The College closed down, it seems, after July 1865.  

**EPILOGUE**

Why did the MPC close down after less than 20 years? No doubt, it had to face many difficulties because it was a novel project in a foreign land, and the authorities often had to plan on an ad hoc basis to ensure the survival and development of the project. It was also difficult to find just the right persons to put into practice the intentions of the London Committee. The College had many enemies, both open and secret; among its “most zealous detractors” were some English residents who, one would have thought, might have been among its warmest supporters: a probable reason for their hostility could have been the College’s “bold and faithful scriptural character.” Because it was to some extent a hybrid institution, combining missionary students with ordinary pupils, there was a conflict of aims. University graduates, however able, exemplary, and admirably suited to train youths for commercial or official life, were not the persons best qualified to teach Orientals, whose abilities and character were so different. A different kind of person was required to win the confidence of Orientals and understand their background; he had to be a man of God, preferably a missionary with experience, and fluent in several Oriental languages. But probably the crucial difficulty was the recruitment of suitable Oriental students: some were too young, some too old, some had hardly any education to start with. Others were unwilling or unable to receive moral and intellectual instruction, and it seems that all too many were motivated by the wish to get an education free of charge and find a good job in their own country rather than to serve God and their fellow-men. For these reasons, the “beacon light” was doomed to be extinguished.

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1. I have been unable to find the exact date. The Rev. Miles left Malta with his wife on board the S.S. Kedar for Liverpool via Gibraltar on 14 August 1865. *(Arrivals and Departures*, Vol. 216, entry 64 (a), NAM).

On 26 March 1872 the Trustees sold the MPC property to Dr Pasquale Mifsud LL.D. and Carlo Maria Mifsud, merchant and Council member, for £220. (N.A.V. Not. Achille Micallef, 6-7-1895. (35 fl.) after the Committee had unanimously decided to sell or rent it at a meeting held on 5 Dec., 1871. *(Ibid.* L.54).

As soon as the MPC closed down, the Bishop of Gibraltar, the Rev. Trower, felt it his duty to supply members of the United Church of England and Ireland resident in Sliema and St Julian’s with a place of worship. Some £4000 were required for a chapel *(MT 22 II 1866, p. 1)*. The foundation stone was laid by the Acting-Governor, Major-General Ridley, on 20 September 1866. The architect was G.M. Hills of London and the work was carried out by Webster Paulose, C.E. *(MT 27 i. 1866, pp. 1-2)*. Bishop Trower consecrated the church, which was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity, on 23 April 1867. *(MT 25 iv. 1867, p. 2)*


3. *MT 19 vi. 1855, p. 2.*


5. *MT 27 vi. 1861, p. 1.*


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**TWO SHORT STUDIES**

Arnold Cassola

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**1. GIROLAMO SPINOLA (1686-1721): LAST POSSESSOR OF THE REGOLE PER LA LINGUA MALTESE**

The *Regole per la lingua maltese*, the earliest extant grammar and dictionary of the Maltese language, seems to have been in the possession of at least two persons. In fact, the surnames of two families, whose members regularly joined the Order of St John, appear in the bound manuscript. One of the families is Italian (Spinola) whilst the other can be traced back to the French region of Provence (Fougas de la Bastie). The writing on f. lv. reads something like “– L-ga-P. Spinula”.

On looking up the lists of members of the Religious Order of St. Philip Neri (the Vallicelliana Library is sited in the Chiesa Nuova building, of the Padri Filippini) I found out that a certain “SPINOLA p. Girolamo Nobile genovese, [che] nasque nel 1686, intenditore di musica, fu accetto [nell’Ordine] il 23-II, morì il 17-V-1721”.

If a connection between Padre G. Spinola and the Regole could be found, one could go a long way towards solving the Regole dating enigma.

It was Dott. ssa Valentina D’Urso of the Vallicelliana Library who came up with the missing link: “Spinula” (the e is actually prolonged in such a way as to read ae) is the genitive form of “Spinola”, and thus stands for ‘Spinola’s’. Did this volume belong to P. (Padre) Spinola? And was it the only book in his possession? Dott. ssa D’Urso rushed off to the Sala Borromini in the Vallicelliana building and half an hour later came back with the answer to all our queries. There were various other books that had belonged to Padre Spinola, and all of them had the following handwritten script on the inside front cover: “ex legatus P. Spinulae”. What really caught the eye was the script on p. lv of Lorenzo Gracian’s *Obras*: the hand that had scribbled Spinola’s name on the Regole had done the same on Gracian’s *Obras*.

Now there was no doubt at all: what had seemed to be a scribbled “L-ga- P. Spinulae” on the Regole was actually “ex Legatus P. Spinulae”.

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Two questions still to be answered were: “How did the Regole end up in his possession?” and “What connection did Padre Girolamo Spinola have with the Knights of the Order of St. John?” Despite consulting various works, no extra biographical information could be obtained about him. As a final resort, I decided I would look up the year 1721 in the register of deaths at the Archivio dei Padri della Congregazione dell’Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri, Rome. Luckily, my hopes were rewarded with the following entry at p. 129:


Although the Latin used here is not classical Latin, the words olim Eques Hierosolimitanus speak loud and clear: prior to his becoming a priest, Girolamo Spinola had been a Knight of the Order of Jerusalem! What does this all imply? Padre Spinola died in 1721. The Regole formed part of his possessions at the time of death. This means that we can back-date it to 1721, at the latest.

What kind of person was Girolamo Spinola? Judging by the books in his possession, he can certainly be defined a man of culture, whose main interests lay in the humanistic field. His books can be classified into six main categories: drama, literature, history, collections of letters, publications of religious interest and miscellany. I will proceed by listing the books, category by category, together with the Biblioteca Vallicelliana classification mark. Anything which might be of particular interest will be pointed out:

**DRAMA**


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-[On f.1r, there is written in ink: “del P. Girolamo Spinola monaco (crossed out, with “prete” written over it) della Congregazione di San Filippo Neri in Roma 1721”. Does this mean that Spinola had spent various years in the convent of the Padri Filippini (at least two) before taking his vows?]


-[Amongst the actors of this play, one finds “Il Sig. March. Giorgio Spinola”, who had acted the part of one of the “MINISTRI DEL TEMPIO”. In La Grange’s tragedy, “Il Sig. March. Giorgio Spinola” had impersonated one of the “STATUE”, whilst a “Signor Francesco Spinola” had acted the part of “Athenaide chiamata Eudossia”. What connection was there between Girolamo and these other members of the Spinola family? And had Girolamo Spinola ever lived in the Collegio Clementino? These questions arise because the pamphlet entitled *De Incipitibus Trinitatis Mysterii Oraio*, dedicated to Pope Clement II, was published by “Hieronymo Spinula, Patrizio Generus, Collegii Clementini Convivitore, Romae, Typis Rochi Bernabò” in 1733. Was this a posthumous publication of our Girolamo Spinola?]


-[A handwritten note on the frontispiece reads “Ad uso Hieronimi Spinulae Franci”. The seven tragedies contained in this volume are Aias Flagellifer, Electra, Oedipus tyrannus, Antigone, Oedipus Coloneus, Trachiniae and Philoctetes. The entire text is in Greek.]

**LITERATURE**


-[This is the French version of the Latin original. Barante himself translated his own work from Latin into French].

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2. See *Libro de’ Morti del Anno 1645 sino... Archivio dei Padri della Congregazione dell’Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri, Roma*, catalogue classification C.130., f.129.

3. The books that had belonged to Girolamo Spinola all have the handwritten insertion “ex legato P. Spinulae” or “ex legato P. Spinulae”. These entries were obviously inserted after Spinola’s death.

[Histoire de l’Admirable Don Quichotte de la Manche is a French version of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, in five volumes but of different editions.]

**HISTORY**


[On the blank sheet at the end of volume III (after p.304) somebody wrote down by hand in Italian a brief summary of the history of Genoa from 1730-1737. Obviously, it could not have been Girolamo Spinola, who had died in 1721.]


**COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS**

Raccolta di lettere Latine, Greche, Italiane, e Francesi, scritte da Sig.r Convitori del Seminario Romano, per saggio di quello studio, che essi fanno sopra la maniera di bene scrivere, […], in Roma, per il Rossi alla Piazza di Ceri, 1703 (S. BORR. Q.IV.283).

[On the frontispiece, at p.2r, one finds handwritten “Ad uso Hieronimi Spinulae Franci.”]


**PUBLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST**


Paneigrico in rendimento di grazie a Dio per il felice compimento dell’anno centesimo, dalla fondazione dell’Ordine della Ss.ma ANNUNZIATA, composto dal P. Giuseppe Maria Prola della Compagnia di Giesu’, in Roma, per il Bernabo’, l’anno 1704 (S. BORR. B.V.227).

**MISCELLANEOUS**


[This is actually the *Stoicheia* in Latin.]

G. Miselli. *Il Burattino Veridico, ovvero Instruzione Generale per chi viaggia […]*, in Roma, Per Michel’Ercole, 1682 (S. BORR. G.V.174).


The above list of books comprises texts which were written in no less than five languages: Italian, Latin, Greek, French and Spanish. It stands to reason that Girolamo Spinola must have known some of these languages quite well (certainly Italian, probably Latin, Greek and French) and have had at least a working knowledge of others (possibly Spanish). What does transpire is that Spinola was interested in languages. It would therefore come as no surprise if he were also to have an interest in Maltese and a basic knowledge of the language. This would explain his being in possession of the *Regole*. 
Back in Malta, at the National Library, I tried to gather more information on Girolamo Spinola. The name is not recorded in the manuscript volumes known as "Ruolo Generale del Regno di St. John, i.e. neither in the Lista dei Cavallieri, Cappellani e Serventi d'Arme ricevuti nell'Ordine di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme dal 1555 al 1797," where names are listed in alphabetical and chronological order (the names of Knights received in the Order between 1686 and 1721, with whose names begin with an S, are listed at ff. 686-691), nor in the Lista dei Cavalieri, Cappellani e Serventi d'Arme ricevuti in mira e servitizia nell'Ordine di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme dal 1571 al 1770, where the list of novices accepted between 1686 and 1721, and whose names start with an S, runs from ff. 632-640.

The name Girolamo Spinola is also missing from the volume entitled Cariche in Convento 1500 al 1779. This volume comprises various lists of Knights, who were entrusted with particular duties in the day to day running of the Order of St. John’s administration. The total absence of Spinola’s name shows that he had never been entrusted with any specific job. Could this indicate that Spinola, who died of hydrophobia at the early age of 35, had already contracted this disease during his stay in Malta?

Information on Spinola’s request for admission to the Order, and his subsequent acceptance, is to be found in file ARCH 4720, which is included in the volume catalogued as ARCH 4715-4727 at the National Library of Malta. From the printed form entitled Interrogatorio Per esaminare Testimonii nel fare le prove di Cavallieri, che vogliono esser ricevuti nella Vener. Lingua d’Italia, it transpires that “Sig. Girolamo Spinola[e] figliuolo del Sig. Franco, e Maria Rosoele Spinola Regal[?]”, that his maternal grandmother is Maria Gerolama Cattanea Grilla, while his maternal grandmother is Elena Doria.

Other documents contained in ARCH 4720 point to 1702 as the year of Spinola’s application/acceptance within the Order. In a document dated 22nd March 1702, the Parish Priest of the Church “Sanctae Mariae Vinearum” in Genoa confirms that the “libro Baptizatorum” of his parish records the baptism of “Hieronymus Mathia Maria” on “Anno Mill. mo Sexcent. mo Octuag. mo Sexto Die XXVII Feburarii”.

The child had been born three days earlier (“natus die XXIV”), son of “M. Francisci Spinulae, et M. Rosoele coniugum”.

Further proof of Girolamo Spinola’s nobilitari status is provided by Ferdinando Crivelli, in the following letter dated “Milano il 28 agosto 1702” and addressed to “Signori Ammiraglio, e Procuratori della Venerabile Lingua d’Italia, Malta”: “Si sono reviste sotto il di 14 corrente in questa Venerabile Assemblea le prove di

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8 For this and other transcriptions of manuscript documents, I am indebted to Dom. Francesco Vergara, of the Assessoreto ai Beni Culturali, Regione Sicilia.

7 See Cariche in Convento 1500 al 1779, ms., National Library of Malta, ARCH 6430.
2. AN ALTERNATIVE MEANING FOR ACHAR IN G.F. BONAMICO’S SONETTO

Meiju giè bl’Uuard, u Zahar
Aadda i bart, e Sceta, u ’l Beracq
T’ghattiet l’art be nuår u l’Uueracq
Heda e niech, seket el Bachar
Tar e schab men nuecc è Sema
Sa l’è Gebiel neptet el chdura
Regeet t’ghanni col Aasfura
U’ f’el fher col cgalb t’ertena
E qaila fher kien fe di Gesira
li ma Kienesce min i ueinesha
li ma Keinsece min i charisha
Kcu tpekxi el giuh phal lsira
Enti el fher, u ’l hena taana
Cotoner daul ta aicena
Tanti lè Sema i challich chdeina
Fl’achar bart i colna e schana

(The original text, in Wettiger-Fsadi, 1968, p.34)

G.F. Bonamico’s Meiju giè bl’Uuard, u Zahar, the second oldest extant literary text in Maltese, first saw the light in 1924 when it was published both in its original transcription and in modern Maltese.

The 1924 Ghaqda edition actually reproduces De Soldanis’s re-written version and not Bonamico’s original. Thus the last verse, with achar transcribed as akbar, reads: “Fl’ akbar bart i colna e schana”.

De Soldanis’s transcription is probably a faulty one, but it is still presented to the reader as the original version since most compilers of anthologies have accepted the Ghaqda rendering. The verse transcribed as “Fl-akbar bard iskollna s-shana” was adopted by N. Cremona in 1931, Saydon and Aquilina in 1937, K. Vassallo in 1968 and O. Friggieri in 1987.

The alternative rendering, with ch and not kb - probably the correct one, it being chronologically the nearest to the author’s will - was adopted by Wettiger-Fsadni in 1968 and D. Fenech in 1977. In both cases achar stands for modern aghar [‘worst’] and it would thus convey more forcefully the idea of a very strong antithesis based on the literary-linguistic device known as oxymoron, which was extremely popular with the writers of the Baroque Age. Bonamico would be rendering the highest of tributes to Cottoner by attributing to him the power of giving warmth to the Maltese in the fiercest of colds (I am paraphrasing Wettiger-Fsadni).

It is now my intention to suggest an alternative meaning for achar [‘aghàr’] which has not, to my knowledge, ever been considered, but which seems to be quite feasible on the basis of internal graphic evidence. An analysis of the original script confirms that the modern digraph gh has never been transcribed by ch in the text:

BONAMICO
v.2 Aadda
v.3 T’ghattiet
v.7 Regeet
v.7 t’ghanni
v.7 Aasfura
v.13 taana
v.14 aineima

MODERN ORTHOGRAPHY
ghadda
Tghattiet
Reggheu
ghanni
ghasfura
taghna
ghajnejna

Bonamico resorts to the use of aa, gh, ee and ai when transcribing gh, but never to ch. Closer scrutiny shows that whenever the digraph ch has been made use of in the text, it always stands for modern h. Excluding achar, one comes along the following eight words:

6 Cf., e.g., G.B. Marino in Italy, Gongora in Spain and in late 16th Century England, Iohn Lyly.
BONAMICO
v.4 riech
v.4 Bachar
v.5 schab
v.6 chdura
v.11 charisha
v.15 challic
v.15 chdeina
v.16 schana

MODERN ORTHOGRAPHY
rih
Bahar
shab
hdura
harisha
haltik
hdejna
shana

On the strength of the above evidence, it would seem more logical to transcribe achar as ahhar. Thus, the last verse of the poem would read: “Fl ahhar bari colna e schana”, and this would stand for: “At the end of the cold season, the warm one arrives”.

This suggested interpretation of the verse would fit in well with the general context of the poem which harps on the contrast between, on the one hand, the wintry season that is now departed (Aadda) with its “bar”, “Sceta”, “Beraq”, strong “riech” and stormy “Bachar” and “schab” and, on the other, the “Uuward”, “Zahari”, “nuw”, “Uuercq” and “chdura” which Spring brings (gie) along with it.

The ellipse of ta’ [-of the-] between achar and bart could be given a mechanical explanation. Bonamico was quite a prolific writer of Latin verse. According to De Soldanis he even published an entire volume of poems in Latin, the Laevae Cotonoriae (1672), in honour of Niccolò Cottoner. The habitual use of Latin in his poetical works might have led him to reproduce on the page Fl’ achar bart under the influence of the Latin form in ultimo frigore.

However, the ellipse of a preposition before a noun seems to be readily acceptable to Bonamico as a stylistic device. In fact, at v.12 we have kecu tepki el giuh [‘she would cry hunger’] for “kecu tepki bel giuh” [‘she would cry because of hunger’]. Thus, Fl’ achar bart instead of “Fl’ achar tal bart” seems to be justified not only from a semantic point of view but also from a stylistic one.

1 His also rendered by h, but only in one syllable words and, with one exception, at the end of the word. Cf. v.4. ferh; v.9. ferh; v.12 giuh; v.12 phal; v.13 ferh.
3 The ellipse of ta’ before nouns is quite a common feature of Maltese toponymy. Cf., e.g., Ghajn Dwiei, Andar Xewk, Bir Sigra, etc.

TWO UNKNOWN WRITINGS
BY M.A. VASSALLI
G. Cassar Pullicino

The publication in this issue of Melita Historica of two hitherto unknown writings in French by Mikael Anton Vassalli (1764-1829) calls for some comment to place them in their proper perspective.

The twenty years between Vassalli’s deportation to Tunis on January 15, 1801 and his return to Malta from France on June 19, 1820 constitute the least documented period of his life. In the basic biographical work Vassalli and his Times, A. Cremona pinpoints the various lacunae in our knowledge of his exact whereabouts and movements following his banishment from Malta: “We do not know whether Vassalli stayed at Tunis for any period or proceeded on his way for any other destination, but it is quite certain that eventually he found his way to France where he hoped to find some means of earning a living. Evidently he had no better haven or refuge where he could be welcomed... We can approximately calculate the length of time he remained in France, but in which district or town he passed this long period amounting to twenty years, we do not know”.

Elsewhere in the same biography Cremona stresses that “it is not known for certain in which town or province of France Vassalli was during the time he was absent from Malta, but it is obvious that in 1814 he was living at Marseilles”.

Related to this obscure period of Vassalli’s exile is a statement by one of his sons, M.A. Vassalli Formosa de Fremaxo, who published a small book in 1861 entitled Suggestions in accordance with Mr. Amabile Bonello’s Project of Emigration in the Coasts of North Africa. On the very first page of this pamphlet the author proudly mentioned that he was the son of a man to whom the great Napoleon had given the title of “Le Fondateur du Coton en France”, and that this title was also to be found in some of his father’s documents, written by the French authorities, and others extant in some of the archives of France.

1 The date of Vassalli’s arrival from Marseilles on June 19, 1820 has been established by Frans Ciappara in his article “M.A. Vassalli in the Correspondence of Inquisitor Carpegna”, Sunday Chronicle, (Malta), October 2, 1988.
2 A. Cremona (Transl. May Butcher), Vassalli and his Times, Malta, 1940, p.69.
3 Ibid., p.84.