PADRE LUIGI BARTOLO O.F.M. CAP., DESIGNER AND HISTORIAN

Among the many unknown Maltese scholars Padre Luigi Bartolo deserves a special mention. He died on the 15 September 1753 aged about 72 years at the Capuchin Friary, Floriana, Malta and was buried there (1).

So far it has not been possible to trace the exact date of his birth and his baptismal name (2). Most probably he was born in the year 1681 in Valletta (3) and he joined the Franciscan Capuchin Order on the 19 June 1696 (4).

At that time the only Capuchin House in Malta, that of Floriana, formed part of the Monastic Province of Siracusa. In accordance with the Constitutions of the Order, Luigi received his Philosophical and Theological training in the formation houses of the said Province. Since his ordination to the priesthood is not recorded in Malta, it is very likely that he was ordained in Sicily. Besides his Ecclesiastical Studies, Luigi Bartolo had a perfect command of the Latin, Italian and French languages (5).

As a brilliant orator he was invited to preach in various towns and villages in Sicily and in Malta (6).

From the year 1724 to 1790 Padre Bartolo was repeatedly appointed Superior of the Friaries in Piazza, Vittoria, Modica, Sortino and Siracusa. He held other responsible offices such as Master of Novices, Secretary, Definitor and Vicar Provincial. For many years the Office of Fabriciere — a Friar held other responsible offices such as Master of Novices, Secretary, Definitor and Vicar Provincial. For many years the Office of Fabriciere — a Friar re­

was entrusted to him as well (7).

When by the year 1740 the three Maltese Capuchin houses (two more friaries were built by then, namely one at Vittoriosa — to-day Kalkara — and one in Gozo at Rabat) were separated from the Mother Province and created an Independent General Custody, Padre Luigi was asked by the Minister General to join the newly erected Custody where he was appointed one of the four Councillors and Superior of the Floriana Friary. He arrived in Malta on the 6 June 1741 (8).

As the third Custos General he governed the Maltese Friars from 1747 to 1750 (9). Having terminated this office he decided to write the Memoirs of his conferees in the form of an Apparato Cronologico, a chronological account of the Maltese Capuchins which we are studying in this paper. Until few months before his death, Padre Luigi was still, at 72, very active as Superior of Floriana and Vice-Custos General (10).

I gnazio Saverio Mifsud putting on record the death of Fr. Bartolo says: Il 15 Settembre 1752, mort alle ore 5.00 p.m. il Padre Luigi Bartolo, Maltese, Minore Cappuccino, Religioso di vita santa e Letterato insigne, che lascio molte opere Ms. alcune delle quali si conservano nella nostra Biblioteca (11).

His Works

Padre Bernardo Toselli of Bologna who knew Padre Luigi personally and who succeeded him as Superior in Malta, says that Padre Luigi was very unfortun­ate in not being able to publish all his literary works and describes him as an "Eminent preacher, Philosopher, Theologian, Historian, Mathematician, Geographer and architect, but above all a Designer, whose pen drawings called Prospective (views) and maps, so skilfully executed, could be taken for engrav­ings. His paintings on parchment were of such a quality that he seemed to have dedicated himself entirely to this one single art" (12).

It is evident that Padre Luigi was so highly gifted by nature as to be able to produce quite outstanding works both in the intellectual and in the manual sector.

1. Capuchin Province Archives, Floriana, Malta, L. Bartolo Apparato Cronologico, p.230
2. This is due to fact that his name LUIGI is the name given in the Capuchin Order. We know that he was from Valletta from his own Ms. Appendix
3. In the Baptismal Records of the Parish of the said Province. Since his ordination to the priesthood is not recorded in Malta, it is very likely that he was ordained in Sicily. Besides his Ecclesiastical Studies, Luigi Bartolo had a perfect command of the Latin, Italian and French languages (5).
4. Capuchin Province Archives, Floriana, Malta, Catalogo dei Religiosi della Custodia con la loro Eta e Morte, Ms. p.6.

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Francis Azzopardi
In the Apparato Cronologico he gives us a complete list of all his works, but most of them have been lost or we are not as yet aware of their present location (13).

a) The Immaculate Conception

Unfortunately very little is known about his artistic training, but his paintings suggest the work of a miniaturist, possibly an illuminator of choir-books and miniatures, who may have been trained in a monastic workshop (in Italy or Spain), where the late medieval tradition may have been kept (14). "In fact" says Mario Buhagiar "all these qualities can be easily traced in the beautiful picture of the Virgin Immaculate executed between 1721 and 1723". This small water colour on parchment (35 x 24cm) at present preserved at the Capuchin Priory, Floriana, is one of the very few known works existing in Malta" (15). "The work has a linear delicacy and a courtly refinement that are evocative of International Gothic illuminations. This feeling is intensified by the gold scroll-work on the Madonna's robe and in the decoration of the architectural background. The colours have a warm intensity and the tall gracefully aristocratic, star-crowned Virgin, elegantly poised on the crescent moon of the Book of Revelation, is delineated in a gentle serpentine curve" (16).

"Particular care is paid to be the treatment of the beautiful elongated hands which the Virgin piously folds on her breast as she humbly bows her exquisitely modelled head in acceptance of God's will. She is, however, much more than just a beautiful maiden. As in all good devotional art, the painter has laboured to transform sensory beauty into an apt vehicle for the contemplation of the divine. It is a work of distinct spirituality that almost evokes Fra Angelico. The great charm and considerable artistic sophistication of the painting seem to give Luigi Bartolo a relevant and hitherto unsuspected place in Maltese art" (17). "It does seem in fact", continues Buhagiar, "that one can detect a certain affinity between this Madonna and the slightly later sculptural work of Mariano Gerada (reputedly trained by Fra Angelico). The great charm and considerable artistic sophistication of the painting seem to give Luigi Bartolo a relevant and hitherto unsuspected place in Maltese art" (17). "It does seem in fact", continues Buhagiar, "that one can detect a certain affinity between this Madonna and the slightly later sculptural work of Mariano Gerada (reputedly trained by Fra Angelico). The great charm and considerable artistic sophistication of the painting seem to give Luigi Bartolo a relevant and hitherto unsuspected place in Maltese art" (17).

b) Map of Gozo

Besides this Madonna, two very interesting pen-drawings are found in Gozo Antico-Moderano e Sacro-Profano [1745] by G.F. Agius de Soldanis (18). The first to appear is Carta e Veduta dell'Isola del Gozo e Camino (38.7 x 24.5cm). Very likely Agius de Soldanis asked Padre Bartolo to draw the map for his work on Gozo, as we find in the same manuscript the second drawing, namely Prospettiva del Gran Castello del Gozo come si vede dalla parte del Mezzogiorno (39.7 x 18cm) (19). Both views are signed "Fr. Abyasius a Melita, Concionator Capuccinus, invent et delineavit".

According to Dr. Maurice Agius Vadas (20): "Of all the maps drawn of the Maltese archipelago between the years 1500 to 1800, the only one drawn specifically of the island of Gozo alone, appears to be the one drawn in 1745(? by Padre Luigi Bartolo. Of course this is not to say that there were not maps of Gozo drawn by others, but these all formed part of maps showing the whole group" (21).

It is rightly observed that Padre Luigi places South at the top of his map. "This is not strictly speaking" continues Dr. Agius Vadas. "In accordance with the Ptolomaic tradition of orientating maps in such a way as to show North at the top of the page, which convention has been followed by many up to this present day. Nevertheless it should be said in mitigation that Ptolemy's convention can be said not to apply in Gozo's case, as each mapmaker has followed different orientations" (22).

"Padre Luigi Bartolo's map of Gozo of 1745, as far as regards the number of toponyms, gives no less than 79 in number, and this is a definite improvement on the number given in Abela's map of Gozo in 1647. On the other hand we have Palmeus (1752), Capitaine (1788) and Beherend (1820) giving a far greater number of places. Padre Bartolo's map is the first to give the island of Malta in its entirety, and he also gives the names of many harbours and villages which in countries such as Spain was still the favoured style for church paintings and decorations".

13. See Appendix A.B and C.
14. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Mario Buhagiar who has kindly examined and assessed the picture.
15. This painting signed by Padre Luigi Bartolo was kept in the Capuchin Priory at Gela, Sicily. It was donated to the Maltese Capuchin Province by Fr. Ermanno de Meli, Superior, on the 21 July 1958.
17. See Appendix C Opere di miniatura.
larger number of toponyms indeed, but no keys to them, as Fr. Bartolo does."

"Bartolo's attempt at showing contours is rather primitive. Jallot (1734), Berey, Tirion (1761) are more precise; also it is felt that the outline of the island is not as accurate as that given by Abela nearly 100 years before.

"The total lack of a road net-work shown in the map is rather surprising, when already Mutlow, about 1732, can give us a very detailed one, as also does Chassereau-Bowen about 1767c, and the already quoted Palmeus, and Behrend, the latter only in 1821".

"Admittedly it is too late for Rhumb lines but especially as Gozo is shown on its own, more serious is the lack of any indication of longitude and latitude, considering that already as early as 1551 Lanfreri had given these data in his map of the Malta group".

All things considered, Padre Bartolo's drawing appears to be quite a creditable effort, although not strictly scientific.

With regard to the Prospettiva del Gran Castello it is relevant to note here that Mgr. Alfredo Mifsud in his book: Knights Hospitaleors of the Venerable Tongue of England in Malta (Malta 1914), reproduced between pages 218 and 219, a similar Prospettiva from an old print with few interesting variations.

The one found in Agius de Soldanis, for example, is undated; it shows two flags on the extreme ends of the buildings while the drawing of the Gozitan Coat-of-Arms is superimposed or rather glued to the page. Mgr. A. Mifsud reproduction is dated 1745; no flags appear on the buildings and the said Coat-of-Arms is depicted directly on the very same paper.

Although Padre Bartolo gives the key to nine toponyms, a scale to the drawing is wanting from the scientific point of view. Both views of the Gozo Citadel are quite reliable and perhaps the only pen-painted ones still extant.

c) The Apparato Cronologico

Of all the literary works of Luigi Bartolo the most important is the Apparato Cronologico. Although in a very bad state of preservation the Apparato is the only still extant manuscript in Padre Bartolo's own handwriting preserved in the Capuchin Province Archives at Floriana (23).

Besides this original we have two more copies; one also kept at Floriana transcribed in 1910 by Fr. Sebastian Farrugia, Capuchin Archivist (+ 1916). 23a

23. See Appendix A n. 6 and note 30.
23a It was in the National Library, Valletta before 1781. Cir. Francesco Paolo Smitmer, Catalogo della Biblioteca del Sacro Militar Ordine di S. Giovanni oggi detto di Malta, r.3, 1781, p.217.

and the other preserved at the National Library, Valletta, Ms. LIBR 699 by an unknown writer.

With few exceptions the contents of the Apparato is an invaluable historical source for the history of the Maltese Capuchins. There is no doubt about its reliability because Padre Bartolo, as he states in the introduction Il Cronologista al Leggitore was able to collect his information from the original documents he himself was handling at the Capuchin Archives in Siracusa as Secretary Provincial.

As already stated he started writing the Apparato in 1751 on completion of his term as Custos General when he was over 70.

Padre Luigi being well aware of the lack of documents relating to the newly erected Custody, was prompted to compile this historical account by an earnest desire to put on record the gesta of his fellow Maltese Capuchin Friars, bearing in mind a threefold aim. Prima, per non incorrere nella consulibile incuria di nostri antecessori che nulla vuoi annotavano, e da tal trascuragione, moltissime degne notizie si sono offerto disperse. Secondo, per far vedere, che la virtù, la Dottrina, e l'applicazione sono quelle prerogative, che rendono i Religiosi immortal, e famigerati. Terzo, per far vedere a chi che sia, che un sol Convento, da pochissimi Religiosi coabitato, e da una piccola Isolletta oriund, non fu inferiore, ne tampoco secondo a qualche altro convenuto m. siginificante di un intiero Regno, o di qualche estensissima Provincia.

This historical account covers a period of 158 years from 1584 to 1740.

It is evident that Padre Luigi Bartolo was conscious of the precious gift he was endowed with. Besides fulfilling his religious and priestly duties, he considered it his mission to put himself at the service of human Culture and knowledge.

Culture cannot remain the possession of few but it has to spread and draw together. Man must be able to reach beyond himself as long as he refuses to be locked up within.

Padre Luigi Bartolo believed in this and reached his goal by leaving behind him a long series of literary and artistic works.

I conclude quoting Count Ciantar: "Luigi da Malta, de' Minori Cappuccini, Definitore della Provincia di Siracusa, Religioso di molta virtù, erudizione e dottrina, ma quanto virtuoso e dotto, altrettanto umile (24)."

APPENDIX

A. Operi Scientifiche e Letterarie (25)

1. I Consigli della Sapienza tradotti dall’Idioma Francese nella Favella Italiana. Ms. Anno 1713 (26).
4. Anatome Sacrae Scripturae. Opus in quattuor Tomos in quarto distri- butum. Ms. Anno 173 ...
8. Apparato e Prospetto Cronologico nei quali si descrivono li Religiosi Cappuccini Maltesi costituiti in dignità ed altre loro prerogative dacché fu fondato il convento della Valletta sino all’anno 1751. Colla

24. A copy of this Ms. is kept at NLM. Ms. LIBR 561, pp.305 (21 x 15 cm). See also P. Pelagio, op. cit., pp.209-231 giving the year 1714.
25. Bernards a Bonosa, op. cit., p.5 has a slightly different title and says that this Ms. was kept in Capuchin Library at Notò, Sicily; P. Pelagio, op. cit., dates it 1715 p.200.
26. Bernardi, op. cit., p.5 says: “Presso il Graminioni nel 1749”;

B. Opere di Penna (32).

1. Prospettiva della Città Valletta, come si vede dalla parte di Scirocco. Anno 1718.
5. Veduta dell’Isola di Malta, del Gozo e del Comino e di tutte le altre Città, Terre, Cassi, Porti, Case, Torri, Castelli, Fortificazioni ed altri Prospetti di Considerazione che vi sono all’interno di detta Isola. Con un ritratto dell’Emo Gran Maestro Emanuele Pinto fatto pure colla Penna e dedicato all’Istesso Eminentissimo Gran Maestro. Anno 1746 (33).


31. This is perhaps the last historical work of Padre Bartolo. A copy of which (by Agius de Soldani?) is found at the National Library, Valletta, Ms. LIBR 23 ff.190r - 230v under this title: Ristretto della Vita del P. Agostino Gallo, Sacerdote Predicatore Cappuccino dalla Valletta. Besides being the author of this biography, Padre Bartolo was also one of the compilers and signatories of Vita del P. Agostino da Malta, Predicatore in Buona Relazione della Vita Predicazione dei nostri Padri e Frati Cap­ pucini... in questa Provincia di Siracusa Ms. preserved at the General Archives of the Capuchin Order in Rome, AB — 132 pp. 499-568, 451.
33. A similar water colour view of Malta on paper (95 x 60 cm) is also preserved at the Capuchin Friary, Floriana.
34. NLM. P. Pelagio op. cit., p.331. Prospettiva e pianta dell’Isola di Malta dalla parte di Tramontana dedicata all’Eomo G.M. Paolo l’anno 1776. Narbone op. cit., pp.206, 256. Prospettiva e pianta dell’Isola di Malta dalla parte della Tramontana, ES a gran
6. Pianta e Prospettiva del Territorio e Città di Mineo con altri Monumenti e Medaglie dell’Antiche Città di Camoti, e... (sic) che costituivano le tre Città dell’Antica loro denominazione = Menae, Menarum. Anno 1732.

7. Albero Genealogico della antichissima e nobile Famiglia de Saix e de Cherve’ elaborato colla Penna dal P. Luigi Bartolo Predicatore Capuccino e dedicato all’Ilmo Sig. Commendatore Francesco Gioacchino de Saix Cherve’ della Lingua d’Auvergna. Anno 1732.

8. Un altro Albero Genealogico elaborato pure colla Penna e dedicato all’Ilmo Sig. Vincenzo Vague Gurdan, Gran Maresciallo della Lingua d’Auvergna. Anno 1732.

C. Opere di Miniatura (34)


4. Pianta delle Isole di Malta, Gozo e Comino con tutte le Fortificazioni antiche e moderne specialmente le Batterie e Ridotti fabbricati per le spiagge delle suddette Isole. Fatta di miniatura e dedicata all’Ilmo Sig. ... (sic). Anno 1727.

5. Una Figura di Maria Vergine Addolorata fatta di miniatura per il Casciarizzo della Sacrestia del Convento di Militello. Anno 1728.

6. Altre figure di miniatura fatte per li Conventi di Terranova, di Militello, della Vittoriosa [Malta], di Piazza e della Valletta.
6. Padre Luigi Bartolo: The Immaculate Conception (water colour on parchment), Capuchin Friary, Floriana.
