insiders to the household. Moreover, insiders are associated with the domestic domain because of their unproblematic use of the more intimate spaces of the house. The work which goes towards maintaining relations with insiders is therefore also associated with the intimate, domestic domain. However, the work is also of public, political significance, because it creates the networks of obligations which can be drawn upon for political support, or the motivation of political opinion (see chapter four). Thus, although it was defined as 'domestic work', it nevertheless contributed substantively to the demarcation of the public sphere.

Kin work also extends to religious work, because women, as in much of the Mediterranean, are considered to be responsible for the spiritual well-being of the family (Davis, 1984). Many women I knew attended mass once a day, as well as special meetings organised by the churches, to say prayers and learn about the scriptures. Mary was not among these daily attenders, but she expressed her regret at this. If she wasn't so busy, she said, she would go to mass every day.

I would argue that this is because kinship responsibilities extend beyond the living, to the care of the dead. This is also the case in rural Greece (Danforth, 1982). The dead must be prayed for, remembered, and their tombs kept clean. This is work mainly carried out by women, for the reason that it is this kind of care work, the maintenance of close and functional relationships, that is performed by women when people are alive. In death as in life, then, women are responsible for keeping family ties, and making sure that insiders are looked after properly.

Looking after insiders properly inevitably means performing domestic tasks. Minimally, this involves making sure that the house is clean and tidy, and that food is provided. Much of this was achieved *Għand DuPont* by employing a *seftura* ('maid') who came to clean once a week. She was paid from the proceeds of Mary's paid work, however, and in any case did not reduce her domestic burden all that significantly. Even though the maid came in to clean, Mary herself still worked on washing, cooking or cleaning for at least three hours every day.

Mary also worked from home as a dressmaker. For women, work outside the house was generally associated with too much autonomy and the consequent abandonment of domestic responsibility. Compared with paid work outside the house, Mary's dressmaking was relatively un-stigmatised.

However, in the past she had taken employment outside the house. She had been bored, she said, and lonely, so for companionship and entertainment, she decided to work in a factory. Ray had opposed the move, arguing that the family did not need the money, but the fact he had no objections to her subsequently taking up dress-making suggests that this was not his only objection. Mary explained that he'd been unhappy about the kinds of women she was meeting at the factory:

"Those women, do you know? They would always swear. And the young girls, huff, they'd always swear as well. Every sentence they would swear on something,²⁵ or even worse. Ray told me to stop going. I don't know. I used to enjoy going there. To do something, do you know what I mean? But Ray didn't like it. And you know how it is in Malta. A husband says something and his wife jumps."

As much as being worried about the company Mary was keeping at the factories, Ray was worried about the effect that her work would have on the reputation of the household. In particular, the fact that it was a public demonstration of his wife's autonomy. It is a view commonly expressed by men that it is dangerous to allow women to get together unless they are kin. Many told me that they would not allow their wives to go to work, because meeting up with other women would 'give them ideas' that might lead to infidelity or the abandonment of domestic responsibilities.

²⁵ The phrase she used here was *ħaqg għall*- which literally means 'swear on'. It is most commonly used when swearing on holy figures, for example *ħaqg għall-Gesu Kristu* ('swear on Jesus Christ') or *ħaqg għall-Madonna* ('swear on Our Lady'). In everyday speech it is very common formula indeed, punctuating sentences for effect. But it is regarded as strongly blasphemous, and so stigmatised.

On the face of it, this seems to conform to the standard Mediterranean invocation of a gender-based 'honour and shame' syndrome. Women are expected to stay out of the public domain, thereby demonstrating 'shame' to preserve household honour. However, as discussed in the Introduction, the idea of an 'honour and shame' syndrome serves to stereotype the Mediterranean as a culture region, and is anyway not applicable to the Maltese context.

The word *onor* ('honour') is seldom used in Malta. On the one occasion I heard it used during two years of fieldwork, it referred not to household honour, but to the reputation of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* for financial scrupulousness (see chapter seven). In the context of family and household, I prefer the term 'respectability', which is how the DuPonts referred to themselves as a unit (see below).

Similarly, 'shame' is a concept inappropriate to the Maltese setting. Wilhelmsen, in his ethnography of the fishing village of Marsaxlokk, (1976) glossed the word *għarukaza* as shame. But I would argue that a more faithful translation of the term is 'disgrace'. This is principally because of the way the word is used. *Għarukaza* does not refer to a state of being, as in the Greek category *dropi* (Campbell, 1964) or the Andalusian *vergüenza* (Pitt-Rivers, 1961), both of which have been called shame. Rather, *għarukaza* relates to specific events which are by their nature deemed to be disgraceful. I never heard *għarukaza* used as an abstract noun to describe a state of female shame. It was always prefixed by the rhetorical interrogative *xi* or *x'* ('what'). The term was therefore used to refer to specific events as *x'għarukaza* ('what a disgrace'). This could refer not only to the potential disgrace of a woman's activities outside the home, but also to other forms of disgrace, at different levels of social organisation: party-political, national or even international. Thus, when Maltese saw pictures of famine from Africa on their television screens, the response would be the same as that towards a woman working outside the home - *x'għarukaza*.

This view was not only expressed by Ray DuPont, but also by many women. In one of the interviews I conducted following the *tberik*, I met up with Pawla Pace and Josette Dalli. Pawla was a mother of two in her late thirties, and an active member of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* ('Association of Pawlini'). Josette was younger with one child. We sat in Pawla's *salott*, which bracketed the occasion as a visit by an 'outsider'. Likewise,

the presence of Josette, who was asked by Pawla to come along because she was 'embarrassed' (*tistħi*) to have me at her house alone.²⁶

I asked the two women to describe their courtship and marriage, from the point of view of employment and economics. Pawla had been working as a tea-packer before she was married and so paid for her own dowry (*dota*).²⁷ She stopped working as soon as she married, which she declared was 'normal' practice. Josette had never worked, and was vigorously opposed to the idea of married women working:

"It's a matter of personal choice. Not everyone is the same. Some even work after they've had children. But that's not good. If they go out, they might meet other men, and get ideas. Who knows what will happen."

Working outside the house, then, was not only related to the abandonment of responsibility for domestic labour, but also the negation of the family and household as the sole locus of sexual activity. It was therefore related to sexual morality as much as domestic responsibility. The only way to ensure the maintenance of both was to work at home, either on solely domestic tasks, or as Mary DuPont, on paid work that could be accomplished inside the house. This way, not only could domestic tasks be paid for, but also the reputation of the household could be preserved.

Through her paid work, Mary earned more money than Ray, but as it was undeclared, domestic labour, it was not fully acknowledged. The parents' income was pooled, and came to reflect upon the standing of Ray as the head of the household as a whole, but particularly on Ray, who was the nominal main wage-earner.

It also contributed to household reputation by creating and demonstrating the connectedness of the DuPont household. Many of Mary's clients were well-placed in Maltese society, being either of aristocratic descent or members of the old and established

²⁶ *Tistħi*, from the verb *staħa* ('to be embarrassed'), like *għarukaza* refers to specific events, rather than being a property of the person.

²⁷ The concept of *dota* very much conformed to the pattern of dowry outlined by Goody and Tambiah (1973). It was normally paid by the bride's parents, to the bride herself, and comprised moveable property, usually associated with the house. The other major payment made by the parents of the bride was for the wedding itself. The *dota* varied according to the means of the parents, but would minimally contain towels and bed linen. Many Maltese now dispute the parental obligation to pay for both wedding and *dota*, given the relative financial autonomy of young people, but nevertheless the wish to provide a 'bottom drawer' of household goods persists. Mary and Ray DuPont, for example, began saving for Gabriella's wedding and *dota* from the day she was born.

professional bourgeoisie.²⁸ They were household names, who appeared weekly in the society columns of *The Sunday Times (Malta)*. Their visits *għand DuPont*, for fittings or discussions about patterns, were occasions of great honour, particularly for Ray. He would make sure that he was wearing trousers and a shirt when they arrived, rather than his usual domestic attire of shorts and a vest. Moreover, he would make a point of inviting the visitors into the *salott*, and joining in with conversations he left to his wife when the clients were less eminent. Mary would mildly mock his special behaviour, but could nevertheless see the reasons for it:

“Having them come here makes us seem better”, she revealed.

Mary’s work from home, then, reflected positively on household status, as well as being ‘safe’ as far as the household’s reputation for sexual propriety was concerned. It particularly reflected on the status of Ray, who used the opportunity to introduce himself to well-placed clients. This justified her long hours of sewing, as did the extra money it gave the DuPonts, which could be spent on other markers of status, particularly the consumption of household items (see below).

The situation marks an interesting contrast to that observed by Pavlides and Hesser in Greece (1986: 94). There, the introduction of a market economy meant the increased desirability of consumer goods, and so an increase in the status of the male wage-earner in relation to the female domestic worker. Whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women had produced household items, these were now bought with the money their husbands brought home. This transformed them from being producers of the house, to simple ‘caretakers’.

In the DuPont case, the situation is more complex. Both Ray and Mary earn money to be spent on the house. But because her work is inside the house, and undeclared, it is not recognised (see Wadel, 1979). This means that although she contributes to the purchase of household goods, which in turn contribute to the standing of the household, this contribution is devalued. The investment is in the reputation, or public face, of the household, which in turn is a representation of family morality.

²⁸ The Maltese nobility date back to the period before the Knights. There are 28 titles listed in the *Malta Year Book* (1994: 369-370) and have an active Committee of Privileges. In everyday speech they are referred to as *nobli* (‘nobles’), a category which implies elevation and aloofness.

As stated in the last chapter, the male public domain contrasts with two other domains of social space; the family domestic and the female public. Having examined the domestic domain, and women's roles within that, I shall now move on to look at women's sociality in a public context.

Shopping as a Context of Female Sociality

Leaving the house is not a negative thing *per se*. Women left the house on a daily basis, to participate in what I have called a female public domain. This was the domain of grocery shops, which although outside the house, was associated with domesticity. The trips represent an extension of the domestic identity of women into the outside, public domain. This is homologous with the extension described in the last chapter, of women's family roles when they move into the male public domain.

Grocery shopping was most often done in the mornings, at the small grocery shops that served the residential neighbourhoods of Valletta. These grocery shops were also gossip-shops, in that they served as loci for the exchange of information between women. I stress the female gendered nature of these places because men were seldom seen there. Men who did enter were largely ignored, and discouraged from participating in conversation. This happened to me on the occasions when I tried to engage women in conversation in grocery shops. The shopkeepers themselves seemed to conspire to maintain the female exclusivity of their shops, by making sure that men were served and bundled out of the shop as quickly as possible. Frustratingly, this would happen to me time and time again. Even if there was a long queue, I would somehow always find myself being served first, and therefore not have any further pretext for being in the shops. It was therefore a domain to which I only had second-hand access, via Mary's and other women's accounts of what went on there.

Grocery shopping was domestic labour, but describing it only as this, is perhaps rather to miss the point. It also performed a significant social function, in that the grocery shops become places where significant local knowledge was exchanged. Women in Valletta generally made sure they went to the shop at least once daily. This trip involved not only entering shops to make a transaction, but also a lengthy conversation with storekeepers and fellow customers. Consequently, grocery shops were often full of people slowly assembling their daily provisions as they talked through the various issues of the day.

The grocery shop was not only a social space where the exchange of information was facilitated. It was also where everyday women's sociality, or sociality that was not directly linked to kinship, was played out in a public space. Women went to grocery shops to create social ties. The importance of this activity was emphasised to me by Guži and Salvina, Freddie Sciberras's uncle and aunt. The Sciberras household became a place that I would regularly visit. This was partly through my friendship with their nephew Freddie and partly because of my interest in the *festa*. Guži and Salvina's three sons were heavily involved in organising the *festa* and were keen to get me as involved as possible. The role of their eldest son, Paul, is discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

Fittingly, the Sciberras family were well-established in Valletta - their name is the same as that of the hill on which the city is built: Xiberras. Although the branches of the family I became acquainted with were committed *Pawlini*, they considered their origins to be on the other side of the city. This caused some degree of embarrassment for Freddie, as St Paul's sacristan. He was habitually teased by relatives from the other Valletta parishes, particularly at family occasions such as weddings. As discussed in the Introduction, the antagonism between the Valletta parishes has a long and illustrious past, which permeated the memories of many *Pawlini*.

Through the Sciberras's I got a picture of not only how the public commemoration of St Paul was organised, but also how domestic life in houses other than the DuPonts' was managed. I became somebody who could turn up unexpectedly and be offered a seat in the kitchen, and a cup of tea. In this respect, one could say that I became an insider. On one occasion, I was sitting in their kitchen. Guži and Salvina had been discussing the fact that he had not been paid for a long time, and was owed several hundred Maltese liri by his employer:

"What can I do. It's not that I'm hard up. That's no problem. I've got money for cigarettes and a drink sometimes. It's her (Salvina) I worry about. It's not fair. She's got no money for shopping."

I thought at this stage that he was worried about food, and that he was making the explicit distinction between his responsibilities and hers. By not giving her money to buy food, he was depriving her of the means with which to carry out her domestic responsibilities. I moved to note this down, saying "I see, you're worried about her not having money to buy the groceries." Then she interjected:

"No, it's not food that's the problem. We're not going to starve. We've plenty of food. But what am I going to do. Just sit here and stare? If we've got no money I can't go to the shops. I'll just get bored and lonely."

Going to the grocery shops, then, was clearly a recognisable social activity, and one which was not only entertaining, but also perhaps more fundamental to female existence. Without it, women would simply sit and stare. In other words, they would be denied their personhood: denied the situation in which they become animated, social agents.

The outing into the domain of social interaction of the grocery shops was often supplemented by spending some time in the afternoon sitting or standing at the front door of their house, waiting for friends or neighbours to pass by and talk. This latter activity was not indulged in by Mary, for whom it was a stigmatised sign of lower status. She nevertheless made sure that she went shopping at least once a day, despite the fact that the bulk of their shopping was done from a supermarket outside Valletta. Each morning, she would go to the local grocery store to buy fresh vegetables or pasta, a trip from which she would return with fresh news of neighbouring families. To this extent, the subject matter of male and female conversations differed. Male discourse generally concerned subjects of public interest, politics, football, *festa*. Female discourse, on the other hand, was discourse on or constitutive of local reputation, and matters concerned with the personal spaces where this reputation lay: the family and the household.

The female public domain, therefore, is very much concerned with negotiating the respectability of families and households. The next section examines the categories of - and criteria for - respectability in St Paul's parish.

Being Respectable

The distinction between male and female discourse was not only gendered, but also related to social stratification. If male discourse was not so explicitly concerned with respectability, then it follows that those most explicitly concerned with it, were not so interested in male discourse. Indeed, demonstrating respectability itself involved the denigration of male discourse, and the domains within which this discourse existed.

The DuPonts, and particularly Ray DuPont, regarded themselves as above the public world of male sociability. He never willingly went to the bar. Participation in public activity was reserved for the more refined world of dinner parties. Both he and Mary explicitly criticised the regular denizens of *Għand Lawrenz*. They were "basically

good people", I was told when I first went there, but "ignorant". The DuPonts were very much a 'respectable' family, with a keen sense of their social standing: "We're well respected around here," said Ray; "The local people respect us," added Mary.

If the DuPonts saw themselves as 'respectable' members of the parish, this was to distinguish themselves from another category of people who lived there. They saw themselves as belonging to a different social stratum, to the extent that they considered their position within and aspirations for the world, from a different perspective. They were from the class of well-respected and well-connected *pulit* ('polite') society, when compared to the less connected subaltern class, or *poplu* ('people'). The full implications of this distinction are explored in chapters three, four and five.

Respectability is not an explicit category in Maltese, but was nevertheless a major preoccupation for the DuPonts. They would use the English word 'respect' to refer to their standing or reputation. In terms of indigenous categories, the notion of respectability related to an axis of oppositions between two categories of people, or types of behaviour. Central to this was the distinction between *għoli* and *baxx* ('high' and 'low') society. This in turn translated into distinctions between *pulit* ('polite') and *ħamallu* or *pastaż* ('rude') people and behaviour; and between people who were *edukat* or *injurant* ('educated' or 'ignorant').

These were the main sets of terms involved in what I shall call the play of respectability and reputation. It comprised a sliding scale of criticisms and praises which could be used by anybody to denigrate or elevate another. Thus people would praise their own politeness in both speech and dress with the category *pulit* - an expression which had connotations of both smartness and cleanliness - and criticise others' rudeness or scruffiness with the derogatory *ħamallu*.²⁹

Hence, Ray and Mary DuPont regarded *Għand Lawrenz* as a *baxx* ('low') place, where people were not necessarily bad, but not of the same standing as themselves. After my first visit there, I told Mary, who said rather disparagingly that that was a place where people "drink whisky in the morning!". This was an index of inferior status, and marked *Għand Lawrenz* off as a place not fit for her or Ray to patronise.

²⁹ The term *ħamallu/a* is a relatively recent introduction to the Maltese language, and derives from the Greek *ἄμωλος*, meaning 'imbecile'. It means rude, or uncouth. Similar origins as *pastaż* which has come to mean more explicitly rude behaviour.

Ray's unwillingness to participate in this male public domain was symbolised by the men *Għand Lawrenz* through humorous fantasies about his sexual preferences, and those of his wife and daughter. This projection of sexual fantasy onto the respectable classes is not at all unusual (see Pitt-Rivers, 1961: 158). It manifested itself in the antagonism between the twin urban centres of Valletta and Sliema; opposed in terms of their contrasting degrees of respectability. Where Valletta was a place *tal-poplu* (of the people), Sliema was *tal-pépé* (of the penis). Whereas *il-Beltin* ('Valletta people') protected their reputation and prevented the possible disgrace of being cuckolded, *Sliemizi* ('Sliema people') were less circumspect. "Fur coats, no knickers" was how Lawrence the bar-man once described the people of Sliema. Behind the respectable and smart exterior lay a more sordid and disreputable character, that it only needed a strong gust of wind to reveal.

The sexualising of the respectable classes is also revealed in a local nick-name for the *Casino Maltese* - Republic Street's exclusive club. The club is referred to as *il-kazin tal-pojuti* ('the club of the cuckolds'), and is openly ridiculed as such.

Being respectable, then, was a double-edged sword, that whilst conferring a certain status also laid one open to attack. Aloofness could lead to vulnerability and inability to recognise the terms of ridicule used by others. This was certainly the case with the DuPonts, who although they were 'respected', were also ridiculed.

If they were ridiculed by many of the people *Għand Lawrenz*, this was no less significant than the ridicule in which they themselves held me for associating with such people. During my first week *għand DuPont* I told Ray of my interest in the local *fešta*.

"There is a group of people I know who organise a kind of religious feast," he said, "although you can't really call it religious...You'll find them at the small bar next to the church. They're always there, drinking. I don't really have much to do with them; I'm not a drinking man. I know them all though, and they know me. If you're really interested in those things, then you can go and talk to them."

To the household's surprise, this was what I did, but as time developed, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the disjunction between my existence as ethnographer of the *Pawlini*, and DuPont household member. Eventually, the strain of having to maintain an image in keeping with the household, but also spending enough time with the 'lower' people *Għand Lawrenz*, became too much to cope with. I made enquiries and moved to a separate rented place of my own, for the second year of my fieldwork.

The DuPonts' attitude towards my informants *Għand Lawrenz* is demonstrated by the following quotes:

"They're all *ħamalli*, Jon's friends," I heard Gabriella say once.

On another occasion when I was researching the Valletta Carnival, Ray rather damningly suggested of my thesis:

"It'll be a thesis of comedy/absurdity"³⁰

It is in this context that the DuPonts had initially referred to the men of *Għand Lawrenz* as 'ignorant'. It was a chance for them to make a negative evaluation, and hence elevate their own status as 'educated' people.

Ray was a secondary school teacher and graduate. He had once taught at the now closed down Valletta boys' secondary school, which meant that many of the younger men who I came to know in Valletta - men in their thirties - had been taught by him. They therefore referred to him by the polite form of address, as *Sur DuPont*, the term *Sur* ('sir', or 'señor') being an explicit acknowledgement of respect for rank. In this case, rank was defined by education.

Ray and Mary's 24-year-old daughter was also thought of as well-educated. She worked as registrar at the relatively new and prestigious Institute of Tourism Studies - an educational establishment set up by the National Tourism Organisation of Malta (the civil service organisation that exists in lieu of a Tourism Ministry) (see Mitchell, forthcoming, b). She had got this job through hard work, education and the right connections.

Ray was not the only person referred to as *Sur* by the *Pawlini*. Within the world of local religious Confraternities (see chapter six) two other men were habitually called *Sur*. The first was *Sur Ċikku*, an elderly man whose life had been dedicated to the operation of the Confraternity of the Sacred Crucifix. Although he had no essential status by virtue of education, family connection or wealth, he was nevertheless *Sur* by virtue of his years, and the respect within which everybody held him.

³⁰ The term used here was *komedja*, which means both 'comedy' and 'circus'. He was therefore pointing towards the absurdity of the Carnival, and of researching it.

The second was the Rector of the Confraternity, and was ascribed the status of *Sur* by virtue of learning, genealogy and occupation. A graduate, he was the son of a long line of influential Valletta merchants, who developed his father's business into one that single-handedly introduced the concept of management consultancy into Malta. He was *Sur Fred* by ascription, although use of his forename rather than surname ensured an approachability that transcended the barriers of status group.

Ray DuPont, on the other hand, was referred to, from afar, as *Sur DuPont*; an aloof member of the local *pulit* classes who was nevertheless considered to be *raġel sew* ('a good man'). This was largely, I suspect, for his work over the years for the Nationalist Party. He was a party officer, who had canvassed for local candidates during the difficult 1980's, and had been a representative of the Malta Union of Teachers during the strikes of 1984-85 (see Zammit Mangion, 1992: 114). Showing loyalty to the Nationalist cause during these difficult times made him 'a good man' in the eyes of a constituency who were predominantly, and passionately, Nationalist (see chapter four). These links with the Nationalist Party conferred status on two counts. Not only was he a 'good man' for helping the party cause, he was also associated with 'respectability' by association particularly with the Nationalists. PN supporters regarded their party as being more 'respectable' than the Labour Party, because of its historical origins in the bourgeois mercantile classes, the professions and the clergy. Their party was therefore more 'polite' than the Labour Party, who were more strongly associated with engineers, architects and dockyard shop stewards.

The distinction extended to political style. The MLP were regarded as more populist and confrontational, a characteristic embodied particularly in the rhetorical style of Dom Mintoff, the 1970's prime minister (Boissevain, 1994). By contrast, the Nationalists had a reputation for a more subtle political style. They did *kollox bil-pulit* ('everything politely'). The 'respectability' of the DuPont household, therefore, related as much to political identity as political deed.

As well as status achieved by acting in the political sphere, and by having particular occupations, the DuPonts were respectable for reasons of descent. Mary could claim and emphasise her relative distinction through her family. Her parents were relatively high status. Her father had been an officer in the British Navy, which meant that since his death her mother - aged 74 at the time of fieldwork - enjoyed a reasonably high standard of living, through his services pension. This arrived monthly from Britain in pounds sterling, which allowed a certain flexibility in the ways it was administered. It

could be exchanged for Maltese liri, or kept for occasions when Ray and Mary were travelling abroad, so that they could buy sought-after foreign goods.

Ray was also from a respectable Valletta family, his descent even being traceable back to the seventeenth century arrival in Malta of a French knight called DuPont. On more than one occasion, Ray had told me how a Belgian of the same surname had contacted him some years previously to say that they were related via the knight. The Belgian had referred to him in his letters as 'cousin'. The story achieved two things. Firstly, it linked the DuPont genealogy with aristocracy. All knights had to be of sound aristocratic lineage. So if Ray was the descendent of a knight, he must also be the descendent of aristocracy. Secondly, it established, or perhaps reinforced, the family links with Europe.

To a large degree, the association of Ray with aristocratic descent was a fiction, or fantasy, based on the contingencies of distinction. For whilst the established aristocracy staked their claims to legitimacy on concrete historical and genealogical records, with titles traceable back to their original investiture, Ray's claims were based only upon a mythical image of possible legitimacy. There was no genealogical evidence linking him to a knight called DuPont, nor any clear idea of who the knight was. Neither was there any claim, in present or recent past, to any title held by the DuPont family. Rather, it was a speculative title, based on speculative genealogy. It was nevertheless profoundly important in the DuPonts' elaboration of self and family identity. It made them a cut above their neighbours, as it established the possibility of aristocratic linkage.

It was a suggestive possibility, which linked Ray and Mary not only with the nobility, but also with Europe. This is significant, because the politics of Nationalist distinction involved a habitual denigration of Malta and the Maltese. Europe was seen as an ideal towards which the Maltese should aspire, for guidance in cultural sophistication as well as for models for the consumption of goods and the provision of services. This was particularly so for Nationalists such as the DuPonts, for whom the late twentieth-century millennial movement was that to achieve Malta's entry into the European Union (EU).

If being respectable in this mainly Nationalist parish involved a European orientation, then this also involved the consumption of European goods - and indeed Europe itself. The next section examines the extent to which respectability, discussed and negotiated in a female public domain, is related to the consumption of Europe.

Consuming Europe

Europe was seen as the fount of all things of value in high culture, music, art, and literature. The sophistication was evoked by the repeated use of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' on Italian television. The Italian channels were the only ones the DuPonts would watch, shunning local television except for the news. When their favourite piece of music appeared, with its logo graphic incorporating the circled twelve stars of Europe, they would turn the volume up, and often remarked on how beautiful the piece was. Not merely composed in Europe, and so somehow representative of European-ness, this piece of music had become its very epitome, and a stirring emotional reminder of Nationalist aspirations to European entry. The DuPonts bought in to the imagined community of Europe, with its recognisable constellation of symbols of identity (Shore, 1993).

The affirmation of European superiority, however, was not limited to the world of high cultural sophistication. It was also related to life-style aspiration. For Bourdieu, this kind of consumption amounts to a self-classification by consumers, as members of a particular social stratum (1984: 482). The consumption of European goods, therefore, relates not only to the elaboration of European identity, but also to social class identity, and respectability.

European goods were considered higher quality than those locally-produced, a distinction which applied to both food-stuffs and consumer items. The DuPonts would, for example, habitually buy Italian pasta, although it was more expensive than Maltese, because they were convinced of its superior quality. Buying European pasta was a means of demonstrating allegiance to the political project of Malta's entry to the EU. It was also, and consequently, a means of demonstrating commitment to a particular view of Malta's national identity.

In shops, the distinction was made between goods *ta' barra* ('from outside') and those *ta' Malta* ('from Malta'). The same categories were therefore used for the nation as for the household. Whenever new brands of food appeared on the grocery shelves, an identification was made as to whether they were *ta' barra* or *ta' Malta*, the distinction between the two being one of quality. *Ta' barra* generally meant European. In 1992, 37.5% of all imports were from the European Union (European Commission, 1993). This meant in turn that the high-quality unit of consumption was the European unit.

To take a small example, when one of St Paul's grocery stores took delivery of a large quantity of tinned tuna fish - possibly illicitly - *ta' barra* and were selling them at a

price not far above that of the brand *ta' Malta'*, word quickly spread, and the tins sold within days. Even lowly tuna fish is more desirable if it came to the shops from abroad.

The attitude towards consumer durables was equally interesting. It stemmed in part from the Labour Party initiative of the 1980's in which their government of the day tried to establish a manufacturing base in Malta. In particular, people's memories of this move centre around the television. This is perhaps because of the centrality of television in Maltese domestic life. I would usually find that the television was on when I went into a Maltese house, but the people were seldom sitting concentrating on what was being broadcast. Rather, the television was used for background.

During the 1980's, large import duties were introduced on all goods, in an attempt to protect the small but developing manufacturing industry, that centred on product assembly. For televisions, parts were imported by the government from Grundig, and assembled at a small industrial estate in the centre of the island. These then became the only televisions that could be bought in the Maltese shops.

My mainly Nationalist informants objected to this limiting of choice, and emphasised the new availability of various brand names since the start of the PN government in 1987. Outside brands were clearly considered superior in quality. Stories circulated about faults in the locally-produced televisions, based on the assumption that the Maltese lacked both expertise and discipline to correctly produce such sophisticated items.

The irony is that since the liberation of the market, the Maltese assembly plants are thriving. Many of the components found inside televisions from abroad are produced in Malta. Hence, the political economy of the Maltese television is characterised by the denigration of locally-produced consumer goods, which are now willingly consumed as components, incorporated within goods which 'come from' Europe, or more broadly *ta' barra*, and are therefore considered superior.

Ray's pride of links with France fed into this hierarchy of *ta' barra* and *ta' Malta*. It might be said that he himself was *ta' barra*, and hence of a higher quality than those with local genealogy. But in emphasising these links with Europe, Ray was also anticipating the moment when the distinction between Maltese and European would no longer apply, when *barra* would subsume *Malta*, at the moment of Malta's accession to the European Union.

If consuming Europe meant the demonstration of respectability, then this was no more suggestive than when the items being consumed were household objects. By decorating a house, and displaying its goods, the respectability of a household, and therefore its family, was demonstrated to visitors. The unity of family and household were symbolised through the decoration of the house itself. The rise of this kind of consumption can be related to challenges posed to the notion of a complementary, harmonious family. These challenges are explored in the last two sections of this chapter, but first I examine the meaning and implications of consumption in the house.

Consumption and the House

The locus of the play of respectability was the house itself, which came to symbolise the family. The DuPont house was owned by Farsons, a large locally-owned brewery, and the DuPonts paid only Lm100 (£200) per annum as rent. They had had the opportunity to buy it on many occasions, and there was a continuous discourse on the pro's and con's of ownership. In general, Mary felt it was an opportunity to ensure a reasonably prosperous future for Gabriella. All around them, houses were being sold off as offices, at large profit. They could make Lm20,000 if they bought the house. Ray objected that it was too expensive and too much responsibility. To him, they were better off saving their money to help Gabriella buy her own house when it came to that point, rather than investing now.

Despite the fact they rented, the DuPonts clearly felt the house to be their own. They were happy to invest in improvements to various parts of the house. On my first visit *għand DuPont* I was given a full tour of the house, as was their custom:

“Whenever people come round to visit, we always given them a full tour of the house. I’m not sure why, we just always do. It’s nice to show them the house.”
(Mary)

The focus was on the refurbishments they had done to turn it into the home it now was. It was impressed on me how old the house was, but this was always immediately qualified with an emphasis on its comfort. The house was old, but they had worked on it to make it comfortable. They had also invested time and money to make it beautiful, and house decorations were a particular preoccupation.

I have already suggested the extent to which the *salott* represents the public face of the household. Occasions when it was used were opportunities for the DuPonts to

demonstrate their taste through the display of their *salott*, to people. In particular, they could show the items they had acquired to put in the *salott*, and its decor. These were indices of distinction, as they were indices of consumption.

The *salott* was divided into three sections. Firstly, closest to the kitchen was a seating area that contained a large leather suite of chairs around a mahogany coffee-table. On the wall was a large painting by a well-known artist from Malta's sister island, Gozo. This had been specially commissioned by Ray. Secondly, close to the balcony, was a dining area that had a heavily polished oak table and accompanying chairs. On the table there was a silver candlestick and on the wall another piece of original art, this time an oil abstract by a Maltese painter. It sat next to a large display unit with various ornaments and trinkets. Finally, there was the balcony itself, which was not often used, but gave the impression of space.

When I was shown around the *salott*, my attention was drawn to the original art. In particular, the abstract was highlighted, with the simple phrase: "It's an abstract". This can be seen as an expression of their 'education'; the fact that they know, and understand what abstract art is, and can refer to it as such when talking to an educated Northern European.

They also demonstrated their connections, by drawing attention to the fact that the other painting had been a personal commission. To commission work is to know the artist; to have connections in the right kinds of places. Finally, I was told about the balcony, which they had recently had restored. They were keen to emphasise how difficult, and how expensive this had been.

According to Gullestad (1993), home decoration in Norway can be seen as a means by which people symbolically construct images of completeness, and hence class and gender identities, which confront the fragmentation of modernity. The same can be said of Malta, which has experienced a huge growth in home-building and home-decoration since Independence in 1964.

If consumption is the modern method by which people construct themselves as social beings (Miller, 1987), then consumption in the household is that construction in its most intimate sphere. People consume in the household in order to present themselves in the context of their identities in the household.

Ideally, the Maltese household was characterised by complementary and harmonious gender roles. However, in the early 1990's, there was a widespread belief that the 'traditional' family was disintegrating. The 1990's were conceived of as a period of rapid social change. This was manifest in both the perceptions of changing lifestyles across the generations, and a major public debate about where the family was, and where it was going.

In that context, then, the construction of identity in the household must be seen within the framework of an explicit debate on gender roles in the family, and the role of the family itself. The perception of disintegration was accompanied by an increasing critique of traditional gender roles, and the contestation of dominant gender identities (see Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1992).

Contestation led to the reinforcement of dominant ideas of gender, as well as the emergence of new ones. The critics of traditional gender roles found themselves in conflict with a new conservatism based on the idealised image of the Maltese family. This image was on the one hand criticised for being sexist and inaccurate (the image of complementarity being seen against a backdrop of the exploitation of women), and on the other hand held up as the ideal to which all Maltese should aspire. This indicates the predicament of gender identity in early 1990's Malta. The family was caught between images of tradition and modernity, and the consequence was an increased emphasis on the physical symbolisation of gender and family identity in the house itself.

Consumption about the house emerged as a means of papering over the cracks, so to speak, that appeared on the walls of the central institution of Maltese life: the family. The house was not only the locus of the idealised complementary family, it was also the locus of consumption that served to present that family as complementary, despite its fragmentation. Here, the concerns of domesticity and the public sphere became jointly involved in the creation and symbolisation of social standing

Contesting Female Identities

Changes in lifestyle were the topic of heated debate in the DuPont household. In particular, arguments surrounded money. Gabriella's income was larger than either Ray's or Mary's, but as is common in such situations, very little of this money filtered into the household budget. In Malta there is a widespread feeling that young people should be allowed to earn their own money and spend it as they see fit, without paying any 'housekeeping' to their parents. To suggest that a child pay for their board is considered a

sign that the parents do not care. However, this does not mean that children in Malta should spend their money on whatever they want.

Mary explained the situation to me in terms of the costs of marriage and setting up home. If young people can stay at home and live for free, then they can save up to pay for their weddings and to build a house. Not only is the cost of the house considered the responsibility of the engaged couple, but increasingly also the cost of the wedding.

“So long as she saves for her wedding”, Mary explained, “she can stay here for nothing. She does occasionally pay for things around the house - the new tiling in the bathroom, for example. But we don’t ask anything of her. Mind you, it’s sometimes difficult to imagine that she ever saves anything, she spends so much money on clothes and going out. Perhaps it’s because we were always brought up to save, but I always worry about how much money she’s saving.”

Mary’s attitude is indicative of the bewilderment many middle-aged people had towards the relatively large disposable incomes of their children. Gabriella was not untypical among young unmarried Maltese in running her own car, funding her own holidays abroad, maintaining a wardrobe of expensive Italian clothes, and going out at least twice a week.

Pawla Pace, one of the women I had interviewed in connection with domestic labour, was equally concerned with the behaviour of her two adult daughters. The eldest was a beautician who had been working for two years. She sometimes gave her mother money, but not normally. She preferred to keep it for herself, as she was saving up to buy a car. She also spent lots of money on clothes, and going out. She wouldn’t save money, even though her parents told her to. She was not interested in getting married:

“That’s the way it is today. The young girls don’t want to get married. They just want to have fun. They save up, buy a car, and then ‘viva liberty’.”

She was particularly worried about the affect this example was setting to the younger daughter, who she described as a *demonja bil-grun* (‘demon with horns’) because she was always out at night-clubs, and spending money on apparently frivolous things.

Such hedonistic consumption was a constant source of tension in the DuPont household and others. Related to the perceived increase in liberal attitudes towards bringing up children, it was seen as an index of the breakdown of traditional values of parental respect and discipline. Guzi Sciberras told me on one occasion of the predicament Malta had created for itself since Independence from British rule:

"It's true that today we've got our liberty, but we've come to have too much. Liberty is beautiful, but we've ended up with people taking liberties.³¹ Taking liberties isn't good, in fact, it's bad."

Alongside the tension about Gabriella's spending came a complementary anxiety about her overall moral well-being. The perceived breakdown in parental discipline was part of a complex of perceived breakdown of 'traditional' society, which includes the erosion of the influence of the church. Consequently, a careful eye was kept on Gabriella and other young people by their parents, to make sure that they were regularly attending confession and mass, and that when they went out at weekends they did not engage in any sinful - in other words, sexual - activities.

In the DuPont household, protectiveness was manifest in the setting of rigid curfew times. On one weekend night she is allowed to stay out until 2am, on the other she had to be back by 1.30am. On both occasions, Ray and Mary will stay up to make sure she comes in on time, and any transgression was met with either a tightening of the regime or a huge argument, or both. On one or two occasions, such arguments came alarmingly close to violence.

Many young people I talked to referred to similar tensions in their own households; tensions that were only alleviated by a complex set of deceptions and half-truths that 'protected' their parents from the disgraceful realities of their evenings out.

The tension is particularly acute for young women, and is related to notions of moral and sexual piety. It is also, and consequently, related to women's 'correct' place in the domestic domain. For older Maltese people, young women going out to Paceville, and going to bars and night-clubs is inviting trouble, because it is transgressing the boundaries of gendered domains. It involves women entering the male public without the protective extension of the domestic, family domain defining the terms of that transgression. However, for the younger people themselves, the activity does not have these connotations. The bars of Paceville are not gendered in the same way that the Valletta bars are, and so do not pose the same problems. Thus, the apparent zone of contestation

³¹ Here, Guzi contrasted the term *libertà*, which means 'liberty', and was a popular phrase in Nationalist rhetoric, being part of the triad 'work, justice, liberty' (*xoghol, justizzja, libertà*) that had been at the centre of electoral campaigns during the 1980's, with *libertinaġġ*. *Libertinaġġ* means 'taking liberties', or a surplus of 'liberty'.

over young women's behaviour and transgressions is as much a zone of misunderstanding as of conflict.

The fact that younger people regard the bars of Paceville as different from those of the city is indicated by their unwillingness to go to the latter. I asked Gabriella if she had ever been for a drink in Valletta, as she was so keen on going out in Paceville. She replied that she had never, and would never do that. The bars in Valletta were all "men's bars", and she wouldn't enjoy having a drink in them.

However, stating that the contestation of lifestyles and gendered domains by younger women such as Gabriella, is as much to do with misunderstanding as conflict, should not detract from the very genuine tensions these issues reveal. The tensions relate not only to contestation in the private, domestic domain, but also public debates about the nature of the family and the household. These debates were manifest particularly in the Maltese press.

Public Concern for the State of the Family

At the centre of public debate was the widely-held view that the Maltese family, and indeed Maltese society as a whole, were in a state of crisis:

"...today we have the highest ever rates for theft, murder, alcoholism and drug abuse. These factors contribute to reveal the dismal state of many Maltese families and, consequently, of society itself." (*The Malta Independent*, 6/3/95)

The problems were seen as stemming principally from increased materialism, hedonism and egotism, which put pressure on family relations, and led to marital break-up. The principal agent in the creation of this view was the Maltese church, which had a public forum in the shape of the Bishops' periodic pastoral letters. In their 1992 pastoral letter for the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, the Bishops pointed towards these problems. It was summarised by a subsequent editorial in *The Times of Malta*:

"The Bishops' concern must be motivated not only by the higher incidence of broken marriages...but also by the materialistic mentality that seems to be prevalent among so many young married couples...Hedonism, in its several alienating forms, has become, for some, a way of life...it is no wonder that many young couples' ideas of marriage are so alien from those Christian ideals that were, up to some time ago, the hallmark of Maltese marriages...Those ideals made the Maltese family the supporting prop of Maltese society. If fostered they will continue to ensure that it will still give its beneficial contribution to the Maltese nation." (*The Times of Malta*, 25/8/92: 4)

The letter, then, points towards a situation of change and consequent crisis, in the family and in society. Throughout the two years of fieldwork, statistics about the increase in marital separations were published periodically. These became topics for debate not only in the press, but also in everyday discourse. In summer 1995, when I returned for a short visit to Malta, Vince Farrugia told me of the statistics recently published which showed that in 1994, the number of separations amounted to 60% of the numbers of marriages. This was quoted to me as another worrying sign of the family's decline.

The notions of materialism and hedonism were explicitly related to changes in the gendered division of labour, and the pressure to consume. An increasing appetite for consumption was seen as the prime motivation for women's paid labour outside the home. In January 1994, the Archbishop of Malta issued a statement in which he praised women who stayed at home to fulfil domestic responsibilities, despite the pressures to consume:

"She is the woman, who, in spite of the currents of our times, is aware that in order to live life in its fullness, she is not inevitably bound to go out to work but can do work in the home itself and dedicate herself fully to her noble mission in the family." (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*, 16/1/94 - quoting the Archbishop of Malta)

Materialism was therefore a prime cause of the abandonment of women's 'proper' position in the domestic domain, and should be resisted at all costs. This topic was taken up not only by the Bishops, but also by local sociologists, in particular, the priests Anthony Abela and Carmel Tabone.

Abela's work was based on large-scale surveys conducted with Gallup. It attempted to review the 'state of play' in Maltese society, and was publicised in the press as confirming the dominantly 'traditional' opinions of the Maltese.³² His seminar of December 1993 was reported in *The Malta Independent* under the headline "Maltese women's place is in the home":

"The Maltese stand out as having the most conservative attitudes in Europe when it comes to women and work...an international seminar in Valletta was told yesterday. Sociologist Anthony M Abela told the seminar...'In Malta women tend to resist the European trend for married women to seek paid work. They are very cautious about the impact of a working mother has on the life of a family.'" (*The Malta Independent*, 5/12/95)

³² In his 1991 monograph, Abela attempts to plot Malta's position on a map of European values. He contrasts the 'traditional' values of the Mediterranean with 'modern' values in northern Europe, particularly Scandinavia. His conclusion is that Malta's value-system is 'neo-traditional', reflecting a strong commitment to aspects of society considered as such.

Tabone's work, by contrast, focused on the contestation of this dominant model of the division of labour by gender. He argued that the increase in the numbers of married women working outside the home should not be seen as a negative development in the Maltese family. Rather, he saw it as one of the inevitable changes Malta was going through as a result of modernity. Moreover, he saw it as a potentially positive change, as it marked the beginning of the end of the unequal and^a exploitative 'traditional' family:

"Current local developments...suggest a movement towards a new relationship characterised by partnership and similarity rather than patriarchy and difference. Is not this a more faithful representation of the unity and oneness of marriage, and of a new found rationale of stability for the family?" (Tabone, 1994: 250)

Hence, while Abela's research was used to demonstrate enduring Maltese commitment to the image of the complementary family, Tabone explicitly questioned it. He pointed towards a critique of the idealised complementary family, and indeed contributed to that critique.

Contesting the Traditional Family in Public

Contestation of the dominant model of the complementary family was most strongly demonstrated by Maltese women's groups, and particularly *Moviment Mara Maltija* (lit. 'Maltese Woman's Movement'). This was set up in 1992 by a small group of professional-class women who recognised the need for a women's pressure group to campaign for women's rights. Of particular concern was the issue of domestic violence, which they sought to publicise, and provide help for its victims.

They organised a series of public seminars, letter-writing campaigns and newspaper articles on the subject. One of the main problems was to assess the scale of domestic violence, which was largely "hidden because of the way privacy determines family relationships. It [was] a feature of family life to which society has almost turned a blind eye." (*The Malta Independent*, 13/6/1993).

Moviment Mara Maltija nevertheless thought it to be a widespread problem. The president of the movement during 1993 was Isabelle Borg. She cited the following, staggering, observation, as evidence of the widespread occurrence of domestic violence. A friend of hers who worked as a doctor in the casualty department at the main government hospital, had been struck by the numbers of women who came in suffering from injuries caused by domestic violence. He said that in his experience at least one case was seen in

every twelve-hour shift, so this made a total of over 700 cases per year. However, the casualty department was not the only source of primary treatment to victims. If one assumed that the various 24-hour emergency clinics were also treating battered wives, then the figure expands to 6,300. Moreover, research had shown that women normally only reported being assaulted by their partners after it had happened seven or eight times. This meant that the actual frequency of domestic violence was staggeringly high; perhaps 50,000 incidents per year.

There is no way of verifying these figures. They may well be exaggerated, but my impression was that domestic violence was widespread. Many of the women I talked to made coded references to their victimisation, and men also implied that women were victims. From time to time implicit references were made *Ghand Lawrenz*, to occasions when men had 'worried' (*jinkwieta* - lit. 'disquiet') or 'frightened' (*jbeża*) them by the way they had acted towards their wives. The references were always made in a subdued voice. There was a feeling that such facts were not supposed to be exposed. Attempts by the *Moviment Mara Maltija* to expose the prevalence of domestic violence served to challenge the image of the harmonious complementary family.

This image itself might be seen as a function of dislocation and fragmentation at a time when life in Malta was believed to be rapidly changing. Much of the discourse on family problems and the changing family related to the pressure on families to consume, which led to tensions and marital break-up. If, however, we assume that one of the reasons for the pressure to consume was precisely because of fragmentation and tension, then the idealised complementary family and the contested versions of that family emerge as two sides of a dialectic which fuels the will to consume. In order to present a coherent 'face' of the household against the threats posed by modern society, the household needed to symbolise its unity and respectability through consumption. But this consumption itself posed a threat to the integrity of the image of the family, because it necessitated the breakdown of 'traditional' male and female roles, through increased female participation in paid work outside the home. Because this was threatening to the integrity of the complementary family, it needed to be further allayed by increased consumption. The particular locus for this consumption was the house, which although no longer the same kind of household appealed to in images of the 'traditional' family, was nevertheless still the principal unit of social standing.

Social change and the contestation of the complementary family was seen as a product of post-Independence Malta. In St Paul's parish, it was specifically traced back to

the rule of the Labour government (1971-1987), when many of the trends that endured into the 1990's were said to have begun. In the next chapter, I shall examine the significance of this retrospective appeal to pre-Labour Maltese society, relating the apparent disintegration of the Maltese family, the Maltese community and Maltese society, to people's memories of the 1970's and 80's. These appeals to pre-Labour Malta constituted nostalgia for a moment when the older certainties of lived traditions were disrupted, leading to debate and contest.

The contestation of gender identities in the 1990's was conducted both in public culture, and in the daily arguments and conflicts within the modern Maltese family. It amounted to a debate about men and women's relative legitimacy for participation in the sphere of public decision-making, and the relative degree of representation women were accorded, as victims of domestic violence, and increasingly prominent participants in the workforce.

Chapter Three: *L-Arcipierku* as a Nostalgic Community

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of memories of the former 'community' of *L-Arcipierku*, a neighbourhood at the lower end - both physically and socially - of St Paul's parish. The area was demolished as part of the slum clearance/modernisation policies of the Labour government during the 1970's, and people remember the events with great hostility. The area was seen as the 'heart' of St Paul's parish, and many of my informants *Għand Lawrenz* were from there. It was a source of support for the *festu* administration, and the Nationalist Party. Its demolition was therefore seen as a cataclysmic episode, that set the gradual erosion of family life and morality in Malta, in motion.

The research on which this chapter is based was conducted mainly with the groups of *Pawluni* men who spent time *Għand Lawrenz* on a regular basis. As we have seen, Mary and Ray DuPont regarded them as 'low', because of their behaviour, and particularly their drinking habits. Many of these men were from families which used to live in *L-Arcipierku*, but had had to move away during the demolition. This chapter, explores more fully the connections between living in *L-Arcipierku* and being classified as being low. In particular, I relate the apparently low moral standing of the area to different styles of housing and patterns of kinship. The DuPonts' opinion of the former *Arcipierku* rested on the assumption that the standards and styles of living were disreputable. This in turn rested on assumptions about the inability of people to maintain the correct division between public and private life, in their very cramped living conditions. Not adequately separating public and private would have inevitably led to morally deprecating 'scandal', it was implied. This, coupled with the tendency for repeated intermarriage between families that led to 'confusion', meant that *L-Arcipierku* was a low place.

However, for the people living there, the conditions of life did not pose such moral problems. Scandal was avoided by considering *L-Arcipierku* a single household. The cramped conditions did not imply an exposure of the private parts of one household to another. It was merely the normal, private life of a single household, and a single family. They had fond memories of the area, linked not only to personal memories of the places where they had grown up, but also to memories of descent and family ties. Conversations about *L-Arcipierku* would often be related to conversations about descent, genealogy and who was related to who. Its destruction, therefore, became not only the destruction of a neighbourhood or community, but also a family and a household. This designation of the

area as a single family and a single household was central to the process of what I shall term the nostalgic construction of community.

The people who had lived in *L-Arċipierku* looked back nostalgically at life in the area, seeing it as a time of cohesion and completeness when compared to the fragmentation and contestation of life in the early 1990's. Many informants traced the contestation of identities to the destruction of *L-Arċipierku*, when the certainty of local community identity - itself considered family life writ large - was destroyed. As well as with the denizens of *Għand Lawrenz*, research was also carried out in the form of extended interviews with various elderly men and women who still lived in the parts of *L-Arċipierku* that had not been destroyed by 1993. To judge the significance of changes in the area, I asked them to describe their lives in *L-Arċipierku*. Many referred to the events of 1972, when large parts of the centre of *L-Arċipierku* were razed, as a kind of cataclysm, from which they had never really recovered. They linked the destruction of this neighbourhood to the moral decline of the family, such that the erosion of localism became simultaneously the erosion of family morality and ideal gender roles.

Conversations about *L-Arċipierku* would take place in the context of conversations about the *fešta*, linking questions of local identity with *fešta* such that the disappearance of *L-Arċipierku* became juxtaposed with the continuity of the *fešta*. For the people of St Paul's parish, and particularly those associated with the *fešta*, *L-Arċipierku* was the centre, or heart, of the parish. This heart no longer existed in the narrow streets and overhung balconies of lower St Paul's, but it nevertheless occupied an important place in local memories.

As well as being of immense personal and local significance, however, the arguments about *L-Arċipierku* were the important topic of debate in national public culture. Gupta (1995) has argued that anthropologists have tended to over-privilege face-to-face interaction in their ethnography, when compared to communication based on public culture. In this chapter, I use both, examining firstly the press reactions to debates about *L-Arċipierku*, as contemporary historical documents, and secondly people's memories of those debates in 1990's Valletta. As will become clear in chapters four and five, there are sound theoretical reasons for adopting this approach. In Malta, partly because of its small size, and partly because of the nature of patronage politics, public culture and face-to-face interaction are articulated zones of debate. Public figures are simultaneously personally familiar. Politicians are friends and those writing in the media close neighbours. This means, as Gupta suggests, that an integrated approach which examines both public culture and face-to-face interaction, is necessary. Firstly, though, I shall give a brief description of *L-Arċipierku*.

L-Arċipierku in Space

Like the whole of Valletta, there is a steep gradient in St Paul's parish, between those areas close to the neck of the peninsula at City Gate, and those near its seaward head. The parish also runs downhill from the ridge that is Merchant's Street, to the edge of Grand Harbour (see map 5). At the convergence of these two downhill gradients, the first running lengthways along the peninsula and the second sideways across it, is the lowest-lying area of the parish, known as *L-Arċipierku* (the Archipelago). Like the other low-lying areas of Valletta, *L-Arċipierku* was considered relatively low status. The low parts of Valletta were referred to as *l-isfel*, or 'low-town' (lit. 'the bottom'), and the upper parts as *il-fuq*, or 'high-town' (lit. 'the top'). This gradient was both spatial and social.

When I asked people why *L-Arċipierku* was so called, people were generally unsure. Aquilina's dictionary defines *L-Arċipierku* as "a slummy area of Valletta that was demolished in 1974 (sic)" and refers the term back to the 1750 dictionary of De Soldanis. However, despite examining the manuscripts at the Maltese National Library, I was unable to find any reference in this, the first Maltese dictionary. The name seems impossible to trace. One enterprising informant suggested that perhaps the reason for the name was that just as in an archipelago of islands, in *L-Arċipierku* you had lots of small units close together. The streets had been very narrow, and so there were lots of balconies, lots of dwellings, very close together. So close, in fact, that one could reach out with one's hand from one side to the other.

Whether or not this is the correct origin of the term *Arċipierku*, it does reveal the difference in character between it and the higher parts of the parish. The latter were characterised by wide streets lined with large town-houses, many of which were built by wealthy merchants during the seventeenth century. They were spacious and airy, often with courtyard gardens, and although many have now been converted into either flats or offices, they still maintain an air of grandeur. By contrast, *L-Arċipierku* is characterised in the memories of people who used to live there, as a crowded, confined space with very narrow streets lined with *kerrejiet*.

plates 5 and 6



View of St Paul's parish from upper Valletta



Maltese Balconies in L-Arċipierku

The *kerrejja* (pl. *kerrejiet*) was a kind of primitive tenement building, originally built to house the servants and functionaries who provided service to the city's households and institutions, be they port facilities, religious communities or governmental offices.³³ Built around a central, open courtyard, they comprised a system of small rooms connected by narrow landings. Each floor had between ten and twelve rooms, so that a four-storey *kerrejja* would have over forty rooms.

Each room was occupied by a single family, and each landing had a single, communal hygiene facility: a tap and an open chute into which sewage was tipped. Until after the second world war, family sizes in Malta were very large, which meant that the *kerrejiet* must have been extremely crowded. Many informants recalled living in *kerrejja* rooms in large families.

A 1970 report prepared by the Social Action Movement, a church-based organisation supporting the improvement of social conditions in Malta, highlighted the overcrowded conditions of *kerrejiet* in Malta. The total of 262 *kerrejiet* in Malta contained 3,159 rooms, 2,636 of which were inhabited. Of the 1,266 households that lived in these *kerrejiet*, 355 occupied a single room, 574 lived in two rooms, 242 in 3, 70 in 4 rooms, 23 in 5 rooms and only two lived in six rooms (see Appendix Three). This meant exceptionally overcrowded conditions. In Valletta itself, the situation was the worst. In 1945, a Government report had stated that 8,600 people in Valletta were living in overcrowded conditions, this defined as a situation where two or more people lived in each room.

Kerrejiet became increasingly disused after the 1970's. As they gradually emptied out, people took over rooms adjacent to their own, knocking holes in the walls between different rooms. This alleviated the over-crowding to a certain extent. Nowadays only a few remain in Valletta, and the ones that do are largely empty.

The image of *L-Arċipierku* is still dominated by the memory of the *kerrejja*. Many of those I talked to had lived in them, and it was primarily this kind of housing that was targeted for demolition in the 1970's. Issues surrounding the demolition were debated in public culture, as well as in face-to-face interaction. These debates raised issues about defining the status of *L-Arċipierku* relative to the category 'slum'.

³³ Originally, administrative and religious functions in Valletta, as in Malta, were combined in the form of the Order of St John, who built Valletta as their capital in the 1570's. See Chapter 1 for a historical background to this.

Defining the status of *L-Arċipierku* involved also defining the reputation of the people who lived there. This related to both localism and party political identity. It also had implications for their identification as a subaltern group. The debates define the legitimacy with which people from different strata can participate in debates over such issues as the demolition of houses and communities. Through the debates, the people of *L-Arċipierku* themselves emerge as a group who are the victims of arbitrary political policy decisions, and who are unable to represent themselves to the authorities.

The Demolition in Public Culture

The plans to demolish *L-Arċipierku* began with the British colonial government's post-war surveys, which aimed to provide an outline for the rehabilitation of the harbour areas. The harbours had been a major target for Axis bombing during the war, and much of the housing had been destroyed. Compared to the other harbour towns, which are close to the dockyard areas, Valletta got off relatively lightly in terms of war damage, but the surveys nevertheless provided an opportunity to create a strategic building plan that would rid the city of properties described in the main report as 'obsolescent'. Among the obsolescent areas were large parts of *L-Arċipierku*, that were condemned by the Department of Health as 'slums' (Harrison & Hubbard, 1945: 64). These areas were ear-marked for demolition.

Between the publication of the British government report in 1945, and the election of the Labour government in 1971, *L-Arċipierku* remained intact. The British seemed, characteristically, to have prioritised military over civilian considerations. Immediately post-war, the Labour Party called for increased investment in housing, and the improvement of social conditions in general. The MLP government of 1955 to 1961 began to implement its policies of urban improvements in the harbour areas, by demolishing and rebuilding the notorious *Mandraġġ*³⁴ area of Valletta, and inaugurating the new town of Santa Lucia, near Paola (see map 2). However, by the late 1950's, these social issues were overtaken by arguments about integration and Independence. The programme of urban redevelopment was halted before *L-Arċipierku* was touched.

³⁴ The *Mandraġġ* is the low-lying area on the Marsamxett side of Valletta. Early plans by the Knights to hollow out an area of dockyards had to be abandoned when the excavation hit rock too hard to dig. This left a deep hole in which the local people built a labyrinth of small winding streets, and underground dwellings. It developed a reputation as a den of thieves, which persisted into the twentieth century. Elderly informants referred to it as an effective police 'no go' area. The only agents of authority who were safe to enter were priests, and this only to administer the last rites to a dying parishioner. The *Mandraġġ* was demolished in the 1960's, to make way for more hygienic, safer, and more easily controlled blocks of flats.

In 1964, Independence was granted under a Nationalist government. The opposition, led by Dom Mintoff, campaigned vigorously for the improvement of social welfare and housing, and was elected in 1971 on this platform. Once the Labour government was in place, they quickly made moves to revive the recommendations of the original 1945 report, and turn to *L-Arcipierku*. In July 1971, Labour came to power, and on 2nd June 1972 a declaration was made under the Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Ordinance that large areas of *L-Arcipierku* were to be requisitioned (Government of Malta, 1972: 1421). On 18th July the first families left *L-Arcipierku*, and on July 22nd the first buildings were destroyed. There was immediate outcry from the residents of *L-Arcipierku* and the Nationalist opposition. The debate became a matter for national concern, as articles were written with claims and counter-claims in the three national daily newspapers.

The Maltese national press comprises three daily newspapers, five Sunday papers, and many more fortnightly and monthly publications. This coverage is substantial for a nation with a population of under half a million. The press is divided along linguistic lines - 3 of the 8^{major} papers are English language, the rest are in Maltese. And they are also - more significantly - divided politically. As one might expect in such a polarised political climate, the two main parties each have their own daily newspaper in Maltese. The Nationalist paper, and its official party organ, is appropriately called *In-Nazzjon Tagħna* ('our nation'). The Labour paper is *L-Orrizont* ('the horizon'), which is the official organ of the General Workers Union. The third daily paper is the English-language *Times of Malta*, which although nominally independent, is rather conservative, and broadly supports the Nationalist Party.

These newspapers are widely read - adult literacy is relatively high; at 86% (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/95fact/mt.html). They are also very much markers of political affiliation. In general, Nationalist supporters do not read *L-Orrizont*, and Labourites avoid *In-Nazzjon*. And to avoid confrontation in the streets, people who have just bought a newspaper generally roll it up tightly to conceal the coloured header band that betrays the paper's - and their - political allegiance. *In-Nazzjon* has a blue header, and *L-Orrizont* a red one.

These two Maltese language papers, and the English-language *Times of Malta* carried stories of the controversy surrounding the destruction of *L-Arcipierku* in 1972. This suggests that the events of 1972, and the memories of them that I encountered in the early 1990's, did not only have local, parochial, significance, but were also important nationally.

The debate became highly politicised, and led to arguments in parliament between a Labour government in favour of the demolition and a Nationalist opposition who opposed it. The calls for demolition were excessive, argued the PN. Even the Social Action Movement (SAM) defended *L-Arċipierku*. This was the same organisation that in 1970 had argued in favour of "drastic action - if necessary by eviction - for the elimination of the remaining...kerrejjas (sic)" (Centre for Social Studies, 170: 11). In 1971 the SAM became joint sponsor with the Malta Homes Society, of a new Slum Clearance Commission that conducted a survey of the area. It concluded, and announced at a public seminar in early July 1972, that rather than being a slum, *L-Arċipierku* was an "area of sub-standard housing" (*The Times of Malta*, 6/7/72: 10). Under this category, the recommendation was made to rehabilitate, rather than demolish the area.

Much of the argument in the press surrounded the category 'slum', and whether *L-Arċipierku* could legitimately be called one. The term was originally coined in the 1945 British report, but also became one of the principal terms for debate during July 1972. The word 'slum' was borrowed directly from the English by Maltese language journalists of both political persuasions, who used it to further their respective arguments. The Labour newspaper, *L-Orizzont* initially carried a feature article on the achievements of successive socialist governments in the area of housing development. It concluded with the announcement that:

"The social democratic government of Malta has begun an intensive project of new and comfortable buildings instead of the slums of the city of Valletta." (*L-Orizzont*, 5/7/72: 7 - my translation)

This appears to have been relatively uncontroversial, except that there was disagreement as to what precisely "the slums of the city of Valletta" were.

The church-based SAM denied that *L-Arċipierku* was a slum area. In a *Times of Malta* report on the Slum Clearance Commission, it argued that rather than *L-Arċipierku* being demolished, attention should be turned to the area on the other side of Valletta, where the area known as the *Due Balli* should be demolished (*Times of Malta*, 5/7/72: 9). It was in a much worse condition. *L-Arċipierku* should be rehabilitated (*In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, 17/7/72: 1-12).

A prominent figure in the Slum Clearance Commission's public seminar of July 1972 was Peter Serracino-Inglott. His family was from close to *L-Arċipierku*, and he defended it

adamantly. As a spokesperson for the area, he subsequently came to symbolise the local and political significance of the debate on *L-Arċipierku*. For just as *L-Arċipierku* was in general a strong-hold of Nationalist support, Serracino-Inglott went on to become a powerful member of the PN hierarchy. During my fieldwork, he was quietly, though influentially, involved at the highest levels. He was Rector of the University; a prominent and well-connected public figure in the PN. Moreover, just as *L-Arċipierku* was linked with *San Pawl*, Serracino-Inglott went on to become a member of the collegiate chapter at St Paul's Shipwreck church.

These two elements in the biography of a single spokesperson for *L-Arċipierku* sum up the significance of the debate. It was not merely about housing, but also about party politics and the politics of localism. It is therefore not surprising that the Slum Clearance Commission, with Serracino-Inglott as a prominent member, defended the interests of the area against the Labour government. It is equally predictable that they should suggest the *Due Balli* as an alternative site for demolition. The *Due Balli* was, in many senses, the local 'other' of the *Arċipierku* self. If *L-Arċipierku* was the heartland of St Paul's parish, then the *Due Balli* adopted the corresponding role for St Dominic's. The *Arċipierku* debate, therefore, related local rivalry of place, to *fešta* rivalry of those places' patrons, and political rivalry of the parties that were associated with the *fešta*. A champion of *L-Arċipierku* was Serracino-Inglott, the well-connected neighbour of the area, who emerged because of his influence, and in the absence of the people of *L-Arċipierku*'s ability to represent themselves. His role as public spokesperson was given legitimacy in the press, which related the argument that the *Due Balli*, not *L-Arċipierku*, should be knocked down.

The debate was open to others. On 8th July, a long letter appeared in *In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, which, although it did not name the *Due Balli* specifically, referred to other parts of Valletta which are much worse than *L-Arċipierku*, and should be demolished first:

"Instead of beginning with knocking down the worst slums in Malta, the government wants to knock down some houses in *L-Arċipierku* which in comparison with the rest of the slums are in a good condition." (*In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, 8/7/72: 4 - my translation)

Here, the category 'slum' is explicitly contrasted with 'house'. This implies that slums are not houses, and should be knocked down, whereas houses should be preserved. The argument that the government wanted to destroy "houses in *L-Arċipierku*" rather than "the worst slums in Malta" demonstrates the claims of the defenders of *L-Arċipierku* that their dwellings were not slums, but houses. This is significant, in that the house is a dominant symbol of Maltese family life, and indeed a dominant symbol of community.

Claims were made in the Nationalist press about not only the quality of the houses which were earmarked for destruction, but also the quality of the lives of the people who lived in those houses - and hence by extension the quality of those people themselves. A *Times of Malta* article of 21st July refers to the quality of the community which is about to be destroyed, and the cleanliness of its houses:

"The Arcipierku...is a stable community...with strong interpersonal links and friendships and a sense of communal pride. Most houses are kept scrupulously clean..." (*The Times of Malta* 21/7/72: 16)

The argument about whether *L-Arcipierku* was or was not a slum became one not merely about structural concerns, but about morality. The assertion of strong community links within the area is preceded by a defence of the *Arcipierku* people's knowledge of moral issues such as sex and religion. This spiritual cleanliness is then reaffirmed by the appeals to physical cleanliness; itself a mark of respectability. The assertion is that these are good people who live good lives, and therefore do not deserve to be called slum-dwellers. This contrasts, however, with the *Due Balli*. The same author goes on to contrast the two situations, and argues that the latter area should be demolished because "the people want to move out of bad houses" (*The Times of Malta* 21/7/72: 16).

The theme of moral quality as a defence of *L-Arcipierku* is of particular significance, as it is precisely the same category that was used by 'respectable' people of upper St Paul's to denigrate the people of the area. Its reputation among people such as the DuPonts, as we shall see, was related to its moral reputation for spiritual cleanliness, itself represented in metaphors of the bathroom and physical cleanliness. Defence of the area used the same argument - *L-Arcipierku* was clean, and its dwellings 'houses', not 'slums'.

However, for the Labour government, *L-Arcipierku* was a slum. They attempted to gain legitimacy for this claim by inviting the British Governor General, Sir Anthony Mamo, to survey conditions in the area. *L-Orizzont* reported that nearly all the residents Sir Mamo talked to asked him to save them from their miserable housing conditions (*L-Orizzont*, 18/7/72: 16). The opposition responded that the only house he had entered was the worst one in *L-Arcipierku*. It was not typical of the others, which compared to the houses of the *Due Balli*, were in perfectly good condition.

The argument was reinforced by the PN newspaper, *In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, in which an editorial made further reference to the need to preserve *L-Arcipierku* in favour of the *Due Balli*:

“[The]...Slum Clearance Commission made it clear that *L-Arcipierku* can be rehabilitated, given a new life, whilst ‘slum clearance’ has got to take place in the zone of Valletta known as the *Due Balli*.” (*In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, 17/7/72: 4)

Just as the defence of *L-Arcipierku* had moral connotations, so did the denigration of the *Due Balli*. Not only was the *Due Balli* thought of by Nationalists and *Pawlini* as a substandard and often dirty part of town, it also had a reputation for prostitution and crime. It was close to the part of Strait Street that was famous as a sailors’ recreation area. Known as ‘the gut’, this area had been lined with bars and dance halls, the facades and signs of which could still be seen in the early 1990’s, although the trade was long since abandoned. The gut was a haven of petty crime and prostitution, and many of its functionaries lived in the *Due Balli*. It was also a violent area, immortalised in Thomas Pynchon’s classic Mediterranean novel, *V*.³⁵ In contrast to *L-Arcipierku*, the *Due Balli* had a shifting population. No claims could therefore be made for its solidarity as a community. Neither could appeals be made to its moral rectitude, given its reputation.

As will have become clear, the public debates about the demolition of *L-Arcipierku* were suffused with party politics throughout. However, it was not until it was discussed in parliament that the full implications were made public. During debates on 17th July, 1972, the leader of the Nationalist opposition asked the Labour government why *L-Arcipierku* was to be demolished before the *Due Balli*. According to the banner headline of the next day’s *In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, the answer had been “*Għax Fortizza Nazzjonalista*” (because it’s a Nationalist fortress) (*In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, 18/7/72: 1) This made the links between the government’s policies and the political allegiance of the people of *L-Arcipierku* explicit. As far as the PN were concerned, the act was pure political spite. That the statement was subsequently denied in the pages of *L-Orrizont* is largely irrelevant. The PN’s use of phrase had been effective, and it was still used by the people of *L-Arcipierku* in the early 1990’s, to describe the reasons behind their eviction. The significance of these party-political implications are explored in greater detail in the next chapter, which looks at the question of party allegiance and the self-image of people from *L-Arcipierku* as a subaltern group.

³⁵ Pynchon gives a particularly vivid picture of a night out in ‘the gut’, with a group of sailors from the USS Scaffold, who after drinking in several bars become embroiled in a large fight that brings together the crew-members of different ships, against the local military police.

The helplessness of the people of *L-Arċipierku* was particularly emphasised in public debates at the time, through discussion of the provision - or lack of it - of alternative accommodation following the evictions. Whilst the MLP argued that alternative accommodation of a higher standard than that in *L-Arċipierku* was being provided to all evacuees, this was hotly denied by the PN and its journalists. They argued that the temporary accommodation being provided was pitiful, and was likely to become permanent, given the length of time it would take to rebuild the modern apartments that had been promised:

“Numerous families that today live in houses suitable for humans, are being sent to indecent places with no sanitation and are being forced to live in a way that is totally immoral for families. The police and soldiers are being sent to bring out the belongings from inside these people’s houses, to house them in hutches.” (*In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, 17/7/72: 4 - my translation)

The memory of these events endured into the early 1990’s. It was seen as a catastrophe by most of those I spoke to in Valletta, this perception operating at two, inter-related, levels. Firstly, at the level of personal memory, whereby their own lives had been affected significantly by the fact of *L-Arċipierku* being knocked down. Secondly, at a level of the community, whereby nostalgia for a former time became nostalgia for a former way of life characterised by a different, and preferable, way of being. *L-Arċipierku* was referred to nostalgically as an ideal community in which none of the concerns of the modern world existed: drugs, marital break-up, premarital pregnancy etc. But it was also an image of what the natural community of *Pawlini* could have been without the interference of politics and politicians. It was seen as a natural community, because it was a single family, or household, writ large. Its destruction was seen as the ultimate act of spiteful politics by the arbitrary and corrupt Labour government of the 1970’s and 80’s. Its memory therefore pits the self of family, community, *Pawlini* and *Nazzjonalisti* against their corresponding others: the forces of unwanted change brought about by modernisation and the socialist government.

The distinction between these two sets of oppositions hinges on the image of a subaltern community being affected, impacted upon, by an arbitrary public state. For those, like the *Arċipierku Pawlini*, who thought of themselves as being part of *il-poplu*, (‘the people’) it was one related to access to resources and, ultimately, access to representation, which they considered themselves denied. It therefore also related to the questions of respectability and connectedness which we left in the previous section. It is to these sets of issues that I shall now turn, in looking at the significance of *L-Arċipierku* for the relatively well-placed of St

Paul's parish. I shall then discuss the self-image of those who lived in the area, before moving on to the significance for the *Pawlini* of *L-Arċipierku* as a nostalgic community.

L-Arċipierku as a 'Low' Place

If, as discussed in the last chapter, Ray and Mary DuPont considered themselves respectable, and those around them considered them good people, then this categorisation related to their place of dwelling as much as their lifestyle. As already noted, the physical space of Valletta is divided on a gradient, between the higher parts of the city, known as 'high-town' or *il-fuq* (lit. 'the top') and the lower parts known as 'low-town' or *l-isfel* (lit. 'the bottom'). However, this physical, topological division is also a social division, such that in general, people from *il-fuq* are thought of as being of a higher status than those from *l-isfel*. Consequently, *L-Arċipierku* was the low-status pole against which the DuPonts' own higher status was judged.

Ray DuPont referred to it in rather contradictory terms:

"Well I suppose like any big city, it's got its slum areas...Mind you Valletta's not a big city. And it's not really slums. We don't really have any slums here in Malta. But that area down there - what we call the Archipelago. You'd call it a low class area. It's a low area."

He called *L-Arċipierku* a slum area, and then quickly qualified his statement, to demonstrate the frequently-made point that, in Malta, slums are a thing of the past. It is also possible that he remembered the public debates over the category 'slum' and how it was applied to *L-Arċipierku*. As a Nationalist he would maintain the assumption that *L-Arċipierku* was not a slum. The statement goes hand in hand with other claims about the economic and social successes of post-Independence Malta.

It was frequently asserted during fieldwork that unlike the rest of Europe, Malta had no substantial social problems. Unemployment was not an issue, and homelessness was very uncommon. In particular, Maltese would be keen to emphasise the absence of beggars on the streets. In comparison to the alarming numbers which occupy the shop doorways of the continental capitals, Malta was relatively unaffected by such manifestations of poverty. The observation that this was so fed into a discourse of national pride. However, the discourse ran counter to the equally prevalent critique of modern Maltese society. Whilst an overall trend in everyday Maltese discourse was to praise Malta in the face of comparison with elsewhere, this was offset by criticism of the Maltese way of life which bemoaned the erosion of past values. The contradiction was particularly stark when talking to Maltese who

had recently travelled. Comparisons were made about the efficiency and cleanliness of European cities, of the politeness and good service. But they were invariably offset by complaints about the food, or the cost of certain items. Such conversations invariably end with the statement: *m'hemmx b'hal-hawn fid-dinja*, "there's nowhere like here in the world".

One example came following a trip by a youth football team to a championships in Portsmouth. Here, the boys had been incredibly impressed by the large shopping centre in the middle of town. They had spent a lot of time there, and seen several incidents of shop-lifting. One of the boys explained to me what happened:

"It was amazing. All of a sudden, there were eight policemen there around these boys. They came from nowhere. Can you imagine. Can you imagine that happening here. No, we can't get anything done like that. With those bunch of fools at the police station."

He continued for a few more minutes, with nods of encouragement and affirmation from his fellow team-mates, but then eventually the tide of criticism turned:

"Mind you, I'd rather be here, you know. Because the boys over there are really 'cold' (*kesħin*).³⁶ Whenever you tried to go and talk to them, they'd just ignore you. Not like here. Here we'll talk to anyone. We're friendly. There's nowhere like here in the world."

He was pleased to get home, he said, even though the team had only been away for a week. That was enough.

This pattern was repeated over and over, throughout my fieldwork. People appeared to simultaneously praise and criticise Malta and the Maltese, suggesting on the one hand that life was better in other places, and then on the other hand that in fact life is best in Malta itself. The tension also existed with regard to temporal comparisons. Just as other places were considered both good and bad, so the Maltese past was evaluated through simultaneous appeals to the value of tradition, and the benefits of development. It seemed unanimous that in terms of material development, Malta had improved since Independence. But as far as morality and social values were concerned, there had been a decline. This tension emerges in a variety of contexts, and is a central paradox of Maltese identity.

³⁶ Being 'cold', *kiesħi* (pl. *kesħin*) denotes both stand-offishness and an arrogant, self-aggrandising nature. People who are thought to be getting too big for their boots are admonished with the accusation of becoming *kiesħi*.

The central tension is that, despite all the criticisms the Maltese make of contemporary life, they still say there is really nowhere better. This is clear in Ray DuPont's statement about *L-Arċipierku*. On the one hand, he wanted to demonstrate that it was an unpleasant place to live, and was therefore called a 'slum'. On the other hand, he did not want to suggest that slums exist in modern Malta. It was therefore a problematic term. He pulled away from this definition, adopting a less analytical, and in many ways more 'ethnographic' term: 'low' (*baxx*). As a category, low is both evaluative and relative, as opposed to the absoluteness implied by the category 'slum'. 'Lowness' is a value judgement, whereas apparently the 'slum' is an objective category which can clearly be seen to either apply or not apply to *L-Arċipierku*.

In the terms of the earlier debate over demolition, the category slum became an absolute criterion for government action. If it could be demonstrated that *L-Arċipierku*, or indeed the *Due Balli*, were slums, then this would justify their demolition. However, simply being low makes the nature and status of the areas, an issue for contestation. It opens up avenues for the people who live in those areas to assert their morality, despite the attempts to call them low.

As with the designation of slum areas, the category low is dependent in part on material factors, and the implications of consumption. As argued in the last chapter, consumption, and particularly the consumption of household goods, is of major significance in the construction of respectability in St Paul's. It is inevitable, therefore, that just as the quality of their own household reflected upon their own high status, for the DuPonts, the inferiority of others' households reflected upon their low status. When I asked Mary DuPont what Ray had meant by saying that the people of *L-Arċipierku* were 'low', she replied:

"I don't know. They're low, you know...They live in very small houses; just in one room [dwellings] with no bathrooms."

The bathroom occupies a particularly significant position in the definition of a respectable household. Spending on bathrooms in new houses is high, and talked a bout a great deal. This has led to what Grima and Zammit (nd) have identified as a veritable "bathroom syndrome":

"There is a tendency to incorporate as many luxurious bathrooms as possible in a house and to boast about them. Here one can see...[a]...precarious balance between a traditional value orientation which dictates that money should only be spent on 'basic needs' such as bathrooms and the new consumeristic trend manifested in the luxurious furnishing of these bathrooms and the often superfluous number of them." (10)

For example, when in 1995, Mary told me about Gabriella's newly-bought house, the first thing she mentioned - and emphasised - was the two bathrooms she had installed. The house had previously only had one, and she had moved the fittings from this to a new one and replaced the old one with new furniture from Italy. The manoeuvre demonstrated for Mary, not only the standing of the household but also the wisdom and thrift of reusing the older bathroom fittings. As Grima and Zammit argue, Mary was demonstrating the balance between an emphasis on frugality and an emphasis on consumption.

Many Maltese houses had two, or even three, bathrooms. They are conceptually distinguished between bathrooms *ta'kuljum* ('everyday') and those set aside especially for visitors. I would suggest that, just as the *salott* represents the public face of the family and household, so the bathroom in some senses represents the private face. But this is no less open to public scrutiny. Clearly, when visitors come for dinner or a drink, they may well need access to the bathroom. It therefore needs to be an appropriate representation of the family's standing. Hence, one finds, as with consumption in general, a particular emphasis on European, and particularly Italian designs, which were considered somewhat exclusive.

Above all, the bathroom, like the house as a whole, must be clean. Cleanliness in general is used to demonstrate reputation, such that respectable, polite people are referred to as *nadif* ('clean') as well as *pulit* ('polite'). The pursuit of cleanliness as an index of a person or a family's reputation is linked to the pursuit of the technology of personal cleanliness, which is why the bathroom occupies such a prominent position in the play of respectability. To this extent, not having a bathroom represented an absence of the index of personal cleanliness, and therefore moral cleanliness. It also demonstrated an inability, or unwillingness, to expend resources on a bathroom.

But the problem with not having a bathroom was not only related to the demonstration of status or moral rectitude through consumption. It was also linked to ideas about personal privacy, exposure and the inevitable moral consequences of blurring the private and the public. Not having a bathroom meant that the acceptable means of representing the private side of the household was absent. Privacy was simply exposed.

Mary followed the rather curious statement about bathrooms with a description of a *kerrejja*, which was seen to create an existence in which the niceties of high-town, *pulit* life were absent. This was as much to do with the physical layout of the *kerrejja* as anything else. Because the *kerrejja* was physically open, with small, shared rooms and shared toilets, she

argued, this made people's lives open as well. They therefore tended to shout, instead of talking, to swear openly, and to drink to excess, provoking displays of drunkenness that revealed their low status. In short, they didn't measure up to the acceptable codes of behaviour and modes of deportment for respectable life.

Mary's particular preoccupation, given her occupation as a dressmaker, was the wedding. She would gauge the strata of Maltese society on the basis of different types of wedding, and categorised the low, or *ħamallu* ('rude') wedding according to the same criteria of openness and loudness. Low weddings were noisy, she argued, and usually had dancebands playing rather than silence or a subtle string ensemble. They involved a great deal of drinking, and excessive displays of emotion; it was common for fights to break out. This contrasted with the images of gentility surrounding weddings in polite society, which for Mary were a demonstration of the absolute differences in social characteristics between these different strata of Maltese society.

The excesses of low people in their activities and demeanour contrasted with ideas of restraint for polite (*pulit*) people. The comparison revolved around the notion of who was acceptable or unacceptable for participation in society, to be a 'person' or to be in public. In everyday discourse, when somebody behaves in a way considered inappropriate or bad, they are castigated with the phrase *mhux nies* ('not a person'). This suggests that the person behaving badly no longer qualifies as a member of human society, or is no longer fit to appear in public. This latter connotation is implied by the related term *mhux tajjeb għall-mann-nies* ('not good to be with people'). The miscreant should keep themselves away from people, staying in private. But the connotations of these phrases relate not only to human beings in general. The category *nies* in this context implies not just any people, but people of a certain status, or standing - *nies ta' ċerta klassi* (lit. 'people of a certain class'). Thus, when somebody is accused of 'not being good to be with people', it is not just any people, but people of polite society, that they are said to be no good with. The public from which an uncouth person is discouraged, is the public of the well-placed, higher-status 'people'.

If the people of *L-Arcipierku*, categorised by the DuPonts as low, are consequently seen to be not good to be with people, then the implication is that they should stick to the private world of their *kerrejjiet*. But this is complicated, because it is precisely the confusion of public and private in the *kerrejja* that seems to be the cause of their being classified low in the first place. The *kerrejja* was conceived of as a place where the boundaries between public and private were blurred, leading to a complementary abandonment of the aesthetics of polite behaviour. For although the ideal household was seen as a unit of complementarity

between inside and outside, public and private, the two categories were to be maintained as separate. This was demonstrated by the studious avoidance of discussing private matters in the public domain, but it was also demonstrated by preventing bodily exposure. This was difficult in the *kerrejja*. Because *kerrejja* life involved the use of a communal bathroom, there was a constant threat of being exposed, and thereby creating *skandlu* ('scandal').

Skandlu literally means 'scandal', but in the context of the household, refers explicitly to the over-exposure of the naked body. In particular, it refers to the scandal, or disgrace (*għarukaza*) of members of the opposite sex being exposed to each other.³⁷ As one of my informants *Għand Lawrenz* put it:

"*Skandlu*, for example, is when a father sees his daughter in the bath."

I enquired further; "Surely the *skandlu* only really occurs when people find out about that happening, though. It only becomes a *skandlu* when it's exposed." This would be close to the English idea of a scandal being the exposure of a secret situation of immorality. But my informant disagreed:

"No, in Malta we call it a *skandlu* when a man sees his daughter's body."

This was explained to me by Simon Cumbo, a man who had lived as a child in an *Arcipierku kerrejja* during the 1960's. He also explained to me how *skandlu* had been avoided in the *kerrejjet*. Every time his sisters and mother wanted to wash, the boys would be taken outside by their father, and they would clean themselves in the corner of their room. Similarly, *skandlu* would be avoided when any of the women wanted to go to the toilet. They would do so behind a curtain and the boys would be told to go onto the landing. The waste was disposed of in a bucket that was poured down the communal drainage point. This way, exposure to both neighbours and family members was avoided. The converse would occur when the men of the family needed to wash or go to the toilet. The women would leave, to let them perform their ablutions without exposure. Thus, despite the potential for exposure of the body to the opposite sex, as suggested by the single-room, quasi-communal existence with its lack of a private bathroom, the potential for *skandlu* had been properly managed in the *Arcipierku kerrejja* in which the Cumbo family had lived.

³⁷ Although the initial examples here refer to the *skandlu* of women being exposed to men, the potential for disgrace is gender reciprocal. It is equally disgraceful for men to expose themselves to women, as for women to be exposed to men.

As Simon told me about this, another regular of *Għand Lawrenz* concurred. Their family had had similar traditions, to avoid the scandalous and disgracing exposure of the body. This was Guzi Cremona, who had also lived in an *Arċipierku kerrejja* as a child and been evicted in 1972. Both Simon and Guzi had very fond memories of *L-Arċipierku*, and enjoyed reminiscing about their childhood there. In particular, they gave me an insight into the human consequences of the demolition of the area. The demolition was not only present in the records of public culture - the newspapers and government reports. It was also very much alive in the memories of the people who used to live there.

L-Arċipierku Remembered Għand Lawrenz

Simon Cumbo was a regular customer *Għand Lawrenz* throughout my fieldwork, and became a reliable friend and informant. Although he was not heavily involved in the *festa*, he was friendly with the *klikka* that was. By virtue of age, rather than marital status, he occupied a position in the public, front part of the bar, and therefore had an air of authority that made him a 'real man'.

Simon had a small stall on the daily Valletta market (the *monti*), from which he sold shirts. He began work every day at 6am, preparing his stall for the market to open at 9. The *monti* takes up most of the upper end of Merchant's Street, and runs daily until 1pm. At this time, Simon would dismantle his stall, wheel his hand-cart down the hill to a small rented store-room, and return home for lunch. He was unmarried, and lived with his mother, sister and two brothers. He was in his mid-forties. After lunch, as is the habit in Malta, he would rest for a few hours, and then leave the house again at around 5pm.

He would climb the steps from the house to *Għand Lawrenz* for a cup of tea, and then run whatever errands were necessary. Whilst I was in Malta, Simon was particularly concerned with housing, as the house that his family had occupied since the 1970's was now in a very bad state of repair. In 1994, the roof fell in, narrowly missing his sleeping mother and sister, whose bedroom was at the top of the house. He therefore spent his time trying to arrange visits to the Housing Department, government officials and various well-placed political figures in order to arrange something more suitable. By 7pm Simon's chores would largely be completed, and he would return *Għand Lawrenz* to have a drink and discuss the issues of the day.

As well as talk related to current issues, a great deal of conversation *Għand Lawrenz* was about the past. This was particularly so in the lead-up to the *festa*, when anticipation was fuelled by people bringing in photographs of previous *festi*. This would lead to

reminiscences about those *festi*, and the people involved in them. In particular, prominent statue-carriers (*reffiegħ*) would be pointed out, many of whom were uncles or grandfathers of those present. This would link the continuity of the commemorative tradition to memories of *L-Arcipierku*, as many of the former *reffiegħ* were from that area. Talk of how the *festi* used to be led to talk of how *L-Arcipierku* used to be, and some of the albums brought along contained photographs of both.

Whenever such photographs were produced, people would huddle around to identify who was on them. Different claims were made about who they were:

“That’s uncle Leli, he used to live by the old well.”

“No, no...that’s Guzi Chetcuti - he lived on St Nicholas Street.”

A kind of game emerged, in which members of the *Għand Lawrenz klikek* (‘cliques’) would test each other about their knowledge - and memories - of *L-Arcipierku*. Even younger men would join in, who were too young to remember the area. The twin sons of Simon Cumbo’s friend Guzi Cremona were particularly vociferous. They were only fourteen in 1993, and so could not have remembered the area or its demolition. Nevertheless, they would spend hours testing each other about who had lived where, and which shops had been on which street corners in *L-Arcipierku*.

The process of demonstrating this knowledge was related to the creation of group identity. It became the means by which *Pawlini* would demonstrate their origins in *L-Arcipierku*, and hence the heart of the parish. It was also a process of talking through, scripting and officialising the collective memories of *L-Arcipierku*’s destruction.

A lot of anthropological work has been done recently on the topic of collective memory. Taking the lead from a resuscitation of Halbwachs (1992), a variety of thinkers have explored the relationship between individual memory and social memory (see for example, Connerton, 1989; Fentress and Wickham, 1992; Tonkin, 1991).

A key to the concept of social memory is the recognition that remembering is a social activity. Although remembering is a selective and creative activity based on the personal relevance of particular events in the past and their salience for the present (Wachtel, 1990: 4), those personal criteria are inevitably social, because humans are social beings (Fentress and Wickham, 1992: 7). Social memory does not just express collective

experiences that occurred in the past. It actually creates the experience of commonality (Tonkin, 1991: 111-112). It therefore relates the remembering of individual experiences to the construction of social identities. As Fentress and Wickham have argued:

“Social memory exists because it has meaning for the group that remembers it.”
(Ibid: 87)

I would go further, and argue that social memory actually creates the groups that remember it. When remembering the past, groups are demarcating their social identities. When people reminisced about *L-Arċipierku Għand Lawrenz*, they were constructing the boundaries of that group, but also drawing attention to other identities - those of party politics and social class.

Simon was always happy to join in with these reminiscences. He had fond memories of *L-Arċipierku*, although his family no longer lived there. They had moved to a house in the upper part of the parish, close to the church. Like many former residents, they regarded this move as eviction by an unjust government, and looked back with nostalgia at the days when they had lived in *L-Arċipierku*. His response to the injustice, and its personal consequences, were particularly significant for Simon. Following the eviction, and seeing no future for himself in Malta, he had contacted an uncle, and emigrated to Canada for several years.

Emigration was a common practice for people who disagreed with the government of the day. It was an opportunity to find employment and adventure. Like many people of *L-Arċipierku*, Simon and his family, were staunch Nationalists. He therefore blamed the incumbent Labour Party of the 1970's and 80's for the lack of employment opportunities, and for the razing of his home. One way to deal with the difficulties posed by this administration was to leave the country.

There is a long tradition of emigration from Malta. At times of particular political tension, the numbers rise, as for example in 1981. That year, the election produced a controversial result. The Labour Party won victory in parliament, by virtue of capturing a majority of seats, but in the complex system of proportional representation, they had failed to achieve an overall majority of first choice votes. This meant that, strictly speaking, they had gained a majority without winning a majority of the votes. Accusations were levelled about gerrymandering and corruption, and there was widespread unrest. The opposition PN boycotted parliament for two years, until 1993 (Howe, 1987: 241). There was also widespread emigration by Nationalist supporters who saw this as the final signal that they

should leave. With another six years in power, they felt, the Labour government would make things even worse for them. It would be better to get out and start a new life abroad.

Simon's emigration was not the only personal consequence for the Cumbo family, of the destruction of *L-Arċipierku*. It also provoked anxiety problems in Simon's mother, and possibly marked the origins of his brother's long-term psychiatric difficulties. The result of the *Arċipierku*'s destruction for the Cumbo family, therefore, was the loss^{of} mental health of two of its members, and the loss of a third to Canada. The family had been shattered by the experience of moving, and having its home destroyed. Simon explained it to me with the simple term *kissruna*; 'they broke/smashed us'.³⁸ Against this image of breakage, however, lived a corresponding memory of completeness before *L-Arċipierku* was demolished. In terms of morality, this contrasted with the DuPont picture of a disgraceful situation prone to *skandlu*. In fact, the source of scandal was identified by Simon's friend, Guži Cremona. It lay outside *L-Arċipierku*, rather than being intrinsic to the area.

In 1993, Guži was in his late thirties, and like Simon had fond memories of his childhood in *L-Arċipierku*. By his own admission, Guži had been a rather wild child, and he told me of how his mother had used to call out across *L-Arċipierku* for him: *Guži! Demonju! Ejja l'hawn!* ('Guži, you demon, come here').

He now worked as a delivery-man for the *Times of Malta*, the English-language daily newspaper that has its main offices and printing press in St Paul's parish. He was married to a woman who also came from *L-Arċipierku*, and they had twin sons aged 13.

He was a more fervent and active *Pawlin* than Simon Cumbo, and spent most of his spare time working on various projects connected with the *fešta*. Each work session was followed by a lengthy drink *Għand Lawrenz* with his friends and colleagues. He was a good friend of Vince Farrugia, and a member of the small *klikka* associated with Vince. These men also drank in the front of the bar, and were involved in not only the administration and preparation of the *fešta*, but also its completion. They were *reffiegħ* ('statue-carriers'), and proud of this position.

Like Simon's, Guži's family had been badly affected by the move away from *L-Arċipierku*. Ironically, however, the biggest concern for Guži was the disgraceful consequences of the move. In particular, this had been a problem for his sister-in-law. His elder brother, Charlie, had married while the family still lived in *L-Arċipierku*, and he and his

³⁸ From the Maltese *kisser*; to break, or smash.

wife had taken a room close to his parents'. However, when the buildings were demolished, the whole family, including Charlie and his wife, were moved from separate accommodation to a single dwelling; a small two-room apartment at the top end of Valletta. The result was that Charlie's wife had no privacy, particularly from her father-in-law, Guzi's father.

There, she had been scandalised because she had no privacy. This was precisely the process to which the DuPonts had alluded, but it occurred after the family left *L-Arċipierku*. The *skandlu*, therefore, became a property of the post-1972 situation; after *L-Arċipierku* was razed, rather than before. No doubt also traumatised by having her familiar environment and marital home destroyed, she had a nervous breakdown, and was ill for many years. Before the move, there had been no problems. Rather, the destruction of *L-Arċipierku* had been the cause of difficulties, and had created the *skandlu* that affected Charlie's wife. *Skandlu*, therefore, was not seen by the people who lived in *L-Arċipierku* as a property of life there, but of life after it, and particularly life in the accommodation that was provided for them after evacuation.

While still living in *L-Arċipierku*, people had organised their lives such that they could avoid moral difficulties, but the affect of its destruction on the Cremona family was to make *skandlu* unavoidable. Indeed, more broadly, the pre-demolition *Arċipierku* was seen as an image of completeness. Its destruction represented a breakdown of this prevailing, successful community life.

The DuPont point of view was from outside *L-Arċipierku*, looking downhill, so to speak, at people they considered less genteel and hence less respectable than themselves. From this perspective, the difficulties caused by living in a *kerrejja*, without a bathroom, were unavoidable. They represented an impossible blurring of the boundaries between personal privacy and public exposure. But from the opposite viewpoint, from *L-Arċipierku* uphill, these difficulties were easily bypassed. What did lead to problems was when the equilibrium of community life was destroyed. By the more violent intrusion of the public, political, into the private, communal, genuine difficulties were caused, leading to mental health problems and long-term bitterness. Thus, the problems of morality were ones extrinsic to life in the *kerrejjet* of *L-Arċipierku*, rather than intrinsic. They were a feature of those people being acted upon, rather than a property of their everyday lives. This is crucial in the maintenance of an acceptable, respectable self-image, for the people of *L-Arċipierku*. It is also of major significance in those people's self-identity as a subaltern group. This will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

A further key to the identity of *L-Arċipierku*, and indeed an index of its enduring significance in the *Pawlini* concept of self, was its designation as a single household, via the extension of the household metaphors of inclusion and exclusion discussed in the last chapter. It is possible to argue that because the *kerrejja* was a single building with a single front door, it was therefore thought of as a single household in itself. This does not necessarily seem to be the case, but what is clear is that *L-Arċipierku* as a whole was metaphorically regarded as a single household. This meant that the management of privacy and exposure within *L-Arċipierku* as a whole were achievable in the same way that they were in the house. The apparent open-ness of the different dwellings, therefore, was balanced by the maintenance of strict vigilance over acceptable behaviour, and the pragmatic management of space and time.

L-Arċipierku as a Single Household

The expansion of household metaphors to the level of community involved the liberal use of household terms when referring to *L-Arċipierku*. Indeed, this was the dominant mode of defining life in the area, in the absence of the category 'community'. In Malta, although the category 'community' exists, in the word *komunita*, it is seldom used indigenously in the same way as anthropologists would use the term. Rather, it is most often coined in a religious context. Church leaders, and particularly the Archpriest of St Paul's, would use it to describe their parishioners. Thus *komunita* was an administrative category for the church, referring to a particular congregation. But *komunita* is most often used to refer to religious communities themselves. Thus, members of religious orders would refer to their convents as communities, as would lay members of particular organisations; in particular the Christian Charismatic Revival and the *Neo Katekuminali*.³⁹ To refer to *L-Arċipierku*, a place which bears the characteristics of what anthropologists might wish to call a community, local people referred to metaphors of family or household. Community, therefore, was symbolised, rather than being an essential property of the place (see Cohen, 1985).

L-Arċipierku was said to have been *bħal familja waħda* ('like one family') or *qisna bitħa waħda* ('we were like one yard/courtyard'). Being one yard conveys the sense that, although

³⁹ Over recent years in Malta, there has been a widespread increase in the numbers of unorthodox Catholic movements. Some, like the Christian Charismatic Revival, revolve around particular charismatic leaders who are believed to have healing powers or direct access to the Holy Spirit. Others, like the *Neo Katekuminali* are more puritanical in their approach. They have set up 'communities' which attempt to recreate the ways of life of the early Christians, by renouncing material possessions and concentrating on spirituality. At the time of writing, Maltese anthropologist Nadia Sammut is researching these movements.

L-Arċipierku consisted of many households, many dwellings, it was really only one. The *bitfña*, the yard, in a Maltese house is a marginal place, in-between the wholly private inside world, and the public spaces of the street. It is nevertheless an extension of the inside world of the household proper. It is not usually accessible except through the house, so that access is normally controlled in the same way as access to the house. But in *kerrejjet* and other types of communal housing, the yard was open to many different dwellings.

The yard is most commonly a place for doing the washing, and thus a place for the outside performance of domestic tasks by women. In *L-Arċipierku*, washing was done not in the private yards of individual households, but at one of the communal wells. Here, groups of women would congregate. On the streets, but conceptually in the yard, they would perform, in public, domestic work which was categorically associated with the semi-private world of the yard. This was the outdoor version of work which Mary DuPont, in her separate household, would perform in her own, private outside space - the roof. But the performance of this task in the communal, public space of the well, was offset by the categorisation of that space as part of the communal yard, the communal household, that was *L-Arċipierku*.

Older informants would refer not only to the communal nature of the *Arċipierku* clothes washing, however, but also to the open-ness of the area in general. It was remembered, for example, how - particularly in the summer - men and children would sleep outside on the streets, in the cool, and how the doors in *L-Arċipierku* were habitually kept unlocked. There was no need to close up the house, because there was no threat of burglary. These two aspects of life in *L-Arċipierku* were offered as evidence of how safe the place was, compared to the Valletta of the early 1990's, in which crime was rife. In particular, people referred to the introduction of drugs during the 1970's, which had caused not only the social problems of addiction, but also something of a wave of petty crime. Stories abounded in which elderly people were attacked on the streets or were burgled for the smallest amount of money. All for drugs.

The coincidence of the decline of *L-Arċipierku* and the rise in drug problems was not incidental. In the eyes of many people, both were the fault of the 1970's Labour government, which had razed *L-Arċipierku* and allowed the buildings that replaced it to be populated by outsiders. This had meant it was impossible to maintain a proper vigilance over the area. The consequence was that drug-taking activities were more easy to hide, and so escalated. But the Labour government was also responsible, because of its policies of association with North Africa, and particularly Libya. This was seen as the origins of the Valletta drugs

problem. As connections between the islands and the North African shores became more efficient, so it became easier to smuggle drugs into the country. The result was that what had been a relatively safe corner of Valletta, where sleeping on the streets was no problem, became a more dangerous place where drug addicts might attack anybody who stayed out too late.

But evoking memories of a time when the streets of *L-Arċipierku* were safe was not merely related to discourse about the comparative safety of the past and the present. It also fuelled the expansion of metaphors of the household to the level of the community, that were at the centre of memories of the area. If it was safe to sleep on the streets, and doors were kept open, then this was because the streets were seen as being inside the boundaries of *L-Arċipierku*. If the doors were kept unlocked it was because they were internal, not external doors. They were doors through which people designated insiders (*ta'ġewwa*) could freely pass. In the context of the single household, these were members of the primary kin group. But in the context of *L-Arċipierku*, it was members of the community designated *familja waħda* - one family.

L-Arċipierku as a Single Family

This is a second dominant metaphor with which people described the nostalgic community of *L-Arċipierku*. It had been more than a community; it was a single family. It was therefore an extended version of the most natural social unity in Malta; the prime religious institution and the most important feature of Maltese society - the family itself.

One of the older people I discussed memories of *L-Arċipierku* with, and one of those who habitually referred to it as having been both one yard and one family was Pawla Farrugia, whose family was known by the collective nickname *Tal-Casan*.

NICKNAMES AND REPUTATION

Nicknames (*laqmijiet*, sing. *laqam*) are important markers of personal and communal identity in Malta. They can be personal, usually referring to particular characteristics or memories of an individual. For example, a man known as *L-Ambaxxatur* ('the ambassador'), because he frequently travelled. They can also be collective, referring back to a predecessor's personal nickname. This is usually demonstrated by the prefix *Tal-* or *Ta'* ('of'). For example *Tal-Casan*, which refers to all those people descended from the original *Casan*. They might also refer to previous surnames of female kin who were particularly influential, or to the origins of a person or descendant who came from elsewhere. Thus, several people in St Paul's were known as *L-Għawdxi* ('the Gozitan') if they or their predecessors came from

Malta's sister island of Gozo, and others were known as *Iż-Żebbuġi* ('the one from Żebbuġ' - a Maltese village), *L-Ingliż* ('the English person') etc. In general, people were proud of their nicknames. It gave them an identity that was personalised, more intimate than the official name they were given at birth.

The importance of the nickname was explained by many informants as being pragmatic. Because there were a limited number of surnames in Malta, and Christian names also tended to be very repetitious, nicknames marked out differences where official names were the same. Pawla Farrugia explained this to me:

"It's good if you're looking for somebody. See how many Pawla Farrugia's there are. If anybody came down here looking for me, they'd never find me. But they know me as Pawla *Tal-Casan*. That way, they can find me straight away."

Pawla was widow and a mother of eleven children, all of whom were adults. Only one was unmarried, and she lived with her mother in their *Arċipierku* home until 1994. She had been lucky in the 1970's. Her home had been preserved, although the demolition went on directly in front of her. This had a no less significant effect on her life. Even though she remained in her own home, her friends and neighbours were displaced.

I would visit Pawla in the afternoons, when many Maltese rest, to have a cup of tea and talk about her life in *L-Arċipierku*. We would discuss the changes, and the events of her past. In particular, she was concerned with the changes in way of life that the destruction of *L-Arċipierku* had brought about, and the decline in moral standards. This was a preoccupation, too, of Anna, her remaining daughter, who would also be present. They would tell me about religion in Malta, showing me dramatised videos of saints' lives, and documentaries about holy apparitions or people who experienced the passion of Christ. Mostly taken from Italian television, these were Anna and Pawla's favourites. They discussed them as proof of the strength of the holy spirit in the current times of moral crisis.

All Pawla's married children lived in Valletta except for the eldest son. Most of the others lived close to *L-Arċipierku*. Her life, and their lives had revolved around the area, and although they were not evicted with the majority in 1972, she felt the effects of the demolition on her lifestyle and community.

The nickname *Tal-Casan*, I was told, was a reference to the wealthy Casan family of Sliema, who now own the largest car showrooms in Malta. It was coined when the now-deceased Ċensu, Pawla's husband, used to take groups of children from *L-Arċipierku* to

Sliema to play football. Jokes were made about him going to visit his wealthy Sliema friends, and so he eventually became known as *Ċensu Tal-Casan*. This would have been in the 1960s, and since then all his offspring and their children have been referred to as *Tal-Casan*. (see Appendix Four for genealogy).

Tal-Casan was a very influential family not only in the local neighbourhood of *L-Arċipierku*, but throughout Valletta as a whole. Both Simon Cumbo and Guži Cremona had fond memories of *Ċensu Tal-Casan*, and Guži's wife Polly was particularly friendly with the *Tal-Casan* daughters, who she grew up with. Guži and Polly's sons now play with Pawla Casan's grandsons, thus linking the families Cremona and *Tal-Casan* across three generations. The influence of the *Tal-Casan* family was impressed upon me in the lead-up to the Local Council elections in November 1994, when a leading candidate expressed his fears that their decision to boycott the election could affect the outcome.

Their influence was guaranteed partly by the memory of Censu, who was remembered as a father figure by the generation brought up in *L-Arċipierku* during the 1950s and 60s. It was he who had been instrumental in the setting up of the *Arċipierku* youth centre, and more symbolically, had saved the statue of St Paul that stood on the corner St Nicholas and Old Wells Streets, when *L-Arċipierku* was destroyed in 1972.

This fact was commemorated in a set of photographs that I was frequently shown when I asked about *L-Arċipierku*. The most popular photograph was one of a small man who had been known as *Iż-Żiżu* - a nickname with no apparent meaning - standing in the niche where St Paul had been, adopting the same posture as the saint: right arm raised with an open palm, preaching to the masses. *Iż-Żiżu* had been a popular man, I was told, and a joker. But he had not survived the move from *L-Arċipierku*. Like many, he had been moved to sub-standard accommodation, became depressed and died shortly after. Pawla Casan referred to the tragedy:

"They moved people to small houses in high town (*il-fuq*). *Iż-żiżu* died from that (*miet b'hekk*)"

Other photographs depicted groups of men carefully lowering the statue down from its niche and into the back of a truck, to be taken away for storage. The project had been masterminded by *Ċensu Tal-Casan*, and he was therefore remembered as the protector of St Paul; the saviour of the patron of *L-Arċipierku* - the heart of St Paul's parish.

The remembrance of this reputation reflected not only on the memory of Ċensu himself, but also on his descendants. He was remembered in the enduring nickname, which became a bilateral kinship category through which his children and grandchildren enjoyed a certain reputation and influence. In particular, Charlie, his eldest son, was regarded as something of a leader. He, like Simon Cumbo, spent time abroad during the 1970's, but returned wealthy, to set up a restaurant which expanded into a thriving business. To make such a success of a business venture meant that not only must he have had existing connections with influential people, but also that these connections must inevitably have strengthened and diversified. These connections, coupled with a genuinely generous character, made Charlie *Casan* something of a saintly figure who was often in a position to help people, and was generally prepared to do so.

Pawla was proud of her children and their reputation. They were also proud. As Lourdes, the youngest daughter, said to me, they often helped each other. Unlike other siblings, who were always arguing, the *Casan* family stuck together. This was an idealised version of the way the family should be: a single unit of mutual help and support, which should unite against any crisis. This was also the image of the way *L-Arċipierku* had been. For not only had it been a single household, it had also been a single family - *familja waħda*. One of the characteristics of this *familja waħda* was that its members would help each other. This kind of unconditional help was normally only expected from family, if even from them, so to expect help from other members of a community meant the extension of the criteria and obligations of family membership to the level of the community as a whole.

Pawla *Casan* would emphasise the extent to which people in *L-Arċipierku* would help each other out, and both Guži and Simon stressed the point with the phrase: *konna naqbzu għal-xulxin* (lit. 'we used to jump for each other' - 'we used to help each other out'). The phrase has particular connotations of defence in a conflict. To 'jump' for somebody is to get involved and help somebody in a conflict. It therefore had connotations of violence and fighting, that were suggestive for the men who grew up in *L-Arċipierku*.

VIOLENCE AND FOOTBALL

Like Valletta as a whole, *L-Arċipierku* has had something of a tough-guy image. For a man, particularly a young man, being *tal-Belt* or *tas-City* ('of the city'), was something to be proud of, in that it conferred a certain reputation for toughness. The reputation was particularly manifest in occasions associated with football. The Valletta City fans had a reputation for extreme effervescence that on occasion led to violence. Particularly when celebrating the team's successes, a certain pride was taken by seemingly all Valletta

residents, of the fans' excesses. In summer 1995, I returned to Valletta for a short visit, and was told by Ray DuPont of what had happened when Valletta City had won the league and trophy 'double':

"You can imagine. First of all they celebrated the league. They were going until four o'clock in the morning, up and down Republic Street, blowing their horns and shouting.⁴⁰ And then two weeks later, they win the trophy. Well, you can imagine the scenes. This time they were at it all night."

He stopped short of saying that it was 'amazing' or 'fantastic', but the tone of his voice was enthusiastic enough to suggest that this was what he thought. It was a humorous and entertaining response to the victory.

When I had previously asked one of the supporters who'd been involved what they would do if they won, his response had been simple: *niskru u nkissru* ('get drunk and then smash things [up]'). Although it had not come to such a violent conclusion, this is more or less what happened. They drank, and let themselves go.

Like football supporters in other contexts (see, for example, Murphy, Williams & Dunning, 1990), the anger and aggression of the Valletta supporters was directed at specific rivals. These were Hamrun and Floriana, who were arch enemies. With their supporters, they were frequently involved in fights, some of which took on the appearance of full-scale riots. They fought to defend their reputation as tough-guys, but also to defend their team, their city, and through the linkage of Valletta City with the local clubs, their *Arċipierku*.

One of the main centres of gravity, for supporters of Valletta City, was the club bar of Valletta St Paul's football club, which is on St Dominic's Street close to the centre of the old *Arċipierku*. This is the main social centre for men of *L-Arċipierku*, and men who lived in the newly-built flats and remaining older tenements would meet here to drink and discuss football, politics and the other issues of the day.

The club was significant, in the world of football, in the same way as the parish of St Paul in the world of the church. Namely, because like the parish's claims to originality, the

⁴⁰ It is normal for such sporting victories to be followed by loud and relentless car-cades around the roads of Malta. Vehicles will be hired especially for the occasion, and decorated with the colours of the team, and sculptures made from fibreglass or papier mache. These will depict the emblems of the team - a lion, in the case of Valletta City - or those of a vanquished opponent. In the league victory of 1991, Valletta fans I knew built a large coffin in the back of their jeep. The coffin was then draped with the green and white flag of Floriana, Valletta's arch rivals.

club's membership claimed it to have been the first Valletta football team. It was from Valletta St Paul's, they argued, that the current Premier Division side Valletta City, originated. The two were linked both historically and in the present. Over recent years, the two have shared many players - popular local figures who were seen at the club bar on a daily basis. But further back in time, the teams were administratively linked. Club members tell the story of when the St Paul's administration was ousted from the City organisation, with a certain acrimony. In particular, the bitterness related to the large collection of trophies held in the Valletta City club, which in the eyes of the St Paul's supporters belong to them. This bitterness did not prevent them from making the weekly trip to the Ta'Qali stadium in the centre of Malta, to watch Valletta City playing in the league. Rather it assured that when they went to support the City team, they were also supporting St Paul's. Pride in the city team was therefore pride also of the *Arċipierku* team, which provided the City side with its valuable patrimony, and continued to supply it with skilful players.

Similarly, pride in the reputation of the city implied pride in the reputation of *L-Arċipierku*. In particular, Freddie the sacristan used to habitually, though ironically, refer to his place of origin when he realised he was being challenged. For example, if somebody made reference to his abilities as a sacristan, he would respond by jokingly acting out a defence of his reputation. *Jiena mill-Arċipierku* ('I'm from *L-Arċipierku*') he would say quietly, implying that people from *L-Arċipierku* shouldn't be taken advantage of. They stick together and will defend themselves and their fellows against criticism.

Indeed, this seems to have been more literally the case in the past. Several people I knew who lived outside Valletta asked me whether the Valletta 'gangs' still existed. I did not know of any 'gangs' as such, but proceeded to ask people. My enquiries were unsuccessful, although I did find out where the reputation for Valletta gangs came from. It seemed that the neighbourhoods of *L-Arċipierku*, the *Due Balli* and the *Mandraġġ* had had groups of young men who used to spend their time on the streets and would often challenge outsiders, particularly young men, to fights. This mirrors Belmonte's picture of an urban barrio, with groups of young men to 'defend' the boundaries of the space (Belmonte, 1989: 40). The young men of *L-Arċipierku*, it seemed, had quite literally 'jumped in' to situations where they might have needed to fight.

This was also confirmed by Simon Cumbo, who told me of the fights he had had, as a member of the *Arċipierku* youth club, with the *Antonjoni*. In contrast to the low-town *Arċipierku* youth club, the *Antonjoni* were a young men's group that met at the *Ta'Giezu* church run by the Franciscan Minors, and located in the high-town. The boys of *L-Arċipierku*

had clearly been aware of the status gradient the difference in location implied, and drew attention to it. Simon told me how the *Antonjoni* had been regarded:

“They were a bit snobbish.” - he touched his nose, to demonstrate that snobbishness meant having the nose raised in a supercilious manner - “You know, they thought they were more than they were. But we showed them. When we used to play football against them, it always used to end up in a fight. And we’d always win.”

This is indicative of the tensions which existed between the relatively low-status subaltern group from *L-Arċipierku*, and those from the higher parts of town, who were generally thought of, or thought of themselves, to be of a higher echelon of society. But it also demonstrated the extent to which the boys of *L-Arċipierku* would come together to defend their position. to this extent, it demonstrated the extent to which *L-Arċipierku* was *familja waħda*.

THE CONTOURS OF KINSHIP

Theoretically, Maltese kinship is divided between a *razza* (lit. ‘race’), which is the term for patrilineal kin, and *reduta*, which is the term for affines. The former are recognised by the surname, and the latter by relationships of affinity. However, in most cases, families were not referred to by their actual surnames or affinal names, but by a nickname, which like the nickname *Tal-Casan*, operated bilaterally. Thus familiarity was recognised bilaterally, and most people were considered to be ‘of’ a particular bilateral group that were identified by a particular nickname. Consequently, being a member of ‘one family’ need not necessarily refer to being part of a specific patrilineal descent group bearing the same surname. Rather, because family identity was most often denoted by nickname, the link could be either patrilateral or matrilateral.

A particular case in point is that of Charlie Grima, who was referred to individually as *L-Ambaxxatur* (‘the ambassador’), because of his love of travel. He was another member of the *klikka* associated with Vince Farrugia. His family had lived in *L-Arċipierku* prior to the events of 1972, and had then been moved across to the *Due Balli*. As a staunch Nationalist and fanatical supporter of St Paul, this was something of a tragedy, but his memories of the demolition of *L-Arċipierku* linked up with more tragic memories of the excessively polarised Labour years.

His brother had run a shop in the upper reaches of St Paul’s parish, and had many friends in the area. One of these friends was a Labour supporter. On one occasion in the mid-1970’s, they had argued over politics. The friend came back with a gun, and shot

Charlie's brother dead. The memory of this seemed to have strengthened Charlie's allegiance to the Nationalist cause. He seldom referred to his brother's death, but when he did it was in the context of demonstrating the excesses of the Labour administration.

Charlie was proud of being a Nationalist, a *Pawlin* and from *L-Arċipierku*. The extent to which these three categories of identity are mutually implicated is discussed in further detail in the next chapter. He was also proud of being a member of a large family group. As he told me on one occasion:

Ir-razza tagħna mill-Arċipierku. Hija fuq flames mitt ruħi.

"Our family is from *L-Arċipierku*. It [consists of] over five hundred people."

I quote his original statement in Maltese to draw attention to the category *razza*. Other people described a *razza* as "people who have the same surname", in other words, members of a patrilineal descent group. It is opposed to *reduta*, the category for affines, with whom one is supposed to have less close links. But these idealised categories do not relate to the way in which *razza* is used; particularly by Charlie in this context. The *razza* he was referring to was not related to his surname, but that of his paternal grandmother. It therefore contained members of both *razza* and *reduta*; kin and affines.

Charlie was proud of his personal nickname, but also of his collective, family nickname, which on this occasion was the label for what he described as his *razza*. The collective nickname was *Ta'Kristjano*, the surname of his father's mother. It referred back to the time when she, as member of the category *reduta*, had married into the Grima *razza*. But the categories were not strictly maintained, and when Charlie claimed that his *razza* was five hundred strong, it was to people who shared the nickname *Ta'Kristjano* that he referred. Therefore, it was not the strict kinship category of patrilineal kin, but a looser agglomeration, based on descent from the original source of the nickname *Ta'Kristjano*, to which he was referring. While in principle, the *razza* was opposed to *reduta*, in practice the use of a nickname as the primary designation of personal and family identity made this distinction obsolete. The category referred more to the memory of the origins of the nickname, than to actual claims to descent. This demonstrates the malleability of kinship terminology in the demarcation of social identities. It is a process that Good (1981), after Bourdieu, has identified as practical kinship.

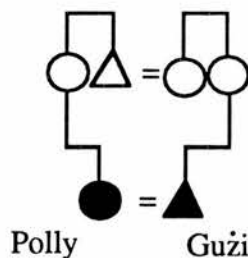
The commemoration of particular predecessors in the family nickname was particularly common. Thus, for example, just as all of Pawla Farrugia's offspring and grandchildren were known as *Tal-Casan*, so Guži Cremona was known as *Tad-Daddu*, or *Id-Daddu*, after a mispronunciation of his grandmother's name, which had been Doddy. Polly, his wife, and his children were also *Tad-Daddu*, and when they bore children his grandchildren would probably also be. The continuity of nicknames thus ran across the strict categorical distinction between *razza* and *reduta*, and freely down through the generations. This allowed a certain flexibility in the designation of kinspeople, which in turn permitted the classification of *L-Arcìpierku* as a whole, as one family.

CONSOLIDATION THROUGH INTERMARRIAGE

L-Arcìpierku was said to have been a single family not just in a metaphoric sense, but also more literally. When I asked how the area had been before the 1970's, I was often told that there had been a few large families who had intermarried (*kienu jżewgu l-xulxin*) so that members of one family were also members of others, building up a picture of the whole *Arcìpierku* being, quite literally, a single family. *Tal-Casan* was one of these few families. They were related to the Cumbo's. Censu *Tal-Casan's* mother had married twice. She was only Farrugia from her second marriage. Her first had been to Čensu Cumbo, the paternal great-uncle of Simon. This meant that Simon Cumbo and Pawla *Casan's* children were step-cousins (see Appendix Five).

More complex were the relations between Guži Cremona and other inhabitants of *L-Arcìpierku*. Firstly, Guži was related to his wife, Polly, not just by marriage, but also via a marriage in their parents' generations. His mother's sister had married Polly's mother's brother. This meant that they shared an aunt and an uncle. For Guži, Polly's uncle Leli was his uncle by marriage, or *ziju ta'rispett* (lit. 'uncle of respect'). For Polly, Guži's aunt Carmen was her aunt by marriage, or *zija ta'rispett* (see fig. 5).

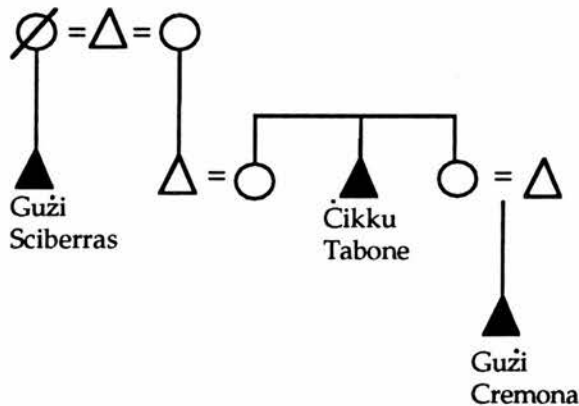
fig 5: The Double Relatedness of Polly and Guži Cremona



This is a clear example of two people being related in two ways because of repeated intermarriage. But the Cremona relations with other families in *L-Arċipierku* were also significant. Guži was related not only to Polly's family, but also to that of Cikku Tabone, who was another elderly person who I would visit to discuss *L-Arċipierku*. Through Cikku, Guži was further related to the Sciberras family who were introduced in the context of domesticity, in the last chapter. They were heavily involved in the *festa* whilst I was in Malta, and were closely related to Freddie the sacristan.

Cikku Tabone had kept a stall on the *monti*, and through this activity had picked up the nickname *tal-liri* ('of the [Maltese] liri'/'of the money'). He was 79 in 1993, and as a founder member of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, the organisation which administered the *festa*, he was a valuable source of information. He was a lifelong Nationalist, and had lived in *L-Arċipierku* until 1972 when his house was demolished. He had, however, been lucky enough to secure alternative housing in the same block as the St Paul's football club, and so was not entirely displaced by the evacuation. He was Guži Cremona's uncle, his sister having married Guži's father. He was also related to the Sciberras family; one of his sisters had married Guži Sciberras's step-brother, born to Leli Sciberras's second wife, Kellina (see Appendix Six). Moreover, Guži's wife Salvina was the first cousin of one of Cikku's sisters-in-law. This meant that Cikku was related to both Guži and Salvina Sciberras (see fig 6).

fig 6 - Relations of Cikku Tabone, Guži Cremona and Guži Sciberras



For the people of *L-Arċipierku*, these inter-marriages were something to be proud of. They consolidated the idea that their little community was not only figuratively, but quite literally, *familja waħda*. For the DuPonts, however, it was further evidence of their lower status. *L-Arċipierku*, it was argued, was a place where people were mixed up, confused. The

DuPonts and others would refer to people from *L-Arċipierku* as *gerfix*, which means confused, but also appeared to have connotations of inter-breeding. People from *L-Arċipierku* were *gerfix*, it was implied, because there were too many intermarriages, and was too much interbreeding, within a small number of families. In terms of its relationship with the DuPont descent pattern, it represented an entrenchment, or immobility that contrasts with the relative cosmopolitanism and movement of the DuPont family - both in spatial and social terms. It also pitted the modernity and European-ness of the DuPonts with the more traditional patterns of *Arċipierku* kinship.

INTERMARRIAGE AND IMMOBILITY

In Malta, the relatively educated, such as the DuPonts, frequently make reference to the traditionality of certain sections of the population; usually the rural or low-status urban people of the Harbour areas. The people of *L-Arċipierku* fell into this second category. They were regarded as immobile, relative to the well-connected high-town population. Indeed, immobility is one of the criteria for defining subaltern status. Spatial entrenchment meant a lack of connections in the right places - this in turn meant an inability to represent oneself, and a radical disjunction between those who participated in the public sphere and those who did not.

Entrenchment related to notions of traditional life, such that the subaltern populations of rural or urban harbour areas were considered more traditional than the well-connected suburbans. The means by which traditionality was asserted was through appeals to 'traditional' ways of life - referred to in Maltese by the categories *usanza* (a tradition by usage) or *tradizzjoni*. Traditions, or *affarijiet tradizzjonali* ('traditional things') were epitomised by certain proverbs, which were alluded to, in order to demonstrate the traditional. When speaking of particular typical, or traditional forms of behaviour, people would begin by saying "in Malta we have a saying". These sayings were collected in the 1960's by the linguist Joseph Aquilina and published in his *Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs*. This publication now acts as a means by which the educated and 'modern' can keep in touch with the 'traditional' and less educated. The proverb comes to epitomise the latter.

Referring to the tendency of people in *L-Arċipierku* to intermarry, Ray DuPont began with "in Malta we have a saying":

"A good cow gets sold in its own country" (Aquilina, 1972: 190)

The meaning of this phrase relates to the preference for matrilineal, uxori-local marriage, a practice which tends to entrench families in a particular locality. If all people are attempting to marry within their own village, then villages effectively become endogamous groups. Villagers are limited in their possible choice of partner. Over successive generations, families inevitably intermarry and lines of descent become mixed up, *gerfix*.

By appealing to the proverb, Ray DuPont is suggesting that this state of affairs prevails in *L-Arcipierku*, and that this makes *L-Arcipierku* a place where descent is mixed up in a way that makes it traditional, entrenched and hence backward. This in turn is conceived negatively, to imply that the people of *L-Arcipierku* are somehow ignorant (*injurant*) of the modern, European world, and hence lower in status than the modern and the educated. The use of notions of traditionality therefore became a means of denigrating *L-Arcipierku* and emphasising its low status.

The image of the traditional *Arcipierku* for many of the people who had lived there, however, represented a nostalgic model of the way life should be, or at least how it had been in times that from a certain perspective could be described as better. This nostalgia was central to memories of the destruction of *L-Arcipierku*, which was widely regarded as the beginning of the end for traditional society in St Paul's.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia for the past related, in turn, to the over-sensitivity to criteria for identity. As argued in the introduction, modernity leads to a recognition that the criteria for participation in the public sphere - the criteria of identity - are important projects of social life. Identity becomes something that must be created, and can be contested. This inevitably leads to the recognition that temporality leads to social change. If identities can be contested, as they are created, they can also be changed. But change emerges not only from the internal dynamics of a particular social group or category, it can also be forced from outside, as was the case with the destruction of *L-Arcipierku*.

Simon Cumbo told me with some regret how, in contrast to St Paul's in the 1990's, *L-Arcipierku* had felt safe because you had always known that everybody was related to you:

"But those days have gone now. The days when you used to say '*aw' kuġin'* (hey, cousin) in the streets to people you were related to. Now nobody cares."

This was confirmed by John Sciberras, the youngest son of Salvina and Guzi, who was also Freddie the sacristan's cousin. I was sitting with him and some other young men in

the bar of La Valette, and I asked them what they thought about families and relations. John replied:

“They’re important. Without your family, you’re nobody. Mind you, we don’t take so much notice of cousins and so on as they used to. For example, Vince here, he’s related to me.”

Here, John used the phrase *jġi minni* (lit. ‘he comes from me’), which suggests a theoretical knowledge of the fact that somebody is related to oneself, without necessarily implying that one knows how. Then the third man we were with interrupted:

“And me, *niġi minnek* (‘I come from you’).”

John had not known this, and certainly didn’t know how they were related. This seemed to prove his point, that the significance of the more distant relations, and knowledge of their relatedness, was diminishing. For Simon Cumbo, this was a shame. It marked the ending of an acknowledgement of family responsibility, and of recognising kinship and family as the most important feature of Maltese life.

It might be argued at this point that it is not surprising that a group of young men would not know how they were related to other people in their vicinity. In many senses, the knowledge associated with the family and relatedness was considered female knowledge, or certainly only something in which one would be interested after one was married. But younger women also seemed less interested in this kind of knowledge about their more distant cousins. This was remarked upon by older people, both men and women:

“The young people - they don’t care - *lanqas jgħatu kaz* (lit. ‘don’t give a case’)”

It would seem that if the people who used to live in *L-Arċipierku* refer nostalgically to a generalised image of how things used to be in the good old days before the area was demolished, this is no less so for people such as the DuPonts. They refer also to a generalised picture of how life in *L-Arċipierku* operated, based largely on stereotypes of what it meant to live a low existence. All of the categories used on both sides of the gradient were over-determined. They were also ambiguous. For if on the one hand appeals to traditional ways of life, for example, were used to suggest backwardness and unwillingness to engage in the modern world, on the other hand they were used to suggest a morality untouched by the changes brought about by modernity.

On the one hand, the lifestyle of *Arċipierku* life could be criticised for its apparently immoral vaunting of the correct boundaries between public and private existence, but on the other hand it could be lauded for its safety, its togetherness and its morality. In both cases, the images were set up against the perceptions of the modern Malta as one characterised by crime, materialism, and above all in this context, *egoizmu* (egotism).

Egoizmu is related to materialism in that it is associated with the acquisition of resources at the expense of ties of obligation. These ties were said to have been particularly strong in *L-Arċipierku*, which means that when *L-Arċipierku* goes, so rises *egoizmu*. This was how many of the older people I talked to referred to the young people of today. They were considered, even by people as young as Simon Cumbo, to be self-centred, capricious, and irresponsible:

“When we were young we didn’t have anything, so how could we be greedy? How could anyone come and burgle us when there wasn’t anything to steal? Do you know what my mother got for her dowry: a towel. We didn’t have anything at all. But nowadays, because children have something, they want everything. Nowadays you have to buy a computer for your children, but then within three weeks they don’t look at it. Is that progress?”

This was a spirited, and typical, attack on the young people of the day. They were seen as self-centred and hedonistic. This was what led to the problems of drugs and crime. But on the occasion on which it was spoken, there was somebody there to defend the changes:

“And I suppose that in your day everything was great, eh? All of you walking around with your heads in the Bible. The church tells you everything to do, and you go and do it. What sort of life is that?”

This riposte was provided by John Bone, the nephew of Guzi and Salvina Sciberras, and a good friend of their sons. He was a quiet man, but significantly, one of the few Labour supporters who were also *Pawlini* and spent time *Għand Lawrenz*. Significantly, because much of the talk about progress and decline, or morality and modernity, particularly when it related to the issues of *L-Arċipierku*, was also related to politics, and the feeling that the decline in morals could be linked back to the Labour years. John Bone, however, was unwilling to make this simple equation of decline with post-Labour, post-*Arċipierku* life. This was partly because he wished to defend his generation. But also partly for reasons of party prejudice. He did not want it to go unsaid that the Labour government had done a lot to enable Maltese people to criticise the church, and had therefore enabled a more free-thinking population.

These debates evoke those concerning gender, which were dealt with in the last two chapters, and will re-emerge in chapters six and seven, with regard to the *fešta*. The criticisms of present lifestyles, the rhetoric about lack of commitment to church and *fešta*, the reference to the increase of drug abuse and crime, all relate to a sense of past: that before the significant events of the 1970's, and particularly before the Labour government, things had been better. The Memories of *L-Arċipierku* therefore link notions of community identity, themselves linked with a vision of kinship, family and gender, with ideas about party politics. They reveal the pervasive sense that the world has changed in a negative direction since the events of the 1970's, but also that these changes were facilitated by the actions of politicians who were largely unaccountable. They therefore relate gender and family identities to party political identity.

In particular, they relate to the widely-used explanation of the events of July 1972, and the explicit links made then between the demolition of *L-Arċipierku* and party politics. That *L-Arċipierku* was being destroyed because it was Nationalist Fortress: *Għax Fortizza Nazzjonalista*. The demolition was therefore a deliberate, spiteful and vindictive act by government that maintained a despotic political regime.

Party Politics and Mintoff's Pipe

The spitefulness of the Labour administration was demonised in the figure of Dom Mintoff, who was regarded by many of my *Pawlini* informants as the epitome of all evil. On many occasions, I was told of what a *bastard* he was. In particular, Vince Farrugia would impress upon me the vindictive nature of Mintoff's politics:

"He was a real *bastard*. He used to go over to the dockyards and hold big meetings. You know, the dockyards are a real Labour stronghold. Well, he used to go over there and shout at them, swear at them. He'd tell them to come over here and start smashing up the shops. And they were so stupid, that they'd listen to it and obey him. He'd tell them that if they didn't do it, that'd be a sign that they have no balls (*bla bajd* - lit. without eggs). So they'd come over here with chains and start smashing up the shops."

This story comes from the disputes during the 1980's over public holidays, and especially the relationship between state holidays and church holidays. For whilst the Nationalist Party have always had strong links with the church, and therefore supported the perpetuation of national church holidays, the Labour Party have for a long time been anti-clerical. During the 1980's they attempted to eradicate church holidays, replacing them with their own, civic commemorations. The result was that many of the Nationalist-supporting

shop-owners of Valletta refused to abide by the new, Labour holidays, and maintained their old calendar. They would therefore remain open on March 31st, which was designated 'Freedom Day' from the British fleets, and close their shops for the traditional feast of *Imnarja* (Sts Peter and Paul) at the end of June. This was seen as a direct threat to Labour hegemony, and was the cause behind the call for riots.

But just as the familiar and happy images of the Nationalist past were at once immediate and generalised, personal and public, so Mintoff's vindictiveness was talked about in terms of a personal vendetta that was set off by an immediate and personal engagement with the people of *L-Arcipierku*. The main index of his cruelty was the razing of the area, and this had been caused, they argued, by the events of a pre-election rally he had held there.

Both Vince, and Guži Cremona told me of how he had called a rally in *L-Arcipierku* to further his electoral campaign. However, because it was *Fortizza Nazzjonalista*, the people of *L-Arcipierku* had responded with hostility. He had been showered with eggs and flour, and gone home in disgrace. But not before delivering the death knell on the community. According to all accounts, his response was to say that the first thing he'd do when he came into power would be to flatten *L-Arcipierku*. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ċikku Tabone told a version of the story which demonstrated even more starkly the complex relationship of public politics with personal experiences thereof. The flour and eggs had been true, he said, but the real reason why Mintoff had been so angry as to promise the destruction of *L-Arcipierku* had been that in all the mayhem, one of the young men of the area - the reputed tough-guys who protected its integrity - had stolen his pipe. Thus, the execution of a political policy as a public service to the people of Valletta, was narrated as the most personal of vendettas, and the most banal. Another example of the way in which the Labour government, opponent of the area that was *Fortizza Nazzjonalista*, and instigator of moral, social and political decline in post-Independence Malta, had arbitrarily and vindictively acted upon the subaltern group of people of *L-Arcipierku*.

As we have seen, many people's families were severely affected by the demolition. They suffered in a variety of ways, both relating to personal health and more abstract notions of the development of the nation, the safety of the Valletta streets, and the morality of their children. However, there were others who managed to avoid major hardship. These were the people who, characteristically, were *tal-qalba*. They were sufficiently well-connected

to enjoy preferential treatment, even though they were Nationalists at a time of the Labour government.

Developments subsequent to that, in terms of declining moral or social standards, are also related to the memories of the Labour government, which on the basis of this reading alone might have been characterised as arbitrary or despotic. But the political significance of the *L-Arċipierku* debate reveals, in a broader sense, the feeling of the people of *L-Arċipierku* being an unrepresented, subaltern group that are victims, rather than agents, of political process. In particular, it reveals the importance of memories of a particular phase of victimisation by the arbitrary Maltese political system; the years of Labour rule.

The connections between party political identity and subaltern identity are explored in greater detail in the next chapter, which examines the nature of political allegiance, and the mechanisms of patronage politics in Malta.

Chapter Four: Party Politics and Class Identities

This chapter moves on from examining memories of *L-Arċipierku* and their significance in the creation of nostalgic images of community. It explores in greater detail the relationship between this nostalgia for *L-Arċipierku* and party political allegiance. It explains how locality and party became so inextricably linked in Malta, but also moves on from the idea of party political allegiance, to examine questions of class, and people's consciousness of their identity as a subaltern group.

This was important, in that it meant that the *Pawlina* were defined as a powerless group - who were victims not only of the widespread changes in Maltese society, nor only the vindictive policies of the Labour government, but also more generally, of the patron grade who were at the centre of Maltese society. This was significant because, like the division between men and women, the distinction between the well-connected and the subaltern runs through the organisation of the *festa*.

Party Politics and National Identity

In early 1990's Malta, politics was almost unanimously considered to be dangerous and dirty. Dangerous because it was highly polemicised and hence leads to argument and occasionally to violence. Dirty because its process was essentially corrupt, and the people involved in politics are corrupt. The full implications of this opinion, for the *festa* organisation, are explored in the next chapter. This chapter is concerned with broader political trends.

A national survey conducted by Gallup and publicised in the English-language Sunday newspaper, *The Malta Independent* in 1992, saw 45% of those asked stating that they believed politics to be corrupt. 65.8% of those asked believed that corruption throughout all areas of life was widespread in Malta, and those most likely to believe that corruption was rife were students.

The survey led to a wide-ranging national debate, both in the press and outside it, about the nature of politics, both national and local. The prime minister, Eddie Fenech Adami, whose ruling Nationalist Party (PN) proclaimed themselves the party against corruption, made the following statement:

"It is extremely worrying to see that the survey shows that public perception of politics as a whole is so bad." (*The Malta Independent*, 1/11/92: 1)

That politics leads to argument and even violence seemed to be a universally acknowledged fact. Many bars and cafes in Malta carried signs above the bar to the effect that any conversation was permissible, except for swearing and talk about politics. To do so was to invite argument.

On one occasion early in fieldwork, I was having dinner with an English friend and her middle-aged male, Maltese companion. He was a bank manager, and hence very much a part of respectable society. He was also well-connected in political circles, with close friends in the higher ranks of both the PN and the MLP.⁴¹ We discussed my research project, and like many people, he assumed that I would be interested more in archaeology and the remnants of the past than in contemporary Malta. I explained that I was interested in the past to the extent that it can be seen as a tool with which contemporary Malta represented itself; to itself and to others. But that primarily what I was interested in was contemporary Malta itself, and particularly contemporary, perhaps political, debates about social identity and where the nation was going.

Our companion looked at me and shook his head: "In that case you're going to upset a lot of people," he said. The implication was that not only was the investigation of present-day Malta inevitably going to involve an examination of politics and the political process, but that doing so would inevitably lead to argument. The process of national identity and its articulation was thereby confirmed as a contested project, which implicated party politics and the politics of party polarity. This was the danger in talking about contemporary Malta in public. People could disagree with you and be upset by the suggestions you made, assuming that you made them on the basis of political conviction.

Political conviction is not only a political category in Malta, but also a moral one, in the sense that it relates not only to decisions about economic or political policy, but also to ideas about moral progress and modernity. This is the case in a wide variety of contexts, where party politics has become associated with religion and ideas of morality.⁴² In Malta,

⁴¹ For the very highest echelons of Maltese society, politics was a professional activity. This meant that for the very well-connected, colleagues could be drawn from either side of the House of Representatives. Indeed, the career path of Maltese politicians, which depended on connections established through family, school and work, meant that friends, and even family-members would be political opponents. A case in point is the Mifsud-Bonnici cousins Karmenu (Labour Prime Minister, 1983-1987) and Ugo (Nationalist President, 1994-).

⁴² See for example, van der Veen (1994), who discusses the relationship between religion and political nationalism in India.

the moral content of politics related to different conclusions about the role of the church. This had implications for the mapping out of Malta's future.

Different conclusions about the role of the church related to different projections of the correct path for Malta's future. The distinctions, developing out of the twin traditions of Christian democratic *Italianità* ('Italian-ness') and socialist *Malta Maltija* (Maltese Malta), revolved around pro- and anti-European policies. Where the governing PN was in favour of Malta's accession to the EU, the opposition MLP were against it.

Anxieties about European integration often revolved around concerns for the moral and religious integrity of the nation. Fears that entry into Europe would mean the influx of anti-Catholic norms and values, an increase in social problems of drugs and pre-marital pregnancy, and the inevitable introduction of divorce and abortion legislation, fuelled the uncertainty about whether entering Europe was a good idea. These concerns were voiced even by staunch Nationalist supporters, who defended the idea of Europe because it was central party policy, but nevertheless expressed personal misgivings.

The criticisms of PN integration policy levelled by the Labour Party were less explicitly centred around moral concerns. Their worries, rather, were related to more prosaic questions of taxation and employment. In particular, the introduction in 1995 of VAT on all goods became a major opportunity for the MLP to criticise PN European policy.

The Nationalists had sold VAT to the Maltese public on the grounds that, in order to align the Maltese economy with the economies of the rest of Europe, they had to introduce VAT. This would be coupled with the reduction of the large trade tariffs that previously existed. The result was that an immediate levy of 15% was added to all goods. There was a major outcry, particularly from the Labour Party, who used the new tax as an opportunity to criticise the prospect of Malta's entry into Europe. They coupled this attack against the inevitable increase in the cost of living, with predictions about the potential influx of legitimate foreign workers to Malta, should it join the EU. They argued that given Malta's nearly 100% employment record over recent years, and the problems of unemployment across Europe, the freedom of movement policies within the EU would mean that the Maltese employment market would be saturated should the country enter the Union.

The arguments about employment were particularly suggestive for a nation in which memories of widespread unemployment are immediate. For the individual, the only way of guaranteeing employment was to create the right kinds of relationships with the

right political patrons from the right political party. This is one of the reasons why politics was such a contentious issue in Malta, because it meant that party allegiance was directly related to people's livelihood.

The arguments about VAT and employment were suggestive not only for Labour supporters, but also for Nationalists. Even informants such as Simon Cumbo, who professed himself a die-hard Nationalist, and had been heavily involved in party activities throughout his life, were concerned. I was frequently asked whether I thought Malta joining the EU was a good idea:

"What's it like in Europe. Is it true what they say that it'll mean lots of taxes and no jobs? What's it like in England? Do you think it's a good idea that Malta joins Europe?"

Other informants were rather more critical of the policies:

"I've heard that joining Europe will mean more taxes. They're talking about introducing VAT next year, because of Europe. I think that's a terrible idea."

This last comment provoked a heated response from those who heard it. It was spoken on the steps outside *Għand Lawrenz*, where groups of men often congregated to drink tea in the mornings. The speaker ran a nearby shop and had stopped to chat for a while, before continuing about his business. The reaction to his statement was that this was Labour talk. How could the speaker be so critical of *il-partit* ('the party')?

Referring to the Nationalist Party as simply *il-partit* ('the party') was the norm among the *Pawlini*. The implication was that they need not refer to 'the Nationalists', because nearly everybody was a Nationalist supporter. There was no ambiguity as to which party they were referring to by 'the party', so there was no further need for clarification. It also, however, draws attention to a distinction between the ideology of the party - ie the fact of being Nationalists, Christian democrats, pro-European etc - and the organisation in charge of executing that ideology. This, in turn, marked a distinction between specific policy and broad policy thrust, which enabled the speaker, above, to dissent from what the party was doing, without threatening his allegiance to party identity.

He clarified his commitment to the party by confirming that what he had said would only be discussed in a context such as this, where everybody was a party supporter, and critique would not damage the party's reputation. Of course, he would never admit to a Labour supporter that their criticisms of the Nationalists might be justified.

This exchange reveals a deep commitment to party, despite disagreements with it over policy. This commitment emerged in many different contexts throughout my fieldwork, and was expressed by many different people. It relates to the designation of *L-Arċipierku* as *Fortizza Nazzjonalista*, in that it relates local identity to political party allegiance; itself central to debates about national identity.

Labour's objections to EU integration were not only related to VAT and employment, but also to language. Language, as already argued, was central to Maltese national identity. It was a critical means by which, in everyday life, Maltese maintained separation from the thousands of tourists who flood the island. It was also an important political issue. During the 1920's and 1930's, the 'language question' provoked lively - at times violent - debate (see Introduction). Language also emerged in relation to the issue of EU membership.

The Labour Party argued that the government should only accept the terms of entry stipulated by the European Commission if they included an undertaking to allow the Maltese language to enter the Union on an equal basis with the other languages. To allow any other terms would be an insult to the nation, and would mean a dissolution of national identity. The prominent linguist Frans Sammut, member of the *Akkademja tal-Malti* ('Academy of Maltese'),⁴³ predicted a new 'language question', in which Malta struggled to maintain its cultural integrity without being dominated by Europeans.

This cultural integrity was related not only to language, but also to morality. Although the EU was acknowledged as the home of the church - this was partly the reason why the Nationalists were so vehemently pro-European - it was also widely considered the root of all evil. Concern was widely expressed, particularly in church circles, over the corrupting influence of European television. Thus, although European televisions, for *pulit* ('polite') Nationalists, were desirable symbols of their respectability and links with Europe (see chapter two), they were also dangerous sources of possible moral harm. Such is the paradox of modernity: that on the one hand, progress means the pursuit of social change, but on the other hand it involves the erosion of past certainties.

⁴³ Set up in 1920, the *Akkademja tal-Malti* is modelled on the French *Academie Francaise*, and sees its principal role as defending the integrity of the language. I spent several hours discussing the *Akkademja* with Frans Sammut, in the summer of 1992.

Party Allegiance

As we have seen, respectability and social standing are projected onto place in Malta. This also goes for party political allegiance, with a marked conceptual-political distinction being made by the Maltese, between the broadly Nationalist (PN) north, and the socialist (MLP) south. The frontier between the two is an imaginary line drawn across the map of Malta from the inlet of Grand Harbour at Marsa, horizontally across through Qormi and to the coast east of Żebbuġ (see map 1). The balance of political allegiance can be seen by the percentages of 'first preference'⁴⁴votes given to the two main parties at the 1992 general election in each voting district (see fig 7 and map 4).

The north-south divide has led to local debate about the infrastructural development of each area, and the comparative access of their populations to resources such as power and water, as well as public funding for roads, schools etc. It is said that during the Labour administration, for example, power and water cuts - the latter being frequent during the summer months - were much more likely in the Nationalist-dominated north. Since the change of government, this trend has switched, and attention now focuses on the active under-development of the south by a PN administration that's seen by Labourites as spiteful and vindictive.

Politics in Malta is directly related to access to resources, the two principal resources being employment and housing. When I asked a local political candidate what was the principal concern of his electorate, this was his reply:

"In general, people in Malta don't vote for any high political principle. Their main concern is to get work, and a cheap house, but mainly work. If they know that somebody can get them a good job working for the government, then they'll vote for him."

The job of the politician, therefore, is to provide these resources, and their ability to provide these resources becomes an index of their capabilities. If we assume, as seems to have been the case, that throughout the history of Maltese party politics, employment has always been the principal scarce resource, and that the people in a position to distribute it were also political players, then we can assume that one method by which a potential employee could assure employment was by supporting the political projects of their

⁴⁴The Maltese electoral system is famous for being one of the most complicated in the world. A combination of proportional-representation based on a single transferable vote, has been supplemented by extra modifications to fit the local situation. I shall attempt to explain the system more fully below, but at this stage taking the 'first preference' votes is a suitable gauge of political conviction.

employer. Given that different types of employers operated in different parts of Malta, it can be seen how at an early stage, when voters would associate themselves with people who they knew would provide employment, party support became associated with particular localities. Thus, I would broadly suggest that those who, during the formative years of the late nineteenth century, were employed by merchants in Valletta, became Nationalists, and those employed by the British at the dockyards, became Labourites.⁴⁵

fig 7 - First Preference Votes as percentages of the total votes cast, by voting district, 1992

| <i>District</i> | <i>PN percentage</i> | <i>MLP percentage</i> | <i>North/South</i> |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 01 | 54.78 | 43.87 | North |
| 02 | 31.93 | 66.37 | South |
| 03 | 37.01 | 60.77 | South |
| 04 | 41.88 | 56.23 | South |
| 05 | 38.48 | 59.88 | South |
| 06 | 44.17 | 54.54 | South |
| 07 | 61.62 | 36.37 | North |
| 08 | 60.33 | 37.71 | North |
| 09 | 57.12 | 40.70 | North |
| 10 | 71.24 | 26.66 | North |
| 11 | 61.27 | 36.62 | North |
| 12 | 54.58 | 43.95 | North |
| 13 | 58.94 | 40.42 | North |

These were the two main centres of economic gravity throughout the Maltese colonial era. On the one hand were the local merchants based in Valletta, who were mostly the patrons, and indeed often the kin, of early Nationalist politicians. They ran their businesses around the harbour trade, and the markets of the city, employing local people as porters or market functionaries. On the other hand was the colonial administration which employed people at the dockyards on the south side of Grand Harbour. Here, in the atmosphere of labour, rather than trade, was where the Maltese Trade Union movement emerged, and the Labour Party eventually found its strength of support (Zammit, 1984: 42).

⁴⁵ Naturally, the process was not nearly so programmatic as I suggest. Nevertheless, it is, broadly speaking, sustainable as an argument about the general trends at work in the development of political polarity and the politics of place.

This would explain the strong association of party allegiance with locality, and hence the unquestioned claims that *L-Arċipierku* was *Fortizza Nazzjonalista*. If most of the people there had been employed by Nationalists, who were providing them with patronage in the form of employment, in return for their political support, then it seems reasonable to assume that they too would become Nationalists. And if *L-Arċipierku* was a *Fortizza Nazzjonalista*, the harbour town of Bormla, where the drydocks are situated, was *Fortizza Laburista* ('A Labour Fortress').

The links between party and place was impressed upon me by Vince Farrugia, my close informant *Għand Lawrenz*. His parents had lived in *L-Arċipierku*, but in the early 1990's, they lived in a small house opposite the Dominican church in Merchant's Street. Vince worked as a book restorer at the National Library of Malta. He was heavily involved in religious and *fešta* activities, and was a staunch Nationalist. This, he impressed upon me one day, when I was helping him to fold some religious vestments, in the loft above the sacristy of St Paul's church.

We were discussing the forthcoming Local Council elections - the first of their kind in Malta - and he was protesting at the hypocrisy of all the candidates. He hated politicians, he said, they always promise the world and then gave you nothing. He'd decided not to vote, and I asked if he'd ever consider voting for the Labour Party:

"Never. Never, never, never. Okay, I don't agree with everything from our side. But you'll not see me voting Labour. I was born a Nationalist - my father's Nationalist, my Grandfather was Nationalist, and my Great-Grandfather was Nationalist. And that's that, I'm a Nationalist. Even if I think the Labour Party are right, and the Nationalists are wrong. In that case, I wouldn't vote. But vote Labour - never."

Support for political parties is strongly hereditary, such that not only is allegiance related to place, but also to family. As Nazju Cumbo, Simon's brother, pointed out to me, political allegiance really depends on two accidents: being born into the politics of an area and being born into the politics of a family. Both are equally arbitrary and both are equally significant for political identity.

Moreover, both were remembered with affection and pride, not only by Vince Farrugia, but also by Cikku Tabone. For both, political allegiance to the Nationalists is associated with a deeper allegiance to family memory.

Vince told me with pride on more than one occasion how his father remembered an occasion in the 1930's when a Nationalist rally was held in the *L-Arċipierku* and his father's

(Vince's grandfather's) balcony was used. He remembered the pioneering Nationalist leader, Nerik Mizzi standing on the balcony, addressing the gathered crowds.

Ċikku Tabone also remembered his father inviting prominent Nationalists into their *Arċipierku* house. Every year, he told me, the family would hold a party and prominent members of the party would be invited. Thus the public figures of Nationalist Party hierarchy were also familiarly linked to the intimate, private spaces of Ċikku's house, *L-Arċipierku*, and its nostalgic community. He personally remembered the public figures who are now written down in the history books of the Maltese nation, entering his house as guests. The links-up with national history and personal and family memory ensured that place, family and party were inextricably linked in the formation of social identity.

But the personalisation of politics also ensured that past politicians were personally remembered, and through this, that party lines were seldom crossed. Gorg Borg Olivier, for example, who was Nationalist prime minister at the time of Independence, was personally remembered as a figure frequently seen around the streets of Valletta. The election in 1994 of his nephew, Paul Borg Olivier, consolidated this memory. The dynamics of his relationship with the Valletta constituents was inevitably shaded by the legacy of his famous uncle, for whom the latter was a friendly and munificent patron. Moreover, because many of the constituents were much older than Paul, and knew Gorg Borg Olivier perhaps better than he himself, his authority as local political player and benevolent leader was tempered by his uncle's memory. On more than one occasion, I saw elderly Nationalists approach the young aspirant to give friendly, but firm, advice or reprimand on various aspects of his campaign. The perceived intimacy they'd achieved with his uncle allowed them to invert the relationship of patronage, to the extent that they, not he, became the ascendant.

Borg Olivier was also remembered in everyday discourse. Particularly by older Nationalists, he was fondly referred to when things seem^{ed} to be going badly for the party: "If Borg Olivier was still here"; "Borg Olivier wouldn't have got into these problems". It was this remembrance, for people like Vince, that linked the Nationalists Party as an abstract, anonymous institution, to the intimate memories of person and family.

As well as the memory of Nerik Mizzi on the balcony, Vince's father remembered the Independence celebrations overseen by Borg Olivier, who emerged as a National(ist) hero in the early 1960's. His continued remembrance was sealed for Vince himself in the personal memory of his funeral in 1980. The genealogy of personal recollections of intimate relations with famous Nationalists thereby sealed the indelible association of the family with

the PN. But these were not merely personal nor privatised family memories. They were also reinforced in communal, social interaction, particularly during the lead-up to the *festi*, when memories were shared of past *festi* and political campaigns.

Two years running, Ċikku Spiteri, an elderly servant of the *San Pawl* cause, referred to respectfully as Sur Ċikk. brought his photograph albums *Għand Lawrenz*. The first was full of photos of the *festi* over the years, showing the special commemorations of the *San Pawl* centenary in 1960 and the fateful year of *pelegrinaġġ* ('pilgrimage') during the Gulf War (see next chapter). The second contained political photos, and enabled those present to link their own personal and family memories with the pictorial commemorations collected by Sur Ċikk.

Huddled into the small 'women's' section of the bar (see fig 3, chapter two), I sat beside Sur Ċikk. as he began to turn the pages on the history of the Nationalist Party. There were photos of Nerik Mizzi, which prompted the repetition by Vince of his father's recollection. Photos of Independence day confirmed the moment of triumph for Borg Olivier and the Valletta Nationalists, who claimed him as their own.

The significance of this was also publicly commemorated, annually during the five-day *Indipendenza* ('Independence') celebrations held *fuq il-Fosos* ('on the granaries') in Floriana. This is an open site just outside the city gates of Valletta where mass meetings have been held for decades. During *Indipendenza* it is given over to the PN as a festival of their identity and allegiance to the party. Food-stalls and bars are set up and public debates take place in small arenas erected alongside the main stage, where entertainment is provided, including the party leader's (currently the prime minister) annual *Indipendenza* speech to the faithful.

The photographs of Borg Olivier's funeral consolidated the personal memories of the man in the minds of all those present. He was remembered with a sad shake of the head - he was a good man, who always used to come along to *San Pawl*. But his achievements were also annually commemorated in the *Indipendenza* celebrations, which mark the moment when control over the national territory was assured. For Vince this was a complex issue. It would be tempting to say that all Nationalists were anti-British, because of their stand against colonial rule and their celebration of the moment of its release. But like many *Pawlini*, indeed many Maltese, Vince's father is an ex-British servicemen, having worked for the Royal Navy as a cook during his entire working life. Both he and Vince had good memories of the British.

I was told by Vince's father that they were very good employers. Indeed, it was common knowledge that one of the biggest perks of having been a colonial employee was the British services pension, which he now drew. Well-exceeding the Maltese state provision, this came regularly from Britain in sterling. It could therefore be kept in a foreign exchange account and used for funding holidays abroad - until recently there was severe taxation on the exchange of currency to or from Maltese liri - or buying foreign goods without incurring importation tax. The British were thought of as even-handed and fair employers; responsible for teaching the Maltese a sense of justice. This contrasted with the Maltese sense of self-criticism at local corruption and lack of discipline. The British were held up as paragons of virtue against local indiscipline. Once more, the tension of self-criticism and self-appreciation emerges as a central theme in the Maltese discourse of self.

Moreover, the British were considered benevolent employers. Vince expressed fond memories of the Christmas parties that used to be organised for the children of Maltese servicemen, which were considered to be the best parties with the biggest presents.

But despite this profound affection for the memory of the British, their expulsion was a necessary part of the development of the Maltese nation. The significance of Independence as an event was complicated in Vince's consciousness by the personal memories of his own and his father's personal circumstances, but nevertheless consolidated by the principle of national sovereignty over national territory.

That this was a party issue was made clear by the attitudes of Vince and other Valletta Nationalists towards the events which surrounded the final expulsion of the British forces in 1979. This was marked as a Labour *festa* , in contrast to the Nationalist feast of *Indipendenza*, and known as Freedom Day (*Tal-Felsien*). Occurring during the MLP administration, it is celebrated by *Laboristi* ('Labourites') as the day on which Malta, now not only independent and a republic, became *really* free from its colonial past.

The conclusion is explicitly rejected by Nationalist supporters, although for Vince, the idea clearly has some resonance. On one occasion, when we were talking about colonial rule, he pointed towards what he saw as a major difficulty with the presence of the British garrisons in Malta:

"When the English were here - even after Independence - there were lots of places where we, the Maltese, couldn't enter. Take Ricasoli, for example. Do you know where it is? Opposite Valletta (on the south side of Grand Harbour). Where they've

got the film studios. Did you know that until the British left the Maltese couldn't enter there? I remember one time we went swimming across there from Valletta. From where we always go (swimming) - under the bastion. We went across to the opposite side and the English - the soldiers, threw us out. And that was after Independence. That's not supposed to be like that, is it. It's a joke that we're an independent country and we can't go wherever we want."

He was clearly struck by the absurdity of an independent nation which forbids its citizens from entering certain areas. But he nevertheless rejected the ousting of the British forces, and its March celebration. Freedom Day is a national holiday, but he acknowledged it as no more than this. Although he and the other *Pawlini* would gather together as they did every Sunday, to discuss politics, football and *fešta* in a Valletta bar, their celebration was low-key. It was an effective boycott of what was regarded by some as a sinister attempt by the MLP government of the time to forge stronger links with the Eastern Bloc, and by others as simply a stupid piece of foreign policy bungling. But despite this overt party political objection to the acknowledgement of Freedom Day, there was a deeper commitment to its principle: the idea that the individual citizen in an independent nation should be allowed to use any part of that nation as their own.

The model of political allegiance was related to memories of genealogy and place, but rationalised by different people in different ways. Thus, although Vince would never vote MLP or support Freedom Day, he could understand the logic of sovereignty upon which the expulsion of the British was based.

The strong allegiance to party persists, however, despite the complexity of his views. This allegiance was a function of the genealogical and patronal links between places and parties. This, in turn, was reinforced by the system of patronage politics itself. During the political campaigns of recent memory, local political candidates would mobilise support and assistance in the form of canvassers from their constituency, in return for the promise of particularly sought-for employment - usually government employment, which is considered to be the most desirable as it is often undemanding and very secure. This, I was assured, was how politics worked; through a procedure identifiable as patronage.

Patronage Politics

Patronage politics determines that the distribution of resources is not achieved by the indifferent bureaucratic means that are ideally the process of an efficient state. Rather, they are distributed according to the strategic and personalised connections of particular

individuals working as state functionaries.⁴⁶ Thus, for example, rather than employment being given to those who deserve it, on the basis of ability and the apparently indifferent and meritocratic process of assessment and interview, it is given on the basis of reciprocal return for political support. The assistance given to political candidates, in the form of canvassing, is therefore directly translatable into employment as a *quid pro quo*.

The system of patronage, as it related to the people of *L-Arcipierku*, and indeed St Paul's parish as a whole, saw a relatively disenfranchised, subaltern group in contrast to a relatively well-connected and influential stratum. The former had more indirect access to resources, as they had more indirect access to the people who controlled resources. The latter, on the other hand, found it easier to command the reciprocity of political patrons. This distinction, this gradient mapped onto the gradient between high-town and low-town, in spatial terms, and onto the distinction between *L-Arcipierku* and the rest of the parish. To this extent, it also mapped onto the moral distinction, or distinction based on respectability, between 'low' people, who were *baxxi*, *ħamalli*, and the respectable *puliti*.

The distinction can be demonstrated by comparing Ray DuPont with Simon Cumbo, over their relative degree of connectedness with the two main Valletta politicians of the early 1990's: Ray Bondin and Carmel Cacopardo. Bondin was the chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project (VRP), and although he lost his parliamentary seat in the 1992 general election, was an important and influential figure. This was not least because of the considerable budget he controlled as head of the VRP. This could be used to provide employment and complete projects for influential friends or loyal supporters.

Ray DuPont had known Ray Bondin's cousin, Dante since they were children together at the Legion of Mary and doctrine classes. He had also known Ray since he was a child. They were neighbours and enjoyed a friendly relationship, that was based on the mutual acknowledgement of influence. Ray knew that if he had any problems, he could approach Bondin as a member of the same neighbourhood, the same background, and the same strata of society. They had grown up together, as peers and this had created a certain mutual respect. Similarly, Bondin knew that Ray was an influential figure during election campaigns. This was demonstrated in 1995, when the General Secretary of the Nationalist

⁴⁶ As discussed in the Introduction, the differences between patronage and brokerage have been the subject of anthropological debate. The differentiation is largely related to the structural positions of patron, broker and client respectively (see Paine, 1971). Here, I refer to patronage as a cultural idiom within and through which political relations are conducted. It therefore applies equally to patron-client relations and broker-client relations. In each case, the idiom is the same; that of patronage.

Party, Austin Gatt decided that he was going to stand for office in the next general election. Gatt's first move was to contact all the people in Valletta, where he would stand, who he knew were influential. They were invited to a reception at his house, and told of his intention to stand. The DuPonts were invited, because they were acknowledged as people who could sway opinion. Thus, although the DuPonts did not have direct access to resources, in the sense that they did not control their distribution themselves, they did have close, friendly contacts with those who did. These contacts were based on a shared personal history, and the acknowledgement of a mutual interdependence.

By contrast, Simon Cumbo's access to Carmel Cacopardo was based solely on the reciprocal obligations of a political patron to his canvassing client. Cacopardo, like Bondin, was in a position to distribute employment to his electors. He was the chief architect at the Kalaxlokk port development in the south of Malta, and was responsible there, for hiring labour. He also lost his parliamentary seat in the election of 1992, but before then had been supported by not only Simon Cumbo, but also several other people from *L-Arcipierku*. In particular, the two eldest of Salvina and Guzi Sciberras's three sons, Mario and Paul, were loyal campaigners for Cacopardo's cause.

They had initially been rewarded for this support. Both were given employment at Kalaxlokk, but on temporary, unstable, contracts. After a few months, the development started winding down, and they were soon released from their employment. They were disappointed by Cacopardo's inability to provide them with alternative work, and petitioned him to try and find them something else. His inability to do so was seen as a denial of his responsibility as a patron to whom they had given their support. They quickly began to bad-mouth him among the local electorate, and he soon developed a bad reputation. Similarly, Simon, who had hoped that Cacopardo would help him when the roof of his house collapsed, turned against him when it became clear that he would not help. He had denied his reciprocal obligation.

However, despite this bad reputation he developed with the electors of Valletta, Cacopardo was still in a position to progress through the ranks of the party organisation. He turned his attentions from electioneering to journalism, and was soon occupying a prominent position at *In-Nazzjon Tagħna*, and at party headquarters.

At a local level, the Sciberras and Cumbo families still grumbled about him, however. He had reneged on the implicit contract that, in return for political help with

canvassing, he would give them work, and make the necessary connections with the Housing or Works Departments to sort out Simon's domestic problems.

The issue was discussed one day in the sacristy of St Paul's church. It was late evening, and a group of *Pawlini* had just finished reorganising the paraphernalia for one of the minor feasts. They stood around, as was the habit, discussing the issues of the day. Nazju Cumbo, Simon's brother, mentioned that the family had still received no help with their house from Cacopardo. It was not good enough. He would never support him again. Those present concurred. It was an outrage.

Then the conversation turned to other politicians in Valletta who might be more efficient. Somebody mentioned Manwel Bonnici, who had been a member of parliament from 1966 to 1987. He had been instrumental in 1972, in representing the people of *L-Arċipierku* against the Labour administration. He organised a petition and tried to change the demolition policy. He was therefore popular among several *Pawlini*. In particular, Guži Cremona was a strong supporter. But he didn't think he would be of much help to either the Cumbo's or the Sciberras's. The problem was that Bonnici was "too good" (*tajjeb wisq*), according to Guži. He never promised anything to anybody, and never misappropriated any funds:

"Manwel's too good. That's his problem. And that went against him, when there are others who will do things for votes. When you're a politician, you have to."

This tallies with an observation reported to me by Jeremy Boissevain, that politicians' careers are dependent on them being in a position to give as much as they can to others without asking for anything in return (Boissevain, pers comm).

A younger *Pawlin*, George Bruno, interjected. He disagreed. This was precisely the kind of *clienteliżmu* ('clientelism') that the Nationalist government was trying to stamp out:

"That's the mentality that we have to change - that because you help a candidate you get a Government job, and then you don't do anything in the job. That's what's got to change - the idea that you can get something for nothing."

The term *clienteliżmu* entered the vocabulary of Maltese politics in the early 1990's, as the second stage of the Nationalist government's demonstration of its integrity. Whilst the later years of the 1980' had concentrated on accusing the outgoing Labour administration of *koruzzjoni* ('corruption'), it was now time to turn to the problem of clientelism in the public services. But the debate at a public level in government policy

contrasted with people's everyday, personal experience of trying to gain access to resources. This was at the centre of the disagreement between Guži and George. For whilst George was toeing the party line in calling for the end of clientelism, Guži was acknowledging the *realpolitik* of everyday attempts to get things done. This necessarily involved clientelism; the manipulation of resources by people who are well-placed to do so.

The cases of Cumbo, Sciberras and Cacopardo demonstrates the options available to those who are well-connected with influential people. The people from *L-Arċipierku* were unable to halt the progress of Cacopardo, because he was well-connected. He had friends at party headquarters, and when his political supporters ceased to be necessary, he was able to renege on his obligation to provide resources in return for canvassing. Nothing could be done to halt his progress, they had no leverage with which to force his hand. They remained, respectively, roofless and jobless. Ray DuPont, on the other hand, maintained his close relationships with Ray Bondin, and continued to be used for the Austin Gatt campaign. He was well-connected, and remained so.

Patronage and the Well-Connected

The difference between these two types of people, or two strata of Maltese society, is expressed in the vernacular, as one between 'the people', *il-poplu*, conceived as a subaltern group which lacked proper access to resources, and the 'well-connected'. This latter category are referred to with a variety of metaphors. The most prominent refers to people who have connections as being *tal-qalba* ('of the heart'). The implication is that if one is *tal-qalba*, getting things done - and particularly getting access to government services - is made much easier. One has close contact, and leverage over, the people who have control over these resources, and who are therefore informal brokers of the state provision.

I had my attention drawn to this process on several occasions during fieldwork. In all cases, the systems of state patronage were dominated by rules of reciprocity. The first example was of a couple I knew who had recently returned from several years in Britain and bought a flat in a rural suburb of San Ġwann. The house was fully-built, but lacked a telephone. An application was made, but nine months later they had heard nothing about when it might arrive. Then one morning while the wife and her mother were shopping in Sliema, the latter spotted a former neighbour and fellow member of the Union Club - a kind of colonial-style sports club that had originally been the British Officers' Club - who happened to be Minister for Youth, Culture and the Arts. To the embarrassment of her daughter, she dashed across the road and 'had a word' with him. Within a month, their telephone had arrived, to the annoyance of neighbours who remained on the waiting list.

A similar story surrounds my own application for a telephone at the flat I moved to in Valletta, after leaving the DuPont household. Like my return migrant acquaintances, I made an application and waited, expecting perhaps a month's delay. I told one or two of my local informants about my application and they immediately took me to see the Telemalta (the telephone company) supervisor for Valletta. He is *ħabib taghna* ('our friend') they told me, and would be able to arrange things.

After talking to the supervisor, I was taken aside rather conspiratorially by one of the assembled *Pawlini*:

"If you have any problems, tell me. I know a few things about him (the supervisor), and if he doesn't give it (the telephone) to you I'll start talking. Leave it in my hands."

As with the return migrant couple, I had a phone within a month, thanks to the intervention of my informants who acted as secondary brokers, between myself and the broker of the state. He was in a position to manipulate resources on an arbitrary basis, rather than providing them according to the ideology of indifference produced by state bureaucracies. My informants were in a position to manipulate his position in this regard, because they "knew a few things about him".

In both these examples, the brokers involved give their services unconditionally. For the couple, this is a function of the obligatory reciprocity defined by the closeness of relations between mother and daughter. For myself, this was partly because, through extensive contact with the *Pawlini* I had established myself as a trustworthy and unthreatening presence, and partly because of the special treatment granted to privileged outsiders who manage to establish such a rapport.

It was assumed (no doubt accurately) that I would be unable to negotiate the process of having a telephone installed on my own. Not having any previous links with the supervisor, I would not be able to approach him on a personal basis, which is the key to assuring the provision of services. This lack of connection with the processes with which things are achieved became part of my Maltese persona, and led to my being habitually referred to as *miskin* - a poor thing who is lost and unconnected; bewildered and in need of help. But my lack of connectedness also meant a lack of expected reciprocity. Because I was assumed not to know people in the same way that locals did - I had no critical relations of reciprocity from which I could draw favours and so pass them on to others - my

relationships with people who helped me were somehow less problematic. Being helped did not implicate me, because I was not part of the overall system of reciprocity through which people gained access to resources. In short, I was not *tal-qalba*, and despite the fact that I had had the situation manipulated by somebody who was, this did not make me *tal-qalba*.

Another, rather more poetic metaphor used to refer to people who are well connected, is *tal-qaqocca* ('of the artichoke [heart]'). This is the same metaphor used when referring to *klikek* of male sociality (see chapter one). More prosaically, people who were well-connected were said to 'know what they have to do' - *jaf x'għandu jgħamel* - to get things done, or to 'know to whose house they have to go' - *jaf għand fejn għandu jmur*. In these formulations, rather than the closeness of the person to the sites of provision, it is that person's knowledge of the contours, or topology of bureaucratic provision, that is emphasised. The people may not necessarily be close, but they know how to get to, the resources they need.

Patronage and the Subaltern

Contrasting with these well-connected people are the subaltern *poplu*. *Il-poplu* is the generalised term for the Maltese people. It means not only people, but also population, and has connotations of the Italian *popolino*, or little people. Indeed, during a controversy in 1994 over buildings that had been erected without permits, the Maltese people became known as the *ħut żgħir* ('little fish'), who stood in opposition to the 'big fish' of the well-connected.

The metaphor emerged because the government was taking steps to demolish many of the small, hand-built beach-huts that line many parts of the Maltese shore-line. The beach-huts were seen by some as an ecological problem, and an unsightly embellishment of the otherwise beautiful rocky shores. For many Valletta people, however, they were a valuable summer resource. Because many people could not afford to rent accommodation for their summer breaks, they built their own, and spent their summer afternoons by the sea, for free.⁴⁷ The parts of shoreline in Valletta, beneath *L-Arcipierku* at a place known as *taħt iż-żiemel* ('under the horse'), the rocks were covered in such small huts. Some were used to store fishing equipment, and others for cooking, eating or even sleeping, during a day out at the beach. When it was announced that they were to be demolished, by government order, there was a major outcry. In particular, people complained of hypocrisy. How come 'the people' had to lose their beach huts, when large hotel and housing complexes were being

⁴⁷ Many Maltese workers work only half days during the summer months of July, August and September. Teachers and school students do not work at all during these months.

built without permits all over Malta by well-connected developers?⁴⁸ There was one law for the 'big fish', it was argued, and another for the 'little'. In the meantime, it was 'the people' who lost out.

This happened even under a Nationalist administration. It was impressed upon me by Vince, who as I have already demonstrated, was happy to criticise the party. Despite unconditional support for the PN, he was not afraid to criticise its policies, and even its central ideology. Referring to the controversy over the boat-houses, he saw this as indicative of the Nationalists' bias towards the upper echelons of Maltese society:

"Even our party never did anything for 'the people' (*il-poplu*). They were always on the side of those with moustaches."

'Those with moustaches' (*dawk tal-mustaċċi*) were the well-placed, the respectable, the 'polite'. In this case it is those who are supported, protected, by the party and by the government. The larger fish in the small sea of Maltese building development.

This observation relates to the nature of the people of *L-Arċipierku* as a subaltern group, who lack both access to resources, and adequate representation. In referring to this question, Simon Cumbo made the following observation, which relates these questions to that of the creation and maintenance of a political sphere of public opinion in Malta. Comparing Malta to England, he argued that one of the main differences, and the essential problem with Malta, was that there was no public opinion:

"In England you have public opinion, but here we have no public opinion."

By this he meant, that 'the people' (*il-poplu*) had no way of entering into the discussions which formulated the public sphere. As a subaltern group, they were disenfranchised, and simply had to respond to the policies of those who had access to resources, and whose opinions were represented in political debate: namely, those who were close to the centre of political gravity - those *tal-qalba* or *tal-qaqoċċa*, those *tal-mustaċċi*.

⁴⁸ A major scandal of the early 1990's was the development at Busietta Gardens, in Madliena, near Gharghur. Here, a large, luxurious complex of villas was built on the side of one of Malta's most attractive valleys. The problem was that, according to planning legislation, no buildings should be erected in valleys. To do so requires a special concession. In the case of Busietta Gardens, the concession was not applied for until after the complex had been built. The controversy, which was pursued mainly by the centrist, ecological Alternative Democratic Party (*Alternattiva Demokratika*), fuelled debate for several months.

If *il-poplu* ('the people') were categorically opposed to the well-connected (*tal-qalba*), the terms of this opposition, or what the two strata competed over, was access to the resources of the government. The government in Malta is referred to by the generalised category *il-gvern*, 'the government'. As Brian Beeley (1959) observed, *il-gvern* is a generalised category, because it represents an anonymous and potentially threatening - certainly opaque - bureaucratic structure. We have already seen how one of the principal ways of referring to people who are in a good position to gain access to government resources is through their knowledge of the topology of its institutions. Somebody who 'knows how' to access the resources of the government. This means that in the context of government brokerage, the anonymity and generalisation of the category *gvern* is constantly tempered by the proximity and personal nature of the way in which it is accessed. *Il-Gvern*, then, is an abstract and anonymous category of service provision which is nevertheless accessed via the very concrete and immediate mechanisms of patronage.

Il-Gvern not only referred to the anonymous levels of bureaucracy which we might associate with the state, however, but also to the government of the day. The access to resources via brokers and patrons depends on them being supporters of the same party. In both examples cited above, of the mechanisms of patronage - my own example and that of the return migrant couple - the resource providers, brokers and recipients came from the same political background, so to speak. All were Nationalists and the events occurred during a Nationalist administration. Indeed, political identity was one of the links of similarity that enabled my *Pawlina* friends to define the Telemalta supervisor as a friend. Similarly, the influence over the Minister enjoyed by the return migrant's mother was dependent on political similarity. Finding political 'friends' in a position to help depended, in turn, on the right government being in power. Thus when one tried to gain access to the resources of *il-gvern*, the degrees of success or failure one was likely to achieve depended on what shade of *gvern* was in power at the time: Labour or Nationalist.

In general, when the party in power was the party one was identified with, then access to resources became much smoother. The connections one could draw on led more directly to those in control of distribution. One could either talk directly to one's local politician or to their local canvassers for help. Moreover, the chances are that lower-level patrons would also be party supporters, as was the case with the Telemalta supervisor. The logical converse of this was that a profound sense of disenfranchisement was experienced by those whose party is not in government. One of the main complaints levelled by my Valletta Nationalist acquaintances about the years of Labour rule was the fact they could get no access to the resources they had rights to as Maltese citizens.

This disenfranchisement emerged because of the habitual tendency of incoming governments to instigate wide-ranging reforms in the public services. When Labour came to power in 1971, large numbers of prominent civil servants were made redundant and replaced by politically sympathetic people. In 1987, the incoming Nationalists promised there would be no such redundancies. Instead, they embarked upon a wide-ranging restructuring of the whole state bureaucracy which effectively took away the power of the old Labour bureaucrats, who although they were not made redundant, were made ineffectual as patrons or brokers.

The disenfranchisement of the subaltern *poplu*, in the face of the anonymous *gvern*, therefore, is exacerbated when the *gvern* of the day is not one's own. During these periods of history, it is almost as if the nation itself is not one's own. This is how people of *L-Arċipierku* referred to the years of Labour rule. They were habitually generalised as *iż-żmien tal-Labour* ('the Labour times') - a phrase which resonates with other periodisations of Maltese history. Most notably, *iż-żmien tal-Labour* is comparable with *iz-zmien tal-Kavaleri* ('the time of the Knights') or *iż-żmien tal-Ingliżi* ('the time of British colonial rule'). In each case, it is referring retrospectively to a time when control of the nation is vested in a power considered external to the people, and particularly the people of *L-Arċipierku*. *Iż-żmien tal-Labour*, then, was the time when a hostile *gvern* acted upon a defenceless *poplu*, remembered most notably in the form of the nostalgic community of *L-Arċipierku*.

The generalised, opaque and anonymous Labour government was seen to be acting against the little people on the basis solely of its political prejudice. To this extent, the anonymous government also became an arbitrary and vindictive institution, but this could equally be the case when the government of the day was one's own.

Even during the PN years, the *Pawlini* complained of government policy; of the arrogance and hypocrisy of politicians. They complained of the powerlessness of the subaltern *ħut żgħir* ('little fish'), and the ability of certain people - for example, Carmel Cacopardo - to renege on the reciprocal contract of patronage, without serious redress.

This demonstrates the extent to which the *Pawlini* regarded themselves as subaltern: a social class who had little or no influence, and were clients to the local patron classes. Simon Cumbo's invocation of ideas of public opinion is particularly important, as it draws direct attention to the criteria for defining the identity of the subaltern and patron groups: participation, or lack of it, in the sphere of public decision-making. If, as discussed in the last

chapter, the people of *L-Arčipierku*, and the majority of *Pawlina*, were 'not good to be with (influential) people', then this was, firstly, because of their identification as *il-poplu* ('the people'), and secondly, because of the realisation that being part of *il-poplu* meant non-participation in the public sphere of politics and decision-making.

The antagonism between these two groups related to the aesthetics of respectability and the moral standing of the household, discussed in chapter two. It emerged, in particular, in relation to the *fešta* and its organisation, over which the subaltern group did have a certain amount of power and influence.

Chapter Five: Representing and Administering the *Festa* in the National Public Sphere⁴⁹

This chapter examines the relationship between the *festa* of *San Pawl* and its representation in national public culture. The arguments put forward about this representation, both by the well-connected and by the subaltern, relate to the significance of St Paul in the elaboration of national identity. The arguments also relate to the defining of class identities, and indeed those of masculinity. This contradicts Boissevain's assumptions that such manifestations are simply symbolic representations of localism and party political factionalism.

Generic *Festa*; Specific Identities

Festa literally means feast. But in the Maltese context it denotes the annual commemoration of the life - and death, in the case of martyrs - of a particularly significant saint. This is most often the saint to which a particular parish is dedicated (the titular saint), but may also be the saint to which a prominent secondary chapel or side-altar to the main parish church is dedicated. In the case of St Paul, and his commemoration in the *festa* of *San Pawl*, I am dealing with a titular saint.

In the 1960's, Jeremy Boissevain examined the extent to which the distinction between titular and secondary village *festi* ('feasts') became a means of expressing the antagonism between local political factions. The extent to which place relates to party politics has already been discussed. Here, I link party to place and *festa* allegiance.

Influenced by Boissevain's conclusions, subsequent ethnographers of Malta have approached the rural *festa* as a generic ritual form. Since his early ethnography, Boissevain has charted the development of *festa* and its escalation in relation to the globalising processes of modernity (Boissevain, 1965; 1984; 1988; 1991). He argues that local identity is portrayed in the *festa*, as an opposition to globalisation; and furthermore this process, this phenomenon, is the same in all its manifestations. Each particular *festa* is a version of the same, overall, process - a symbolic representation of local political allegiance against the incursions of modernity - common to much of Europe (Boissevain, 1992a). To this extent, there is an assumption that the symbol of identity is arbitrary. It is simply the one that happens to be there. The particular saint, rather than having any

⁴⁹ Parts of this chapter were presented as a poster presentation to the 1995 ASA Conference on 'Anthropology and Representation' in Hull.

intrinsic significance *qua* saint, is merely a peg upon which to hang the more fundamental quality of party political and local identity. This assumption of arbitrariness in the symbols of political and local identity is mirrored, to a certain extent, by Nazju Cumbo's observation that political allegiance depends on the accidents of being born into the politics of an area and a family (see chapter four). The same goes for the accident of being born into an area that supports a particular patron saint.

However, to subsume Maltese *festi* under the wider and generalised category of 'the Maltese *festta*' is to deny people's experiences of supporting particular saints. Although people such as Nazju Cumbo might well rationalise their support of St Paul through appeals to the arbitrariness of their birth, they nevertheless remain firmly committed to that saint, not as merely a symbolic peg on which to hang political and local identities, but as a major feature of social identity in itself.⁵⁰ As a symbolic portrayal of identity, *festta* is not arbitrary for the people involved in it. For them, it is of the utmost importance that the *festta* they support is *San Pawl*: none other carries with it the same connotations. These connotations are national, as well as local. This is the reason why, although Boissevain is correct in his observation that *festta* is a symbolic representation of local identity, the theory of this local ritual form needs to be expanded. In particular, it needs to be acknowledged that the *festta*, and particularly *San Pawl*, represents other types of identity, based on class, gender and nationality.

As well as the national significance of *San Pawl*, it is also important for the participants because of its implications for class identities. The particular dynamics of class relations, explored in the last chapter, and developed here in the context of *festta*, demonstrate the links between *festta* and class identities. The tensions between the well-connected patron grade, and the less connected subaltern class, run through the organisation and administration of the *festta*. Finally, as explored in chapters six and seven, the form of the *festta* itself means that its performance is related to the notions of gender and household, explored in their own context in chapters one and two, and in the context of *L-Arc'ipierku* in chapter three. There are therefore more general points to be made about the types of identities represented by *festta*, as well as specific ones, which relate to the particular position of St Paul in the Maltese world.

⁵⁰ Peter Worsley (1967) has made a similar point about totemism among Groote Eylandt Aboriginals. There, rather than simply an arbitrary signifier, the totem is embedded in a specific mythological context. This is how it is experienced and interpreted by the Aboriginals themselves.

St Paul and the Other Saints

The patron saint of every Maltese *fešta* is praised for its particular contribution to the world. Supporters of the saint will learn the saint's hagiography in great detail, presenting it as evidence of the saint's superiority, and relevance in their daily lives. Thus, St Dominic is exalted by his Valletta supporters, as the saint who developed an explicitly urban pastoral mission, and is therefore particularly suitable to their situation. St Publius, the patron of Floriana, is praised for having been the first Bishop of Malta, and therefore the first official of the Maltese church.

St Paul, for his part, precedes - and even succeeds - St Publius, for having been the person who converted him, and therefore the rest of the Maltese. He is therefore the figure at the very centre of Maltese religious belief; the person who originated the continuous tradition of allegiance to Christianity and Catholicism. This links Malta itself with the original church. For if St Peter was the rock on which the church of Rome was built, it was St Paul who stood on that rock and preached the new faith. It was he himself who had converted the Maltese, at the very beginning of church and national history.

St Paul is not only a local patron for the parish and *L-Arcipierku*, he is also the patron saint of the Maltese nation as a whole. This means that, for *Pawlini*, his appeal, and his potency,⁵¹ transcend the merely local and party political. This is not to say that St Paul, and indeed *San Pawl*, his *fešta*, are insignificant in the symbolisation of local and political allegiance, but to suggest also that the implications of being a supporter of St Paul - being *Pawlini* - are much larger than this.

This is a property of St Paul *qua* St Paul, and not of St Paul as simply a convenient symbolic peg on which to hang other identities. St Paul is important for the *Pawlini* because he links the local and the national, the religious and the political, extending his influence outwards rather than bracketing off a local space.

This means that the organisation of his *fešta* is a particularly heavy responsibility for those involved. The public rituals surrounding the commemoration of St Paul are not just for local consumption, but for the nation as a whole, and so they must be appropriate to that wider stage. The celebrations organised by the *Pawlini* are scrutinised

⁵¹ The potency, or power, of St Paul is most often expressed with reference to his historical significance, and only rarely through the use of abstract nouns such as *potir* ('power') or *saħħa* ('strength').

by a public that is national, not merely local, and this means that they are fiercely debated internally amongst the *Pawlina*, as well as externally in the nation as a whole.

St Paul and the Public Sphere

The main focus of debate coincides with the main line of tension outlined in the previous chapter; namely, the tension between the relatively well-connected and the relatively less so. This in turn relates to the extent to which the *festa* serves the interests of one or the other stratum of Valletta society, and the extent to which *San Pawl* should or should not be associated with politics. The tension also relates to antagonisms between the different groups of men, or *klikek* who spent time *Għand Lawrenz*. In particular, there were tensions between older members of the Committee of *L-Għaqda tal-Pawlina* ('The Association of *Pawlina*').

As argued in the last chapter, tensions between the well-connected and the relatively less so were associated with tensions over participation in the public sphere of decision-making, and of creating public opinion. They therefore related to the areas of public office and public debate, that were denied to 'the people', but available to those with connections. In the last chapter, I demonstrated how this distinction related to public office, and issues of national politics. The distinction also prevailed in relation to degrees of access and participation in public culture.

By public culture, I mean the sphere of mass-produced, publicly available discursive material available in the media. To this extent I conform to Appadurai and Breckenridge's usage when they define public culture as a "zone of cultural debate" (1988: 6). As argued in chapter four, this zone, in Malta, is divided along party-political lines. This meant that debate about *L-Arċipierku* in the Maltese press led to parallel debate over cultural identities - based on political party, but also on class and indeed national identity. Here, I examine debate in public culture over the issue of St Paul's shipwreck. An analysis of this debate shows the specific importance of the *festa* of *San Pawl*. It also, however, shows the extent to which public culture, as a zone of cultural debate, relates to another, similar, zone: that of face-to-face debate, within the public sphere of everyday interaction.

The media are particularly well-developed in Malta. The press included one English language and two Maltese dailies, which were widely read, and had a long tradition of vitriolic letters to the editor. Radio, since its deregulation in 1992, had provided a more discursive medium, with phone-in and discussion programmes abounding

on the 10 national stations.⁵² Television was dominated by Italian channels, but there was a single government channel that in the early 1990's broadcast an increasing number of locally-oriented programmes between the British- and American-made dramas.⁵³ These were mostly discussion programmes in the form of public debates about the state of Maltese society.

The development of the media would suggest a 'transformed' public sphere in the Habermas mould (Habermas, 1989), whereby public debate becomes transformed from a productive, critical discussion on political issues, into an object for consumption by an uncritical mass. However, in the Maltese situation, this transformation is not fully completed, largely because the public sphere of the mass media operates in articulation with, rather than in opposition to, the public sphere of face-to-face communication. Thus, as discussed in the last chapter, politics was debated both in the face-to-face encounters that are the pre-requisite of patronage politics, and the more broadly circulated media of public culture. The same is true for elements of public culture not directly related to politics.

The public figures who write for the newspapers or appear on radio and television are also personally familiar. Like politicians, they are people 'at a distance', because participating directly in the zone of cultural debate that is public culture. But they are also people 'close by', because they are people with whom one could have, or conceive of having, personal, face-to-face, relationships. Despite the fact that those involved in both political and public culture are the relatively well-connected, they are nevertheless 'open', to be engaged with, rather than closed off from public attention. This personal familiarity, and immediacy, makes the tension between the relatively influential or well-connected and the relatively less so, even more acute. The availability of public figures consolidates the frustrations of the subaltern groups, whilst at the same time offering the possibility that connections would be successful. Such is the power of political patrons to promise that which they can just as freely deny: access to resources. The case of Carmel Cacopardo, discussed in the last chapter, serves to demonstrate this fact.

The forms the media themselves take emphasise the sense in which public figures can be approached on a personal basis. The preponderance of phone-in radio shows, and

⁵² In June 1994 there were 10 national stations broadcasting on the radio, and plans to set up local stations in several localities. By summer 1995, a local station had been set up, serving the villages of Naxxar, Mosta and Għargħur.

⁵³ In 1994, a second television station was set up by the Labour Party, which argued that the state station was simply a mouthpiece for the PN government.

the plans for developing local radio, have meant that the broadcast radio operates as a node for private telephone calls, or a public version of interactions which could just as easily occur face-to-face. The media are used to personalise the space of public debate; to personalise political patronage, and indeed the nation as a whole. The public media, then, are not the dislocated spaces of an imagined national community producing debate for consumption by the populace. Rather, both newspaper and radio lie somewhere between the categories of public and private communication, for although they are key elements in a national public culture, the persons involved in creating this culture are also personally familiar. They may be friends, neighbours, acquaintances.

One category of people who were particularly involved in public culture, were priests, many of whom combined their roles of public orator (from the pulpit) and private counsellor (from the confessional) with those of writer or media personality. One such figure was one of the canons at St Paul's church, *Dun* (from the Italian, *Don* - 'master') John Ciarlò. In the early 1990's there were 8 canons in the St Paul's chapter (*kapitlu*), of whom five regularly celebrated mass at the church. The chapter was headed by an Archpriest (*Arċipriet*), who had two vice-priests to help with pastoral matters in the parish.

Dun Ciarlò was often in the parish, celebrating mass at least once a week. He was also a familiar name in the letters columns of all the major newspapers, however, being a frequent writer against the perceived rise of satanism in Malta.⁵⁴ He was also instrumental, in the early 1990's, in a public debate that concerned St Paul. An examination of the debate serves to demonstrate the significance of St Paul for the Maltese as a whole, and therefore the importance of his commemoration in *San Pawl*. It also shows the extent to which debates about St Paul are conducted at both public and personal, national and local levels. My account of the debate comes entirely from written sources, and therefore the sphere of public culture. However, my knowledge of Ciarlò and his relationship with the people of St Paul's was gained from the face-to-face ethnographic methods of participant observation.

The debate concerned the shipwreck of St Paul in Malta, to which the parish church of St Paul is dedicated, and which the 'official' name of *Għand Lawrenz*

⁵⁴ This was a major preoccupation in early 1990's Malta. The signs of satanism were frequently reported to have been found, and leader articles discussed devilish practices and interviewed both exorcists and people who claimed to have been possessed. The panic about the rise of satanism can be seen, in itself, as a response to the crisis of modernity, just as witchcraft has been linked in other contexts to social crises (see Marwick, 1970).

commemorates.⁵⁵ For *Pawlini*, this is the seminal moment in Maltese history, marking as it does the conversion of the Maltese to the Catholic faith. According to St Luke's *Acts of the Apostles*, St Paul, on his way to Rome to be tried for preaching Christianity, was shipwrecked on Malta (*New Jerusalem Bible*, 1985; *Acts of the Apostles*: 28;1). There he stayed for three months, converting Publius, the local leader, to Christianity, and thereby sewing the seeds of the faith that was to remain as the centrepiece of Maltese society.

Religion and national identity are inextricably linked in Malta. Before British rule (1800-1964) it had effectively been a theocracy under the Knights of St John, and during the colonial period legislation assured the position of the church. Since Independence the prominence of the church has been maintained, despite the anti-clericalism of the Labour Party.⁵⁶

The Nationalists, for their part, were supporters of the church. Since its creation it had always been the party of the clergy,⁵⁷ and this continued until, and beyond, the time of my fieldwork. In his Independence Day speech of 1992, the Nationalist Prime Minister, Eddie Fenech Adami made explicit reference to the Catholicism of the Maltese. This is no doubt partly a consequence of his close relations with the Rector of the University, Rev Peter Serracino-Inglott, who is widely regarded as the 'intellectual wing' of the PN (see chapter three).

The centrality of the church in Malta was traceable back in popular history to the shipwreck of St Paul. Even non-*Pawlini* I met would remark with pride that Malta was mentioned in the Bible, as the site of St Paul's shipwreck.

When in the late 1980's, German theologian Heinz Warnecke published a thesis which claimed that the *Melite* referred to in the original Greek *Acts* was not Malta, but the Ionian island of Cephallenia, there was a major outcry. His argument was initially publicised in *The Sunday Times (Malta)*, where a lengthy article appeared in February 1989.

⁵⁵ As noted in chapter one, *Ghand Lawrenz* is actually called *San Paolo Naufrago*. This is Italian for 'St Paul's Shipwreck'.

⁵⁶ For a fuller treatment of church-state relations, and particularly the church's conflict with the Labour party, see Koster, 1984.

⁵⁷ Many of the early campaigners for the Nationalist Party in the late 1800's were priests. See Frenco, 1979.

The Sunday Times (Malta) is a curious publication, occupying a space somewhere between a serious tabloid such as *The Daily Express* and a scholarly journal. Each edition usually contains at least one learned article, usually by a local historian, that is well-researched, containing footnotes and bibliography. It is therefore the medium for scholarly, as well as political, debate. Moreover, it is also the medium for the articulation of the personal and public modes of debate. Letters to the editor are a prominent source of debate, and replies to learned articles make the publication something of a forum for discussion of topical issues. The newspaper also reports on public fora held throughout Malta on a variety of topics.

In May 1989 a further article reported on a public forum held at the German-Maltese Circle, an organisation for cultural exchange. This was an account, in the public medium of a mass-circulation newspaper, of face-to-face debates in a different, but related, public sphere.

Was St Paul Shipwrecked in Malta?

Warnecke had been invited to explain his thesis that St Paul had been shipwrecked on the Ionian island of Cephallenia, rather than Malta. He argued that rather than the *Melite* of Roman description, which was Malta, St Luke must have been referring to the *Melite* of the Greek Argonauts' legend. His evidence was based on a discussion of the shipwreck account in *Acts*, and whether or not the characteristics of the island described there, could actually have been Malta.

Firstly, he pointed to the account's reference to the building of a fire for warmth. It is unlikely that this would have been needed in Malta, but was probably quite likely to have been in Cephallenia. The average temperature in Malta during October, the month of shipwreck, is twenty-two degrees celsius, whereas Cephallenia frequently has snow at that time of year. Secondly, he argued that the reference to the inhabitants of the island being *barbaroi*, or barbarians, suggests Cephallenia rather than Malta. Whereas the former was a Greek island hitherto unincorporated into the Roman empire, the latter was an important imperial outpost. Thus while inhabitants of Cephallenia would have been regarded as barbarians, those of Malta "could have easily passed as Romans." (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*, 29/5/95). Thirdly, he argued that whilst the *Acts* account refers to St Paul being lodged with the island's chief man (Publius), close to the shipwreck site, there was nowhere in Malta where shoreline and settlement were this close. In Cephallenia, on the other hand, the capital city was close to a rocky outcrop well-known for shipwrecks. Fourthly, he argued that Malta, not having any marshy areas, would

have been free from malaria. Cephallenia had widespread malarial marshes. This is significant, in that the act St Paul had performed to convince Publius to convert, had been to cure his father from fever; presumably malaria. Finally, Warnecke argued that the island referred to by St Luke could not have been Malta because it has no poisonous snakes. *Acts* describes how St Paul had been attacked by a viper when putting more wood onto the fire, but had not been hurt. This had convinced the locals that he was a good man, but would have been impossible in Malta, because no vipers live there. In Cephallenia, on the other hand, poisonous snakes abound, and are even incorporated into popular religious ritual.

At each point, Warnecke was refuted by the Maltese at the forum, many of whom were priests. Although it was true that the average October temperature was twenty-two degrees, this did not necessarily account for the weather on particular days. The fact that the Maltese were Roman subjects did not mean that they spoke Latin, and the local dialect - which all assumed to be Maltese - would have been regarded as 'barbarian'. There was archaeological evidence to suggest that there were Roman ports where the island's chief man might have lived close to the shore, and the fever referred to need not have been malaria. It could just as easily have been undulant fever, which was, and is, a common Maltese affliction. Finally, the fact that there were no snakes in modern Malta does not necessarily mean their absence in antiquity. Nineteenth century sources were subsequently found which suggested that the ecology of ancient Malta may well have supported a variety of species (Cassar Pullicino, 1992: 124-125).

The forum seems to have begun with a friendly and jovial atmosphere, but become rather heated, as local priests defended the integrity of their belief in the *Acts* account. The origins of their religiosity, itself central to Maltese society, depended on this account. The debate continued periodically in the Maltese press over the next few years, and eventually led to the publication of a book, edited by *Dun Ciarlò* and his friend Michael Galea (Galea & Ciarlò, 1992). In it, the criticisms of Warnecke's thesis were once more set down, not only by local scholars, but also by another German, Jurgen Wehnert. This became the 'official' Maltese response to the Warnecke thesis, and therefore a definitive defence of the nation's identification with St Paul. In many ways it mirrors Michael Herzfeld's conclusions about Greek folklorists, whose writings represent a defence of the integrity of identity against the incursions of Anglo-American ethnographers (Herzfeld, 1987: 66).

In the Maltese case, the debate was over the intrusions into historical tradition by those who, as foreigners, were *ipso facto* unqualified to comment. As a whole, the debate

raised questions about not only the factuality of the biblical account, but also the legitimacy of foreigners writing about Malta. In particular, local scholars were annoyed that Warnecke had never been to Malta or consulted local sources, before publishing his thesis. I discussed the matter in 1990 with historians at the University. They were outraged that a thesis of such importance for Maltese society should be produced at such a distance:

"It's ridiculous...everybody thinks they can just write what they like [about Malta]...he didn't even come here!"

This was not merely anger at their being talked about by an outsider, however, it was also fundamental to the arguments in favour of St Paul's shipwreck on Malta. In the original forum, and subsequent writing on the issue, appeals were directly made to the necessity of taking into account the long Pauline tradition in Malta. Paul Guillaumier, an important figure in the debate, conceded the absence of solid documentary or archaeological evidence for Christianity in Malta before the third or fourth centuries, but suggests that the sheer value of the earliest remains should be convincing enough. There seems no reason to doubt St Luke:

"No...histrionics and acrobatics are needed to substantiate the humble but venerable origins of Maltese Christianity. In the absence of more historical evidence, there need be no taboo either in admitting that, so far, the aetiology of Maltese Christianity does not yield a date earlier than the third-fourth century...Nor, from the lack of mention of conversions in the Acts, should one necessarily prescind from the possibility that St Paul may have preached the Gospel and left a nucleus of faithful, first among whom Publius; a possibility, backed by a belief enshrined in the history, culture and identity of the local inhabitants as Maltese and Christians." (*The Sunday Times (Malta)*, 8/11/92: 42).

This, above all, was seen as incontrovertible proof of the *Acts* account. Strength of tradition, then, was seen as evidence enough for St Paul's shipwreck on Malta. As *Dun Ciarlò* put it to me:

"You just have to be Maltese to know that St Paul was shipwrecked here."

In the debate on St Paul, and the origins of the Maltese church, *Dun Ciarlò* emerged as something of a crusader for the cause. He organised the official response to Warnecke, marshalling his critics not only in the semi-academic medium of *The Sunday Times (Malta)*, but also in academic publications. He was therefore very much in the public eye. But for the people of St Paul's parish, he was also personally familiar.

Naturally, he took mass and confessions⁵⁸ as part of his canonical duties, but he had also been instrumental in the setting up of the *Arċipierku* youth centre in the 1960's. The memory of him in this capacity went alongside that of *Ċensu Tal-Casan*, therefore, for people brought up in *L-Arċipierku*. Guži Cremona told me on one occasion of how he had used to go to the youth centre and cause trouble. *Dun Ciarlò* had been firm, but understanding, even when Guži had tried to hit him. He was consequently remembered as a significant agent in the nostalgic community that *L-Arċipierku* represented, and was intimately tied in to people's sense of place.

However, *Dun Ciarlò's* familiarity was not only limited to the people of St Paul's parish. Nationally familiar in the public sphere, he was also personally familiar at a national level. Like all prominent priests, he was seen throughout the country at various meetings and events. He could be approached, like any priest, to take confession, and was well-known throughout Malta. Indeed, he was regarded by my *Pawlini* informant-friends as being particularly good at taking confessions. He was good at explaining the consequences of particular actions, and the ways in which one could avoid problematic situations.

He was therefore not simply a distant academic or religious public figure, but someone with whom one could have, or at least think of having a more intimate relationship. He was defender of the national religious character. But he could also, through confession, defend the intimate spaces of individual morality, and through his role in *L-Arċipierku*, the private significance of personal memories.

It would be unwise to overstate the homology here, between memories of *L-Arċipierku* and *Dun Ciarlò's* role therein, and his role in the defence of the tradition of St Paul, but connections can be made. In both cases, he was the defender of a significant historical feature of *Pawlini* identity. On the one hand, the place where many of them had lived, and was regarded as the 'heart' of St Paul's parish; on the other hand, the central event which defined them as *Pawlini*, and was commemorated by them every year.

This joint role was conferred not only on *Dun Ciarlò*, but also had ramifications with regard to the organisation of the *fešta* itself. For just as *Dun Ciarlò* defended the

⁵⁸ Confessional practices remain a regular feature of people's lives in Malta, however outmoded they may have become elsewhere in the Catholic church (David Murphy, pers comm).

integrity of the local and the national, so the people who organised the *festa* had responsibility for creating in it an adequate representation of local and national interests. The job of negotiating these interests was invested in the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* ('Association of *Pawlini*').

The *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*

The *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* was set up in 1970 after a major argument occurred on *festa* day itself: 10th February. These events, and the history of the *Għaqda* were commemorated in an article in the *festa* programme for 1995. Under the headline "The birth of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*: A Providential Storm?", it commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the setting-up of the *Għaqda*.

My account is based partly on this document, partly on the accounts of informant-friends *Għand Lawrenz*, and partly on interviews with older *Pawlini*, particularly *Ċikku Tabone* (see chapter three), who was a member of the first *Kumitat* ('Committee').

On the day of the *festa*, as with all other *festi*, the statue of the patron saint is taken out of the church and, carried with large wooden poles by a team of twelve men, is lifted in procession around the streets of Valletta (see chapter seven). It is the high-point of the *festa*, and one which holds particular emotional significance. It is therefore important that this event occurs. The problem is that, because St Paul's *festa* occurs in February, it is often threatened by bad weather. Because the statue is antique, it cannot be taken out of the church in the rain. This means that in order to complete the *festa* properly, there must be good weather on February 10th.

Discourse prior to the *festa*, therefore, often involves the rather anxious assessment of long-term weather prospects. These conversations often become heated, as anxiety for the *festa* translates into vociferous debate. In 1970, the debate became particularly acute. It looked as though the clergy were not going to allow the procession to take place. The decision lay in the hands of the chapter, and more specifically in those of the Archpriest. An argument began in the sacristy that led to the formation of the *Għaqda*:

"Everybody was anxiously waiting for the person who took it upon themselves to ring...the Meteorological Office to get the official weather forecast. Others began shouting their own forecasts. Some people shouted. Everybody had their own version. Everybody wanted Paul to go out and bless the unique Valletta streets, but in circumstances like those you want to consider your decision.

On occasions like those everything begins to get confused with everything else. One argument leads to another. Everybody thinks they're right. When all is said and done, [the decision] wasn't everybody's responsibility. In a word, it was the kind of situation that not for the first time became heated." (St Paul's Parish, 1995: 8 - my translation)

Guži Cremona remembered the day, and in particular the actions of Rev Carmel Zammit (known as *Dun Karm*), one of the parish vice-priests. He was generally a placid man, but was prone to explosions of temper. On this occasion, he got incredibly frustrated with the responsibility of calming down a situation which was getting more and more confrontational. The local laity were criticising the clergy, for suggesting that the procession might not take place. But what they did not understand was that the clergy had a responsibility to preserve the statue, which was the property of the church. Eventually, Dun Karm got so frustrated, that he grabbed the bench-top of the huge mahogany chest used to store damask drapes, and lifted it two feet from its normal position. He then let it crash down into place, with a huge bang. The feat clearly made a huge impression on the young Guži. He had been fifteen years old at the time, and told me the story in the context of demonstrating how strong Dun Karm was. He remembered the immediate silence that came to the sacristy, and people's stunned reactions.

Cikku Tabone, Guži's uncle also told me of the events of that day. He was walking up the hill to go and have a *festa* drink at La Valette, when Guži's father, his brother-in-law, came running up:

"'You've got to come,' said *Id-Daddu* [Guži's father's nickname], 'there's a huge argument in the sacristy - Dun Karm has gone crazy.' But by the time I got there, the argument had finished. The procession never took place. Then a few months later I got this message from Pawlu Asciak - I never knew him, except as a tenor⁵⁹ - to come to a meeting at the Anglo.⁶⁰ That was when the *Għaqda* was formed."

High-town *festa* and low-town *festa*

Prior to 1970, just as the parish as a whole was divided along a spatial gradient, so too was the *festa*. Whilst the St Paul's chapter and a few well-placed members of 'high-town' society organised the procession and festivities occurring in and around the church, a small group of men from 'low-town' organised their own festivities in *L-Arcipierku*. Cikku Tabone described it as a distinction between the *festa ta'fuq* ('high-town *festa*' - lit. '*festa* of up') and the *festa t'isfel* ('low-town *festa*' - lit. '*festa* of down').

⁵⁹ As indicated below, Pawlu Asciak was a well-known opera singer.

⁶⁰ The 'Anglo' is an abbreviation of the 'Anglo-Maltese Union', a small club on Merchant's Street.

He himself had organised the 'low-town *festa*' with *Id-Daddu* (Guži Cremona's father). They had collected money door-to-door, worked on street decorations and even hired bands for the neighbourhood festivities.

Pawlu Ascjak, on the other hand, had been central in organising the 'high-town *festa*'. He was a well-connected and 'polite' member of Maltese society. He was a well-known opera singer, from a well-connected and well-educated family. He suggested that an association be set up to take control of decisions about the *festa*, so as to avoid the kind of confrontation between laity and clergy that occurred in February 1970. The association, *L-Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, would have both lay and clerical members, and be responsible for all administrative and financial tasks associated with the *festa*.

The newly-formed *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* brought together the 'high-town' and 'low-town' *festi*. It is open to any people considered to be earnest supporters of the *festa*, who are practising Catholics and are committed to the apostolic legacy of St Paul. Such were the threefold regulations by which applications to join the *Pawlini* were judged. In practice, only the first criterion came into play, and not really even that one. In general, if somebody wanted to join the *Pawlini*, this was evidence enough of their allegiance to St Paul, his church and his *festa*.

Running the *festa* involved organising the collection of funds, through door-to-door collections and fund-raising activities such as bingo evenings, plays and song contests. It also involved managing and administering the spending of this money, on street decorations, band marches, fireworks and publicity. This was the work of the *Kumitat* ('Committee').

Membership entitled people to vote in the annual election for the *Kumitat*, who were responsible for the running of the *festa*, collecting and administering funds, booking and getting police permission for fireworks and bands, and making decisions about changes in the form or content of the *festa*. In general, the election of the new *Kumitat* was relatively uneventful, although periodically, controversy emerged, making the election discussions quite volatile.

At every stage, there was scope for criticism of the *Kumitat*, most often on aesthetic grounds. The most constant threat of censure came from those providing funds for the *festa*. If new street decorations were considered badly designed, hired bands did not play well, or fireworks were set off at the wrong times, there was criticism. Similarly, if

publicity material was not considered appropriate, complaints were made about the amount of money wasted. The potential tensions came from the relationship between decision-making officials, who were party to the Committee-meetings and commissions, and those who were excluded from these decisions. In particular, they centred around the deployment of money by the former, which had been provided by the latter. The tensions were therefore bound up in the overall politics of inclusion in the public, decision-making sphere of influence, and the exclusion from it of a subaltern class.

The creation of the *Għaqda* represented a union of 'high-' and 'low-town' influences, and was not approved of by all *Pawlini*. In particular, Ċikku Tabone's friend, Pawlu Debattista - a brother-in-law of Salvina Sciberras, and helper with the 'low-town *festa*' - had objected to the suggestion. He didn't go to the initial meeting, and effectively dropped out of *festa* organising. This action was indicative of the tensions between 'high' and 'low' influences on the *festa* at the time of the *Għaqda*'s creation. The union of the two *festi* created a context within which these tensions were played out. They relate not only to influence over the *festa* itself, but also more broadly, to the tensions between the relatively well-connected and the relatively less so.

I will highlight these tensions as they emerged from an argument that surrounded the 1993 poster for *San Pawl*, and what it represented. These tensions related to personal politics, the politics of distinction, and national party politics. They demonstrate the often diverging interests of what Baumann would call the two "competing constituencies" involved in the *festa* (1992: 99): those associated with the well-connected, *pulit* ('polite') 'high-town' Committee-members; and those associated with the relatively excluded, subaltern *Pawlini*. The distinctions between the two relate to differing ideas about the representation of the *festa* in publicity materials, and different ideas about the relationship between *Pawlini* identity and national identity. However, they also relate to the divisions of men into younger and older groups, seen *Għand Lawrenz* in chapter two. They therefore relate issues of national identity and class identity to those of gender and masculinity.

Publicity and the National Public Sphere

Publicity materials create a representation of the *festa* to advertise it nationwide, and provide collector's items for visiting ethnographers, or those who collect *Pawlini* memorabilia. In 1993, the form this representation took caused considerable controversy, both locally and nationally. Nationally, people know that the

commemoration of the saint is also the commemoration of the nation's spirituality, and so take note of how this commemoration is organised.

Although not one of the official national celebrations such as Carnival or Independence Day, which are overseen by *Il-Kumitat tal-Festi Nazzjonali* ('The National Celebrations Committee'), it is *de facto* a national *fešta*. It is marked by a national holiday, on which all Maltese are obliged by the church to attend mass. It is also the only *fešta* at which the attendance of the Archbishop, the Prime Minister and the President is habitual, if not obligatory. Links between the parochial and the national are further cemented by their constant reiteration during *San Pawl* itself. St Paul is referred to as *Pawlu ta' Malta* ('Paul of Malta'), *L-Apostlu ta' Malta* ('the apostle of Malta'), *L-Apostlu Missierna* ('the apostle, our father'), *Missier il-Maltin* ('the father of the Maltese'), and *Pawlu Tagħna* ('our Paul').

For the *Kumitat of L-Għaqda tal-Pawluni* ('The Committee of the Association of *Pawluni*'), this made the organisation of the *fešta*, and its smooth running, a big responsibility. More than at other parish *festi*, the eyes of the nation focus critically on *San Pawl*, and any problems receive a national airing. As with political and academic debate, such criticism was conducted simultaneously at a public and a personal level, in both the public media of newspaper, radio and television, and through a more intimate face-to-face exchange.

In their everyday life, people in Malta had a great deal of face-to-face contact with people outside their immediate locality. This contact provided an opportunity to discuss topics of collective interest. Clubs and associations of political, religious and secular varieties organise themselves on both national and local bases, so that, for example, each named locality in Malta will normally have its own PN club, its own MLP club and its own band club. Although they are local, they are also part of the wider, national organisations, and communicate with other, similar clubs in other localities. This was impressed upon me by Guži Cremona one day when we had gone to visit a *fešta* in one of the villages. The reassuring thing about travelling around, he said, was that you could always find a PN club and know that that was a place where people would have the same opinions.

The daily exchange of information at both local and national levels contributes to the articulation of public and personal spheres. Topics of interest are discussed and judgements made. One of these is the adequacy or otherwise with which organisations

such as the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* commemorate national events. The articulated nature of public and personal discussion meant that, just like politicians and academics, leading figures in the *Għaqda* are also personally familiar, public figures. This was very much the case for Hector Bruno, the President of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* in the early 1990's. He had campaigned for the Nationalist Party (PN) through the difficult 1987 general elections, and helped them to victory. The election came after 16 years of the MLP administration regarded by so many *Pawlini* as dangerous and vindictive. Shootings, bombings and rioting had been commonplace during those years, and several of the *Pawlini* had either been personally involved, or had lost friends or relatives in political killings. However, rather than use violence, Bruno resolved to run his campaign through the use of popular cultural forms. He produced satirical sketches that were circulated on tape and performed at political meetings. He also wrote music that set political songs or chants to popular contemporary tunes.

The technique was a great success, not least for Bruno himself, who was often described as being "more famous than the Prime Minister" after the elections. However, as with the former Nationalist Prime Minister, Gorg Borg Olivier, Bruno was not a distant public figure (see chapter four). Rather, he was somebody often seen in person at *festi* and in the small *pjazza* ('square') *quddiem il-qorti* ('in front of the law courts'), that serves as a national centre for the exchange of information. Here, groups of men congregate, particularly on Saturday mornings, to pick up snippets of information which can then be taken and circulated in the clubs and bars they frequent more regularly. This *pjazza* has a core of Valletta men who meet up every day, and are there for long hours every morning, sitting on the low parapet facing the neo-classical court building. They discuss politics, football, and other topics of collective, public interest. Besides this central group, other groups of men come and go, picking up snippets of information for circulation elsewhere. It is also a place where public fora are held. Public address systems are set up in the small *pjazza*, and panels of politicians are invited to discuss particular issues.⁶¹ Here, the wider public can confront their political representatives face-to-face.

⁶¹ This was done particularly by the *Alternattiva Demokratika* ('The Democratic Alternative'). Set up in 1987, they are a centrist, green party particularly popular among intellectuals and students. Opinions varied as to their significance, but some informants argued that in a few years, they would be powerful political players. They gained no seats in the general elections of 1987 or 1992, but achieved some inroads during the local council elections of 1993-1994.

plates 7 and 8



Everyday Activity Quddiem il-Qorti



Public Meeting Quddiem il-Qorti

The *pjazza quddiem il-qorti* could be said to be the very locus of the nation's sphere of public opinion, or at least the place where information of national concern is circulated. As Bruno himself said to me: "All you need to do is spend one hour *quddiem il-qorti* every day, and you'll soon find out who's sleeping with who". Bruno was a familiar figure here, and therefore, an approachable public figure, one with whom it was possible to imagine a personal relationship.

Criticisms of his reputation for being able to successfully organise public events, then, would be communicated simultaneously at both public and personal levels; in the public media of radio and television, but also through the personal networks of gossip and rumour that cross-cut local boundaries and in some senses originated *quddiem il-qorti*.

As President of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, he was ultimately responsible for the smooth running of *San Pawl*, and was therefore implicated in any critique of the *festa*, be it in the press, on the radio or *quddiem il-qorti*. He was therefore involved in the controversy that surrounded the 1993 poster, that was expressed at both public and personal levels.

The Publicity Poster of 1993

In mid-January of that year, several weeks before the *festa* was due to begin, a poster depicting the programme of events for *San Pawl* 1993 appeared in shops around St Paul's parish, and *Għand Lawrence* (see fig 7). It was a representation aimed at publicising the commemoration of the saint.

Against a black background was a black-and-white line drawing of St Paul standing with a muscular right arm raised high in the air. This is the familiar stance of the saint as he preached. Above his head was a large Maltese flag, signifying the national importance of St Paul. It contained the first of three colours on the poster.

To the left of the figure of the saint were the waves of the sea, picked out in blue, and to his right, in the corner, was an indistinct triangular shape in black and white. Onto the dark area of the 'sky' were printed the programme of *festa* events. At the top of the poster in yellow were the words *San Pawl '93*, above which was the motto:

Għax aħna Pawlini, aħna Maltin

"Because we're *Pawlini*, we're Maltese"

The poster was designed by Hector Bruno himself, and Antoine Farrugia, the *Għiaqda's* Director of Activities. The line drawing was done by Antoine, and he was very proud of it. When I told him that the poster might well feature in my thesis, he was keen to give me a copy, despite the fact that only a limited number had been printed. He told me that there was a tendency for people to collect items related to *San Pawl*, and that this was a problem when it came to the circulation of programmes and posters.

The poster was made available from the sacristy of the church itself, and a careful eye was kept on those who took a copy. Local business-people and shop-owners were considered the most worthy recipients, because they were most likely to display the poster in their windows. This would ensure publicity to not only a local audience, but also a national one. Valletta is Malta's capital and the biggest centre for financial, administrative and retail services. This means that every day a lot of people enter the city from outside (see Introduction), so the audience for posters put up in St Paul's parish generously outweighs the immediately parochial.

As a form of advertising, the poster had to contain all the necessary information to help those planning to attend the *fešta* schedule their participation (see Appendix 5). An itinerary was given, from the first day of the *fešta* to its culmination on February 10th, when the statue is carried around the streets of Valletta.

It was also widely considered to be an important representation of the spirit of the *fešta*, and therefore an artefact which should somehow show the texture of emotions and the degrees of commitment that people have to *San Pawl*.

PHOTOGRAPH OR DRAWING?: THE AESTHETICS OF THE POSTER

Most *fešta* posters carry a photograph of the official *vara* (the 'monumental statue', which is carried in procession on the *fešta* day) of the particular saint to be commemorated. But this particular poster was innovative. Rather than adopting the usual pattern of a photographic representation of the saint's *vara*, this poster used the line drawing created by Antoine Farrugia. In doing so, it tapped into notions of distinction and the comparative aesthetics of people placed in different social strata.

fig 8- The Poster for San Pawl 1993

Ghax ahna Pawlini ahna Maltin

SAN PAWL '93

Valletta

FESTI TA' GEWWA

Is-Sibt, 23 ta' Jannar, wara l-Qুদ্ধiesa tas-6 p.m.
 Hruġ tal-Vara ta' San Pawl min-Niċċi.
 It-Tnejn, 25 ta' Jannar fis-6 p.m.
 Quddiesja Koneċe brata li-akkazzjoni tal-Festa tal-Konvezzjoni ta' San Pawl
 Jmeridjana Rivu, Dun Pawl Gattavechia, u Dun Orlanwa ta' Talo fl-San Pawl.
 It-Tlieta u l-Gimgħa 28 u 29 ta' Jannar fis-7 p.m.
 Video għal San Pawl fl-Centru Parrokkli.
 Is-Sibt u l-Hadd, 30 u 31 ta' Jannar fis-6 p.m.
 Quddiesja ta' Orlanwa ta' Talo u l-Appostli ta' San Pawl.
 It-Tnejn, 1 ta' Frar fid-9 a.m.
 L-aqtha għall-morda u anjzani.
 It-Tlieta, 2 ta' Frar fid-9.30 a.m.
 Video għal San Pawl għal Għammar u n-Nies tad-Dur.
 Is-Sibt, 6 ta' Frar fis-9 a.m.
 Quddiesja u laqtha għal il-lap-Belt bi programmi għalkom fl-Centru
 Parrokkli.
 Is-Sibt, l-Hadd u l-Tnejn, 6, 7 u 8 ta' Frar
 Jawn ta' Tredja l-għal San Pawl Miskar.
 Fis-9.15 p.m.: Għasor Solenni.
 Fis-6 p.m.: Quddiesja Kantiata, Preaka tal-Tredju min W. R. Patri Charles,
 Taberna O.P.S. Soc. D. Inna, Antifona u Celebrazzjoni Ewkaristika.

LEJLET IL-FESTA

It-Tlieta, 9 ta' Frar fid-5.30 p.m.
 Manifestazzjoni Solenni bir-Rokken ta' l-Appostli Miskar, San Pawl
 immxaxja mill-ET Monsinjor Guzeppi Merceca, Arcisqof ta' Malta, Qudiesja
 Konkorsbrata min-Vigarij Generali Monsinjor Annetta Depascualo, Kunt
 mill-Ker Parrokkli immxaxja mill-Kan. Dun Maltew Magri.

JUM IL-FESTA

L-Erbgha, 10 ta' Frar
 Fis-6, 7 u 8 a.m. Qudiesja Konkorsbrata
 Fid-9.15 a.m.: Qudiesja Popolari u mill-ET Monsinjor Guzeppi Merceca
 Arcisqof ta' Malta, Wara l-Vangelu, Panegjriku min Rev. Kan. Dun
 Guzeppi Geroch Cremona.
 Fis-11.45 a.m.: Qudiesja Letta
 Fis-4 p.m.: Qudiesja Letta bi-Omelija min-Rev. Kan. Dun Felice Tabone.
 Fis-5.30 p.m.: Parrokkjoni Sinodali bi-Katwa devota u maestruza u bid-
 dnoh mir-kozzja ta' San Pawl. Fl-Piazza San Gwann isar Stazzjoni ta' F. G.
 Fid-9.30 p.m. Dinjari Puntazzjoni min-Artista Għammarzjoni Ewkaristika
 li-Azżika tal-Summar ta' et-Nies bjan immxaxja min-Maestro di Cappella
 u-Summar Joseph Gatt.

FESTI TA' BARRA

Il-Hadd, 7 ta' Frar fid-9.45 a.m.
 Miskar-Soc. Fil-Naz. LA VALETTE, Triq San Pawl (min hdejn il-Knisja),
 Triq San Duminku, Triq Miskar, Triq l-Arcisqof, Triq ir-Repubblika, Fil-
 li, ta' p.m. il-Banda tal-kozzja idrogr. ta' Valletta u wera: kompijoni
 Triq Miskar għal Triq San Pawl an hdejn il-Knisja.
 Fis-7.30 p.m.:
 Miskar mill-Fil. BIRZEBBUQA, Triq ir-Repubblika, Triq San Gwann, Triq il-
 Miskar, Triq San Duminku, Triq Mediterran, Triq San Kristofru, Triq San
 Pawl.
 It-Tnejn, 8 ta' Frar fis-7.45 p.m.
 Dimostrazzjoni tal-vara tal-Konvezzjoni ta' San Pawl akkompagnata mill-
 Banda Filarmonika ANCI ta' Hax Omm, Triq San Pawl, Triq San Gwann,
 Triq Sant Ursula, Triq San Kristofru, Triq Madrisan, Triq San Nikola, Triq
 San Pawl, Triq l-Arcisqof, Triq ir-Repubblika.

LEJLET IL-FESTA

It-Tlieta, 9 ta' Frar fis-7 p.m.
 Miskar-Soc. Fil-Naz. LA VALETTE, Triq ir-Repubblika, Triq San Gwann,
 Triq il-Miskar, Triq Miskar, Triq San Pawl, Triq San Nikola,
 Logħob tan-nar ta' Tarr fi Triq il-Mediterran.
 LEJLET IL-FESTA, Manifestazzjoni popolari li-Arbgha.

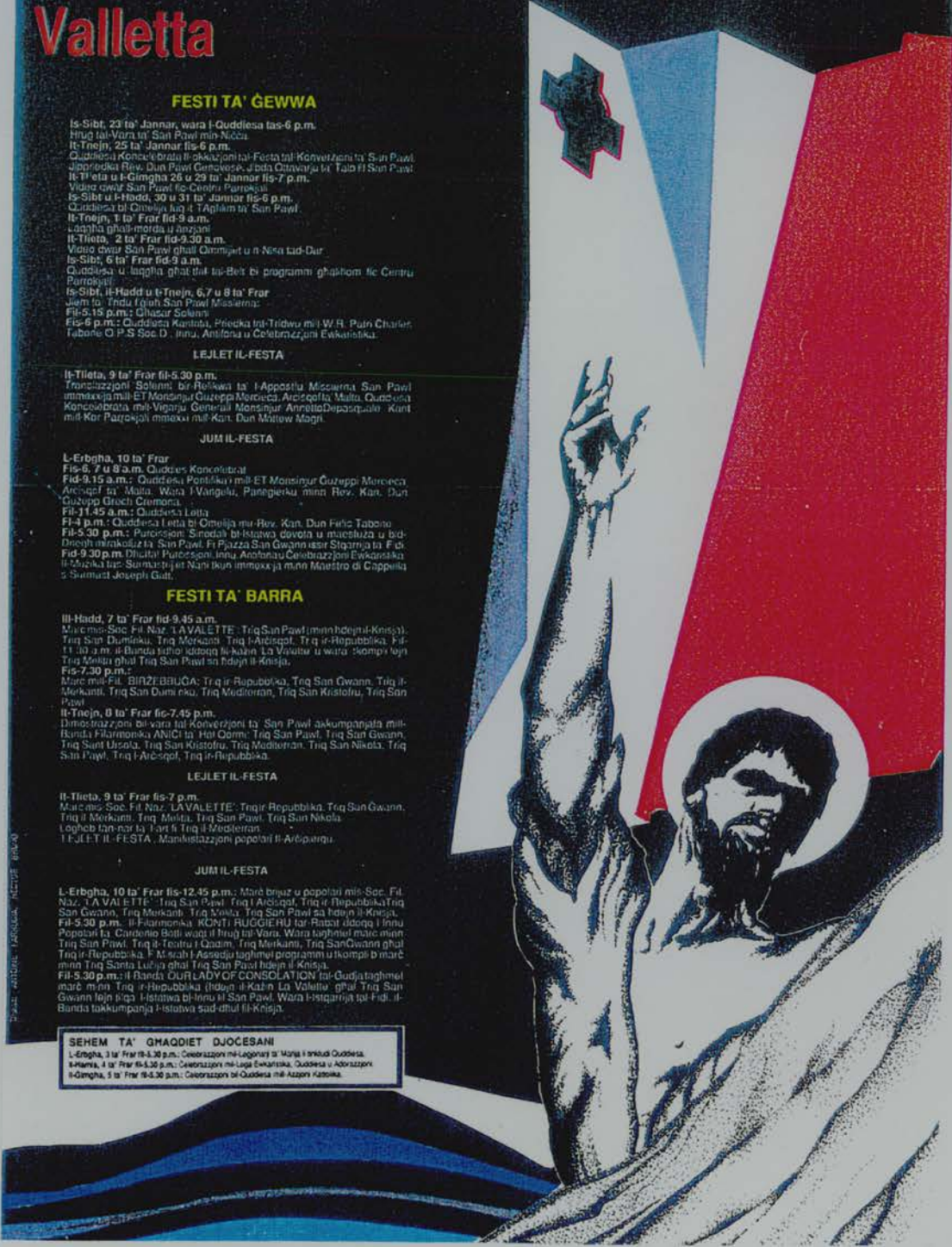
JUM IL-FESTA

L-Erbgha, 10 ta' Frar fis-12.45 p.m.: Miskar bjan u popolari min-Soc. Fil-
 Naz. LA VALETTE, Triq San Pawl, Triq l-Arcisqof, Triq ir-Repubblika, Triq
 San Gwann, Triq Miskar, Triq Miskar, Triq San Pawl ta' hdejn il-Knisja,
 Fis-5.30 p.m. il-Filarmonika KCMTI RUGGIERU tal-Rabat idrogr. l-Innu
 Popolari ta' Cardenio Botta wada il-Hruġ tal-Vara. Wera tagħmiel maic minn
 Triq San Pawl, Triq l-Tredja l-Qasim, Triq Miskar, Triq San Gwann għal
 Triq ir-Repubblika, l-Miskar l-Arcisqof tagħmiel programmi u kompijoni b' miskar
 minn Triq Santa Lujja għal Triq San Pawl hdejn il-Knisja.
 Fis-5.30 p.m. il-Banda OUR LADY OF CONSOLATION tal-Cudja tagħmiel
 maic minn Triq ir-Repubblika (hdejn il-Kan. Ln Valletta għal Triq San
 Gwann) idrogr. l-Historja tal-Innu ta' San Pawl, Wera l-Historja tal-Fil. il-
 Banda akkompagnata l-Historja sad-oh il-Knisja.

SEHEM TA' GHAQDIET DJOCESANI

L-Erbgha, 10 ta' Frar fis-12.45 p.m.: Celebrazzjoni mill-Lega Ewkaristika, Miskar u Adorazzjoni.
 l-Henna, 1 ta' Frar fis-5.30 p.m.: Celebrazzjoni mill-Lega Ewkaristika, Qudiesja u Adorazzjoni.
 il-Gimgħa, 5 ta' Frar fis-9.30 p.m.: Celebrazzjoni ta' Qudiesja mill-Azzjoni Kattolika.

Foto: Antifona, l-Arcisqof, l-Arcisqof, l-Arcisqof



The drawing was fairly expressive in style, contrasting with the heavy baroque of most religious art in Malta. It was therefore less familiar than the usual religious representations, and required a certain invocation of taste that contrasted with the conventional representations of *festa*. In requiring a different appreciation, it was clearly appealing to notions of art appreciation that in Malta are the preserve of the respectable classes.

As shown in chapter two, the DuPonts had been keen to impress upon me their knowledge of "abstract art", as an index of respectability. Similarly, Hector Bruno and Antoine Farrugia considered themselves, or aspired to being similarly *edukat* ('educated') in the appreciation of art. Indeed, more broadly, both aspired to being well-connected - Bruno through his high-level political connections and Farrugia through his new job as a bank clerk. Moreover, they both criticised the conservatism of more conventional modes of aesthetics which involved the consumption of more classical art forms. These were regarded by them as *antik* ('old-fashioned' - lit. antique), and *lura* ('backward'). To innovate with the form of representation in the poster was to make a point about the taste of its creators, and about the identity of the *festa* and its *Għaqda*. The message can be glossed as 'we are educated, respectable, not backward people'.

The innovation was therefore drawing a distinction between tradition and modernity. In an early interview with Bruno, he had drawn the same categories into play. He remarked with some exasperation how traditionally-minded the clergy in Malta were. This traditionality, in the context of the poster, was pitted against the innovative modernity - indeed also the aesthetic modernism - of the lay *Pawlina*.

On its publication, the poster was immediately criticised by the clergy for its use of the line drawing. The argument was that the *festa* had always been advertised by a photograph of a piece of art from the church. This drawing did not even resemble any of that art. It was therefore not an appropriate representation of the tradition of *festa*.

PROBLEMS WITH THE MOTTO: INCORPORATION OR EXCLUSION

A further innovation was the motto, *Għax Aħna Pawlini, Aħna Maltin* ('Because We're Pawlini, We're Maltese'). This was intended to be the motto of the *festa* as a whole, and presumed to show the linkage of local and national interests that *San Pawl* embodies. It therefore showed the incorporative nature of *San Pawl*; the extent to which

it involves not only a symbolisation of identity by a single locality, but also the expansion of the significance of that identity to a national level.

San Pawl involves an incorporation of the national, to the extent that it is a national *fešta*. However, it is also international, in the sense that it commemorates the central figure - as far as *Pawlini* are concerned - in the spreading of the gospel and hence the creation of the church, which is undeniably an international institution. Moreover, in terms of its ritual practice, *San Pawl* involves not only national state dignitaries, but also the leaders of the international churches that have congregations in Malta. It marks a coming together of Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Church of England, Church of Scotland and Methodist leaders. It is internationally incorporative to this extent, and through the steps taken to involve tourists and foreign residents in the celebrations.

This, perhaps, is nothing unique to *San Pawl*. As Boissevain himself has pointed out, one of the ways in which *fešta* organisers have gauged the success or failure of their commemorations is to count the number of tour buses that turn up (1988: 73). This is clearly an extension of the premise that the more people present at a *fešta*, the better it must have been. This assumption is manifest in post-*fešta* discussions, when critics will argue that there were hardly any people - *ma'kienx hemm nies* 'there weren't any people there' - and enthusiasts will exaggerate the crowds - *kemm kien hemm nies!* 'what a lot of people were there' (lit. 'how many people were there').

The recognition of tourists as important players in the process of *fešta* contradicts the assumption that such celebrations involve the unambiguous representation of localism against the forces of globalism. Indeed, in the *San Pawl* celebrations, an active effort was made to incorporate tourists. In 1994, for example, perhaps in the spirit of innovation set in motion the previous year, the clergy decided to conduct a special mass in English on the afternoon of *San Pawl*. The intention was to involve as many tourists as possible, thereby incorporating them into the proceedings, and the spirit of the *fešta*.⁶²

The motto produced for the 1993 *fešta* was clearly an attempt to convey this sense of incorporation, at a national level. Rather than a local show of factional strength against the outsider, it constituted an attempt to demonstrate commonality. However, the wording of the motto provoked a national debate which I heard expressed on the radio, in

⁶² The significance of tourists, and 'outsiders' more generally, in the *fešta*, is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

the press, and in conversations between academics at the University. I also saw Hector Bruno challenged in person, on the subject of the motto.

The problem was that although it had intended to imply an inclusiveness, the wording of the motto suggested the opposite. To state that "because we're *Pawlini*, we're Maltese", implied that the only true Maltese are *Pawlini*. It was argued that the motto should have been written in reverse; "because we're Maltese, we're *Pawlini*", which conveys the sense that, at heart, all Maltese are *Pawlini*. Therefore, what had been intended as a message conveying inclusion turned out to imply exclusiveness, a suggestion which was offensive, to *Pawlini* and non-*Pawlini* alike.

Criticising the Poster *Għand Lawrenz*

The debate was re-enacted *Għand Lawrenz* one afternoon. It was during the final few days before the *fešta* began. This is a time when the most involved *Pawlini* men take leave from their work to help decorate the streets and the church for the *fešta*. They also spend a great deal of time being sociable. Every few hours or so, after completing a particular task, groups of men will return to the bar for a drink and a snack. As discussed in chapter two, the bar is very much a male domain of sociability. Opinions are expressed on topics such as politics, football and *fešta*, which although of interest to women, are considered the preserve of men. Immediately before and after *San Pawl*, the latter subject takes over, and stories of previous *festi* become a major preoccupation. Indeed, at times during fieldwork it seemed that one of the main reasons for staging such commemorative rituals was in order to be able to talk about them.

On this day, the poster became the topic for discussion. As usual, conversation became heated, and was open to interjections from anybody who wished to join in. As people spoke, they stood, to make their point, raising their voices and gesticulating for effect.

The poster was criticised on aesthetic grounds by a man from *L-Arċipierku* called Robert Abdilla. He was a carpenter, and had had training in the art of religious representations. Two years previously he had commissioned the new statue of St Paul's conversion that was now carried through the streets two days before *San Pawl*, and had built the ornamental pedestal on which it stood during the *fešta* (see chapter seven). He considered himself to be something of an expert, therefore, in the visual arts, and was not impressed by this representation.

The image of the saint was ugly, he said, and not close enough to the image provided by the main *vara*. Here, the orthodoxy of existing representations was being set up as a model against which to judge all subsequent representations. Appeals to the expressionistic held no sway, in the pursuit of the genuine, the traditional. Such was the conservatism of those who do not consider themselves members of *pulit* ('polite') society. This is not to say that such people unproblematically thought of themselves as *baxx* ('low'), for such a label is derogatory. Rather, they think of themselves as being part of *il-poplu* ('the people') in contrast to those *tal-pépé* ('of the penis').

In contrast to the ugliness of this innovative, pretentious representation, the representation Robert had commissioned was an exact depiction of St Paul's conversion as shown in the painting on the ceiling of the parish church. St Paul, on horseback, on the road to Damascus, blinded by the light of the holy spirit. This was beautiful art, he said. Not this ugly line drawing. To qualify as beautiful art, therefore, was to conform to the existing, accepted norms of representative aesthetics. Innovation, despite its association with respectability and modernity, was considered by this man to be pointless.

A further criticism of the poster, which came from both Robert Abdilla and Vince Farrugia, my closest informant-friend was that it was too political; *qisu tal-Indipendenza* - "It's like the Independence [Day posters]", was one comment. *Mela, aħna tal-partit* - "Oh, so we're from the [political] party, then", was another. Here, they were referring to the use of the Maltese national flag in the poster.

The flag is said to have been presented by the crusading Roger the Norman in 1090, after he reclaimed Malta from the Arabs.⁶³ It is half red, half white, with the George Cross granted to Malta during the Second World War picked out on the white panel. The flag is therefore representative of two significant moments in the history of the islands. Along with the representation of St Paul, it shows the continuity of a religious tradition that is traceable back to the saint, was reinstalled by Roger, and was reasserted during the war. World War Two is often referred to as the structural analogue of a previous sixteenth-century conflict against the Moslem Turks, where defence of Europe became defence of the faith. So even though not explicitly religious, the significance of the George Cross evokes religious connotations.

However, the flag is seldom seen in a religious context. Rather, it is most commonly associated with rituals of state, and the Independence Day celebrations that

⁶³ As discussed in the Introduction, this date is contested.

are sponsored by the Nationalist Party. The use of this political imagery in the religious context was considered by Robert and Vince objectionable, although a third member of the debate disagreed.

"Look, you've got the picture of St Paul, because it's *San Pawl*, then the flag shows that he's the patron of Malta. You've got the sea to show how he came to Malta, and then this bit..." he jabbed a finger at the indistinct triangular feature at the bottom left hand corner, "...that's the edge of the barge that was taking him to Rome. You see, you have to *understand* it."

At this point, Charlie Grima (*L-Ambaxxatur* - 'the Ambassador' - see chapter three), who was habitually involved in the same *klikka* as both Robert and Vince, stood up. With glee, he shouted that *that* was what it was all about. "You see, he understands it, he understands. Do you see, Jon" ...he turned to me, to demonstrate the significance of what he was saying... "he understands, [but] they..." He tailed off at this point. It was enough to know that somebody understood and appreciated the poster.

The Poster and Politics

These different readings of the poster relate to the different constituents involved in the organisation and indeed the appreciation of the *festa*. Moreover, they could be said to correspond to different readings of the meaning of the *festa* itself, a recognition of which in itself threatens the assumptions that a generic *festa* exists. If it is recognised that different constituents have different readings of the *festa*, then to imply that it somehow represents a united moment in the articulation of either political factional or local communal identity, seems rather simplistic. Rather, the *festa* also emerges as the locus of debate, or the playing out of tensions, between different groups, and the elaboration of different types of identity.

Of course, there were good reasons why these different readings existed; why Charlie and the other man would adopt one reading of the poster, whilst Vince and Robert maintained another. The main one was that Charlie was a member of the Committee, and had therefore had a hand in the decision about its design. But there were also significant reasons why Vince and Robert should object to what they saw as the politicisation of the *festa*. These are twofold, the first being rather general, the second particular to this situation.

The first is the point that religion and politics should not be mixed. To do so is close to sacrilegious, especially given the low esteem with which politicians are generally held in Malta (see chapter four), but particularly by Vince himself. He told me

on another occasion, when we were discussing his decision not to vote in the 1993 local council elections, that although he had voted at the last two general elections, he would never do so again:

"They're all dogs, politicians, and all corrupt. Before the elections you see them everywhere, buying drinks for everybody, like they're saints. But then afterwards, you can't see them without a telescope."

With this last phrase, he put his hand up to his face in the mock representation of a telescope, looking round for the invisible, errant politicians. To associate the *fešta* with politics, then, was to associate it with corruption and the exceedingly profane and self-interested. This did not befit the spiritual importance of the *fešta* and religion in general, which should be seen as entirely sacred, transcendent and beyond the petty world of politics.

The second, however, is related much more to the particular micro politics of the *Pawlina* themselves, and relates to the enduring tension within the *Għaqda*, between the well-connected 'high-town' members, and the subaltern *poplu* from 'low-town' and *L-Arċipierku*. Vince and Robert both used to be on the Committee of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlina*, and were heavily involved in decision-making, until a controversy occurred in 1991 which led to their replacement. This was during the Gulf War, when it was suggested by the Archbishop that the *fešta* should not involve any outside celebrations, as a solemn display of concern for the future of the world. The parish priest was in favour of this, which effectively turned *San Pawl* 1991 from being a *fešta* into being a pilgrimage, or *pelegrinaġġ*. The Committee discussed the matter, and eventually cancelled all band marches, fireworks and the inaugural demonstration with the statue of St Paul's conversion.

There was a major outcry. The Committee were accused of bowing down too easily to the wishes of the church authorities. After all, hadn't this been the reason why the *Għaqda* had been set up in the first place? To make sure that the lay interests in the *fešta* were properly defended against the authority of the church.

At the Annual General Meeting that followed the *pelegrinaġġ*, the Committee was deposed, and replaced by another. It was widely believed that the new Committee would be stronger in its dealings with the ecclesiastical authorities. This was mainly because of the new President, Hector Bruno. He was a powerful political campaigner for the Nationalist Party, and had been editor of the Nationalist newspaper for several

years. He had power and influence, and knew how to manipulate situations to the benefit of his constituents.

But he was not well liked by the outgoing administration, which included Robert and Vince. He was regarded as self-interested; more of a politician than a church man. What is more, he had taken over their position of influence to further his own ends. This was at the centre of their objections. It reveals the enduring tensions between the less well-connected, subaltern *poplu*, and the relatively better-connected stratum of political actors. The tension was set up with the creation of the *Għaqda*, and the union of the 'high-town' and 'low-town' *festi*. It is significant that the opponents of the new Committee were predominantly from *L-Arċipierku*, whereas Bruno himself was from the upper areas of the parish.

The schism was consolidated the following year, in an argument involving Mario Tonna. He was a good friend of Vince Farrugia, a prominent member of the *klikka* associated with Vince, and a jovial figure with a passion for the church and *festi*.

In 1992, Tonna (as he was habitually known) was in charge of ordering and administering the fireworks for the *festi*. Every *festi* is accompanied by periodic bursts of fireworks, in the form of loud petards set off each day in the lead-up to the *festi*, at mass times. On the eve of the *festi*, a display of ground fireworks (flares and rotating 'Catherine Wheels' attached to complex wooden scaffolding) is organised, and the culmination of fireworks is the *kaxxa infernali* ('the infernal box') set off when the saint's statue leaves the church. This is a one- or two-minute burst of rapid-fire aerial fireworks, including decorative flourishes and plain petards. It is the moment when the saint is greeted into the outside world, and was Tonna's favourite part of the *festi*.

Determined to make a good show of this, his first year as commissioner for fireworks, he rather over-estimated the needs of the *kaxxa*, and underestimated its cost. The result being that he overspent the budget allowed for fireworks, by some Lm300 (£600). When this came to the attention of the rest of the Committee, it was placed on the agenda of the annual general meeting, to which all members are invited. At this meeting, Tonna was suspended from office, the implication being that the budget irregularities might be the result of embezzlement on his part. The receipts he had did not tally with his overall expenditure. An inquiry was instigated.

These events led to a great deal of argument within the *Pawlini*, not least between Tonna and his assistant in the commission for fireworks, George Bruno. He is the brother of Hector Bruno, who had become the new president of the *Għaqda* following the 1991 *pelegrinaġġ*.

Tonna's argument with George Bruno sharpened the sides in the struggle for power over the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*. On the one side were the group of friends who had been incumbent as the Committee in 1990-91. They were broadly supportive of Tonna's exuberant fireworks expenditure. This was the group of friends who I refer to in chapter one as being older, and relatively settled in their identity as adult men. They spent time in the open part of *Għand Lawrenz*, and were either married or heavily involved in the *festa* and Confraternities. They were not involved in the process of courtship, and talked less of sex than the younger men. They have therefore, and partly because of their participation in the *festa*, resolved their identities as 'real men'. On the other side were the group of younger men, including Hector Bruno, who were against Tonna. By and large, this was the group of younger men, who were more frequently seen behind the bar *Għand Lawrenz*. They were more actively involved in courtship, and talked about sex more-or-less constantly. The tensions, therefore, related to questions of gender and masculinity, as well as those of respectability.

Tonna eventually left the Committee of the *Għaqda*, but remained a member. However, during the years of my fieldwork, he declined to participate in any meetings, regarding them as futile.

The events of 1991 and 1992 were a constant source of conversation and resentment in the bar, particularly during the weeks leading up to *festa* time, when the events which led to the *pelegrinaġġ* and Tonna's dismissal, were remembered, discussed, rehearsed. The two main constituents disagreed on their interpretations of the events, and frequently clashed. Arguments would begin *Għand Lawrenz*. Those associated with Bruno would congregate behind the bar, making comments about the 'old-fashioned' former *Kumitat*. In front of the bar, on the other hand, were Tonna and his friends, particularly Vince Farrugia, Guzi Cremona and Charlie Grima, who formed a *klikka* in their own right. The tensions, represented here in the debate over the poster, related to broader tensions in local society that the *festa* brought into play.

The argument related, firstly, to the politics of distinction and taste, which pitted a conservative popular aesthetics that saw the ubiquitous ecclesiastical baroque as

the only model for representations of the saints, against a *pulit* aesthetics of art appreciation. This version of aesthetics sees the conservatism of *il-poplu* as restricting and overly traditional, when compared to the sophisticated modernism of more expressive art forms.

Secondly, it related to the politics of clergy-lay relations, which for the new *Kumitat* marked a distinction between the conservatism of the *kapitlu*, with its constant appeals to tradition, and the innovativeness of the *Pawlini*. These tensions run through the history of the *Għaqda*, being the main reason for it being set up in the first place. They re-emerged with the issue of the *Pelegrinaġġ*, which had widespread ramifications.

Thirdly, the argument involved an expression of the unwillingness to relate *fešta* to politics in general, and more specifically, a cynicism at the extent to which *San Pawl* 93 was being related to politics by that particular *Kumitat*. This act was not considered neutral, but part of the wider political agenda of the incoming President of the *Għaqda* and his followers, and relates to the tension between the well-connected and the subaltern group who are relatively less so. This tension is itself replicated in that between 'high' and 'low' areas of the parish.

Finally, it related to the tension between different *klikek Għand Lawrenz*: the old and the young, the old and new Committees, the traditional and the progressive-innovative. These tensions emerge not only in the administration of the *fešta*, but also in the process of its being organised and performed. They will be examined in the next chapter, which explores in greater detail the relationship between *fešta* and gender, by looking at the homologous relationship between the form of the *fešta* on the one hand, and the structure of gendered categories that refer to the household, on the other.

The implications of this homology do refer to a generic form of *fešta*. I argue that the *fešta*, widely considered to be a 'family' occasion, seemed, in the same manner as idealised versions of masculinity and femininity, to conceal the contestation of gender identities in early 1990's Malta. It is argued in chapter three that gender identities as they relate to the household, are expanded metaphorically outwards to refer to the community of *L-Arċipierku* as a whole. It must also be argued that the *fešta* is a symbolic representation of communal solidarity. The community is a household writ large, so the homology between household and *fešta* suggests that the *fešta* represents the community. This much supports the Boissevain notion of *fešta* representing localism in the face of globalism. Indeed, following Boissevain, I suggest that it is precisely the increase in

gender contestation, itself a function of modernity, and the perceived break-down of communal and family life, that has led to the escalation in *fešta* celebration over the last twenty years (Boissevain, 1988). Like the official versions of masculinity and femininity, the *fešta* emerges as a means by which society, family, community can be kept together - by appealing to tradition in the face of its apparent decline.

However, the implications of *fešta* are much broader than this. The argument of this chapter, itself re-enacted *Għand Lawrenz*, demonstrates that the *fešta* is concerned also with national identity, and class identity. In particular, it is concerned with how these factors emerged as contexts for debate over how *San Pawl* should be represented, and indeed about what is represented by *San Pawl*. The arguments between *Dun Ciarlò* and the German Warnecke, and those between the two *klikek Għand Lawrenz*, are arguments about the origins of national religious identity, and how they should be represented. They are arguments about commemorating the national patron saint. Moreover, they are arguments about who is qualified to participate in the public sphere in which decisions about that commemoration are made. The *fešta*, therefore, emerges as a site for discussion of the significance of such issues, not merely a representation of localism in response to globalisation.

Chapter Six: Preparing and Starting the *Festa*

This chapter examines the preparations for, and the first act of, the *festa*. It explores the parallels between the division of labour in the preparation for the *festa*, and both the different groups within the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, and the different *klikek* ('cliques') *Għand Lawrenz*. These different groups and *klikek* were frequently antagonistic towards each other, because of differences of social class orientation, and of generation. This chapter also introduces the homologies between categories *ġewwa* and *barra* ('inside' and 'outside') as they refer to the household, to *L-Arcipierku*, and to the *festa* itself. It is argued that part of the power of the *festa* is that it collapses these categories, to represent a complementarity of domains similar in form to the idealised complementarity of gender domains in the household (see chapters one and two). The categories are set up in the first act of the *festa*, in which the statue of St Paul is taken out of its niche and placed in the church, where it serves as an object of contemplation and veneration. Inside the church, but outside the niche, the statue is in a marginal position between inside and outside, which draws attention to the demarcation of the two categories. The categories are brought together at the end of the *festa*, during the main procession (see next chapter).

If the *festa* represents a complementarity of domains, this is homologous with the complementarity of gender domains in the household. Thus, one would expect to find that the activities associated with inside and outside were themselves gendered. Indeed, the tasks associated with preparing the inside and outside festivities are recognisably 'female' and 'male' respectively. But this distinction serves to divert attention from the fact that it is men who perform most of the acts related to *festa*. Hence, what is ostensibly a manifestation that asserts communal unity, and particularly the unity of the wider family that comprises people from *L-Arcipierku*, or *Pawlini*, is dominated by men. As with the ideology of the harmonious complementary family, the complementarity of the *festa* serves to mask male precedence.

Inside and Outside in Household and *Festa*

All Maltese *festi* are divided conceptually and administratively between events *ta'ġewwa* ('inside' the church) and those *ta'barra* ('outside') (see Appendix Seven). The former are those practices which occur inside the church, are associated with the solemn liturgical elements of the *festa*, and are organised by the clergy, the latter occur outside the church and are associated with the popular celebration of *festa*. These events are the responsibility of the laity, and in St Paul's, of *L-Għaqda tal-Pawlini*.

The distinction between outside and inside events is also one between public and private. Inside events are concerned with a more intimate pursuit of religious allegiance to St Paul, when compared to the open-ness of outside events. Boissevain has suggested that such rituals can be divided into 'insider' events which are open primarily to members of the local community, and 'outsider' events which are open to all (Boissevain, 1992a: 12-14). This distinction is reflected in *Pawlini* attitudes towards outsiders' participation in the *fešta*. The outside festivities are the public manifestations to which non-*Pawlini*, including tourists, are not only permitted but actively encouraged to attend. To this extent, they constitute the public face of the *Pawlini*; the presentation of group identity to the wider, public audience. During my fieldwork, I heard it frequently and unconditionally stated that the more people attending the band marches and fireworks displays which characterise the outside festivities, the better. The inside festivities, on the other hand, are more intimate, privatised functions associated with the religious commemoration, rather than popular celebration, of St Paul. There was consequently a certain irritation when people turned up to the inside, church functions, and found it full of outsiders.

In chapters two and three I demonstrated how the inside-outside division in regard to the household is also one of gender. I examined how male and female sociality are reproduced in different contexts, with different associations. Whereas women are more clearly associated with the housework and kin-work that characterises life inside the household, men are more concerned with the public and society work that went on outside. In this chapter, I shall investigate the same division as it relates to the *fešta*.

The outside festivities are organised, prepared and actively participated in by men. This much should be clear from chapter seven, in which the politics of the *L-Għaqda tal-Pawlini* was discussed. It is a pattern which mirrors the administration of collective ritual manifestations in other Mediterranean contexts, where men control the terms in which public rituals are organised and executed.

The logical corollary of men's association with the public manifestations of the outside festivities should be that the inside *fešta* becomes a female sphere of influence. The relationships characterised as 'inside' in the context of the household are those related to kinship, and women are considered the primary kin-workers in Maltese society, so inside relationships become female gendered. If we extend the idea of kin-work to the wider group, then the inside *fešta*, too, should be considered a female sphere of influence. Indeed the activities associated with the inside festivities revolve around religious

Confraternities, which themselves are associated with the religious work of tending the dead. Similarly, the activities they perform in preparation for the *festa* are those which in a household context would be considered female work - cleaning, polishing and attending to the decorative arts. However, the Confraternities are run entirely by men, and it is men who do the majority of preparations for the inside festivities.

As with the household itself, then, the notion of a complementary relationship between inside and outside, female and male, serves to mask the primacy of male agency. For whilst ideally the *festa* involves inside and outside, female and male, both these activities are controlled by men - leaving women largely in the background. As argued in chapter two, women are excluded from the sphere of decision-making about the *festa*. They are also excluded from participation in its preparation and execution. Both the *Għaqda* which prepares the outside festivities, and the Confraternities that oversee inside events, are organised and administered by men. There is therefore a tension between the idea that the *festa* is an inclusive ritual for all the community, and the fact that it is men who control it.

The preparations for the *festa* do not only reveal gender tensions. The antagonisms discussed in the last chapter between different groups within the *Pawlina* organisation, and between different groups *Għand Lawrenz*, was also replicated in the preparations for the *festa*. The groups associated with inside preparations and those associated with the outside festivities, were different. The inside preparations were carried out by the *klikka* associated with Vince Farrugia, who were friends of Mario Tonna, the person at the centre of the 1992 fireworks scandal. They had been involved in the *Kumitat* ('Committee') of the *Għaqda* prior to the 1991 *pelegrinaġġ*, and were prone to sitting in the open, public part of *Għand Lawrenz*. They were therefore men who, to a large extent, had demonstrated, and established their masculinity. The outside festivities, on the other hand, were organised by the supporters of the well-connected Hector Bruno. These were young men who spent their time *Għand Lawrenz* behind the bar, and were highly mobile, interested in courtship and night life in Paceville. This distinction was not just about age and maturity. As discussed in the last chapter, the distinction was related to ideas of social class identity, and the relationship between *il-poplu* ('the people') and the well-connected *pulit* ('polite') society.

Preparing the *festa ta'barra*

Preparations for the outside festivities reveal these tensions between the younger and the older *Għand Lawrenz klikek*. As argued in the last chapter, tensions relate not

only to different age groups, but also to different class orientation. Argument particularly centred on the adequacy with which preparations were made, and street decorations maintained.

DECLINING STANDARDS

The administration of the external feast involves skills associated with the public domain, itself associated with male sociability. Thus, the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* spend their time convening meetings among themselves or with other organisations from whom they require services or patronage. The skills involved here are those associated with the creation of the bureaucratic public sphere; negotiation, argument, compromise. They also ensure the mobilisation of sufficient manpower to make sure that not only are the *armar* ('street decorations') correctly maintained throughout the year, but also they are correctly and efficiently put up in the weeks leading up to the *festa*. Just as most of the administrative tasks associated with the outside festivities are performed by men, so too are those associated with the pragmatics of preparing the *festa*.

Maintenance of *armar* requires different skills, related to craftsmanship and the ability to work as a team. These practices were important to the sense of the *festa* being a manifestation for which everyone involved was collectively working, except that those involved were inevitably men. Such tasks as maintaining and restoring the street decorations were as much acts of sociability as of creativity. Alongside the hours of work spent on them, went a complementary sociability, such that almost every occasion that got men together to work would also be an occasion that got them together to drink.

Much of my fieldwork in Valletta was spent in the company of men involved in various material tasks related to their religious and ritual activities. These were the *dilettanti* ('enthusiasts') of the *festa*, whose *ħobby* involves preparing and maintaining church and *festa* decorations, and restoring the chapels and oratories of the parish.

The main group I spent time with comprised Vince Farrugia, Mario Tonna, who had been at the centre of the fireworks scandal in 1992, Guži Cremona and Charlie Grima. This group, or *klikka*, were regularly seen *Għand Lawrenz*, sitting in the front part of the bar that I have characterised as where 'real men' sit. Vince and Mario were both in their late twenties, Charlie his early fifties and Guži his late thirties. Only Guži was married, with twin sons aged thirteen, called Paul and Clint. This group, including Paul and Clint, would meet up virtually every day, at St Paul's, Ta'Giežu or Sta Lucija churches, to design and execute various projects; roughly one a year. In 1992 they restored the Oratory of the

Sacred Heart at St Paul's church, and in 1993 it was the Oratory of the Miraculous Crucifix at Ta'Giezu. Although only Guzi was married, the others were 'real men' in the sense that they were heavily involved in religious activities, and particularly because they were all - or had been - *reffiegħa* in the *festa*.

All four men worked, but every day after they had finished, they would meet *Għand Lawrenz* for a cup of tea and a toasted sandwich before going to work on the current project. They would work from six until eight, and then reconvene *Għand Lawrenz* to have a drink - beer, whisky or fizzy pop - until ten or eleven. On Saturday mornings, the group would also work, before the usual drinking session from twelve until one. Saturday nights and Sundays were reserved for purely social activities, but these were also carried out in the same *klikka*. During the summer months, when most people's work-time is reduced to a half day, contact was even more intense, as work started earlier and continued later.

The presence of Guzi's sons marked the participation in such activities as part of a developmental process, whereby young men are encouraged to get involved in activities associated with *festa*, and gradually become involved over the years. During the months that I spent with the *dilettanti* as they prepared for the *festa*, there were almost always young boys at hand. They would help out, running errands to the bars for drinks or to shops for small items such as nails or glue. Guzi hoped that this daily involvement would give his sons a sense of commitment to the *Pawlini* cause, and his wife Polly concurred. She was happy that they wanted to be with older, more responsible men, although she sometimes despaired at their - and indeed their father's - seeming obsession with *San Pawl*. Her biggest fear, however, was that if they were allowed to go to the local football ground, as they often wanted to, they would get involved in dangerous activities. In particular, drugs were a major fear in her and other parents' minds. If avoiding drugs meant they went every day with their father to help working for the church, then so be it. She was happy to have them help out with this *klikka* of *dilettanti*.

Although the *klikka* was a group manifest in sociability, it clearly operated through the tasks that the men were engaged in. To join in with their conversations and concerns when they sat drinking tea or beer, it was necessary also to be present while they were working on their current project. Consequently, I joined in with their work, meeting these men on a daily basis so that our relationship could develop; so that I could become a trusted and reliable member of their *klikka*, and they could become primary informants.

I discovered over time that, although during my time in Malta this group were more concerned with work projects relating to the Oratories at St Paul's and Ta'Giezu, this had not always been the case. These tasks are associated with the church, rather than the *fešta per se*, and as such are of a different order than the work this group had previously performed. In the past, they had been more involved directly in the material tasks surrounding the *fešta*, and particularly the street decorations, or *armar*.

Armar comprises the set of decorations put up in the streets for *fešta*. Every street in Valletta through which the outside festivities pass, be it during band march or procession, is decorated. The main items are: the flag-poles from which are suspended the decorative fabric arches (*pavaljuni*) that turn the uniform beige streets into colourful avenues; the *pavaljuni* themselves, which are suspended from large wooden beams with ornate brass end-pieces; the wooden columns that are erected the length of St Paul's Street, topped with a large brass bowl in which palm leaves are arranged; the brass chandeliers that are suspended from hooks along St Paul's Street; the plain green tinsel that is suspended in festoons with hired lights; and finally, the huge wooden pedestal on which the statue of St Paul's conversion sits, that is erected in the *pjazza quddiem il-qorti*, in front of the law-court. These items take up a lot of room, and are secreted in various church- or *Pawlini*-administered buildings throughout the parish. For example, the *pavaljuni* are rolled up around the beam from which they hang, and stored in a loft above the sacristy of the parish church; the wooden columns and brass paraphernalia are stored in the basement of the Union of St Joseph on St Paul's Street, where the *Pawlini* Youth used to meet; and the flag-poles and pedestal are stored in the small workshop, or *mahzen* rented by the *Pawlini* on East Street.

The *mahzen* is also the place where maintenance and restoration work was carried out on the *armar*, and this was a considerable task. Most of the more decorative items were wooden, painted ornately to resemble marble. Because they were stored in often very humid conditions, and then taken out once a year into the cold, wind and rain of early February, they would warp, crack and chip. Making sure they were presentable during *fešta*, then, was a major task, involving considerable skill, organisation and above all work. This work had been provided by the *klikka* of Vince, Guži, Charlie and Mario, but no longer.

Just as the events of the 1991 *pelegrinaġġ* and the 1992 case against Mario Tonna caused a rift in the organisation of the *fešta*, so too it seemed that a line was drawn between different *klikek* involved in the maintenance and restoration of religious and

festa artefacts. The task of maintaining the *armar* passed on from this *klikka* of Vince, Guzi, Mario and Charlie, and one of their major preoccupations was the extent to which the standards they had set were not being maintained.

The standards related both to workmanship, and the degree of commitment shown by the new men involved in the *armar*. In particular, criticisms revolved around the *Pawlini* workshop, or *mañzen*. When this group had been in charge, I was frequently told, the *mañzen* had been operated like a kind of club. Going there was not considered a chore, but just part of a normal, sociable existence:

“It was just like a club,” said Guzi, “we used to go down there every day, and even if there wasn’t really any work to do we’d go and play around with something or other. And girls would come there too; it was really like a [community] centre. We had a fridge there and a cooker. We’d take a case of wine down and have big meals outside on the parapet overlooking East Street. It was like our own place, and we kept it clean, you know. Not like now; the floor was as clean as a glass, you could eat off it. Now look at it. It’s closed virtually all the time, and dirty.”

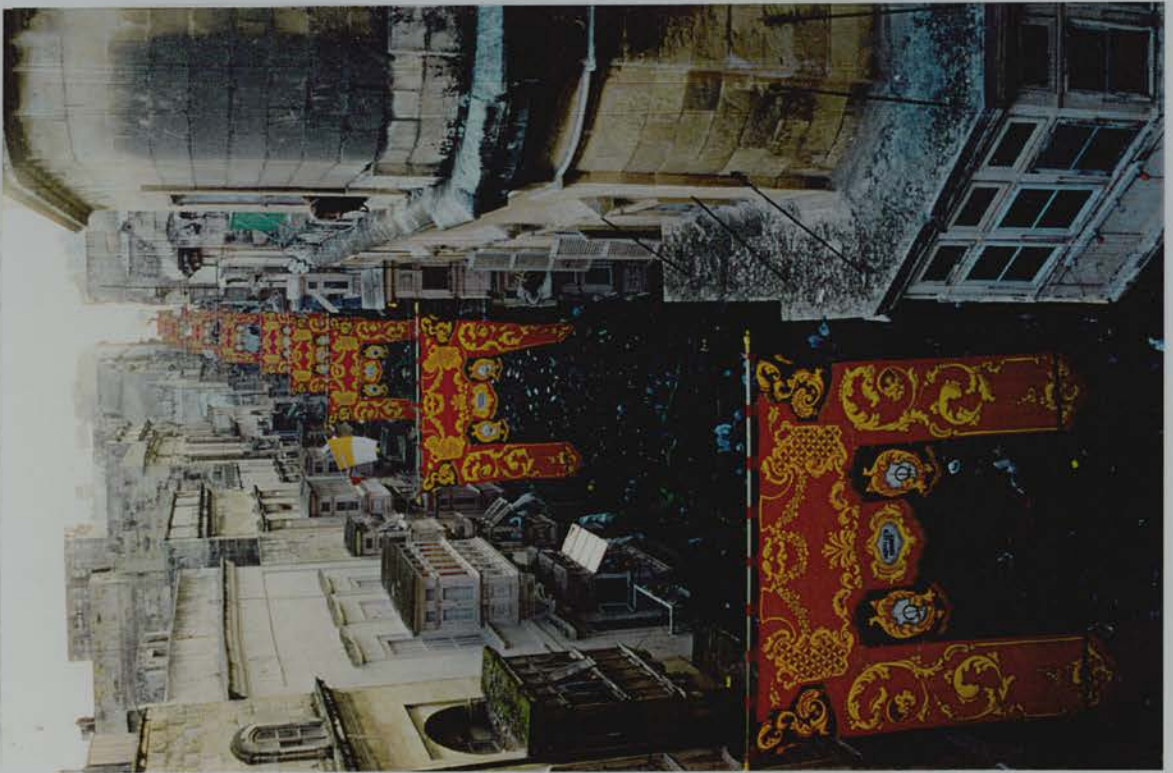
As Mario Tonna wrote in the *festa* programme for 1992, “for all those involved at the *mañzen*, the *festa* begins on the 11th February every year and ends on 10th February” (my trans). Guzi’s criticism of the way things were run in 1993 clearly reflects a nostalgia for the time when this *klikka* were in charge of things; when things were more sociable and hence the work was better accomplished. During that time commitment was unquestioned. Those involved would turn up every day, and as indicated by Guzi, if somebody was courting, they would simply bring the woman along. This comment was a direct reflection on the commitment of the younger men who had taken over the *mañzen*, who were criticised for being too interested in women.

An oft-cited example of the slip in standards, whilst I was in Malta, was the flag-poles, which had become cracked and chipped to the extent that they were unusable. In 1993, an agreement was made with the *festa* Committee of St Dominic’s, to borrow theirs. This was regarded by some as little short of scandal. Not only did it not make sense, given that the *Pawlini* had their own flag-poles, but it also sullied their reputation for being able to stage a *festa* in an efficient, and self-sufficient manner. The fact it was the Dominicans, the *Pawlini* rivals, from who the poles were borrowed, rankled. So did the fact that it reflected directly the decline in standards that had taken over the management and maintenance of the *armar*. For those who commented, and Guzi was among them, the suggestion was that in their day, they would not have had to borrow anything; they would have restored what they already had.

plates 9 and 10



St Paul's Street Decorated for the Festa



Pavaljuni Hanging Along St Paul's Street

plates 11 and 12



Working at the Maħzen



A Drink After the Hard Work

According to this *klikka*, work was done efficiently in those days, and with skill. Even when there was little to be done, innovations were made. Such was the statue of St Paul's conversion, that was commissioned by the *Għaqda* in 1990, and administered primarily by Vince Farrugia and Robert Abdilla, who was mentioned in the last chapter, as designer of the statue.

The statue is a huge effigy, representing a life-size St Paul on horseback as he is blinded by the light of the holy spirit, and converted, on the road to Damascus. Unlike the main statue of St Paul, which was donated to the people of Malta in the seventeenth century by the noble family of Testaferrata, this representation was funded by public subscription. Thus while the former is regarded as a national heirloom, part of *il-patrimonju nazzjonali* ('the national patrimony', or 'heritage'), the latter is a direct testament to the religiosity of the people themselves, and to the craftsmanship of those *Pawlini* who worked on the project for free, and particularly Robert and Vince. The former is a trained carpenter, and with his father did much of the work on the huge pedestal that the statue sits on during the *fešta*. The latter is an expert in all kinds of renovations, but is particularly skilled at creating the elaborate marbled paint-work effect necessary on such artefacts.

It was not only the material work that was performed by the denizens of the *maħżen*, however, but also the administration of the project. People's contributions were recorded meticulously in its accounts to provide a record of the organisers' scrupulousness. I was shown the accounts book by Vince. Every donation was recorded, down to the last Maltese cent, with the name and date of reception, and the date and purpose of its being spent. This was necessary, I was told, to avoid accusations of embezzlement and untrustworthiness, but was also part of the process whereby the ingenuity of those involved was inscribed forever in the *Għaqda* records, providing a concrete reference for the claims of this *klikka*.

After the events of 1991 and 1992, however, these men dissociated themselves from the statue of St Paul's conversion, from the pedestal that they had worked so hard on, and from the *armar* in general. Robert Abdilla in particular, who knew in detail the procedure for the pedestal's assembly, refused to help at all with preparations for *San Pawl* 1993. He regarded the new *fešta* administration as self-interested, and resented his hard work on the pedestal being taken over by them.

After the change in administration, Vince, Guži, Mario and Charlie turned their attentions from the *armar* to work associated with the various Confraternities of which they were members (see below). This effectively meant a move from dealing with the outside festivities to the inside. They began restoring the Oratories of the Sacred Heart and the Miraculous Crucifix, rather than spending their time on *armar*.

Responsibility for the *armar* was taken over by Paul Sciberras, first cousin of Freddie, the sacristan, and son of its former sacristan, Guži (see chapters one, two and three). The Sciberras family are heavily involved in *San Pawl*. In 1993 and 1994 two of Guži's three sons, Paul and Mario, were on the *Kumitat* ('Committee') of *L-Għaqda*, and their personal investment in the *festa* was high. Similarly, Salvina, Guži's wife, was involved in *L-Għaqda*, largely in a fund-raising capacity. The family's involvement was significant. They had been through hard times in the past, I was told by Paul, but prayer and devotion to St Paul had pulled them through. For this reason alone, both Mario and Paul were enthusiastic in their involvement, which centred around the organisation of the *armar*. They were both in their mid-20's and unmarried, and therefore in a position to devote time and energy to the *festa*. But they were constantly frustrated by the unreliability of their peers. On countless occasions I would meet Paul *Għand Lawrenz*, waiting for friends to turn up and perform some task or other. I would talk to him as he got more and more frustrated, and eventually storm out, leaving a message that things had been called off.

For Vince's *klikka*, therefore, the slip in standards related both to the relationship between the well-connected and the subaltern, but also that between men and boys. It related issues of class identity, to those of gender and the realisation of masculinity.

Guži referred to Paul as *miskin* ('poor thing') for having to put up with this kind of unreliability. "He really wants to work for St Paul, but what can he do when he's got nobody but those children to help". Referring thus to the younger helpers as children, Guži was signifying two things about their capabilities. Firstly, that they lacked the skills to perform the restoration work involved in the *festa*. This involved techniques which most men learn either as part of their training for a particular occupation, or when they become householders. Restoration involves skill in carpentry, electrical repairs, plastering and painting. Unless one is professionally involved in these trades, it is common for men to learn them through maintaining, renovating or even building their own house. Because a necessary condition for being a householder is to be married, the attainment of these skills

in an informal setting requires a married man. Thus, in Guži's eyes, to be unmarried, what he refers to as children, is to lack these necessary skills for the correct maintenance of the *armar*. Secondly, and more significantly, Guži was implying that the young men lacked commitment to a single, reliable *klikka* around which to organise the *armar* throughout the year.

The group that took over from Guži, Vince, Mario and Charlie was a loose association of young men with various other concerns, be they courtship, football, billiards or another pastime. In the two years I was in Malta, they came together only as a temporary group, around *festa* time. To this extent, they were a contingent, rather than committed *klikka*. Rather than spending time together throughout the year, working for the *festa* on a daily basis, they came together only for the specific task of putting up the *armar*. As a result, the distinction between preparing the *armar* as a work activity, and it being sociable leisure-time, became sharpened. What for Mario, Guži, Vince and Charlie had been simply a pleasurable part of their daily lives, became for Paul and his contemporaries a chore which took time and effort to administer and execute. This ran contrary to the ideal of dilettantism contained in the self-image of this group. They regarded themselves as *dilettanti tal-festa - festa dilettantes*. The category implied both commitment and amateurism, but did not seem to carry the pejorative baggage that surrounds the word dilettantism in English. Rather, *dilettanti* were experts; people who knew what they were talking about, and knew because they performed their work for the love of it. In the case of working for the *festa* and the church, the love of work was also the love of God, and these *dilettanti*, particularly Vince, would often remark that the material possessions of the church, both those donated by wealthy patrons and made by *dilettanti* such as themselves, were a form of devotion. The criticisms of the new generation were that they were not really *dilettanti*.

A TEMPORARY KLIKKA: LACK OF COMMITMENT

Paul had trouble mobilising sufficient manpower to manage the *armar* throughout the year, but less so in the lead-up to *festa* itself. At this time, groups of young men would meet up nightly to take the appropriate items out of storage and assemble them in the streets. These evenings developed a certain camaraderie, that stayed together until the end of the *festa*, but was of a different order to the year-long committed sociability of the *klikka* formerly associated with the *armar*.

As a young man myself, I joined in, in the lead-up to my first *festa* in 1993. I worked hard with a group of young men for several weeks. Each night we would meet and do some

work together, in groups varying in size from five to fifteen. The process led to the creation of a temporary *klikka*, with a sense of camaraderie reinforced by a nightly drink after the work was done. As the young men got to know each other better, they started being able to joke, and exchange insults in a joking manner, many of which related to the demonstration or testing of masculinity. Such a process is described in detail in chapter one, and is common to male group bonding in other contexts (Lyman, 1995).

Much of the talk involved suggestive double-entendre. It was often, but not always, sexual, and is a most common form of humour in Malta. Known as *dopju sens*, or 'double sense', this form of joking pits the wits of two or three people in a kind of competition to provide the most humorous double meaning. For example, when the plain green tinsel festoons were being strung up along St Paul's street, an exchange developed between three of the men. It centred on the term used to describe these green festoons, which is *ħaxix*, the Maltese word for vegetable. This became wilfully corrupted to *ħaxixa*, which is the common term for marijuana. A comment was made about one of the people's taste for marijuana, and its effects on his behaviour: *moħħu f'ħaxixa*, "his head's full of marijuana". The immediate response was to turn *ħaxixa* back to *ħaxix*, which then became a term of abuse. The man accused of obsession with marijuana claimed his accuser had *moħħu f'ħaxix*; a brain full of vegetables. This metaphor was then extended. If he had a brain full of vegetables, then the main vegetable must be cabbage, *kaboċċa*, a term commonly used to refer to people with mental disabilities. This last term broke the chain of association, leading to hilarity. The group broke down into laughter, and the event was left behind, to be recounted on subsequent occasions, as a story of how the group had been entertained that evening.

Through the contact of successive days' work, and the joking camaraderie, a kind of temporary *klikka* developed as the streets became gradually more colourful. The young men who were involved would stick together not only in the few weeks leading up to the *festa*, but also during it. The intention seemed to be to create an event for which one could be proud, and then enjoy it to the full. As Paul Sciberras told me:

"First of all we work, then during the *festa*, we enjoy ourselves."

That this was a temporary *klikka* seemed less problematic for the more individualistic, younger men. These were the men who, throughout the year, would be seen *Għand Lawrenz*, but behind the bar, rather than in front of it. They would congregate there, temporarily, before going on to other places, particularly Paceville, for courtship.

When they got together for the *festa*, it was in a temporary *klikka* that broke up soon afterwards.

To counter the accusations of dropping standards, these men would refer to the considerable number of innovations introduced to the *festa* over recent years. These related not only to changes in the form of the outside festivities, with new band marches being introduced, but also to innovations in the *armar*.

If the innovation of the previous *armar klikka* had been the statue of St Paul's conversion, then the current administration also claimed, in 1994, a *coup de grace* in the form of a new set of *pavaljuni* for St Paul's Street.

These were the brain-child of Mario Cassar, a close friend of Hector Bruno the *Għaqda* President, and were produced with the same degree of commitment that Vince, Guži, Mario and Charlie regarded as part of normal life. Sponsorship was solicited from local businesses, individuals and families, and volunteers worked long and hard to ensure the *pavaljuni* were completed in time for *San Pawl* 1994.

All acknowledged that they were beautiful, and a fine achievement by the new commission for *armar*. Indeed, it appears that perhaps this achievement has restored the faith of Guži and Vince in the abilities of their successors. In summer 1994, after I left Malta, I received news that they were once more working on materials for the *festa*. They were restoring the ornate platform that used to be erected above the steps in front of *Għand Lawrenz*, from which bands would play during the *festa*.

Despite the apparent drop in standards, then, innovations were still being introduced in the outside festivities. These were elements of the *festa* that created the public face of the *Pawlina*, which would be displayed for all to see. Like the *salott* in the Maltese household, the outside festivities were explicitly created for outsiders, as a representation of the aesthetic tastes and craftsmanship of those who hosted the *festa*. This contrasted with the inside festivities, which were ideally a more intimate affair, at which the community of *Pawlina* would celebrate their saint in privacy.

Preparing the *festa ta' ġewwa*

Tasks associated with the outside festivities are related to ideas of solidarity and sociability among men, and of male responsibility and capability to maintain the *armar* regularly and efficiently. They are tasks which Guži glossed as those of real, adult

men. By contrast, the tasks associated with the inside festivities, of the *festa ta'gewwa*, are ones which in the domain of the household would be considered the responsibility of women. This holds true for most of the duties surrounding the church throughout the year. Many of the tasks are concerned with simple housekeeping rather than creative, productive activity. The productive pursuit of masculine craftsmanship is replaced by a more feminine, decorative aesthetic. To pursue the homology between *festa* and household, these required (female) acts of caretakership, as opposed to (male) acts of production (see chapter two).

In the lead-up to *festa*, elaborately embroidered damasks are hung on the church walls; all the *festa* silverware is taken out of its cupboards, polished, and placed on the altars; carpets are laid on the steps before each altar; and the entire church is cleaned. This latter task is undertaken during the year by a group of dedicated women who spend one morning every week cleaning the church. Except for arranging flowers, this is the only chore performed by women. But in the lead-up to *festa*, men do the cleaning. Thus, the *festa* emerges as a special context in which the activities associated with housework are undertaken by men; domestic tasks are incorporated into the cause of the public representation of *Pawlini* identity.

Flower-arranging remains a female preserve, but the normal displays are surpassed by the ostentatious sprays that are commercially produced for the occasion. These are placed in front of the saint's statue for the duration of the *festa*, and bear the names of organisations which contributed them to the saint. Possibly also made by women, these nevertheless represent the incorporation of the feminine task of flower-arrangement by agents from the public sphere. These included the local Nationalist Party club, La Valette band club, the Prime Minister, Eddie Fenech Adami, and local politician Ray Bondin. There is a certain parallel to be drawn with observations made by Foster (1967) on similar festive practices in Mexico, where part of the process of political leadership depends on the ostentatious patronage of ritual occasions (203-204). In this case, it is symbolic, but it does demonstrate the extent to which the private domain of the inside *festa ta'gewwa* is incorporated into the public sphere, or at least utilised, for the purposes of the public.

That this is possible depends on the male incorporation of the private domain, as represented in their willing performance of what are apparently feminine tasks. For the main altar, the decorative tasks of the inside *festa* are performed by Freddie the

sacristan, but the side-altars are tended mainly by the procurators of the various Confraternities to which the altars are dedicated. These procurators are all men.

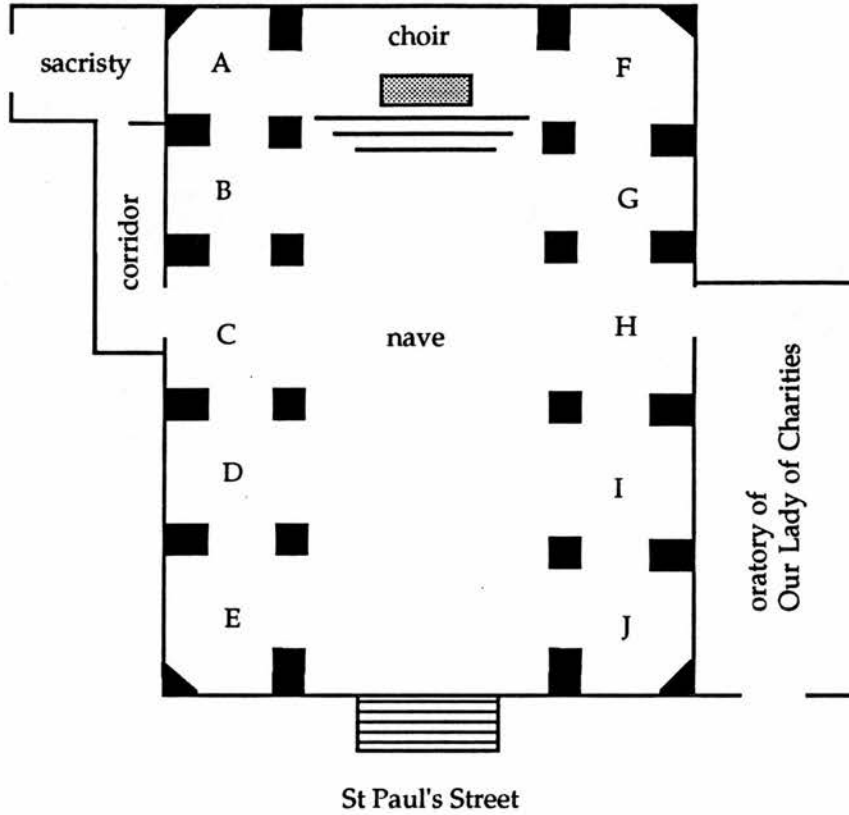
Prior to the *festa*, each of the Confraternities decorates its chapel with the riches conferred by previous generations. The operation is overseen by the procurator of the Confraternity, who acts as an administrative head. During my time in Malta, the group of procurators was particularly close. They were all friends, and members of the *klikka* of *dilettanti* I have identified above as men who had formerly been involved in the administration of the outside festivities, but who had now turned in disillusionment towards the inside *festa*.

The church itself is built to the same design as most Christian churches. The nave is flanked on either side by small chapels, each with its own altar, and altar-piece. These are dedicated to different saints, and different Confraternities (see fig 9). In the last few days before *San Pawl*, the procurators spend a great deal of time together, in the church, comparing the relative beauty of each other's altar, making jocular competitive remarks, and talking to older *festa* enthusiasts.

These older men are regarded as experts; they remember how *San Pawl* used to be organised, and so they have a sense of how it should be organised today. They are bearers of *festa* tradition. One of them in particular, has a specific role in this connection. This is Guzi Vella, who was for many years the St Paul's archivist. He therefore not only remembered how *festa* was done in the immediately preceding generations, he had also read about how it was done in the previous centuries.


He was an important resource for the group of procurators. He could legitimise their claims to a superior knowledge of the traditional, on the occasions when the church authorities, and particularly the Archpriest, appeared to change things. For if, as discussed in the last chapter, debates over the outside festivities and their representation pitted a lay wish to innovate against the more conservative clergy, then the opposite was true of the inside festivities. Here, the clergy were in control, and could make decisions about the form of proceedings. In general, changes were unpopular, and the first line of criticism came from the group of procurators who, armed with the precedent of tradition, would criticise attempts to innovate within the church.


fig 9 - Plan of St Paul's Church



key:

- A = Chapel of the Holy Crucifix
- B = Chapel of St Cajetan
- C = Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament
- D = Chapel of St Crispin and St Crispinian
- E = Chapel of St Michael
- F = Chapel of St Theresa of Avila
- G = Chapel of St Joseph
- H = Chapel of Our Lady of Charities
- I = Chapel of St Homobonus
- J = Chapel of St Martin

 = Main Altar

 = Steps

For example, when in 1993, the televising of the solemn pontifical mass on *fešta* day led to a change in the form of the mass, there was a major outcry from the procurators. Until 1993, for as long as any of the lay experts surrounding *San Paul* could remember, the Eucharist was celebrated during the *pontifikal* ('pontifical mass'), on the main altar

behind the Archbishop. For the brief moments of consecration, he would therefore turn his back on the congregation. This was not considered sufficiently eye-catching by the programme director, and after some discussion with the Archpriest, it was agreed that for the purposes of the broadcast, the Eucharist would be celebrated on the front, table altar.

There was vociferous opposition, particularly by the procurators, who made appeals to the tradition of always celebrating the *fešta* Eucharist on the main altar. This was the only occasion of the year when this was done, and St Paul's was the only church in Malta where it was done by the Archbishop. To lose such a significant moment in the ritual of *San Pawl* would blunt the importance of the *fešta*. But the Archpriest would not be swayed. He was overheard by one of the procurators, talking to the programmer:

"I'll make them accept it...and if they don't, I'll whip them [into shape]."

This comment caused uproar. What had no doubt been intended as a flippant comment was interpreted as a cynical attempt to assert control. It seemed to make stark what many people suggested about the nature of clerical authority; that despite the explicit statements that the church belonged to the people, with clerics being simply figureheads, in fact the nature of their authority was despotic. Rather than being servants of the people, they were their controllers, and exploited their position as supposed public servants, for political gain.

The dynamics of the relationship between *il-poplu* and the clergy was the subject of MLP anticlericalism during the 1970's and 80's. However, it was also freely acknowledged by the *Pawlini*, most of whom were Nationalists. It linked lay-clergy relationships to those between the disenfranchised and powerless subaltern group, and the well-connected, *pulit* ('polite') patron grade, of which the clergy were members. By definition, the clergy were well-educated. They were also well-connected, having been educated at the seminary, and had direct access to the considerable resources of the church. They were therefore inevitably part of the patron grade. Moreover, they were directly linked to the Nationalist Party, as the PN developed out of precisely the same Italianate group from which the clergy were drawn. If the Church of England used to be the Tory Party at prayer, then the Maltese Curia performed the same role for the Nationalists.

News of the argument between the lay Confraternity members and the Archpriest spread from the immediate flare-up in the church, to *Għand Lawrenz* and then from there

through the gossip networks such that, the next day, I was told by Mary DuPont about what had happened. It highlighted the antagonism between lay and clerical interests in the *fešta*. It also showed the overall reluctance to innovate with inside festivities. For if the outside festivities were characterised by an appetite for innovation, where new street decorations were designed and created on a yearly basis, the inside festivities were associated with deep tradition and an unwillingness to accept change. To this extent the division between inside and outside is also one between tradition and innovation, continuity and change. The *fešta* incorporates both, and for this reason is an important locus for debates between them.

The Confraternities

The Confraternities fall into two broad categories; the guild Confraternities and the religious Confraternities. The guild Confraternities, as many *Pawlini* were keen to tell me, were the original trade unions. This was, of course, a well-loaded statement, given the broadly anti-socialist opinions of most of their number. They originated in a type of trades guild which developed in seventeenth century Valletta, to look after the well-being of artisans from a particular trade. Each guild was dedicated to the patron saint of its trade, and contributed towards the establishing of a side-altar in the church of St Paul.

Before the twentieth century, there were seven guild Confraternities at St Paul's, each with its own chapel. These were the Confraternities of:

St Michael - Patron of Grocers and Retailers

Sts Crispin and Crispian - Patrons of Cobblers and Harness-Makers

St Eligius - Patron of Blacksmiths

St Agatha - Patron of Oarsmen and Port Workers⁶⁴

St Helen - Patron of Goldsmiths

St Homobonus - Patron of Drapers and Tailors

St Martin - Patron of Merchants

By the early 1990's, this number had been reduced to four, with the chapel and Confraternity of St Eligius being taken over by the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, those of St Helen being given to the religious Confraternity of Our Lady of Charities, and the Confraternity of St Agatha dying out to leave the chapel of St Cajetan in the hands of the church (see fig 9).

⁶⁴ The Confraternity of St Agatha was allotted the chapel of St Cajetan in 1804 (Ciarlò 1995: 56).

Religious Confraternities centre not around the patron saint of a profession, but a particularly effective object of devotion or intercession. The Confraternity of Our Lady of Charities has three chapels in St Paul's. These are that of Our Lady of Charities itself, formerly St Helen; the chapel of St Theresa of Avila; and that of St Joseph. It also has a large oratory adjoining the church, in which the relic of St Paul is kept. Our Lady of Charities is widely regarded as the Confraternity *tal-puliti*; of the wealthy or well-placed. "All its members are doctors or lawyers", I was told by Vince.

Equally influential, though rather less exclusive, was the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, based in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. This also has an oratory, above the sacristy, which had recently been restored. Members of the Confraternity were widespread throughout the parish of St Paul, and participated in the processions at Corpus Domini and Easter.

A Confraternity is known as a *fratellanza* ('Confraternity', or 'brotherhood') and its members as *fratelli* ('brothers'). Women are not permitted to join, although the wives and families of *fratelli* also benefit from their activities. Their main function is to ensure that all their members have a decent burial in a consecrated graveyard. They hold tombs either in the national graveyard at Paola, or other, local graveyards. Funds are required for the upkeep of the tombs, and to ensure that they are cleaned out at appropriate intervals.

Money comes to the Confraternities from legacies or bequests, many of which are left on the understanding that the interest from the sum endowed will be used to fund masses said to the soul of the departed in perpetuity. It is the job of the procurator of the Confraternity to ensure that these legacies are properly dealt with, and the money is properly managed.

The work of the Confraternity, and its procurator, then, is very much related to the maintenance of proper ties with the dead. They are answerable to the kin of the deceased, in that the legacies left to the Confraternity represent a proportion of the inheritance of those remaining.

Kin links with the dead are maintained by all families, through visits to the cemeteries, particularly at All Souls (1st November) and throughout the following month. At this time, crowds of people will go to the national cemetery, the *Adolorata* at Paola to

make sure that the graves are tidy, and to decorate them with flowers. The graves at the *Adolorata* are well-ordered square pits cut into the limestone and topped with large flagstones. On top, to commemorate the dead, are marble plaques set at an angle on metal stands. These bear the names and dates of the deceased, and their photographs. Rosary beads are taken, and the prayers of the rosary said in front of the tombs of close family members, and friends who have recently deceased. When I went in November 1992 with the DuPont family, prayers were said for both Ray's parents, and for Mary's father. Her mother, Tessie, also came. Candles were lit and placed on the tomb, to demonstrate the commitment of the living to the memory of the dead.

The candles consist of a red plastic jar into which has been poured melted wax, with a wick through the centre. This is topped by a metal grille, to shelter the flame from the wind. The act of lighting a candle is of major significance, and for many Maltese means a more frequent visit to the *Adolorata*. For example, the elderly Ċikku Tabone, who was instrumental in setting up the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, told me that he visited his wife's grave every other day. He had used to go every day, but the development of a longer-lasting, two-day candle had allowed less frequent visits. During November almost every Maltese visits their deceased families, and the prevalence of candles at the *Adolorata* is so marked that if one drives past at night, the hillside that the cemetery occupies glows with red, flickering flames.

At other times of the year, it is generally women and the elderly who maintain these relationships with the dead. As argued in chapter two, this is because the care of the dead extends kin-work to religious-work: caring for the family also involves caring for its dead. Part of a woman's primary role is to visit the dead, or simply pray for them in the local church or chapel. Of the women I knew in St Paul's parish, most would attend a church function, or engage in quiet prayer, on a daily basis. This contrasts with men who, although often present in the church building - the sacristy or an oratory - would not necessarily participate in any liturgical function. For them, a weekly mass on Sundays was sufficient.

Women generally cultivate greater links with the dead, therefore, but the primary agents in the official cultivation of these links are the men who head the Confraternities; the procurators. The procurators, then, are explicitly involved in what would normally be considered the work of women. In the lead-up to the *festa*, procurators also involve themselves in a kind of housework; cleaning, polishing and decorating the church. These are also tasks normally performed by women. But in the *festa* context, they

are performed by men involved with the Confraternities. Women are generally discouraged from participating, and seldom played anything but the most ancillary role in these activities.

Women's Exclusion from *Festa* Preparations

Tessie, Mary DuPont's aged mother had been involved with the *klikka* of *dilettanti* after she moved back to Malta from Belgium in the 1970's. When she arrived back she had little to do, and so began to help with the work of sacristan at the small church that sits beside Grand Harbour, dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse. These tasks soon extended, and she also got involved preparing for *festa* at the parish church. They were happy times for her, she said, before her husband became ill and she herself developed arthritis and nervous problems. But even though the actual tasks involved were very similar to those performed in her daily round of household chores, this participation in the preparations for *festa*, and the work of the church, was disapproved of; not least by Mary and Ray. For them, her participation in the organisation of the festivities brought down her, and their status. It made her, and them, *ħamalli* ('rude'), despite the fact that her activities were concerned solely with the inside *festa*, and hence conceivably associated with women and women's work.

The problem was that joining in with the *festa* preparations associated her with a wider male domain of sociability. The priest in charge of Our Lady of Liesse was the Franciscan monk, Father Justin Sciortino, who was a well-known alcoholic, and spent a lot of time *Għand Lawrenz*. Indeed, during my time in Malta, he was something of a mascot to the regulars at this bar. Through him, Tessie got to know the group of *festa dilettanti*, who at that time only included Charlie Grima from the *klikka* I knew in the early 1990's. She got on well with this crowd, and would help them with their projects associated with the *festa*, but also spend time with them talking and drinking, as well as going further afield for the odd meal. She therefore inevitably transgressed the boundaries of behaviour acceptable to Ray and Mary, for participation in the *festa*, albeit in the *festa ta'gewwa* - the inside festivities - meant inevitable participation in the world of bars and restaurants associated with male sociability.

This demonstrates the extent to which the female activities of the inside *festa*, and indeed those festivities as a whole, are incorporated by the public world of male sociability. What should have been female tasks, because performed inside the church and in this case performed by a woman, were made male, because performed by the Confraternities. Doing this effectively excluded women, who like Tessie were regarded as

ħamalli if they joined in. The whole process is reinforced by the *festa* itself, which although presenting itself as an occasion for family and community - the union or complementarity of genders - does so primarily through the demonstration of male agency over the most significant areas of the *festa*; in particular the carrying of the monumental statue at the beginning and end of festivities.

This replicates the form of ideology surrounding the family. There, the idealised gender complementarity serves to negate the contestation of traditional gender identities, and deny the sometimes brutal male ascendancy. Here, the consequences are less obviously violent, but the exclusion is nevertheless significant. *Festa*, which is ideally an activity that involves the whole community, is dominated by men. The notion of inclusion, therefore, serves to mask the primacy of male participation.

This primacy is publicly demonstrated twice during the *festa* - at the start and at the end. The start involves men carrying the statue of St Paul out of its niche and into the church. This sets up the opposition between inside and outside, as it places the saint on the threshold of the two. No longer behind glass, but not yet fully outside, he is waiting for the moment when inside and outside are resolved, during the procession itself.

The *ħruġ*

San Pawl begins on a weekend two weeks before February 10th, with the first function, the *ħruġ tal vara* ('the taking out of the statue'). The *ħruġ* represents the moment at which the inside-outside distinction begins in the *festa* context. It is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside. Rather, it is the moment at which the opposition is instigated. The statue of St Paul is taken from a glass-fronted niche to the left of the main altar of the church, and carried shoulder-high to the altar, where it is rested for a few minutes. Here, a prayer is said by the parish priest, and the hymn of St Paul is sung by all those congregated. It is then carried down the church, to a side apse, where it is placed on a large ornamental pedestal. Here it will rest, in a marginal position between inside and outside, until the final day of the *festa*.

The *ħruġ* is a moment of great emotion. As the towering figure emerges from its niche, the shouts begin, "Viva San Pawl!" (long live St Paul), "Viva L-Għaxra ta' Malta!" (long live the tenth [of February] of Malta). This is the opening of the *festa*, and the first proximate engagement with St Paul for a year. It is a poignant event. As the huge (probably 10 feet tall), solid wood statue is walked down the central aisle of the church, faces look up in astonishment, and tears begin to well up: "Viva L-Għaxra ta' Malta!".

The *firug* is important in that it makes the statue, and the saint, available to everybody for a more totalised experiential engagement than is possible throughout the year. It can be walked around, and touched: experiences of the saint which cannot be gained at any other time of the year, when the saint is behind glass, in his niche.

After the *firug*, the statue sits on its pedestal for two weeks, awaiting *fešta* day proper. The space in front of him is decorated with flowers and candles, and becomes a space where both men and women will congregate, to chat, to pray, or simply to sit and stare in wonder at the presence of *L-Apostlu ta' Malta* ('the apostle of Malta').

Here, for the only time of the year, people can physically engage with the saint, walking round him and touching him. People change their way of relating to the statue at this time. It becomes animated; something to which one can talk directly, rather than simply offer a donation, as is the case throughout the rest of the year when St Paul is behind glass. When the statue is here, people avoid turning their back on him, and when they do, will apologise; "Sorry, Pawlu". These are days when special prayers can be offered to the saint; the possibility of direct physical engagement standing also for a more direct spiritual engagement that assures or assumes an increased possibility of intercession. It is also a time when young children, and particularly boys, are taken to visit the saint. Babies are taken throughout the year to visit the saint, but particularly during the *fešta*, when the statue can be viewed from all angles. Many social theorists have argued that physical engagements with an artefact such as a statue shape thought in significant ways. Spatial cognition is of primary importance in the learning of social categories (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1990; Csordas, 1994; Mitchell, forthcoming, c; Toren, 1990).

The cognitive significance of being able to encounter the statue in space, in proximity, is clearly not lost on Maltese parents. One explained to me:

"This is the nicest time to take your children to see Paul. This way they can really understand."

I saw several children being encouraged to recognise St Paul, with the question, *Fejn hu San Pawl* ("Where's St Paul?"), after which even pre-speech children would point to the statue, to the pleasure of those who were present. The trick was even tried in other contexts, where small models of the statue, photographs of it, or even paintings of the saint that didn't resemble the statue, were treated as the objects to be acknowledged.

Slightly older children were encouraged to mimic the apostle's stance, once more rewarded with a smile, a kiss or even a sweet. The *ħrug* marks the beginning of a period when the whole family of *Pawlini* can appreciate and engage with the apostle.

Before 1992, the *ħrug* had occurred on Sunday mornings, after the final mass at 11:45. This meant that it would get caught up in the usual Sunday morning sociability, and end up with an excessive drinking binge *Għand Lawrenz*. In 1992, however, it was moved to a Saturday night, after which a fund-raising dinner dance was organised by the *Pawlini*. The dinner dance involved an enthusiastic continuation of the spirit created at the *ħrug*, but marked the occasion with a more family-centred celebration than the previous male-oriented drinking session.

The tables for the dinner dance are organised by family. At my first *festa* in 1993, I was invited by the Sciberras family to sit with them. Around the table were Salvina and Guži, Paul, Mario and John, together with Mario's girl-friend, Gertrude and her mother. Gertrude was referred to by the Sciberras family as Mario's *għarusa*, a term which literally means fiancée, but in this context did not necessarily imply a concrete agreement to marry. Rather, the term has come to signify a long-term relationship with a degree of commitment which goes beyond meeting up casually. As a minimum, it implies being introduced to each-other's parents, and thereby creating the beginnings of an alliance between two families. This alliance was signified by the presence of Gertrude's widowed mother at the dinner dance.

Besides this family group were John Bone, a cousin of the Sciberras boys, his sister and her best friend (see Appendix Two, and chapter three). There was therefore a fairly well-balanced gender-mix, and the personnel were selected according to closeness to the family. The atmosphere was familiar, and the grouping of tables around families and households seemed to mirror the relations between the same units in the neighbourhood setting.

At the beginning of the meal, everybody sat at the table, to await the food. Then between courses, men would get up and 'visit' the other tables, inviting members of other table groups for a drink at the bar. This would leave tables vacant for women to move from one table to the other, to chat with friends and neighbours. This reflects the normal everyday process of sociability, whereby men meet up to talk in the public domain of bar or cafe, whilst women visit each other on home ground. But just as men in the everyday

setting are criticised for spending too much time away, so at the dinner dance, there was a certain critique of the men's behaviour, by women.

To begin with I was left as the only man on the table, as the other men went to the bar. Salvina then criticised Paul for not looking after me properly. He should have taken me to the bar, she suggested. But Gertrude's mother pointed out that the really appropriate thing would be to stay at table. In particular, she complained about Mario leaving Gertrude alone; neglecting his responsibilities as her *għarus* ('fiancé'/'boy-friend'). But the criticism also extended to the other men. In order to fulfil their proper responsibilities to this table group, they should achieve a correct balance between presence and absence, just as to fulfil their responsibilities to the household, they should achieve a correct balance between inside and outside.

This balance, or complementarity, between inside and outside also had ramifications for the *festa* as a whole. If the *festa* is bifurcated, then the *ħruġ* represents the moment where this distinction emerges. It is the moment where St Paul is taken out of his niche, and placed in the marginal, perhaps liminal (Turner, 1969) position in the church, where he is neither wholly inside, tucked away behind glass, nor wholly outside. This then sets the stage for a more rigid demarcation between inside and outside celebrations which runs through the *festa* until the final day, when the inside functions are open to the wider public, an outside audience, and the paraphernalia of inside celebrations are literally taken outside, in the procession.⁶⁵

If the *ħruġ* takes place in a context of balance or complementarity, then, this is as a final celebration of this context, before inside and outside are separated until the final procession. But just as the apparent intimacy of preparations for the inside festivities mask a male, public incorporation of this domain, so the celebration of the *ħruġ* in the apparently complementary context of the dinner dance also masks male precedence. As

⁶⁵ Several anthropologists have attempted to define the universal structure of ritual. Most of these involve a three-stage process initially introduced by Van Gennep (1960). The model therefore applies principally to *rites de passage*, but others - principally Turner (1969) and Bloch (1992) - have argued that it applies to all ritual. In the three-stage model, the ritual subject is separated from everyday life, and placed in a transcendent situation at a remove from the everyday - Turner's liminality - before being reintegrated into society, a changed person. Rituals such as Maltese *festa*, which one might term 'public rituals', as opposed to the 'private' rites of passage, appear to work in the reverse. Here, the statue of St Paul is taken out of his special, and transcendent position, brought into the social world for the period of the *festa*, and then once more removed from the everyday, at its close. His movement transcendent - everyday - transcendent directly opposes that of the classic *rites de passage*, which move everyday - transcendent - everyday.

indicated above, the men leave their tables to replicate the dynamics of gender relations in the household, to form drinking groups at the bar. As the night wore on, these groups became increasingly drunk and increasingly rowdy; increasingly separated from the groups of women still sitting at the tables talking.

The apparently family-oriented event, then, became another replication of male sociability. Indeed, it is significant that the *ħrug* dinner dance is a recent innovation. Before 1992, the *ħrug* had been on a Sunday morning, which incorporated it into the usual weekly routine of sociable drinking. The *ħrug* was therefore moved from a context of male sociability, to one where men and women ideally celebrate the start of the *festa* together.

This was considered by the organisers to be a more appropriate context. It is part of the attempt to rehabilitate not only the *festa* but also the Maltese family. It is part of the attempt to re-engage the family in the concerns of the *festa*, and of the community of *Pawlini*, but also part of the attempt to restore the family to its theoretical complementarity.

The *ħrug* demarcates inside and outside domains in order to assert their complementarity, and in order that they can be brought together at the climax of the *festa*. To this extent, it marks the beginning of the process whereby tensions within the Maltese family, the wider family of *Pawlini*, and the Maltese nation as a whole, are simultaneously elided and alluded to. These tensions relate to gender identities, identities of social class and locality, and party politics. In performing the *festa*, and thereby drawing people together in a manner which is conscious of these identities, people are also made conscious of the contestation of these identities. The doxic quality of the *festa* allows it to simultaneously represent unity and complementarity at an ideological level, but also permits the framing of contested identities (Bourdieu, 1977: 168).

Thus, for example, while on the one hand the *festa* represents a unity of inside and outside influences, as responsibilities of clergy and laity respectively, on the other hand, it draws attention to antagonisms between the two. Similarly, although it reproduces the gendered division of labour as found in idealised versions of the household, this is offset by the fact that it is only men who are involved in the preparations for the *festa*. This in turn permits the contestation of gender identities.

Hence, although the *festa* is useful to say things about 'traditional' values of community, family and gender identities, it is equally useful to highlight the tensions

that arise within these categories of identity. The *festa* does not simply represent these identities as images of unity, it is a conscious project within which these identities are debated and contested.

These themes are expanded in the next chapter, which examines the *festa* itself, and how the domains of inside and outside run parallel, before being united at its climax. This is a moment of extreme emotion, where all influences appear to come together in a moment of unity. It is only a moment, however, and draws attention as much to its contestation as its representation.

Chapter Seven: Outside Celebrations and *Festa* Day

As discussed in the last chapter, the *ħruġ* sets up the opposition between inside and outside influences in the *festa*. This chapter examines each in turn, looking at how the *festa ta'ġewwa* ('inside feast') marks a boundary between *Pawlini* and non-*Pawlini* that the *festa ta'barra* ('outside feast') denies. The *festa ta'ġewwa* comprises what Boissevain has called "insider events" (Boissevain, 1992a: 12-14), which are intended only for a certain, specified group of 'insiders'. They are carried out in the relative privacy of the parish church, and are not considered open to all. The *festa ta'barra*, by contrast, comprises "outsider events" which are carried out in the streets of Valletta, in public, and anybody is both welcome - and indeed encouraged - to attend, be they *Pawlini*, non-*Pawlini* or even tourists.

This is the case for all Maltese *festi*, but particularly for *San Pawl*, because it is not only a local, but also a national, celebration. *San Pawl* is also different from other *festi* because of the implications of the final inside event. This is the *pontifikal* ('pontifical mass'), celebrated on February 10th. At other *festi*, this event is the pinnacle of insider festivities. It is the moment when the marking of an internal space is at its most acute. Outsiders are unwelcome, except as honoured guests. But at *San Pawl*, the *pontifikal* is opened up to outsiders. It is a public event, that involves major public figures, such as the Prime Minister and the Archbishop. It is also opened up - since 1993 - to the wider Maltese public, through being televised. It therefore brings together outsiders to the *festa*, and insiders, to demonstrate the union, or complementarity, of these two elements. This is demonstrated in all *festi*, during *il-purċissjoni* at which the saint's *vara* ('monumental statue'), normally inside the church, is taken outside. But in *San Pawl*, the union of the two is also emphasised at the *pontifikal*. This is significant, in that it reinforces the idea that *San Pawl* is simultaneously a local and a national celebration.

The *festa* is of major significance for the *Pawlini*, and particularly those from *L-Arċipierku*. But this does not mean it is only concerned with demarcating the boundaries of inclusion to these groups. It is also, significantly, concerned with collapsing them. The *festa* collapses the boundaries between inside and outside, *Pawlini* and non-*Pawlini*, in order to demonstrate the unity of the wider community of the nation. If, as argued in chapter five, all Maltese are considered *Pawlini* at some level, because of the significance

of St Paul in Maltese religious history, then this is demonstrated when the inside celebration of the *pontifikal* is made public; made national.

This is further emphasised in *il-purċissjoni tal-vara* ('the procession of the monumental statue'), which brings together not only the inside and outside of local and national, but also the inside and outside of spatial domains, which as we saw in the context of the household, are gendered.

The celebration of *festa* is also the celebration of family. In this context, the family is celebrated as a complementarity of inside and outside. But this is achieved in a context of male agency - of male control over decision-making within the *festa*, and male participation in its enactment. The ideological representation of idealised family relationships can be conceived as a representation of official versions of the family. It draws attention towards harmonious complementarity, whilst downplaying contestation. But it is not irresistible. It can be argued with. To this extent it is a doxic formulation - in Bourdieu's terms - that can be used as a point of reference in everyday discourse, but can also be challenged, contested (Bourdieu, 1977: 164).

The *festa* not only represents family and gender relations, it also enacts them. The *festa* is a primary site for the enacting of masculinity, through male participation in statue-carrying. Thus, masculinity is achieved in the performance of male agency and male control over the ritual form.

Just as inside and outside are brought together at the climax of festivities, so antagonisms between those organising them are momentarily resolved. This amounts to a resolution, also, of the antagonisms between the well-connected and the subaltern groups. When the statue is returned to the inside, after its procession around the city, there is great emotion. There is also a great sense of togetherness - a resolution of difference - that Turner might well have glossed as *communitas*. This is a momentary coming together, or union, of all the elements that make up *festa*, and make *festa* a significant site for the elaboration of social identities.

That this momentary union continues to be persuasive - that people still participate in *festa*, despite the persistence in everyday life of the tensions it symbolically resolves - is a function of the *festa's* ability to simultaneously draw attention towards, and away from, such tensions. The *festa* is a site for debates about local, national, gender, class identities. It is also the source of momentary resolution of these debates.

Before exploring the significance of the final events of the *festa*, I shall examine the nature of both inside and outside festivities. The former serve to mark off a domain of exclusion for those who consider themselves insiders to the *festa*. The latter serve to incorporate outsiders, and therefore demonstrate the inclusive nature of *San Pawl*.

Inside Festivities: the *Tridu*

On 6th February, after 6pm mass, comes the first function of the *festa* proper. This is the first day of the *tridu*, and is an inside function. The *tridu* is a three-part sermon delivered on consecutive days by an invited, 'celebrity' priest. They focus on a particular aspect of the saint's life, drawing out the implications of this for followers of the saint. For example, in 1993 the *tridu* sermons focused on the destiny implied by St Paul's shipwreck in Malta. It should not be seen as a fortuitous accident, the priest argued, but as part of a greater plan for the Maltese people.

The content of the *tridu* sermons serve to consolidate communal ties between *Pawlini*, by reinforcing the common knowledge of St Paul's life and significance. It therefore creates a radical disjunction between inside and outside festivities. During the *tridu* sermons, the church is packed with local people, many of whom are aged, and from *L-Arcipierku*. They are frequently unable to climb the steep hill to the parish church throughout the year, but make the effort for the *tridu*. It is their *festa*, and as inhabitants of the most important part of the parish, they wish to participate. As Ċikku Tabone said to me:

"The *festa* is ours. Ours. The people from *L-Arcipierku*."

This marks the internal festivities as the preserve of people from the parish, and particularly *L-Arcipierku*. There is a certain antagonism towards people from elsewhere, who come to the *festa ta'ġewwa*, and are not seen throughout the rest of the year. Such people, many of whom are former residents of St Paul's, are known as *fatati* ('ghosts'), who only haunt the parish to enjoy the *festa*. Because they are not residents of St Paul's, they may not have contributed financially to the *festa* budget, or to the preparations. They are therefore not 'real' insiders, not real *Pawlini*, but ghosts of what the *Pawlini* should ideally be - committed, loyal, and involved.

Outsiders at the *festi ta'ġewwa* are regarded with suspicion. As they sit in the church, waiting for the *tridu* sermons to begin, people look around, and nod

acknowledgement to their neighbours and friends. Unfamiliar faces are remarked upon, leading to conspiratorial chatter as to their origins and legitimacy for being there. This makes the outsider feel uncomfortable, unwelcome - as it made me feel unwelcome the first time I attended the *tridu*.

The sermons themselves contain well-known stories about the saint, slightly recast to make new points about his important relationship with Malta and the Maltese. As the priest who conducted the *tridu* in 1993 told me, it was all about playing to the gallery:

“You have to give people what they want; tell people what they already know, but make it sound like you’re saying something new.”

As performance, then, the *tridu* sermons are judged on the basis of an existing store of knowledge about St Paul that the congregation already possesses. From an early age, *Pawlini* children are taught the story of the saint’s arrival through locally produced picture- and story-books that are read at school or during the doctrine lessons they attend from the age of four. During one Valletta doctrine lesson just before *San Pawl* 1994 a lengthy quiz was organised, in which children were to learn the answers to a variety of questions about the life of the saint, and then be prepared to repeat them *verbatim*, if asked. This knowledge is supplemented when they begin to attend the masses and sermons of the *fešta*, such that by the time they reach adulthood, a degree of expertise has been developed, with which to judge the annual *tridu*.

This expertise is therefore not available to anybody. To understand the *tridu*, one needs to have been brought up with *San Pawl*. This marks it off as an insider celebration. As the priest talks, heads will nod in sage appreciation of a particular point, and at the end of each sermon, applause will spontaneously erupt. This is not to say that the preaching is unequivocally appreciated. Of the two sets of *San Pawl* sermons I saw, one was clearly better-appreciated than the other.

References are explicitly made to the relative quality of these events, with the tacit assumption made that the congregation have enough expertise to be able to judge. To this extent, these functions are mock enactments of the pedagogic process; more to do with confirming common knowledge than disseminating it. More to do with asserting that the *tridu* is performed for insiders than with teaching new lessons to outsiders. This achieves a certain closure from those who have not attended these functions before. For them, the information is new; they have no criteria for judging the accuracy or insightfulness of the

priest delivering the sermon. They consequently have no grounds for participating in the in-depth analysis that takes place after the functions have finished. The *festi ta'ġewwa* ('inside festivities') therefore serve to demarcate the limits of the insider-status: to mark the boundary of inclusion and exclusion between *Pawlini* and non-*Pawlini*.

Significant in the process of delineating this boundary, is the ability to participate in the post-*tridu* assessment of the particular priest's performance. Once again, the question of identity comes down to the demarcation of the grounds for participation in a sphere of public opinion. In this case, opinion about the performance of the priest in his *tridu*. People not involved in *San Pawl* do not have the expertise to make judgements about this, and are therefore not included.

As each *tridu* sermon ends, the rousing *antifon* ('antiphon') of *San Pawl* is sung by an invited choir. Once more, the boundary of insider and outsider is marked by people's ability to sing along. After the *antifon*, the congregation filters out of the church's side door and through the sacristy. Here, people gather in small conversational groups. They approach the visiting priest to congratulate him on the sermon, and then slowly move along, often for a drink, or to join the band march that has just started up.

This period of conversation is significant, in that it enables the *Pawlini* to demonstrate their common knowledge of the aesthetics of the *tridu*, as well as their membership of the community of *Pawlini*. Each night, after the *tridu* finishes, a band march begins. This marks the contrast between insider and outsider celebrations. As the congregation walks out of the church, and into the streets, they are met by large crowds of *festa* visitors. These people are not expected to have been at the *tridu*. They have no expertise in the judging of *tridu* performances, and would not have been welcome had they come. This juxtaposition of inside and outside festivities, therefore, creates a tension between the two categories of activity, and the two categories of people, which remains with the *festa* until its resolution on *festa* day itself.

If the inside festivities create the demarcation of the boundaries of the *Pawlini*, then this is problematic. It negates the nature of *San Pawl* as a national, not merely local, *festa*. The incorporation of the national is not fully manifest until the final act of the inside *festa*, on February 10th, *festa* day itself. On this day, when other *festi* would be celebrating their saint with the greatest intimacy, in the most important insider event, the *Pawlini* open up proceedings, to incorporate outsiders into the inside festivities. However, in order to do that, the inside festivities must first be established as an

intimate, internal and private sphere to which only members of the wider family of *Pawlini* are really allowed. The dichotomy must first be created, then resolved.

The initial closure of the internal festivities contrasts with the open-ness of the parallel external *festa*, to which I now turn. These are public celebrations to which everybody - whether *Pawlini*, Maltese, or tourist - is welcome, and even encouraged to attend. The most numerous of these *festi ta'barra* ('outside festivities') are the band marches, which take place on each day of the lead-up to the *festa*, and then again on *festa* day.

Band Marches

On each night of the *tridu*, a band march is organised to start outside the church on the completion of the *antifon*. These are the first parts of the outside celebrations, *il-festi ta'barra*. Marches are followed by groups of men and women, who treat the occasion as an opportunity to meet friends and neighbours, and enjoy the rousing music. The routes the marches take vary slightly, so that most streets in the parish have a march passing through at some stage. Many of the marches also leave the parish boundary, to move along Republic Street, thus effectively laying a *Pawlini* claim to the whole city.

Usually, just in front of the band, there is a group of young men, who keep ahead of the march, moving from bar to bar, getting progressively drunker, dancing and singing along to the marches. In particular, the small temporary *klikka* that comes together during the putting out of the *armar*, is normally involved.

As well as decorating the streets they also often create props for themselves to carry during the band marches, and create a corporate identity by wearing matching t-shirts. In the years that I saw the *festa*, they painted umbrellas alternate sections of red and white, picked out onto the white background was the insignia of St Paul: a snake emerging from a fire. The colours are significant, in that they are not only those of St Paul, but also of Valletta and Malta as a whole. They also made large poles out of plastic piping, to which were attached red and white balloons, and flags with *Pawlini* written on them. All these props were carried during band marches, and added to the atmosphere of *briju*, as they were swung around in time to the music. *Briju* is a term that according to Aquilina's dictionary means 'merrymaking', but in a *festa* context it refers to the rather boisterous merrymaking associated with band marches, in which participants dance around, shout, sing and chant along to the rousing music.

plates 13 and 14



Band March Brijuni



Waving Flags at a Band March

These young men also get drunk together during the *festa*, and for many this will be the first time they drink. The pattern is to follow the march route in front of the band, moving from one bar to the next, so that as the band approaches, one has finished one's drink, and can rejoin the march. As participants become tipsy, this becomes increasingly difficult, and drinks are taken out onto the streets. In 1993 and 1994, imported Heineken beer was particularly popular, and during the band marches, it was not uncommon to see young men with three bottles held between the fingers of one hand, and a fourth in the other hand being drunk.

Also as levels of alcohol rise, so does the intensity of *briju*. The 'rucks' that develop in front of the band can involve hundreds of young men, who sing, shout and sway to the music. They frequently cause delays in the proceedings, as scores of young men fall on the floor, hugging and laughing, in a kind of mock ecstasy.

On one particular occasion, this behaviour became the subject of concern. It was the day in 1993 of the inaugural *Marc tal-Hadd filghodu* (Sunday morning march). This was a new march and one of the innovations of which the new Committee was proud. It had been donated by La Valette band club, who usually charged a fee for performing. On this occasion, they waived the fee.

As argued in the Introduction, La Valette has a specially close relationship with *San Pawl*. Their appearances during this *festa* are always done for a cheaper rate than they charge for others. *San Pawl* marks the first occasion in their performance calendar, and the unveiling of their annual set of marches. What is played at *San Pawl* for the first time each year is played again on every occasion La Valette appear throughout the year. There is justification, then, for *Pawlini* claims that La Valette is the band of *San Pawl*.

The Sunday morning march was a popular innovation, because it effectively incorporated the normal weekly Sunday morning social occasion, into the *festa*. It placed what is normally a purely male occasion, into a context where women and children were also involved. This meant that by joining in, the men were not denying their responsibilities as members of families and households. Rather, they were realising these roles, but in a public context. This made excessive drunkenness permissible in ways that are not so clear at other times of the year. The everyday social occasion was incorporated into the extraordinary events of the *festa*, and permitted the relaxation of normal social

expectations. Excesses were permitted because placing the normal Sunday male sociability into a *fiesta* context had the associated effect of placing it in a family context.

On the first Sunday morning march, then, there was a great deal of drunkenness, because a great deal of drunkenness was allowed. The march had been intended to end in front of the parish church, but the small 'ruck' became so involved in its own swaying, drunken celebration, that the march stopped short. It had been held up for twenty minutes in any case, and eventually disbanded. One experienced on-looker told me that this was a warning from La Valette, that if the *Pawlini* could not control themselves, the band would not honour their agreements to complete the march. He also feared that the ecstasy had not just been caused by alcohol, but other substances were involved.

The occasion deteriorated into violence, when an elderly woman who lived above *Għand Lawrenz*, her balcony overlooking the corner of St Paul's street and St Lucy's, complained about swearing. The woman was a constant antagonist of the *Pawlini*, making frequent complaints, both directly, in circumstances such as these, and through the more official channels of The Archpriest. She complained of noise, of swearing and of mess, but also frequently commented on how much money the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* collected from the St Paul's parishioners, and questioned how it was being spent.

This was a matter of gravity for the *Għaqda*. Being accused of drunkenness was one thing, but as Hector Bruno pointed out to me, misappropriating funds was an entirely different matter. This was a matter of honour, he said, using the Maltese *onor* on the one time I heard it in nearly two years' fieldwork. Significantly, it was used in a context where the trustworthiness of the *Għaqda* was being questioned; they were effectively being accused of being *ħaxxej*, and therefore not real men. As discussed in chapter one, the term *ħaxxej* literally means 'fucker', but is most often used for those who have somehow deceived and therefore whose masculinity is in question. The sexual metaphor presents them as the active partner in an act of male homosexuality, being the structural opposite, or twin, of the insult *ħudu f'sormok* - 'take it in your arse'.

As the argument progressed, the woman made direct reference to their manhood, and eventually the younger *Pawlini*, for whom the *fiesta* is intrinsic in the creation of masculinity, erupted in violent backlash. A shower of bottles was launched at her balcony window. Particularly violent was the reaction of Paul Sciberras.

He took her insults personally, as he was responsible for the *armar*. The culmination of a year's preparation and a month's hard work was being questioned by this woman. He had told me that for him, the *festa* meant hard work, followed by enjoyment (see last chapter). The woman's interventions were preventing him from doing that. He ran towards her door, and started pounding to get in. He was pulled back by some of his friends, but then made another, wriggling attempt to get free and after her. People said he would kill her if he got hold of her, and it seemed possible. Attempts were made to pacify him; hold him down. Appeals to his better nature came from friends, his brothers, and most significantly, his mother, who appeared on the scene. She appealed to respect for Lawrenz, whose bar they were now standing in front of. Also, to St Paul, whose statue stood in a niche at the corner. Her words seemed more soothing than those of his friends. Significantly, both the person at whom his anger was directed, and the person who calmed it down, were women. Thus, the threat to masculinity came from a woman, but also the reassurance that this threat was not worth bothering about. Eventually, he calmed down, and was taken home, not to be seen until the following day.

The *festa* is defended by the young men in the same way that *L-Arcipierku* had been. Challenges to the *festa*, like challenges to community boundaries, were met with a violent response. In this case, the challenge was framed in terms of the trustworthiness and reputation of *L-Għaqda*. It was expressed in terms of masculinity, of which trustworthiness is a major component. But such criticisms need not only come from local women. They also came from men involved in other *festi*, particularly those involved with St Dominic's, the most significant 'other' for the *Pawlini*.

Every year, a few incidents occur, that require the *Pawlini* to defend the integrity of their *festa* against the Dominicans. In 1994, for example, three men from St Dominic's provocatively entered *Għand Lawrenz* and started insulting St Paul. Many of the *Pawlini* who were there simply left the bar. It was not worth getting involved: what if the Dominicans were armed? But one or two *Pawlini* were prepared to take the risk. They started arguing back, and a fist-fight soon developed. The scale of such scuffles has decreased over the last twenty years or so, but they are still a significant presence.

As well as physically defending the successes of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* against slurs from outside, participation in the band marches involves direct praise of the organisers. During marches, words are composed to go along with the music which sing the praises of not only the saint, but also the *festa*. To this extent, they can be seen as self-praise; a demonstration of the successes of those organising events.

One particularly common song was set to the tune of *San Paolo No 5*, a composition written in the early years of this century, by C. Botti to praise the saint and the *festa*. To the last few bars of the most popular refrain were put the following words:

“Because we’ve a national *festa*,
 Grand and triumphant,
 Aren’t they beautiful, the *pavaljuni*, [decorative drapes]
 With us, you won’t (have to) do anything.”

The final line refers to the idea that *festa* is about hospitality, and proper hospitality means providing for guests without their having to lift a finger. The invitation to *San Pawl*, then, is represented as unconditional: you won’t have to do anything, if you attend. The outside festivities are open to anybody who wishes to come. In contrast to the privacy of the inside *festa*, which demarcates the boundary of exclusion, the outside *festa* is unconditionally inclusive.

Such collective singing, in triumphalist, self-congratulatory fashion, adds to the sense of collective celebration, and male bonding, for want of a better word, in the band march. Until recently, it had been accompanied by the random letting off of fireworks - either loud explosive bangers or the wailing flares known as *suffarelli*. They were banned just weeks before *San Pawl* 1993, and led to the introduction of a new song: *Irridu suffarelli, rridu suffarelli* (“We need *suffarelli*”).

Such active participation is generally reserved for young men. Whilst the more boisterous among them get involved in this ‘ruck’, older couples, and groups of women, stick to the fringes. Some, particularly the younger women, shadow the progress of the masculine fray, close enough to see and be seen, but not actually involved. It is as if the processes of gender and courtship are being re-enacted in this festive setting. The men are aware of the young women’s presence. They try to get them involved; to draw them into the fray. But the groups of women are evasive. They know better than to get involved, and quickly run away, in giggling groups, to adopt another safe position from which to view.

It is a replication of the courtship process observable every weekend in Paceville, the main centre for youth entertainment. Here, large groups of young men are courted by groups of women. Fear of parental sanction at lost virginity ensures that the women do not get too involved, and creates the strong sense that they are in control of the situation. It

also perpetuates the masculine ideology that women are prone to tempt with promises that they do not deliver.

During the band march men are actively involved. Women, on the other hand, adopt an apparently more passive role, but this is not to say they are not participating. Many women I talked to felt it was important that they turned up; and enjoyed the spectacle and the atmosphere. But for men it is part of their development into 'proper' *festa* participants, demonstrating their agency in order to represent themselves as 'real' men. For although both men and women are necessary for the performance of band marches, it is men who have actively participated in the preparations, and who can therefore claim the praise of the self-congratulatory singing.

Moreover, it is only men who can truly participate in *briju*. In other *festi*, it was common to see some of the more enthusiastic young women joining in with the band marches. This marked a change - a contestation - in the normal roles ascribed to men and women during *festa*. I never saw this during *San Pawl*. For a woman to join in would have her branded *ħamalla*, ('rude, uncouth') and would not be good for the *festa's* overall reputation. To have *ħamalli* participating is to produce a *festa* that is itself *ħamalla*. All *Pawlini* were keen to impress on me that *San Pawl* was not a *festa ħamalla*; it was a respectable feast.

St Paul's Conversion

Since 1992, on the third night of the *tridu*, a *dimostrazzjoni* ('demonstration') has taken place involving the newly-built statue of St Paul's conversion being carried through the streets to the *pjazza quddiem il-qorti*, ('the *pjazza* in front of the law courts') where it is winched up onto its huge pedestal, to stand presiding over Valletta until the end of *San Pawl*. The statue and pedestal were largely the work of Vince Farrugia and Robert Abdilla (see chapters five and six). Erecting the statue in front of the law courts, at the place where public opinion is created, debated, and exchanged, demonstrates a claim by the *Pawlini* over the civic space of Valletta, but also more broadly over the national space. As stated in chapter seven, the *pjazza quddiem il-qorti* is of major significance for the circulation and dissemination of information in a national public sphere of political opinion. It is here that opinions are exchanged and news passed on about political and judicial developments. To have St Paul presiding over this *pjazza* for the three days between the last *tridu* and the day after the *festa*, is to have him presiding over this significant national public space. It demonstrates, in turn, the inclusive nature of *San Pawl*.

plates 15 and 16



The Beginning of the Dimostrazzjoni



The Vara of St Paul in the Decorated Church

plates 17 and 18



Street Scene During Dimostrazzjoni



Balloons for a Band March

If the saint is placed overlooking the space where public opinion is created, then this demonstrates his dominion over that space. This, in turn, represents the national character of St Paul, as patron saint of the whole of Malta. It shows that although in one sense parochial, and related to the creation of local boundaries, in another sense, *San Pawl* incorporates the whole nation in the commemoration of the saint.

The significance of bracketing off the internal space of the insider festivities, is related to the relative ability of people to judge the quality of the *tridu*. In other words, being an insider to the *fešta* depends on one's ability to make judgements and have an opinion. The significance of the public, outsider celebrations are similarly related to questions of public opinion. This tallies with Calhoun's definition of identity. Whilst the internal festivities create local identity through the demarcation or definition of who can participate in public opinion regarding the *tridu*, then external festivities incorporate national public opinion, and therefore national identity, through the demonstration of St Paul's dominion over the *pjazza quddiem il-qorti*.

The demonstration is therefore a significant event. As with the *hrug*, there is a certain struggle for the men to involve themselves in carrying the statue. One or two experienced *reffiegħa* ('statue-carriers') are called upon to control proceedings and make sure that there is always an appropriate balance of strength and height to ensure the safe passage of the statue. But for the young men involved in preparations for the *fešta*, this is one opportunity to demonstrate their willingness and ability to become *reffiegħa* themselves.

There was an unspoken acknowledgement that precedence should be given to those most involved in the *armar*. In 1993, for example, the three Sciberras brothers and their friend Pawlu *Casan* took positions at the front of the statue. They claimed this right as it was they who had organised most of the *armar*. For the occasion, in the absence of the white smocks that characterise most processions, they wore specially printed sweat-shirts, carrying the word *Magnus* (the magnificent one) in red. It was an important moment in their careers as *reffiegħa*; and an important moment in the process of their masculinity, as embodied in the physical engagement with their saint. For if the *dimostrazzjoni* was important in that it demonstrated the incorporation of national identity into the celebration of a local patron, it was no less significant as a moment in the development of men's personal identity. For many young men, it was a first public opportunity to have a go at carrying a statue.

It was also an important moment in the progression of their *festa*. They had gone from the hard work of putting up the *armar* to the enjoyment of band marches and now had the opportunity to carry the statue. Because I had been with them throughout the process, I too was encouraged to have a go. The statue felt incredibly heavy, and provoked a kind of euphoria, that was probably related simply to the physiological symptoms of this kind of bodily trauma. More experienced *reffiegħa* explained their feelings of commitment to the practice in terms of spirituality.

On one occasion *Għand Lawrenz*, I was talking to Robert Abdilla, one of the two main protagonists in creating the statue of the conversion. He tried to explain to me how it felt to carry the statue:

“It’s incredible, the feeling that you get. I remember the first time I did it. It was like the biggest ‘high’ you could possibly get.⁶⁶ You get taken over by it - it’s amazing. Like [St] Paul is with you.”

Il-Lejlet

Following the three days of *tridu*, the 9th February is known as the *lejlet tal-festa* (*festa* eve). On this day, the Archbishop is involved for the first time, in the translation of the relic of St Paul, a small shard of bone. The relic is held in the side oratory of Our Lady of Charity, and on the morning of *il-lejlet*, is taken from there by the Archbishop to its place on the main altar of the church.

The event takes place in the evening, and groups of people congregate outside the church to watch as the diocesan limousines - large and shiny black, with registration plates containing only a silver mitre - pull up and the Archbishop gets out. Within an hour, he is gone again, having performed the translation. The movement of the relic from the fringes of the oratory into the centre of the church signifies the presence of the saint on his *festa* day. At other *festi*, the relic’s presence is even more immediate. It is kissed as a form of homage, but during *San Pawl*, it merely serves as a focus for adoration.

The church actually holds two relics of St Paul. The other is his right wrist-bone (*Id-Drieħ*), which is normally held behind the altar in a glass dome, but is placed on the main altar during important functions such as marriages, funerals and during the *festa*. The significance of *Id-Drieħ* is that it is a fragment of the saint’s preaching hand. All

⁶⁶ Robert had been involved in drugs, and had used his experience of statue carrying to help rehabilitate himself.

representations of him show the right hand held aloft as he instructs the Maltese in the gospel stories. The representations, then, depict the moment of national conversion. *Id-Drieñ* is part of the actual hand that preached. It is therefore invested with considerable power, and believed to be miraculous.

After the translation, a mass is held in the church, and yet another band march begins outside it. This is the *Marċ tal-Arċipierku* ('the *Arċipierku* march') that takes the band in question down to the *Arċipierku*. The area is considered the heart of St Paul's parish, and the heart of *San Pawl*. It is therefore a moment for the commemoration of not only the spirit of St Paul, but also that of St Paul's parish, as represented in the memories of *L-Arċipierku*.

As the march descends into *L-Arċipierku*, revellers encroach ever more imposingly. The lively atmosphere increases, as do the levels of alcohol, and enthusiastic *briju* ('merrymaking'). In 1993, this enthusiasm spilled over into violence, when an argument began between two young men. They were arguing over the status of *L-Arċipierku*. One suggested that it was a place where lots of prostitutes lived. It was therefore a 'low' place with a bad reputation, the other retaliated. He was from *L-Arċipierku*. They started towards each other, but were held back by friends, and bundled out of each others' ways. Reactions to the scuffle reveal the sensitivity of the collective *Pawlina* to the public nature of such events. Even though the march was the most intimate of the outside festivities, taking place in the quasi-privatised space of *L-Arċipierku*, this violent behaviour was still criticised:

"What a disgrace," said Karmenu, the man I was walking with, "fighting in front of the tourists." Then he turned to the men themselves, "Not in front of the tourists!"

Karmenu was a regular *Għand Lawrenz*. He was also a shop-keeper in *L-Arċipierku*, whose shop was saved from demolition in 1972 only to be knocked down in 1995. He was a generous character, with a keen ear for gossip. The word he used to describe the disgrace of men fighting during *fešta* was *għarukaza*, which has been glossed as 'shame' by other authors (Wilhelmsen, 1976). However, I prefer 'disgrace', as this makes the category both relational and situational (see Introduction and chapter two).

In this context, the particular disgrace denoted an unwanted display of violence in front of the tourists. It therefore referred to an over-exposure, or an opening out of the violence that marked the boundaries of *L-Arċipierku* and *Pawlina*, to a public audience.

The objection was not initially to the fact that the men were fighting, but fighting in front of tourists. This demonstrates the awareness *Pawlini* have of the public nature of their *festa*. They must be on their best behaviour, because they are celebrating a public, national *festa*; not merely a local one.

Such excesses, however, are the nature of *festa briju*, and are soon forgotten. Excessive also are the showers of ticker-tape in the streets of *L-Arċipierku*. By the time the band has passed, the narrow streets overhung by wooden balconies are knee-deep in small pieces of paper. In years when it subsequently rains, like 1994, these pieces of paper turn to papier mache that adheres to pavement and tarmac alike. Even by April of that year, there were still traces of the *festa* and its band marches visible in the streets of *L-Arċipierku*.

The *Arċipierku* march ends at the bastion road that overlooks the Grand Harbour breakwater, where a display of ground fireworks are organised. In Maltese terms, the fireworks for *San Pawl* have never been particularly spectacular.⁶⁷ The fireworks comprise wooden sculptures fashioned from wood and covered in flares, Catherine wheels and rockets. In 1993, there were six pieces in all, including the popular *tapit* (a 'carpet' of flares) and the familiar logo, *VSP* which stands for 'Viva San Pawl'. Known as *ċifċifogu*, they are a popular moment in the *festa*, particularly with children and tourists.

As the fireworks were set off, Karmenu, who had wanted to shield the tourists from the young men's violence, now began to mock them. The first flare led to an impromptu 'wow' of surprise and pleasure from the tourist groups, and when subsequent fireworks were set off, Karmenu joined in with them: "Ooooooooooh", he said, laughing heartily after each time. The implication was that, although the tourists might have seen aspects of the *Pawlini* which they had rather not have shown, when the young men fought, there were still elements of local knowledge with which only the Maltese themselves could be familiar. He mocked the tourists because they were displaying a wonder at the fireworks which by Maltese standards were not particularly impressive, and with which any Maltese would be totally familiar. They would take pleasure in the fireworks, but not with the same degree of awe as the tourists. By drawing attention to this division in the audience, Karmenu was demonstrating that the tourists, although

⁶⁷ At some rural *festi* elaborate moving sculptures are made. In 1993, for example, the *festa* of Siggiewi erected a full-size model of the church facade, made out of fireworks. On a rail, was a full-size firework model of the *vara*, which swung out of one door, around in an arc and then back in through the other, as the sculpture burnt.

welcome and encouraged to turn up to the *festa*, were nevertheless excluded from its wider implications.

Being a proper *festa* enthusiast, with the knowledge of fireworks, band marches, and the *tridu*, meant being Maltese. The inclusion of tourists in the *festa*, although acknowledged in the appeals to avoid violence, was nevertheless bracketed in terms of their being outsiders - *barranin*. Once more, this amounted to a process whereby the terms for participation in public debate over *festa* aesthetics, were constitutive of social - in this case national - identity. It was to this bracketing - or creation of national boundary - that Karmenu was drawing attention, when he mocked the tourists. Because they were tourists, they did not have the requisite knowledge to participate in the debates, or public opinion, over the quality of the fireworks. They could make no judgements, and were therefore outsiders.

The naiveté towards the fireworks was also naiveté in the face of the *festa* as a whole. If the tourists saw the fireworks display as simply a spectacle, then this marked their ignorance of the manifestation's significance for the *festa*. The fireworks were the climax of the lead-up to *festa* day itself. As such, they were a long-awaited event, for *Pawlini*, and one which they enjoyed because of this significance. Karmenu was also enjoying the celebration of the knowledge of this significance, and the fact that the tourists, as outsiders to the family and community of *Pawlini*, were ignorant of this.

Festa Day

If the *ħrug* that opens the *festa* marks the beginning of the separation of outside and inside elements, which then run as parallel interests throughout the celebrations, then these two are brought together once more on *festa* day itself. *San Pawl* falls on 10th February, and this day is the occasion when the inside festivities are turned outside, both by bringing the public of outsiders into the intimate inside space of the church during the pontifical mass, and by taking the inside festivities outside during *il-purċissjoni* of the saint's statue.

The resolution of the dichotomy inside-outside is the analogue of the same resolution as represented in the complementarity of genders in the household. This much is clear from the characterisation of *festa* day as a family occasion, on which not only family in the narrow sense of particular households get together, but also family in a broader sense. *San Pawl* is therefore an occasion which draws together the wider family of *Pawlini*. As shown in chapter three, this image of wider family relates to the notion of

an enduring family that emanates from the nostalgic community of *L-Arċipierku*, the urban barrio that was razed during the 1970's. But it also relates directly to specific nuclear families.

Festa is the one occasion when families are almost guaranteed to get together. This is achieved both in the domestic context of a family meal, when the extended family group will congregate to celebrate the *festa* with commensality, and in the public context of the *festa* celebrations, which see family groups participating in both inside and outside activities. *Festa* is represented as a family occasion, through the explicit inclusion of all categories of family member, in the religious exercises that precede *San Pawl*. Special meetings are held for women, housewives, fathers, children and the aged. Each addresses the significance of St Paul for their particular family responsibilities. Then in the *festa* itself, these separate groups come together, to celebrate the common heritage contained in the memory of the saint. I even knew of estranged spouses who made a point of attending *festa* together with their children, to demonstrate togetherness at this most significant time.

To the extent that it involves families coming together to show allegiance to St Paul, *San Pawl* is an occasion on which the complementarity of genders in the family and household unit is realised in a public context. Indeed, the distinctions between public and private, outside and inside in the context of the household, are also resolved on *festa* day. The degree of mutual inclusion is symbolised in village *festi* by opening the doors of the house, so that the inside of the house is on display to the outside world.

This opening out of the household is not practised in Valletta, largely because the most common form of housing is the tenement block, which does not have private houses opening out onto the street. For this type of housing, particularly in *L-Arċipierku*, the street itself is part of the inside (see chapter three). The *Marc' tal-Arċipierku*, which goes through the area, is therefore an equivalent of the opening out of the house, to the wider public world of the outside *festa*. There is also an opening out of the public spaces, to permit them being used by women. *Festa* day is the one day before all others that women are seen drinking in bars and hanging around in the sacristy of the church. On this occasion they can legitimately enter these predominantly male domains of sociability, and through this demonstrate a resolution of inside and outside, private and public, female and male.

However, their ability to transcend these boundaries is circumscribed by the necessity to do so in a proper manner. Thus, although women are 'in public' in ways in which they don't often appear, this does not necessarily imply any real liberalisation. Women's presence in these public domains is normally done in the context of the family group. They will therefore be with their husbands and, particularly in bars, it is the husband who is the primary agent in the family group's interaction with others. It is he who will usher in the family, ensure a seat for his wife and children, and then go to the bar to order drinks. Thus, once again, the representation of a complementary family, in which the tensions between outside and inside, men and women, are apparently resolved, merely serves to mask male agency; male precedence.

The same is true of the commemorative events of *fešta* day itself. For whilst in one sense they represent a resolution of the inside-outside dichotomy, and hence symbolically resolve the tensions between these domains in the household, they do so only in a context where men are the agents.

February 10th is marked by three events, involving firstly the inside *fešta* then the outside, and finally a union of the two in the form of *il-purċissjoni*. All events are well-attended by locals and outsiders, and for the whole day Valletta is busy. The separation between the intimacy of inside festivities and the open-ness of those outside is blurred from the outset, as the whole day involves the incorporation of the whole nation into the spiritual message of Saint Paul. The day is both a public holiday and a feast of obligation. All Maltese must hear mass, or they commit a sin. Thus, the intimacy of personal religious devotion to St Paul, a pre-requisite for membership of the *Pawlini* in both a loose sense and institutionally, is made public, into the devotion of the nation itself, which then incorporates the personal spirituality of all Maltese by making the *fešta* obligatory. For *Pawlini*, this obligation is most popularly fulfilled by attending the *fešta* pontifical mass, or *pontifikal*, which takes place in St Paul's church on the morning of the *fešta*. For others, local churches in other parishes are open for the purpose, and since 1993 the *pontifikal* has been televised, allowing the housebound to participate in their own moment of intimacy with the national patron.

The presence of the television meant that what was categorically the climax of the inside, private festivities, was presented in the most public arena; the national media. The separation between inside and outside was therefore collapsed, as events going on in the intimate space of St Paul's church during *San Pawl* were broadcast to people's

own living rooms; another intimate space. So the intimacy of the inside festivities become public manifestations which are then consumed in the privacy of the home.

The broadcast served to reinforce the existing nature of *fešta* day as a conceptual resolution of the distinctions between inside and outside, private and public. This much had been the case before its being televised, and was signified by the habitual presence of public figures high up in the Nationalist Party. The *pontifikal* is the central moment of the inside *fešta*, and the Archbishop participates, leading the commemorative mass for St Paul. It is also common for the Prime Minister and President of Malta to attend, and there is a great sense of national occasion. Everybody wears their best possible clothes, to publicly display their personal tribute; many buy new dresses or suits which are worn for the first time at the *pontifikal*, and then again later in the day, for *il-purcissjoni*. As for the *tridu* functions, the church is packed well before proceedings start, although there is not the same sense that this is an insider event. Rather, it is expected that the most prominent seats will be taken up by more distant, public figures, and the aisles and naves will be packed with visitors. The event presents problems to the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, whose Committee members act as stewards, blustering around to make sure that things go smoothly and official guests are well catered-for.

Further problems were presented by the presence of television cameras. This made the church rather cramped, but contributed to the sense of occasion. Televising the *pontifikal*, however, caused a certain controversy among *Pawlini*.

Funding came mainly from the St Paul's *kapitlu* ('chapter'), but an amount was also provided by the *Għaqda*. The innovation was not without its critics. Drawing on the experience of Italian football, which saw attendance at matches plummet when they were shown on live television, many argued that televising the *pontifikal* would discourage people from actually going to it. Moreover, it would encourage even those who would not normally attend the *pontifikal* to stay at home, rather than going to church in other areas. This on a day when attendance at mass is obligatory.

Dissent came mainly from lay members of the *Pawlini*, whilst the insistence that the mass be televised came from the clergy. The Archpriest himself argued that televising it would provide a valuable service to the community, for those who were unable to attend due to old age or sickness. It would also - and this was an ill-hidden agenda exposed by more cynical *Pawlini* - serve to glorify St Paul's, its *kapitlu*, and indirectly, the Archpriest himself. Much of the argument revolved around money, and

when it was discovered that Lm500 (£1,000) of the *kapitlu* funds were used to fund the broadcast, there was considerable dissent. If the church belonged to the people, it was argued, then so did its money. They should have been consulted before spending such a large sum on the endeavour.

A further argument arose over changes to the form of the liturgical function, discussed above. But the main objection was that televising the *pontifikal* would stop people attending it. This demonstrates the extent to which, on *fešta* day, the distinction between inside and outside is collapsed. Rather than preserving the liturgical function for *Pawlini* insiders, as with the *tridu*, the *pontifikal* is open to all-comers. Indeed, in 1994, an initiative was set up to further encourage the participation of outsiders in the liturgical side of the *fešta*. In that year, a special mass in English was inaugurated, on the afternoon of *fešta* day. It was advertised nationally at tourist hotels and holiday complexes, and drew a large congregation. The effort was concertedly made to draw in these visitors to the centre of *San Pawl*.

This contrasts with their definition as outsiders - *barranin* - by Karmenu during the fireworks. Here, the inclusiveness of *San Pawl* extends beyond the nation, to international visitors. The incorporation is related partly to the pride with which most Maltese regard their nation and their culture. For whilst on the one hand, Malta is regarded as marginal, and in some senses 'backward' or undisciplined (see chapter three), it is also regarded as of central value to the world. Its value stems primarily from its religiosity. If the Maltese can involve outsiders in the liturgical celebration of *San Pawl*, then they can contribute towards spreading the word of their religion across the globe.

It has been argued that religion and national identity in Malta are inextricably linked (see chapter five). National identity is religious, Catholic identity. One of the central imperatives of Maltese Catholicism is missionary work. Maltese people contribute thousands of pounds every year 'for the missions'. Collecting for the missions takes various forms. Some people collect money. Others, like Pawla *Casan*, for instance, collects old clothes that are then sold for recycling and the proceeds distributed to the missionaries.

This proselytising role of the Maltese Catholic church, and hence the Maltese nation as a whole is further revealed when tourists are encouraged to attend mass during the *fešta*. If Malta is a religious place, then this was considered something that could be offered to other countries, to help them deal with the social problems they themselves had. Thus, although many Maltese considered their country to be marginal and backward,

and particularly with less desirable consumer goods (see chapter two), this was offset by the virtues of tradition and adherence to religion.

The *Panegyрку*

Arguably the most important part of the *pontifikal* is the *panegyрку* ('panegyric') said by an invited priest, as homage to *San Pawl*. It lasts for between sixty and ninety minutes, during which total silence reigns over the crowded church. As with the *tridu*, the *panegyрку* is characterised by familiar aspects of the saint's life, but each priest attempts to draw out original conclusions or implications, from his speech. Also like the *tridu* sermons, the *panegyрку* is assessed by those present, on the basis of its ability to draw new insights from the teachings and life of St Paul.

In 1993, the *panegyрку* focused on the providentiality of St Paul's shipwreck in Malta. Before Paul arrived in Malta, the priest argued, the Maltese people were pagans. They were uneducated. But they were nevertheless ready to receive the words of the Lord as delivered by St Paul. They were therefore seen as the chosen people, who were predestined to become Christians.

The 1994 *panegyрку* focused on the mixture of Hellenic and Jewish cultures that created Christianity, and which St Paul represented. Despite being culturally mixed, however, St Paul's Christian culture arrived in Malta in its purest form. The Maltese were therefore the original, and purest Christians.

Both these sermons linked up the life of St Paul with the spiritual life of the nation, conceived as a continuous Christian tradition that can be traced back to the miracle of Paul's shipwreck. They therefore link what is the pinnacle of the inside celebrations, with the incorporative, national focus of *San Pawl*. Although it is the *festa tal-Pawlina* ('of the *Pawlina*'), it is nevertheless also the *festa tal-Maltin kollha* ('of all Maltese').

After the *pontifikal*, the Archbishop leads mass, and then the crowds disperse, many people returning home to eat. This is usually a large and important meal, drawing together extended family groups to celebrate the *festa* with food. In 1994, I was invited to eat with the Farrugia family whose collective nickname is *tal-Casan*.

The meal was a raucous affair. There were over forty people present, from three generations. It was impressed upon me how important it was in the family calendar; partly because it reminded everybody of the late Ċensu, and partly because it brought

everybody together. Even the somewhat aloof Pawlu came along on this occasion. He normally spent most of his time sitting in his grocery store or chatting at the Valletta Saint Paul's football club. But for the *fešta*, he would participate in family occasions.

Huge pots of rabbit stew had been prepared by three of Pawlu's sisters, and were served with spaghetti on large trestle tables. The children, of whom there were fifteen, were served first. Then as plates were filled, adults - men and women alike - shouted out to be given some food. I was told just to fend for myself; there would be no ceremony. Throughout proceedings the elderly Pawla, the widow of Ċensu *Tal-Casan* sat quietly in the corner, as if presiding over her brood.

After wolfing down their food, the teenagers, particularly Tereza's son, Keith, who had helped with the *armar* ('street decorations'), were keen to leave, to make sure they missed none of the next stage of *San Pawl*. This was the much-loved *Marċ tas-siegħa* ('one o'clock march'), that was renowned for its effervescent *briju* ('merrymaking'). Participants changed for this march, from their smart clothes into jeans and a sweatshirt. Keith had a white sweatshirt with *MAGNUS* ('the magnificent one') printed on the front in red. By the end of the march this would be splashed brown with beer and whisky stains.

The one o'clock march begins and ends outside the church, starting an hour after the end of the *pontifikal* and ending in time for the beginning of *il-purċissjoni*. It is a renowned occasion for excessive drunken-ness. As the march progresses, the crowd of men in front of the band increases, and their dancing and chanting escalates. They link shoulders into large scrums which sway and often topple to the ground. Beer is thrown into the air, as are caps, balloons and umbrellas decorated with the insignia of St Paul: a sword and a snake. The creation of these band march 'props' is the final preparatory act of the group involved in the *armar*, and their destruction during the one o'clock march is their final moment of rowdy celebration, before *il-purċissjoni* begins.

As the march reaches St Paul's Street, the final downhill leg to the church, it comes to a virtual stand-still. The street is packed to overflowing, and by now the participants are tiring. Men are raised shoulder-high and dance aloft. The whole occasion has more the atmosphere of a rock concert or football match than a brass-band march connected to a religious feast. By the time it reaches the bottom of St Paul's Street, however, the march begins once more to encounter more smartly-dressed people, waiting for *il-purċissjoni*.

Il-Purċissjoni

Il-purċissjoni leaves the church after dusk, when crowds congregate both inside and outside the church, to watch the statue, the saint, crossing the physical and conceptual boundary between the two. The moment is marked by a long volley of airborne fireworks, some of which light up the sky with colourful flourishes, whilst others simply explode with a large boom. There is also a string of fire-crackers set off on the roof of the church. This marks the exit of the saint.

The statue is incredibly heavy, and is carried on the shoulders by eight men at a time. These are the *reffiegħa*: the group of twelve men specially chosen to carry the statue, and thereby seal their relationship with the apostle through a physical engagement of which they will bear the scars for life. Men who have performed the honour have permanent, large calluses on their shoulders, as inscriptions of their bodily engagement with the saint. They are proud of these calluses, known as *ħobża* ('bread buns') because they are similar in size and shape to a traditional Maltese bread. They are displayed to the awe of young children, and with pride to the visiting ethnographer. They are bodily inscriptions of their capabilities; their ability to handle the statue of San Pawl, and their physical engagement with it.

THE REFFIEGħA AND MASCULINITY

These bodily inscriptions perform the same role as that identified by Peteet in the traces of violence on men's bodies in Palestine (1994). There, being beaten and physically scarred becomes a kind of rite of passage for which the bodily traces become inscriptions of masculinity. The same could be said of the individual *reffiegħa*'s *ħobża*. Although achieved in less violent circumstances, the *ħobża* is also a bodily inscription of masculinity, as it constitutes a physical trace of the rite of passage that is carrying the statue of St Paul.

To have a *ħobża* is to have demonstrated, or achieved, one's masculinity through the carrying of the statue. It is a physical inscription on the male body of the physical engagement with the statue, with the saint. It is possession of a *ħobża* to which the younger men aspire, and to which they are alluding when they wring their shoulders after the *dimostrazzjoni* ('demonstration') and other occasions when they get the opportunity to lift a statue.

The activity confers status on the men involved, such that they become 'men' by carrying the statue, without having to marry. Discourse about statue-carrying is framed around the same categories of *raġel* ('man') and *pufta* ('homosexual') discussed in chapter two. To 'be a man' is to carry the statue well. If one doesn't, one is a *pufta*. To be a *pufta* is to renege on one's responsibilities to take a proper role in the carrying. This has ramifications for not only the demonstration of physical strength, but also commitment to the group of *reffiegħa* which carries the statue together. The masculinity alluded to here is more than simply that of being strong enough to carry the statue. It commands respect because it relates to other aspects of 'being a man'. It also represents significant agency in the process whereby *festa* demonstrates complementarity of inside and outside domains.

Importantly in the context of the tensions between younger and older *klikek* ('cliques') *Għand Lawrenz*, it was men who I have identified as being older, who were *reffiegħa*. As argued in chapter one, it is these men who appear more settled in their masculinity; and who spend time in the front part of the bar. It is also these men who have since the events of 1991 and 1992 been involved primarily in preparing the inside festivities. I am talking of the *klikka* associated with Vince Farrugia and Mario Tonna, whose members also include Charlie Grima, Robert Abdilla and Guzi Cremona. These are 'real men' because of their participation in the *festa*, but particularly because of the fact that they are *reffiegħa*. In this role, they are regarded with some degree of admiration by the younger men, who will often talk of these older men's *ħobża* calluses, feel them for their firmness, and ask for them to be displayed in the bar.

LEARNING TO BE A REFFIEGH

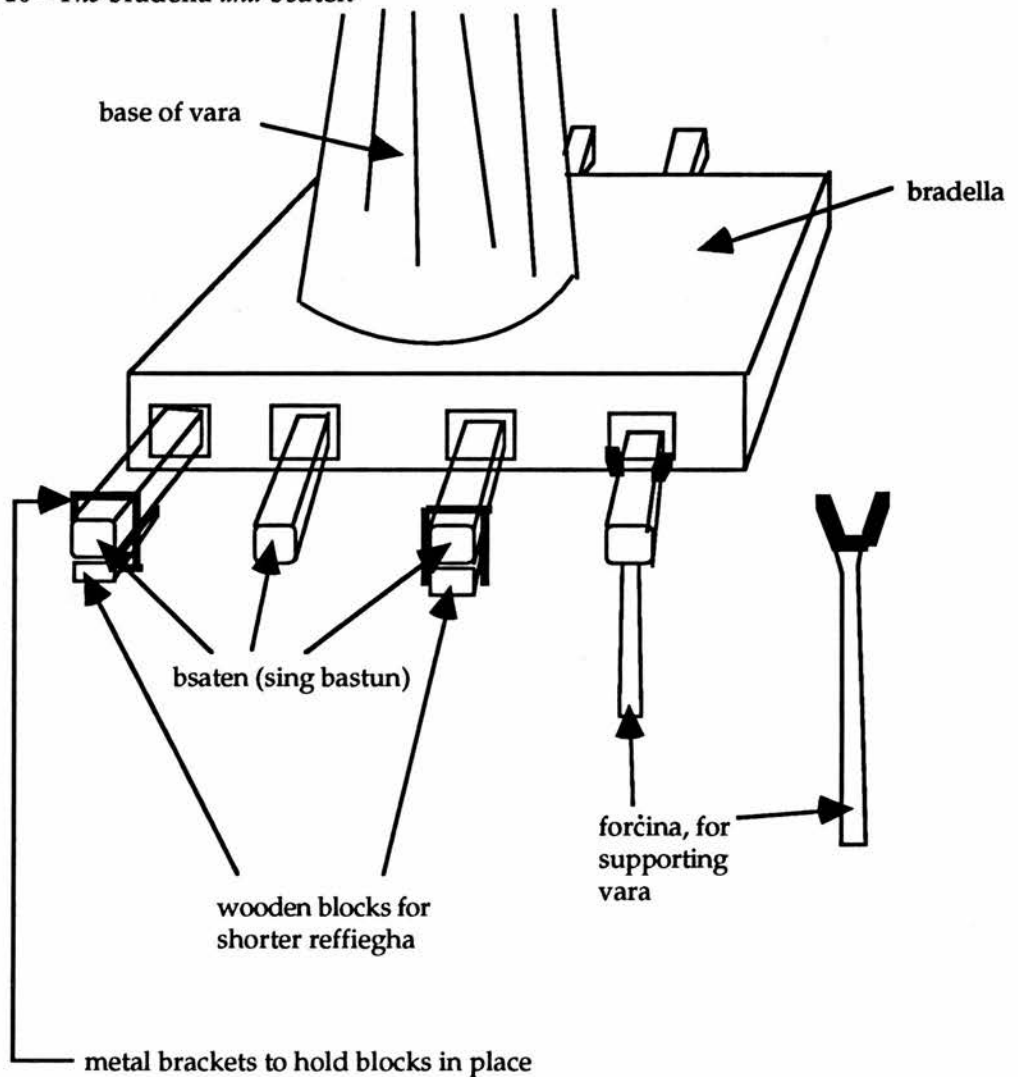
As with the dilettantism described in the last chapter, becoming a *reffiegħ* was associated with a developmental process running from childhood through adolescence. The final achievement of being a *reffiegħ* was associated with the achievement of manhood; a status which was inscribed on the body, in the *ħobża*.

Children and young men, and particularly Guzi Cremona's twin sons would spend time practising, or *training* to become *reffiegħa*. The technique of the *reffiegħ* is not complicated, but requires strength and co-ordination. Moreover, in the eyes of *dilettanti* it is of utmost importance. For carrying, statues are bolted onto a large square or rectangular pallet, known as a *bradella*. The *bradella* has shafts running from front to back, through which large batons, *bsaten* (sing. *bastun*) are passed. It is from these that the statue is carried. They are evenly spaced, so as to allow the *reffiegħa* space to manoeuvre, and protrude some three or four feet at front and back. They are held in place and adjusted

with wooden chocks, which counteract the differences in height between different *reffiegħa*. A large wooden block is bolted onto the *bastun* when one of them is particularly short. (see fig 10).

The statue is carried on the shoulder, ideally resting on the bone that protrudes at the top of the spine. The *reffiegħ* should stand upright, with his thumbs hooked into the rope belt that holds in the roomy white gown worn for the occasion. As he walks, he should sway from side to side, moving steadily along the street so that the statue itself appears to be walking. Ideally, the swaying should coincide with the rhythm of the brass band chosen to accompany the statue.

fig 10 - The bradella and bsaten



The Cremona twins, aged thirteen in 1994, would practice their technique using the large wooden trestles used to support the Good Friday statues during Lent. To their

delight, and that of their father, they chose to carry on different shoulders. This would make them a perfect complimentary pair when they graduated to the real thing. They could each occupy a position at the front corner, on the inside of their *bastun*, to ensure absolute symmetry. Carrying with the head on the outside was considered unsightly, but a lack of left-shouldered *reffiegħa* sometimes meant it was necessary.

They would take their places at either end of a trestle, and then invite one of the adult men to hang from the centre. With the time-honoured signal, *fuq* ('up'), they would lift, and begin their swaying progress along the Oratory corridor. When they reached the step, another call would come, *forçina*, and the trestle would be lowered. *Forçina* refers to the ornate wooden poles topped with silver plated forks, that are used to support the statues of the real processions when they come to rest at street-corners during a procession. There is one for each corner of the *bradella*, and carrying them is a responsibility in itself. Here, then, the boys are explicitly drawing on the terminology of the procession, to add a certain atmosphere to their *training*, rather as in other circumstances, they would add commentary to their football games.

Training as *reffiegħa* was not restricted to the Cremona boys. Vince Farrugia had told me that when he and Mario Tonna were younger, they also trained. They would take a large pole from the *maħzen* on East Street and suspend two oil drums filled with water from it. Then they would parade up and down the street. He told me that at first people thought they were mad, but then when they became *reffiegħa* they were filled with admiration: it had been worth it.

Training of sorts also takes place at Christmas. At this time, in keeping with the characterisation of Christmas as a children's feast, the altar boys and members of the parish church doctrine class would participate in their own, children's procession. Accompanied by other children carrying candles and singing carols, a small *bradella* with the antique statue of Christ in swaddling clothes placed in a crib, would be led out of the sacristy door and round into the main church door. The boys given the privilege of carrying the statue would, like the Cremona boys, try to make it resemble a saint's procession, by swaying and calling out the appropriate terminology, to the amusement of spectators.

Carrying the statue in the *fešta*, therefore, fits into a developmental career, which boys aspire to from an early age. The passage from childhood to being a 'real man' in these terms, is marked by the possession of a *ħobža* callous on the shoulder. With this, one's masculinity is assured, even if one remains unmarried. It is for this reason that Vince,

Tonna and Charlie Grima were 'real men' who spent their time in the front part of *Għand Lawrenz*. Although they were unmarried, they were renowned *reffiegħa* during *San Pawl*.

THE CLIMAX OF THE FESTA

The task of carrying the statue is divided between twelve men, although only eight carry it at any one time. The other four walk alongside the statue with *forċina* (large forked poles - lit. 'forks') that the statue is rested on when they stop at each corner. They also serve as substitutes; nobody could carry the statue around the whole route. It is preceded by the standards of the religious Confraternities based in St Paul's, and by representatives of all the religious orders that have communities in Valletta. After these, which include the Augustinians, Carmelites, Dominicans and Franciscans, comes the chapter of St Paul's followed by the Archpriest who carries the sacred host, and *Id-Drieħi*: the sacred and miraculous right-hand of St Paul, which is carried on a stretcher by four priests. Behind that is the *vara*, ('monumental statue'), followed by a band.

As *il-purċissjoni* prepares to leave the church, large crowds gather outside the door, on St Paul's Street. The band, which is chosen especially for its ability to play rousing interpretations of the marches, waits to the side. In 1993, the band Anici from the village of Qormi was chosen, and in 1994 it was a Gudja band. It follows the statue, which moves at a walking pace through the streets of Valletta, stopping at each corner to allow the *reffiegħa* to have a rest. A second band plays on Republic Street, to entertain the crowds as they await the arrival of *il-purċissjoni*.

Il-purċissjoni proceeds along St Paul's Street, stopping at each corner. It then cuts across to Republic Street, walking up the hill towards City Gate, before turning left into St John's Square. Here, there is a longer wait. The statue is put on large trestles, while a liturgical function is performed by the Archpriest, and the *reffiegħa* go into the sacristy of the Cathedral, for a drink and a rest.

A large crowd packs into the square, and the service is broadcast on a public address system. Prayers are said, and the hymn of St Paul sung by all those present. Then the *reffiegħa* once more emerge and the statue is taken back down St Paul's Street towards the church.

plates 19 and 20



Street Scene During the Purcissjoni



Reffiegħa During the Purcissjoni

On this last leg, the official *reffiegħa* leave the *vara*, and there is an opportunity for all men to *jieħu biċċa* ('have a piece') of the carrying duties. It is a chance for those who have not, or will not, be official *reffiegħa* to show their commitment to the saint through a physical engagement with his statue.

When the *vara* arrives at the doors of the church, the official *reffiegħa* once more take over. The re-entry of the statue into the church is marked by another set of loud, colourful fireworks, which the statue is turned around to 'watch'. Then with a final burst of fireworks, the five steps into the church are taken at running pace, to the shouts of the crowd. Once inside, the *antifon* is played for a final time, and the Archbishop blesses all those present.

It is a moment of intense emotion. Members of the crowd turn to each other and hug, with tears in their eyes. Many are tired from the previous days' festivities, and drunk from the many *fešta* drinks they have bought. It is the climax of proceedings; the point at which the saint, and the *fešta*, goes once more inside, to wait for the next year's commemoration. It is therefore the moment at which the dichotomy created for the *fešta*, between outside and inside, is resolved, to represent the unity and complementarity of these two sides of the *fešta*.

It also represents the unity of the two sides of the church; the clerical authorities who concern themselves with inside festivities and the lay organisations that organise matters outside. It also therefore represents complementarity of genders in the family that is *Pawlini*, and whose household was *L-Arċipierku*. Finally, it represents a resolution, albeit momentary, of the tensions between different constituents in the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, itself informed by the distinction between the well-connected and the subaltern groups.

In 1993, at this moment, I overheard Paul Sciberras and Mario Tonna, who had been at loggerheads over the fireworks incident of two years previously, described in chapter five, refer to the matter once again. They hugged, both in tears. "Listen," said Paul "it's all over. All that business with the fireworks. What's gone is gone. Let's get on with the rest. This is what's important. *San Pawl*."

As outlined in the last chapter, these two men were also differently positioned with regard to the preparations for inside and outside festivities. Whilst Paul Sciberras

was the main organiser of the outside decorations, Mario Tonna was primarily involved in matters inside the church. Although before 1992 he had been commissioner for fireworks, he was now uninterested in the *armar*. Rather, he was the committed procurator of the Confraternity of St Crispin and St Crispinian. Furthermore, he had been a St Paul's *reffiegħ* before having to give up due to health reasons. He had a large callous on his left shoulder, as a physical trace of this status; he was a fully-fledged agent in the final *festa* procession. Paul, on the other hand, was limited to his involvement in carrying the conversion statue, and taking a 'piece' at the *ħruġ* and in the final phase of *il-purċissjoni*.

They represented conflicting interests in the *festa* organisation, and maintained a quiet but marked hostility towards each other. But on this occasion, demonstration of solidarity against the fragmentation of this factionalism was clearly being made. The end of the *festa* is supposed to be a moment when all such grievances are forgotten, just as those within families are put aside. It is symbolically, the moment when the inside and outside festivities come together, uniting the whole community.

Symbolically, and by extension, it is also the moment when the genders are supposed to come together, to display their complementarity in the family of *Pawlini*, just as they are supposed to display complementarity in their families and households at home. Except that this complementarity of domains; of inside and outside and therefore men and women, is performed in a male-dominated context. It is men who organise the festivities both inside and outside the church, and it is men who perform the main tasks involved in the *festa*. Furthermore, not only is it men who are chief agents in assuring the performance of complementarity as manifest in *il-purċissjoni*, but also men who are created through the process of this being done. The final act of the *festa*, then, is not only a celebration of masculinity, but also a major element in the creation of that masculinity in the first place. Without the *festa*, *reffiegħa* could not be created, and without *reffiegħa*, there could be no *festa*. This is acknowledged in the pride the *reffiegħa* feel towards their task.

For example, Charlie Grima's cousin, Pawlu, explained the feelings when he first carried a statue in terms of his commitment to Malta and its communities. He had been a keen *reffiegħ* when he was in his early and mid teens, when he would join in with carrying the lighter statues of the Good Friday procession. His 'career' was interrupted, when he emigrated to Australia during the politically tense 1980's. There, despite a large Maltese expatriate community, there were no *festi* on the scale of *San Pawl*. He explained this to me:

"It's not that they didn't have *festi* in Australia. We always celebrated *San Pawl*; and there was even a small statue. But it wasn't the same. The statue wasn't very big, and there weren't many people there. In any case, there's only one statue of St Paul."

This was the monumental *vara* that was used during *il-purçissjoni* that marked the climax of *San Pawl*.

Pawlu returned to Malta in 1992, and when one of the *reffiegħ* for *San Pawl* 1993 pulled out at the last minute, he was given his first chance to lift St Paul. He was incredibly excited at the prospect, and after the event tried to explain how he had felt:

"It's like coming home properly. I've been away from Malta for so long, and now I'm right back home. It makes me feel proud. Because when I went away, I was just a boy, really. Now I'm a man."

His physical engagement with the saint's statue, therefore, confirmed his identity as Maltese, *Pawlin*, and a man. Carrying the statue confirmed these identities after a period away from the groups which defined them. He was finally returning to their centre, and there was no better way to do that than by carrying St Paul's statue during the *fešta*. This was the best way to come home.

Its importance was, social as well as personal. Pawlu continued:

"It also makes you feel proud because you can bring everybody together. *San Pawl* brings people together. That's good, especially nowadays."

Here, he is referring specifically to the fact that participation as a *reffiegħ* is of central significance, not only for his own identity, but also for constituting group identities. The *fešta* brings people together, he argues, thereby utilising the symbolic - perhaps official - idea that it transforms contradictions into complementarities. This serves, in turn, to draw attention towards the unifying properties of *fešta* and away from its centrality in the creation of masculinity, and the primacy of male agency.

To suggest, then, that the *fešta* creates an unproblematic complementarity between inside and outside, and a consequent unity of the wider family of *Pawlini*, is to miss the fact that it is men who are the prime movers in the creation and enactment of this complementarity. The complementary union, therefore, masks the agency of men. But it is not irresistible in this ideological role. Rather, the symbolic complementarity can be, and

is, contested, through the everyday practice of antagonisms within the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini*, and conflicts in household and family.

The idealised model of community and national unity that *San Pawl* represents may be useful for constructing particular arguments about the past and the present, but this does not mean that they are conclusive. Like the apparent complementarity of the family - the image of which is promoted by church and politician alike - the complementarity of the *festa* serves as a particular mode of creating, enacting, and highlighting tensions between different interests and different identities in the contemporary Maltese world. These are tensions between the new and the old, the modern and the traditional, the outside and the inside, the political and the religious, the male and the female.

The *festa* is the site where these tensions and antagonisms are played out. But it is also the main locus of apparent resolution. That this resolution is never possible is a function of modernity itself, which turns the relatively unconscious living of culture-as-tradition, into the self-conscious project of culture-as-identity. *Festa* lies at the intersection of these two ideas about culture. It is presented as tradition, and serves to rhetorically unite; but also creates and reveals the contestation of identity. For this reason, it is of major significance in modern Malta.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

Maltese *festa* is ideally about keeping people together. In my first interview with the President of the *Għaqda tal-Pawlini* ('Association of *Pawlini*'), Hector Bruno, he pointed this out:

"The *festa* is nice, you know. It's a tradition. But it's good because it brings people together. Especially nowadays, many people live outside Valletta, and many people are busy. It's nice that everybody comes together for *San Pawl*."

Ideally, the *festa* gets together those who should be together by virtue of common residence, common kinship or common political convictions. That these three elements of identity frequently cross-cut and inter-relate should be clear from the reading of this thesis. I set out to demonstrate the predicament of *festa*, and of social identity more generally, in Malta in the early 1990's. This predicament relates to the particular position of Malta in the modern world.

Malta and the Maltese feel themselves to be marginal, and vulnerable, to the influences of the world economic system. Historically, they have been dependent on the outside world for food and wealth, and this continues to be the case. In a situation of such dependency, when even foodstuffs must be imported, there is inevitably a sense of vulnerability and marginalisation. However, the vulnerability is not only economic, it is also cultural. Malta in the early 1990's was acutely aware of its position vis-à-vis the cultural trends which were felt to be sweeping Europe, and threatening the traditional ways of the Maltese.

In particular, there was a sense that the Maltese family, considered the bulwark of Maltese society, was under threat. This was largely because of changes in the economy, which gave younger people more disposable income than they had ever had before. This meant that younger men were able to buy cars, using this new-found mobility to take advantage of the facilities offered at the coastal tourist resort of Paceville. This, in turn, meant that they were able not only to court the Maltese women who went to its bars and night-clubs, but also to meet young people from abroad. The resulting liberalisation of opinions among Malta's young people was of great concern to the older generations, and the country's two main institutions: the church and the state.

At a local level, the result was also significant. It meant that young men were no longer so committed to activities associated with the *fešta*. They failed to turn up to the bars and clubs of the local neighbourhood on a daily basis, and when they did, they did so before moving swiftly on to some more desirable location. Committed participation by young men, in the ritual form that kept people together was becoming less and less popular.

Economic changes also had an affect on young women's lives. They were also attracted to Paceville, and to seek employment outside the house in order to fund their trips there. This meant a shift in the established, dominant model of gender roles, and led to the questioning of what had previously been seen as a harmonious and functional institution. By the early 1990's, a group of vociferous professional women had organised the *Moviment Mara Maltija* ('Maltese women's movement') to campaign against domestic violence. Thus not only were male gender roles being challenged, so were female.

The sense of decline related not only to the perceived death of the household, but also to the substantive death of former communities. Communities such as *L-Arċipierku*, which had been likened to a family itself, had been destroyed during the previous administration's modernisation drive. The resulting sense of dislocation, and destruction, was related not only to the personal trauma people experienced from having their houses demolished. It was also a consequence of a broader Maltese trend towards neolocal residence.

Throughout the 1980's, large suburban developments sprung up outside the central harbour area. These were often attached to the larger villages, and allowed people to move out of the towns and villages, into less cramped accommodation. But the result was a sense of dislocation; of loss. There was a feeling that the older certainties of strong community life were being destroyed.

For the people of *L-Arċipierku*, this destruction was directly related to the policies of the Labour government, which was seen as a spiteful and vindictive regime that had ear-marked the St Paul's parish area for demolition because of party politics. They therefore saw themselves as victims of this party politics. But they also saw themselves as victims in a broader sense, of the patronage politics within which they were a subaltern class. They lacked direct access to resources, and were forced to curry favour with prominent politicians in order to get the services they considered their right.

The distinction between subaltern and patron-grade ran through the *festa* organisation itself, and was related to the division I have identified between older and younger men involved in the *festa*. Thus, what was ideally a ritual supposed to bring people together, in fact drove them apart. The conflicts between different constituents in the *festa* organisation were ever-present. It was only for the short period during the *festa's* actual climax that hatchets were buried and some form of reconciliation attempted. But the following weeks, tensions re-emerged every time. The unity was only momentary.

Just like the unity proposed by the *festa*, between different age-groups and different political classes, that between the genders was equally spurious. If there was one element of the *festa* which was constantly stressed, it was its role as a family occasion. If the *festa* got people together, then the people it got together, in particular, were members of the same family. As we have seen, family is used metaphorically to refer to neighbourhoods and communities. It was also used to refer to the whole group of *Pawlini*, who followed St Paul at every *festa*. This category could be expanded out, when referring to the inclusive nature of St Paul's feast, as a national *festa*. But it could also be contracted, to maintain an exclusive preserve on the insider festivities central to the feast.

But the family that *San Pawl* got together was also the Maltese family itself, as represented in the idealised notion of a man and a woman running a household in complementarity. That this was suggested, without being delivered, is indicated by the exclusive administration of the *festa* by men, and their control over the *festa's* most significant moment. In particular, complementarity is elided by the exclusive male category *reffiegħ* ('statue carrier'). These men do not only perform the main role in the *festa*, by bringing together the inside and outside festivities to symbolically demonstrate the union of influences - and by extension, genders. They also do so in order themselves to demonstrate, or even create, their own masculinity. Thus, the *festa* becomes as much about the creation of 'real men', as it does about getting people together.

That the ideologies of togetherness persisted despite the obvious tensions cross-cutting unity in the *festa* phenomenon, is a function partly of their doxic nature, and partly of the condition of modernity itself (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). Firstly, these ideologies of togetherness, whether they apply to the family as lived in the 1990's, to memories of the community of *L-Arċipierku*, or the *festa*, in its organisation and execution, are not irresistible. This means that they are also flexible. Rather than being monolithic statements about the way the world is, to which people inevitably conform, they are

discursive statements about the way they think the world should be. Thus, people can disagree with the terms of an ideological statement, whilst at the same time using it to prove a particular point. For example, the argument that *fešta* is about bringing people together, is used as a means of stifling argument between different constituents about how it should be organised. Appealing to the orthodox becomes a means of stifling the heterodox, but this stifling is achieved in the practical unfolding of a particular situation.

The tensions that emerge between orthodox and heterodox versions of gender, class and party political identities are related to the central question of who is permitted to participate in the public sphere of decision-making. It is therefore related to the question of political power and political authority. Where women are excluded from particular modes of participation in public discourse, I have argued that they are equally participating in another, perhaps even more significant, public sphere. Similarly, where a subaltern group are prevented from participation in the public sphere, they have ways and means of influencing what goes on. That they are not always successful in their attempts to influence policy is a function of their subaltern position. But this does not mean to say they are swamped by their apparent powerlessness. Non-participation in the public sphere creates identities as eloquently as participation; its interests are merely served in a different public: that of the grocery shop rather than the bar; the bar rather than the newspaper.

Inclusion and exclusion, then, in terms of gender, local and political identities, are alluded to by conscious agents who use all the means they have for the assertion of their identities. One of the more significant means is through the *fešta* itself, which although not unequivocally unifying, allows space for the playing out of various elements in people's social identities.

I started this thesis by citing Boissevain's (1992a) observation that the revitalisation of ritual in Europe was related to the assertion of localism against the influx of globalised culture. I have demonstrated here that in the case of *San Pawl*, ritual is not merely demonstrating localism in the face of globalism, but is also being used to say a great deal more about other types of social identity.

That it is used to do this, however, is a product of the processes Boissevain highlights. Thus, for example, it is important to symbolically represent the complementarity of the genders, through the bringing together of inside and outside festivities, in a situation where it is felt that the genders are moving apart. If the genders

are moving apart because of globalisation, then they come back together - if only momentarily - because of *fešta*.

But *fešta* does not only work against globalisation, it also incorporates it. A major element in Malta's modern predicament is the sense of economic vulnerability. In this state of vulnerability, it has turned to tourism to keep itself afloat, and one of the major areas of expansion in the early 1990's was heritage, or cultural tourism (see Mitchell, forthcoming, b).

In particular, the *fešta* is marketed to tourists from abroad, to attract them to the traditions of Malta. Travel features seldom omit to mention the *fešta*, and during the summer months, a *fešta* schedule is produced for tourists, to enable them to attend. The Maltese, in marketing their *fešta*, are incorporating the globalising forces of international travel, into the localising rituals they see as traditional.

This marketing job reveals the tension of identity inherent in the *fešta* of the 1990's. The *fešta*, in its relationship with global and local forces, marks off a zone of self-identity, whilst acknowledging and encouraging the participation of outsiders. In its relationship with the politics of social class it comprises an area of tension with a momentary resolution. In its relationship with gender identities, it represents a bringing together of the complementary family, but does this in a context where men are always ascendant. It is therefore equivocal in its demonstration of identity. It provides a useful space within which identities can be negotiated. It allows room for speculation about the difference between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, and for debate between the two. To borrow a phrase from Levi-Strauss, the *fešta* is "good to think with".

Appendix One - Phases of Maltese Prehistory

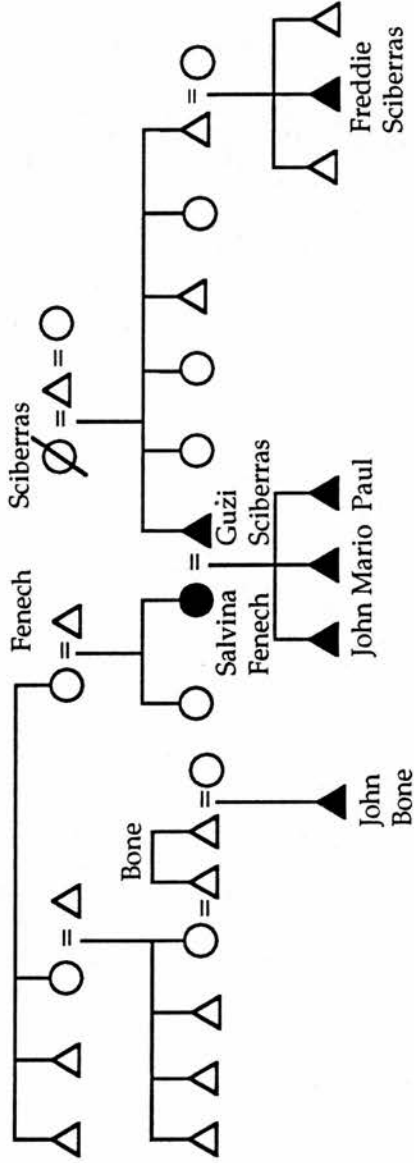
(Different phases are named after places in Malta where significant archaeological finds were made: names in bold type are still-existing villages)

| <i>period</i> | <i>phase</i> | <i>approx date</i> |
|---------------|--|--------------------|
| EARLY | Għar Dalam | 5200 - 4500BC |
| NEOLITHIC | Grey Skorba | 4500 - 4400BC |
| | Red Skorba | 4400 - 4100BC |
| | <i>??? arrival of new people from overseas ???</i> | |
| TEMPLE | Żebbuġ | 4100 - 3800BC |
| BUILDING | Mgarr | 3800 - 3600BC |
| CULTURES | Ġgantija | 3600 - 3300BC |
| | Tarxien | 3300 - 2500BC |
| | <i>??? arrival of new people from overseas ???</i> | |
| BRONZE AGE | Tarxien | 2500 - 1450BC |
| | Cemetery | |
| | <i>arrival of new people from overseas</i> | |
| | Borg in-Nadur | 1450 - 800BC |
| | <i>arrival of new people from overseas</i> | |
| | Baħrija | 8900 - 800BC |
| | <i>arrival of the Phoenicians</i> | |

(Blouet, 1993: 22)

Appendix Two - Sciberras Genealogy

Shaded persons are important characters in the text.



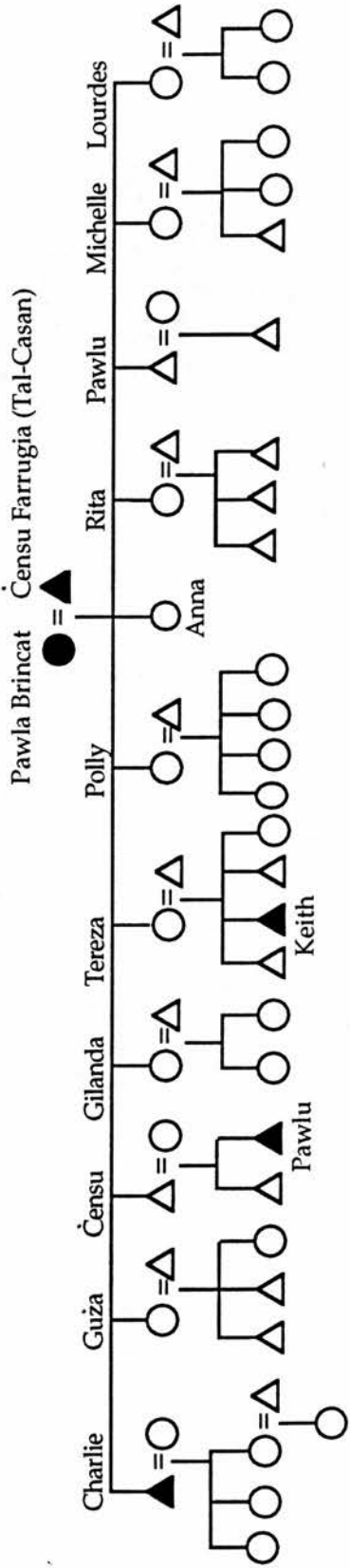
Appendix Three - Kerrejjiet in 1970

| <i>persons in each h'hd</i> | <i>no of households living in:</i> | | | | | | <i>total</i> | | <i>occ</i> | <i>pers</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| | <i>1 rm</i> | <i>2 rm</i> | <i>3 rm</i> | <i>4 rm</i> | <i>5 rm</i> | <i>6 rm</i> | <i>h'hd</i> | <i>pers</i> | <i>rms</i> | <i>per rm</i> |
| 1 | 247 | 181 | 18 | 5 | 2 | - | 453 | 453 | 693 | 0.653 |
| 2 | 47 | 110 | 40 | 6 | 2 | - | 205 | 410 | 421 | 0.973 |
| 3 | 36 | 92 | 37 | 9 | 6 | - | 180 | 540 | 397 | 1.360 |
| 4 | 11 | 61 | 50 | 10 | 1 | - | 133 | 532 | 328 | 1.621 |
| 5 | 8 | 42 | 28 | 7 | 4 | - | 89 | 445 | 224 | 1.986 |
| 6 | 2 | 30 | 27 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 74 | 444 | 206 | 2.155 |
| 7 | 4 | 19 | 15 | 6 | 2 | - | 46 | 322 | 121 | 2.661 |
| 8 | - | 19 | 5 | 3 | 2 | - | 29 | 232 | 75 | 3.093 |
| 9 | - | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 | - | 16 | 144 | 47 | 3.063 |
| 10+ | - | 15 | 14 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 41 | 459 | 124 | 3.701 |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| <i>All</i> | 355 | 574 | 242 | 70 | 23 | 2 | 1,266 | - | 2,636 | 1.510 |
| <i>h'hds</i> | 537 | 1,804 | 1,088 | 382 | 116 | 18 | - | 3,981 | - | - |

(Centre for Social Studies, Malta, 1970: 19)

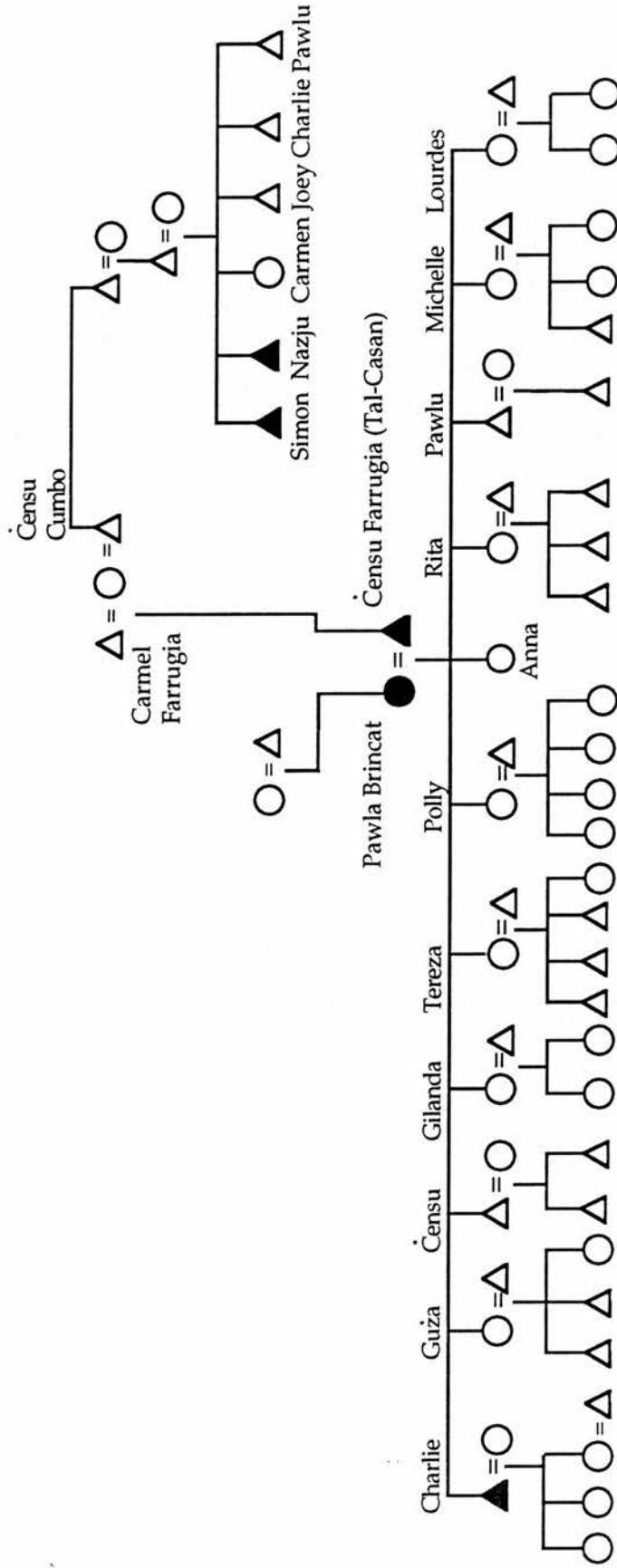
Appendix Four: *Tal-Casan* (Farrugia) Genealogy

Shaded persons are important characters in the text.



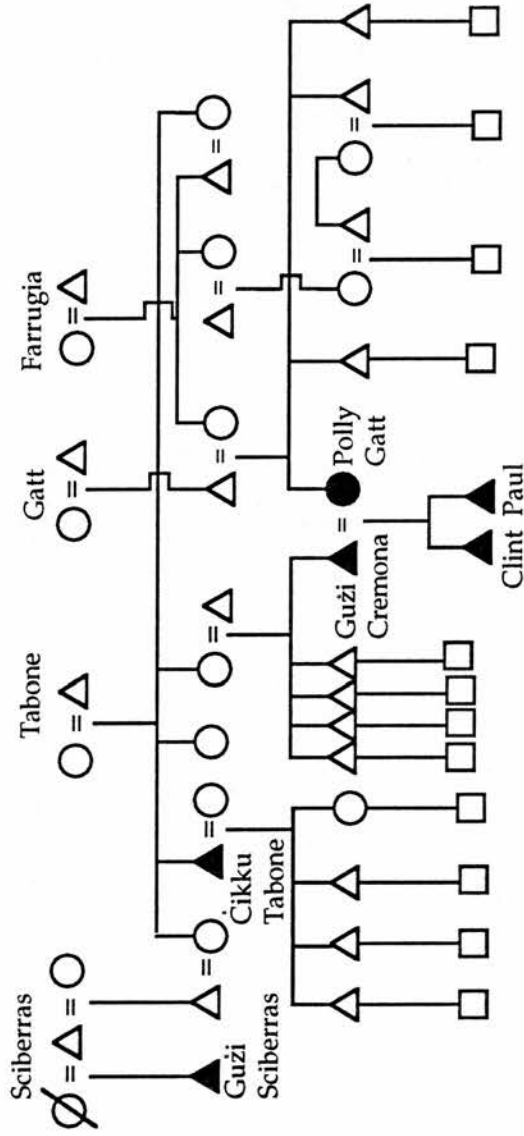
Appendix Five: *Tal-Casan* (Farrugia) and Cumbo Genealogies

Shaded persons are important characters in the text.



Appendix Six - Tabone-Cremona Genealogies

Shaded persons are important characters in the text.



Appendix Seven - *Festa* Schedule 1995*Inside Festivities*

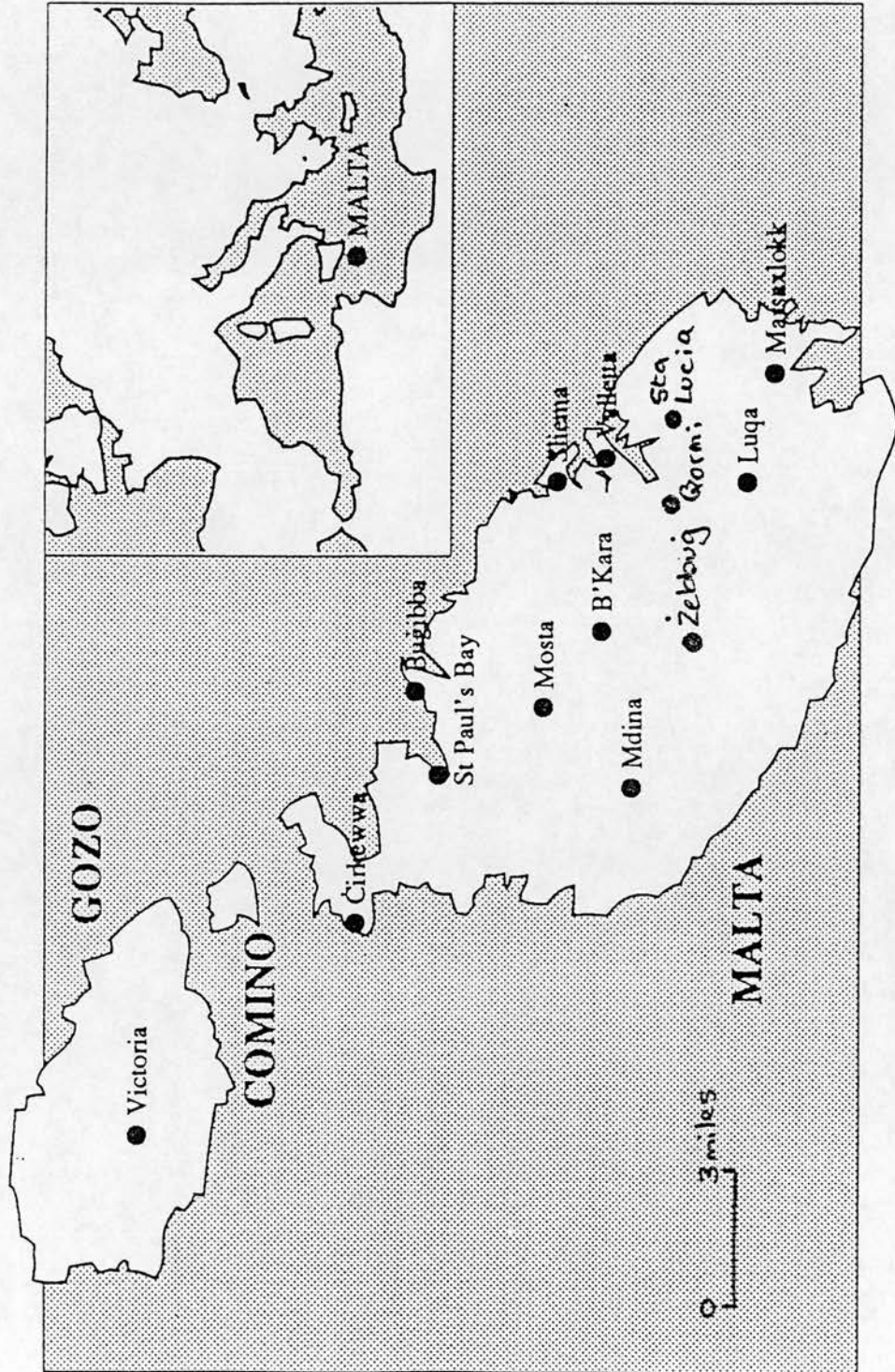
| | |
|--|--|
| Saturday 21st January, 6pm <i>Hrug</i> ('taking out') of the statue of St Paul | Thursday 2nd February, 6pm Feast of Candlemas |
| Wednesday 25th January, 5.15pm Feast of St Paul's Conversion: Rosary, followed by sung mass | Friday 3rd February, 6pm Mass for the Apostolic groups |
| Thursday 26th January, 5.45pm Mass for children, followed by play about St Paul performed by children | Saturday 4th February, 6pm Mass for all Committee members of sporting or other organisations in Valletta |
| Friday 27th January, 6pm Mass celebrated by local Franciscan community | Sunday 5th February, 6pm Mass for all men, women and children with a devotion towards St Paul |
| Saturday 28th January, 7pm St Paul's song contest | Monday 6th February, 5.15pm Mass, followed by <i>Tridu</i> sermon and <i>Antifon</i> ('antiphon') |
| Sunday 29th January, 6pm Mass celebrated by invited priest from St Paul's church, Rabat | Tuesday 7th February, 5.15pm Mass, followed by <i>Tridu</i> sermon and <i>Antifon</i> ('antiphon') |
| Monday 30th January, 6pm Mass celebrated by the Charismatic Group | Wednesday 8th February, 5.15pm Mass, followed by <i>Tridu</i> sermon and <i>Antifon</i> ('antiphon') |
| Tuesday 31st January, 6pm Mass celebrated by Maltese all Maltese nuns | Thursday 9th February <i>Lejlet</i> ('eve') of the <i>Festa</i> 10am Mass for the sick and the aged 5.30pm Translation of the relic of St Paul 7pm Sung mass |
| Wednesday 1st February, 6pm Mass celebrated by Neo Katekumenali | Friday 10th February <i>Festa</i> Day 9.15am Pontifical Mass, with <i>panegyрку</i> ('panegyric') 11.45am Mass 4pm Mass in English 5.15pm Procession of Statue 9.30pm Re-entry of Procession, Celebration of the Eucharist, <i>Antifon</i> ('antiphon') |

Appendix Seven - *Festa* Schedule 1995 - continued*outside festivities*

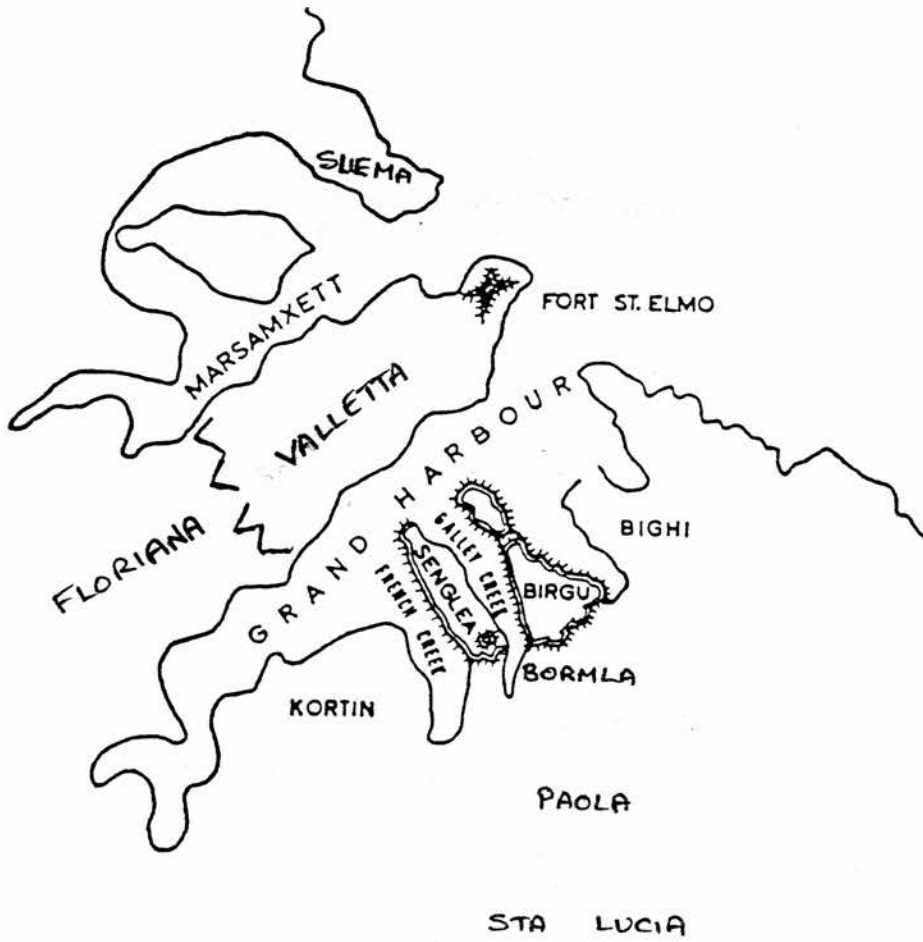
| | |
|---|--|
| Sunday 5th February 10am Band March 7.30pm Band March | Wednesday 8th February 8pm Demonstration with state of St Paul's Conversion |
| Monday 6th February 7.30pm Band March | Thursday 9th February <i>Lejlet</i> ('eve') of the <i>Festa</i> 7pm Band March, followed by Fireworks |
| Tuesday 7th February 7.30pm Band march | Friday 10th February <i>Festa</i> Day 12.45pm <i>Arcipierku</i> Band March 5.30pm Band March 6.30pm Band March and Procession |

Map 1 - Malta, Gozo and Comino

THE MALTESE ISLANDS

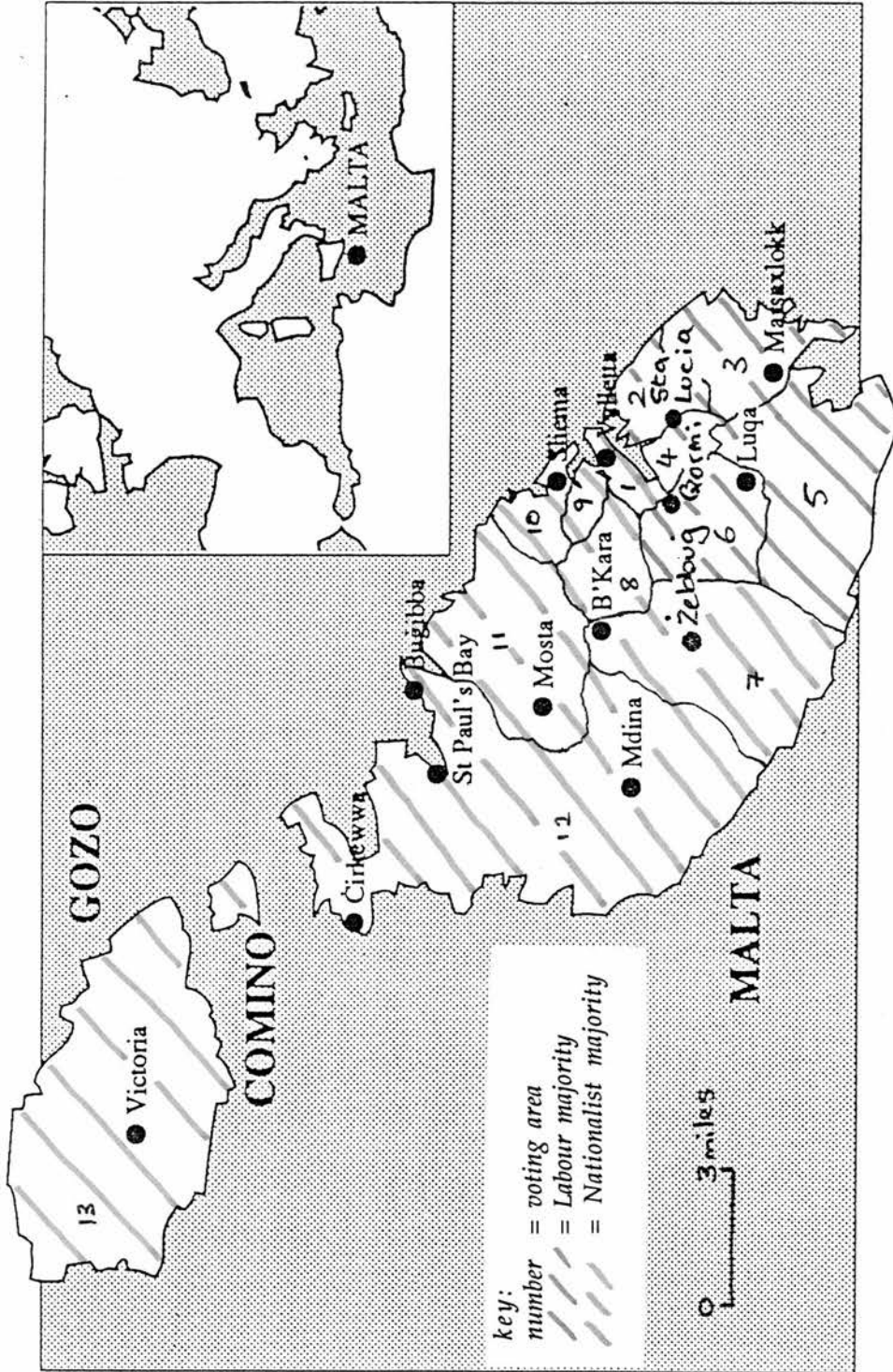


Map 2 - Valletta and the Harbour Areas

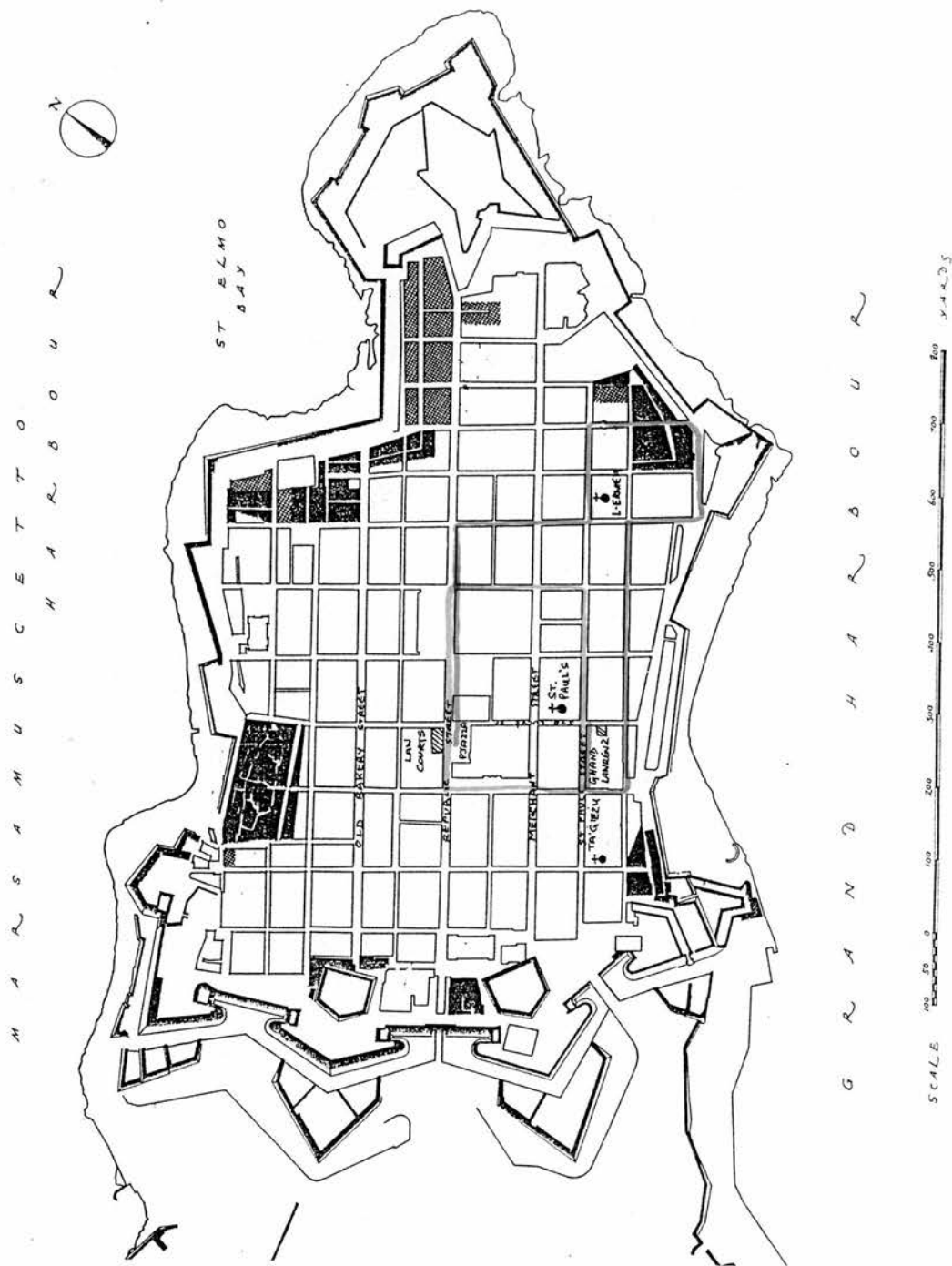


Map 3 -Percentage Majorities of 'First Preference' Votes at 1992 General Election, by Voting District

THE MALTESE ISLANDS

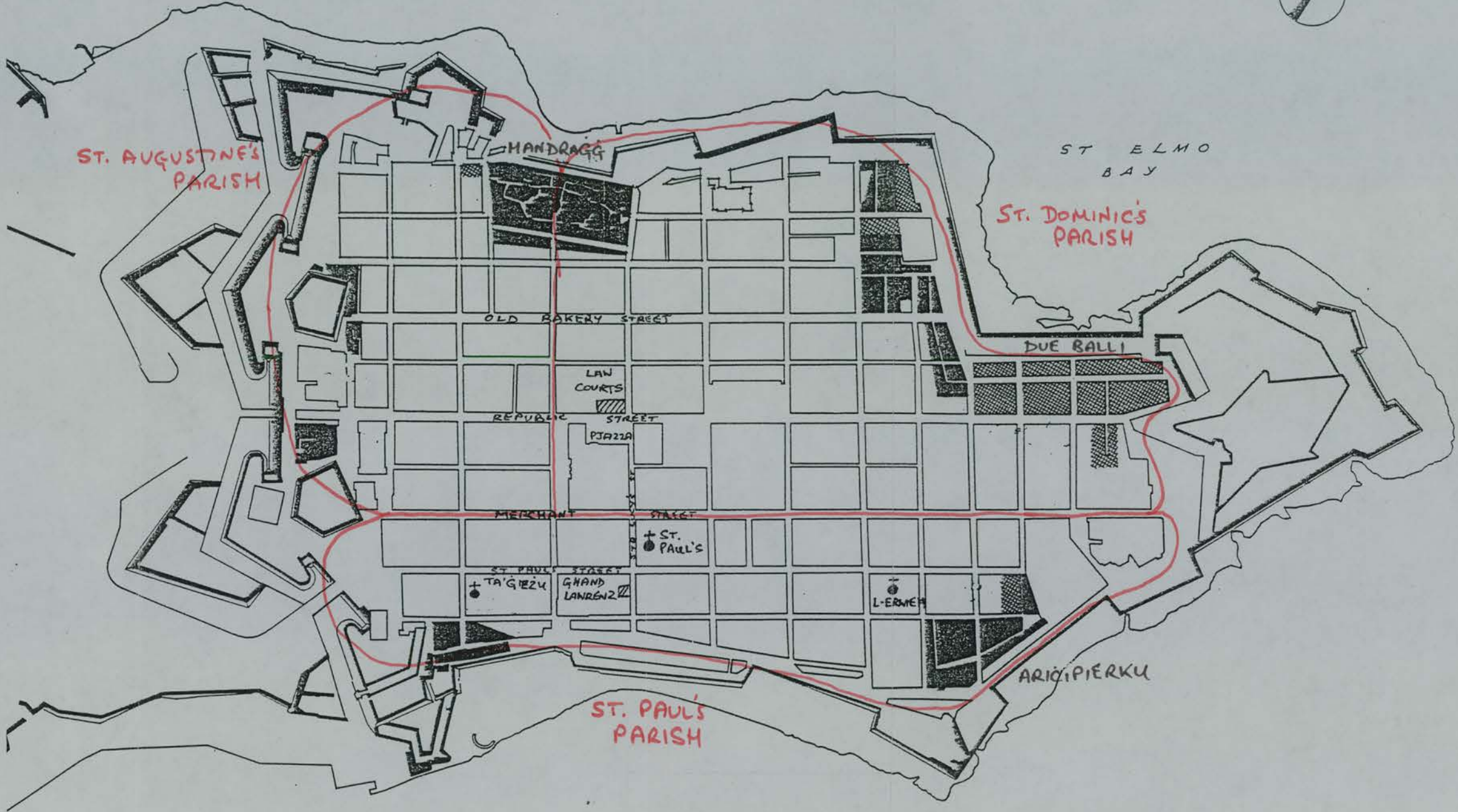


Map 4 - Valletta, showing Procession and Demonstration Routes



key:
 — = procession (purcissjoni) route
 - - - = demonstration (dimostrazzjoni) route

M A R S A M U S C E T T O
H A R B O U R



G R A N D H A R B O U R



Map 5 - Valletta (fold out)

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