The Maltese Wall Clock,
locally known as *L-Arloġġ tal-Lira* 1750-1900:
Interpretation and Conservation

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Abstract

The Maltese Wall Clock, popularly known as *l-Arloġġ tal-lira* is an intrinsic element of Maltese cultural heritage. It manifests the skilled craftsmanship of Maltese artists. Its production commenced in the 17th century, but its form, aesthetics and mechanism were improved and enriched in the 18th and 19th centuries. Typically found in the residences of the upper classes, it served as a status symbol for the wealthy residents of Malta. It was a custom-made product made according to the purchaser's wishes. It was never mass produced so each clock that survives has unique features that distinguishes it from the rest. Most Maltese wall clocks were acquired by bequest or purchase and are presently found in private houses that are not accessible to visitors. A small number are located in museums that are open to the public. These clocks are presented to visitors as a decorative object with little or no accompanying information. By being relocated to a museum and exhibited as a work of art they have been decontextualised, divorced from the families that commissioned them and deprived of the narratives that animated them. The current heritage interpretation of the *Arloġġi tal-lira* in museums is that of an inanimate object. Museums have the role of showcasing and protecting heritage but also to interpret it in the best possible way. Heritage Interpretation's main aim is "to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects" and it must spark curiosity, attention, and interest (Tilden, 1957, p. 8). The primary purpose of this study is to use heritage interpretation strategies to grant the Maltese wall clock its merited importance as a bespoke component of Maltese heritage. Eight clocks feature in this study, four of which are found in historic house museums, and another four in museum galleries and religious buildings. The author interviewed owners of Maltese wall clocks and museum administrators in quest of family stories, memories, personal experiences and anecdotes associated with the clocks. Reuniting the clocks with their family narratives can effectively inform, engage, and provoke visitors. This research embarked on a journey to analyse the current heritage interpretation of *Arloġġi tal-lira* in tourist attractions, it revealed a prevalent lack of information that compromises the clocks' interpretation. An in- depth inquiry showed that in most cases museum personnel did not possess any written records or documentation pertaining to the clocks. This vacuum was addressed through semi structured interviews with key informants and subsequent bibliographic research aimed at retrieving and recording the

background histories of eight *Arloġġi tal-lira.* This information needs to be woven into the current sterile interpretation of the clocks in order to inform and entertain visitors and communicate the uniqueness of Maltese wall clocks and their importance and value as heirlooms of Maltese heritage.

Abbreviations

A.R. – Augmented Reality

F.P.M. - Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti

U.N.E.S.C.O. – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The need to keep track of time has been felt by humans since prehistoric times. On the Maltese islands, prehistoric temples like Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra dating to 3200-3000 BCE, are believed to incorporate solar calendars marking Summer solstices and Autumn equinoxes. This form of timekeeping may have been attuned to farming activities, but other possibilities like navigation and cultic rituals exist. Solar calendars evolved into sundials and by the 13th century mechanical timekeeping devices started to be manufactured. Through time, different types of clocks developed in countries around the world. In Malta, in the 17th century, an innovative decorative wall hung clock made its debut. This Maltese wall clock is locally known as *l-Arloġġ tal-Lira*, literally translated as the 'one pound clock'. This iconic clock is an important part of Maltese heritage. It is still being manufactured on the island and generally occupies a prominent place in Maltese homes. Antique specimens are displayed in various house museums and museum galleries, visitors are attracted to the clock because of its artistic aesthetic qualities and uniqueness but are denied the opportunity to engage with the clock because of lack of interpretation. This study seeks to give the *Arloġġ tal-Lira* a rightful place in Maltese history by examining current forms of interpretation and exploring practical ways how to turn the Maltese wall clock into living history.

The Maltese wall clock was initially meant to adorn the interior of elite Maltese houses. It was crafted by highly skilled Maltese artisans and encompasses features which are characteristically Maltese such as Maltese landscapes, Maltese flowers, the eight-pointed cross and Maltese family coat of arms. Some Maltese clocks made it to foreign lands. These were mostly transported from Malta by Maltese emigrants as a token of their homeland. Most of the surviving antique Maltese wall clocks hang in the private residences of patrician families. The present owners of such clocks came to acquire them through inheritance or direct purchase. These family heirlooms are in private homes that are not open to the public. There is no museum in Malta that focuses on clocks but there are several museums that exhibit antique Maltese wall clocks. In 1992, an exhibition entitled 'Antique Maltese Clocks' was organized by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (F.P.M.). This exhibition allowed the public a once in a lifetime opportunity to see many diverse Maltese clocks that mostly form part of collections in the private houses. In this exhibition, the *Arloġġ tal-Lira* clocks were exhibited

as *objets d'art*, like paintings. Newspapers at the time praised the exhibition. However, the information given about each clock was very brief and included only details about the decorations and mechanisms. Upon looking closely and attentively at the clocks, their unique characteristics reveal deeper meanings. Interpretative aids alongside the clocks, such as suggestive points to look at might have aided the visitor to appreciate, understand and engage with the clock more effectively. This research seeks to address this void. The question that is being explored is, in what ways can interpretation of the Maltese wall clock contribute to a better understanding of it as an important component of Maltese heritage?

Freeman Tilden (1883-1980), who is known as the father of heritage interpretation believed that the interpretation of heritage is not only about giving information. Prompted by this notion, in 1957, he published the book 'Interpreting our Heritage' in which he offers solutions and advice on how heritage should be interpreted. This book, 66 years on, remains relevant and an authority on the subject. Tilden claims that the interpretation of heritage cannot be limited to information. It must be presented as a whole and it needs to connect to the experience, personality and ideas of the visitors (Mendéz Andrés, 2006). Heritage Interpretation helps the visitors make sense of the things around them, no matter how unfamiliar they are to them. It uses original objects to impart and inform, thus having educational purposes. Museums are the custodians of our heritage and education is one of their key roles. They have the exclusivity to manifest the existing relationships between original objects and the visitors. Museums are responsible for providing information that is precise, easy to understand and interesting. This along with enjoyable and thought provoking experiences for the visitors, lead to better understanding and appreciation of heritage (Mckinty, 1999).

The Maltese wall clock cannot be wholly appreciated if it is disconnected from its context. The family that commissioned the clock and its stories are interlaced with the clocks and cannot be separated. The clock embodies a web of relations between different people and circumstances. The families commissioned the Maltese wall clock from local artisans because they needed a device to tell the time, but they also wanted it because it was perceived to be a decorative wall decoration and a status symbol. These personal motivations specifically led to the manufacture of these clocks, each one uniquely constructed for the family commissioning it. It is therefore important that the interpretation of the clocks highlight these

relationships. This research seeks to uncover the relationship between some clocks in museum collections and their families in an effort to create an effective form of interpretation that will enable visitors to engage with the clock and learn about its unique history.

This study is composed of five chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction which gives an outline of the research and establishes the research question. It accentuates the lack of interpretation in local museums and highlights its importance to understand and appreciate the Maltese wall clock. Chapter two is the literature review which traces the evolution of horology in Europe and a history of timekeeping in Malta. It then presents a thorough comparative study on theories proposed by different scholars on Maltese wall clocks. Emerging data suggests that the literature available focuses mainly on the history, the composition and the artisans of the clocks but does not deal with personal experiences, feelings, and human intentions which are integral to interpretation. Chapter three is the Research Methodology which explains the methods and the sources used to collect data as well as the process. It describes how the data was analysed and it discusses the limitations of the study. Chapter four is the Analysis and Discussion of the Results which manifests the information that was gathered through the visits to museums and the interviews. The information pertaining to eight different clocks is discussed. An aesthetic description and a description of the current location and interpretation is presented for each clock. Family narratives are then recorded, and effective interpretative strategies suggested. Chapter five is the Conclusion which answers the main research question and showcases the importance of this research. It puts forward recommendations for more effective interpretation strategies for Maltese wall clocks hung in museums.

This research has led to the discovery of stories that are the missing component in the interpretation of Maltese wall clocks that are housed in public museums. It has effectively chronicled memories, before they fade away. These stories have the power to transform a Maltese wall clock from an emotionless object to an object evocative of interesting memories, feelings and anecdotes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Timekeeping

Nowadays, telling the time is taken as a simple given, achieved just from a glance at a watch, a mobile phone or a clock. Telling time has always been considered essential by humans but has not always been readily achievable or accurate as it is today. The first evidence of timekeeping was cyclical timekeeping which precedes recorded history (Orzel, 2022). Early civilisations needed to keep track of time in order to plant and harvest their crops at the right time of the year, to reap the most produce and maintain the whole community. This was attained by observing the solar and lunar cycles, as well as the positions of stars and planets. These observations led the first humans to construct "archaeoastronomical" structures that use the rising and the setting of the sun to indicate a change in season (Orzel, 2022). Various prehistoric structures such as Mnajdra and Stonehenge indicate similar observances.

One of the most ancient timekeeping methods was to put a stick in the ground and observe the progression of its shadow (Margolis, 2018). This later evolved into the sundial that had markers to divide the day into segments. Sundials are useless on an overcast day, so other devices were created such as the water clock, the candle clock and the hourglass which all proved to be inconvenient under certain unforeseeable circumstances. Consequently, mechanical devices were invented c. 1200 that were powered by weights and became popular in Europe in the 16th century (Orzel, 2022).

As civilisations became more complex, a more accurate measurement of time was needed. In the 17th century, one of the greatest advances in horology occurred. This involved the application of a pendulum to control the timekeeping of a clock (Smith, 1984). This new addition is considered as the most important invention in clockmaking. It was discovered by Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) who determined that the natural swinging movement of the pendulum can be used as a timekeeping standard. His son Vincenzo Galilei (1520-1591) began work on the first clock operated by a pendulum in 1602 (Smith, 1984). Upon his death, in 1649, his clock was still unfinished. His work was resumed by a Dutch physicist, Christian Huygens (1629-1695), commissioned a clockmaker, Salomon Coster to produce pendulum clocks that were accurate to an error of only one minute a day (Tyler, 1968). This invention

revolutionalised timekeeping. It was fundamental to the progress of science, astronomy and navigation. Now clockmakers could produce instruments that gave unprecedented precise time. Pendulum clocks continued to be improved in subsequent centuries, becoming accurate to just seconds a day.

Over the last century clocks have again changed dramatically. The invention of the quartz electric clock in the 1930s led to the modern revolution in timekeeping. Nowadays most modern clocks are quartz-controlled, fitting anyone's budget and available in a huge variety of designs. More recent developments led to the invention of atomic clocks which are accurate to within one second in 60 million years (Orzel, 2022).

2.2 Clock Manufacturing

Owing to the incredible advances in precision and technology, timekeeping progressed from primitive shadow casting sundials to impressive devices, products of skills and opulence. Mechanical clocks were established during the 14th century in Europe. The first clocks were found in monasteries to announce the times of services (Tyler, 1968). The bells could be heard outside the monasteries, incentivising towns to possess a clock of their own. It is claimed that Milan had its first one in 1335. Clocks announced the time by the striking of bells. Indeed, the word 'clock' is similar to the word '*clocca'* in Latin, '*cloche'* in French and '*glocke'* in German, all meaning 'bell' (Tyler, 1968).

The early town clocks were most probably turret clocks that were housed in towers. A clock endowed the town with status and prestige. Churches and cathedrals that could afford the cost also started to install clocks. Apart from telling the time, some of these clocks incorporated a calendar, moving figures or a cock (Tyler, 1968). In these cases, the clock would not be housed in a tower but inside the building to reduce deterioration. Later turret clocks started to incorporate exterior dials. One of the oldest mechanical clocks is in Salisbury Cathedral, England and dates back to 1386 (Tyler, 1968).

Towns that could not afford a turret clock could opt for a monastery type of alarm clock. A person would be employed to listen attentively to the ringing of the alarm clock and go ring

the bell in a nearby tower each time the alarm clock struck to advise the people of the time. This employee eventually became redundant, but many clocks still include effigies that strike bells. These are known as Jacks and pay homage to the bygone occupation (Tyler, 1968).

Smaller churches could not pay for the large clocks that were in use in towns and big churches. They needed a smaller and simpler clock that they could afford. These started to be made in the 15th century. Such clocks started to feature on churches and other public buildings. The wealthy noblemen felt the need to commission the scaled down examples of turret movements for their own abodes (Tyler, 1968). The 15th century therefore saw the introduction of clocks for domestic use. These clocks needed winding every 12 to 15 hours, a task entrusted only to the master of the house or a responsible official. They were not accurate timekeepers and needed to be checked against a sundial (Tyler, 1968).

Also during the 15th century, spring driven clocks started to be made. The first ones were table clocks, meant to stand on a surface. These made a break with tradition since the mechanism was housed in a case (Tyler, 1968). Eventually, clocks started to be made smaller and by the early 16th century they became portable, the first watches (Tyler, 1968). By the middle of the 17th century, table clocks became more refined, included parts made of brass and incorporated astronomical indicators. Watches were being made and fitted into gold or silver cases. They were however inaccurate timekeepers, with an error of 15 to 60 minutes a day (Tyler, 1968).

This was solved with the advent of the pendulum, in 1656. The clocks by Huygens and Coster broke ground not only mechanically but also in their design (Tyler, 1968). Sophisticated mechanisms required cases of equal status. Cases were manufactured in timber, not customary at the time (Smith, 1984). They were table clocks but could also be hung. Born in The Hague, the Huygens-Coster type clock was copied by clockmakers in other European countries and new designs were created. Well-to-do families started to commission these accurate clocks in a case that matches their furniture, mostly in ebony (Tyler, 1968).

In the late 17th century, in an attempt to lengthen the running time of the clock, London clockmakers came up with a new mechanical design. This was enclosed in an ebony case and

meant to hang on a wall with its hanging weights exposed. These were considered unsightly, so the case was elongated to conceal them. Eventually, this type of clock evolved to be housed in a freestanding unit, known as the Long Case Clock or Grandfather clock (Tyler, 1968). It was later improved by enlarging the case and dial and adding the phase of the moon in around 1730. At the time it was useful to know about the phase of the moon because a full moon meant that people could go out at night (Tyler, 1968). The winding time increased to eight days. The eight-day clock can be recognised from winding holes in the dial. People who could not afford an eight-day clock would buy a 30 hour clock with false holes on the dial to look like the more expensive type (Tyler, 1968). The long case clock was particularly popular in England and in Holland, an object of desire for wealthy households. Other countries produced clocks inspired by the long case clock. In Austria they produced Vienna Regulators which were similar in shape to a long case clock but were hung on a wall. In the same period, France was popular for clocks with statuary and later with four pillars. In France, after the mid-18th century wooden cases were no longer in fashion, preference was given to white marble, bronze, and porcelain (Tyler, 1968). Germany was also known for clockmaking, producing wooden painted clocks. The Black Forest area was the birthplace of the famous cuckoo clock in the 17th century. Other countries also contributed to the clockmaking industry (Tyler, 1968).

Clocks remained a prized possession for the wealthy few until the 19th century, when mass production of clocks commenced in America. The flood of cheap American clocks in the European market meant a hard blow to small scale producers of clocks. Consequently, in Germany and in France factories were established for the making of mass-produced domestic timepieces. In England, clockmakers were reluctant to focus on quantity production but eventually were forced to follow the trend (Tyler, 1968).

2.3 Timekeeping in the Maltese Islands

Evidence suggests that since the first humans settled in Malta, they felt the need to keep track of time. Prehistoric settlers built Mnajdra and Ħaġar Qim temples c. 5000 years ago to serve as a calendar marking the equinoxes and solstices. At Mnajdra the central corridor is flooded with sunlight during the equinoxes whilst during the solstices narrow beams of light shine

onto particular slabs (Trump, 2002). The Ħaġar Qim temple features an elliptical hole that on the summer solstice, allows the sun to enter an apse.

Malta's debut in the manufacturing of a timekeeping device features in Arabic literature of the 12th century that mentions a craftsman from Malta who constructed a hydro-mechanical clock in the previous century. Writers extolled this clock that featured a statue of a girl that threw balls in the basin to tell the time (Bonello, 1992). Turret mechanical clocks first appear in Malta at the Mdina Cathedral which had one by 1461. Like other coeval clocks, it probably did not have a dial. The public could tell the time by the striking of bells. This clock was not governed by a pendulum, therefore inaccurate. In the 18th century a new clock was commissioned to Gian Anton Tanti, known as "Sakranobis" meaning the supreme drunkard. In 1888 it was replaced by another clock with two dials by Mikielanġ Sapiano. Tanti's clock was installed at Msida's church (Bonello, 1992).

Mechanical clocks were in existence since before the arrival of the Order in Malta, but sandglasses were more commonly used. They were cheaper, easier to move and carry and at sea mechanical clocks were inoperable due to sea motion and steep changes in temperature that affected the movement of the clocks. They were referred to as *ampolletta*. They were so popular that locally, *ampolletta* came to also mean 30 minutes. They were also used in court. In 1688 Grand Master Gregorio Caraffa stipulated that lawyers were to lose their right of audience upon the end of the thirty minutes as signaled by the sandglass (Bonello, 1992). Sundials were also a welcome indication of time. Various sundials were constructed on public and private buildings. The oldest preserved sundial locally, is found in a residence in Xewkija dating back to 1540 (Micallef, 1994).

According to Bonello (1992) the first clockmaker to the Knights of St John was Magister Joannis de Lanoy. In 1578 he asked the Council of the Order to be duly paid 50 or so scudi for making a clock for Sir Oliver Starkey, Grand Master De Valette's companion. De Lanoy's name suggests that he was a French national. At the time, French clockmakers were highly regarded. It was customary for the Order to invite artists to Malta coming from the countries in which a certain art was thriving. However, it is surprising how Starkey could afford to commission a

clock. In 1578 clocks were still expensive and only within reach of the rich, not only in Malta but across Europe (Bonello, 1992).

The 17th century marked the birth of the Maltese wall clock. This coincided with a time when the wealthy Maltese started to make an effort to improve their abodes and to buy grand decorative pieces of furniture (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). The Maltese wall clock was to be found in the homes of the upper classes: the Grand Master of the Order of St John, elite knights, wealthy families and clergymen. Some owners also had an employee for cleaning, winding and maintaining these clocks (Formosa, 1992). Common folk could not afford to have one. Historians suggest that up to the beginning of the 18th century, subordinate families owned basic pieces of furniture (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989).

2.4 Museums of Timekeeping

The Museum of Timekeeping in Upton, Nottinghamshire, England has a vast collection of clocks ranging from small devices like watches to large ones like church clocks, from ordinary clocks to artistic creations. It presents the visitor with the story of timekeeping from past to present, with many of the clocks in working action and a library with thousands of books about horology. By collecting, documenting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting clocks, the museum aims at promoting the history, science, art, and craft of timekeeping. The exhibits are showcased according to the type of clock. Clocks are accompanied by small labels that describe mainly the movement of the clock and mention the maker. Some clocks have larger labels with details about the original owners and curious stories about the clocks. Museum tours can be booked, and they also post videos that feature particular clocks in their collection in which they explain and demonstrate how they work. The museum relies heavily on the functional aspect of the clocks, leaving out other interesting facts such as the narratives of the clocks. To appreciate this collection, one has to be a keen enthusiast of clock mechanisms (Museum of Timekeeping, n.d.).

In Switzerland, the Musée International d'Horlogerie, is the world’s largest clock museum. It houses around 4,500 timepieces. It delves upon the technical, artistic, social, and economic aspects of clockmaking. Exhibits are displayed in attractive showcases and their label indicates

the type of clock and the period it was manufactured. The labels are in French with no English translation, hindering interpretation for non-French speaking tourists. Apart from appreciating luxurious timepieces, visitors can observe watchmakers at work or take part in little experiments. The museum also makes use of audiovisual presentations, interactive timepieces and a multimedia show to interpret timekeeping for the public. The different types of interpretation help the visitor to understand and appreciate the world of clocks and make this museum attractive to a wider range of people. This museum is centered on the technical aspect of the clocks, not giving a lot of importance to their narratives (Fondation Haute Horlogerie, n.d.).

In Germany, the Deutsches Uhren museum is located in Fuertwangen, in the Black Forest. The museum houses clocks and other artifacts related to horology from many different countries but focuses on the clockmaking tradition in the Black Forest. Clocks carry a label with a description of their movement which also includes the name of the maker. Some clocks are hung next to portraits of their makers, providing a face to a name. Some narratives are also included. Guided tours can be booked, which are popular with visitors in which they can interact with timepieces. Visitors can book a workshop in which they make and decorate a cuckoo clock, typical of the region. Workshops are offered to schools, tailored to the school syllabi. Students can use the inspiration gathered during a visit to the exhibition to make their own clock. They get to choose between making a quartz clock or a sundial. Then they paint and decorate it. The museum is totally accessible for wheelchair users. This museum uses practical workshops to boost motivation for learning but still relies heavily on technical information leaving out the human aspect of the clocks (The German Clock Museum, n.d.).

There are many other museums that house permanent exhibitions of timepieces. These collections provide the visitors with an understanding of how timekeeping evolved. They are spaces where ancient clocks are displayed, preserved, and kept in pristine working conditions by professionals. It must be noted that in Malta there are no museums that contain a collection of clocks or that explore timekeeping and its fascinating evolution. Instead, antique examples of clocks are found displayed haphazardly in several museums, as part of the decoration but not as the main subject matter. The interpretation tools used in the three foreign museums previously mentioned vary from one museum to another with the aim of

attracting visitors. The human element within the clocks tends to be given less importance than the technical details of the clocks. When this is not represented, it leads to a sterile interpretation.

2.5 Local Literature on The Maltese Wall Clock

Six writers, namely Patrick Formosa, Joseph Galea-Naudi, Denise Micallef, Louis Busuttil, Giovanni Bonello and John Pace, have studied and written about the material composition of Maltese wall clocks, their mechanisms and other attributes.

2.5.1 The Context

Maltese wall clocks were typically hung in prominent positions in order to be seen. Such a clock was bought not only for decorative and utility purposes but also because it meant that the owner is wealthy and could afford such a piece. A rich clock was essential to impress and arouse envy (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). When found in a private home, it occupied a place in the most decorated room of the house, the *sala grande* or hall. This room was heavily furnished with other handmade furniture pieces in red deal, chestnut, walnut, or olive wood, all matching the baroque style of the clock with its ornate shape, gilding and painting. The *sala* with all the furniture items and the Maltese clock was the room where the owner of the house greeted and entertained his/her guests. It was a status symbol. The Maltese wall clock was also commissioned for public buildings such as palaces and auberges and was also found in church sacristies (Pace, 2012).

There must have been a substantial demand for its manufacture, since Malta was able to sustain a considerable number of clockmakers for about 150 years. This happened at a time when only the rich could afford them (Busuttil, 1992). The 1842 census claims that there were 26 watchmakers in Malta and 11 gilders at a time when the population was 114,499 (Bonello, 1992). This extravagance of the higher classes contrasted heavily with the other side of the population which experienced harsh working conditions with low incomes and near-serfdom (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989).

2.5.2 The Origins of the Shape of the Clock

The Maltese wall clock has a unique, distinctive look that bears little resemblance to other clocks from other countries of the same period. It is difficult to identify the artisans' primary sources of inspiration when they started to manufacture these clocks. According to Formosa (1992), the Maltese wall clock's closest resemblance is to the street corner or wall niches that enclose saints, found all over the islands. This is a plausible theory since the shape of the case of the clock is similar to that of a street niche. No other authors have corroborated this theory.

According to Tyler (1968), the Maltese clock is a derivative of the altar clock. Tyler (1968) suggests that this type of clock was produced in Italy in the mid-17th century and was introduced in Malta by Kalċidonju Pisani from Siġġiewi in the early 19th century. However, the Italian altar clock does not look similar to a Maltese wall clock. Moreover, Maltese wall clocks started to be produced much earlier than the 19th century. Therefore, this hypothesis is questionable.

In European countries, including England, clock designers traditionally borrowed ideas from architecture. Indeed, when pendulum clocks started to be made, in 1656, they required a case to provide the pendulum with ample space in which to swing and to protect the mechanism from dust. Sophisticated mechanisms required cases of equal status. Cases were manufactured in timber (Smith, 1984). The shape of these timber cases was influenced by architectural features employed in buildings in Europe (Smith, 1984).

2.5.3 The Origins of the Name "*tal-Lira*"

It is commonly believed that the Maltese wall clock, which is locally known as *tal-lira* is known as such because it used to be bought for one pound. Bonello (1992) disputes this theory and presents various valid points that corroborate his opinion. He states that it is improbable that such a clock fully decorated with gilding and painting and having mechanical clockwork could ever have cost only one pound. This is especially true since three skilled artisans had to be paid for its manufacture. He suggests that all artisans were normally well paid for their work. In 1888, Michelangelo Sapiano (1826-1912), a local clockmaker, was asking for 60 pounds for

one of his turret clocks. Another fact that further validates Bonello's theory is that when the Maltese wall clock was at the peak of its popularity, in the 18th century, the currency used by the locals was the *scudo* and not the pound. They only started trading in the pound when the *scudo* was forcibly removed in 1886. Hence, it is unlikely that the Maltese would nickname their clock after the British currency. Moreover, Bonello says that elite families were not inclined to disclose the value of any of their possessions. Hence, they would not call the clock that occupied pride of place in the most ostentatious room of their house "*tal-lira".* Bonello suggests that in the 18th century, when the Maltese clock was in demand, in other countries, a special genre of clock was in fashion. This clock was French and in the UK and the USA it was known as the lyre clock. In Italy the lyre clock was known as the *orologgio a lira*. The lyre clock had a frame that resembled a Greek lyre, a musical instrument that is frequently depicted in images portraying the Greek Sun God Apollo (Smith, 1987). Although in appearance the lyre clock is very different from the Maltese wall clock, Bonello argues that it was customary for people to give clocks of the same genre a common name. He supports his argument by saying that the British call any pasta shape macaroni, and that the Maltese call any large boat *vapur.*

Galea-Naudi and Micallef (1989) mention a tale, popular in the 19th century that could also have been related to the name *tal-lira.* According to these writers, during the 19th century it was customary for girls coming from poor families to work as maidservants with a rich family. These girls used to spend their afternoons at the Upper Barracca gardens or on Strada Reale in Valletta, where they often met their future husbands. On their wedding day, it was customary for their employers to give their maidservant a wedding present. She could choose to have either a wall clock or one gold coin. This delightful, romantic tale has not been repeated by any other author. In theory, this tale is questionable and unrealistic. It is improbable that a maidservant would be given an expensive Maltese wall clock as a wedding gift. It is not an appropriate gift for someone who is not rich. Other, more practical gifts were probably given.

2.5.4 The Essential Elements that make up a Maltese Wall Clock

The clock features certain essential characteristics that distinguish it from others. It is totally handmade by local artisans. It is enclosed in a wooden case which was commonly made of white deal, known as *punent,* (Formosa, 1992). Other researchers list other types of wood that were also used. Galea-Naudi & Micallef (1989) initially mentioned red deal, they later revealed that other types of wood like birch or beech were also used (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1993). Busuttil (1992) mentions mahogany, fruitwood, and chestnut. During the Hospitaller period (1530-1798), wood on the Maltese islands was very scarce. This was largely due to the deforestation that took place over time. Hence, it had to be imported at a substantial cost. The limited supply of timber had to be reserved for important activities such as shipbuilding and ship repair. These tasks required the use of wood which could not be replaced by any other material (Bonello, 2002). This suggests that any object made of wood, including the Maltese wall clock was costly.

Galea-Naudi and Micallef (1989) found out that white deal was typically imported from either Sicily, Genoa, or Reggio Calabria. This type of wood was generally selected due to its ability to take on the multiple gesso layers that were applied on it. It also helped to bring out the bright colours of the clocks (Formosa, 1992). The wooden case of the clock measures around 51 by 61 centimetres, although sizes may vary (Pace, 2012). The depth of the case also varied, according to customers' wishes. Some clocks are plain oblong in shape, others are oblong with a curvilinear pediment on top, also known as cresting or tympanum. More elaborate ones also have a corbel bracket or apron attached to the bottom part, locally known as *mensola.* (Busuttil, 1992). The case is painted and gilded. Its forepart is a glass door that displays the clock face, its main functions being to protect the dial and to enable the regulation of the clock (Formosa, 1992). Commonly, the glass is not clear, it has air bubbles, acquired during the manufacturing process (Formosa, 1992). At the time, glassblowing had not yet reached today's standards.

Behind the glass door, there is another door that holds the dial in position (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). The doors had different locking mechanisms, such as a latch in the form of a pin head which opened when pressed, a hook, or a small key. The latter is rare (Formosa,

1992). The interior of the case is sometimes lined with patterned paper or paper displaying the patron saint of a village (Formosa, 1992). The dial always has an hour hand which is normally short and elaborately decorated. But it does not always have the longer and slimmer minute hand. The hands differ in design, but they were typically made out of brass (Formosa, 1992). On the other side of the dial, the clock mechanism is attached to the wooden door. It is weight driven and has from 24 to 30-hour movements, meaning that it has to be wound daily. The movement of the mechanism is upside down; with the wheels on top and the escapement and fly at the bottom (Busuttil, 1992).

Information regarding the materials used to manufacture the Maltese wall clock indicate that there was diversity amongst the work of different artisans. The materials they used were chosen either according to availability or by choice of customer. The customers chose materials for a high-quality clock but according to their budgets. The Maltese wall clock was ordered to serve as an indicator of the owner's wealth and status.

2.5.5 The Decoration and Ornamentation of the Clock

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, the Maltese wall clock dominated all other clocks being produced locally (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1993). This clock gained popularity for the colour and the decorative element it contributed to any room or space. It also complemented the other ornate, gilded and painted furniture pieces in the room (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). Decorations were normally chosen by the customers commissioning the clocks. The decoration on a Maltese wall clock is elaborate, time consuming and requires the professional hands of skillful artisans.

The wooden case is painted over in various deep hues such as dark or light blue, dark green, dark bluish-green, maroon, and black. These colours provided a sharp contrast with the gold gilding. According to Formosa (1992), the least used of the colours was black, whilst Cauchi (2009) states that the colour of the clock may reflect the profession or milieu of the customer, such as red representing someone from the Order of St John, black a clergyman and green a merchant. Benoit (1992) remarks that dark green clocks evoke the garigue of the Maltese countryside, black ones the *għonnella,* red the geranium, whilst the gilding recalls the interior

of a baroque church. On top of the colour, gilding was applied which used either real gold leaf or silvering. The latter was the process of using silver instead of gold for a cheaper price, but then covering it in a varnish, locally called *mistura* to make it look like real gold (Formosa, 1992).

The dial is hand painted using Roman or Arabic numerals, or both. The circular ring on which the hours and or minutes are painted is called the chapter ring. The chapter ring can have both an inner ring marking the quarters and an outer ring marking the minutes, depending if the clock has one or two hands (Busuttil, 1992). When the minute hand is present, usually small Arabic numbers are marked on the outer ring to denote the minutes (Formosa, 1992). Roman numerals are more frequently used, and interestingly, the number four is not depicted as IV, but as IIII. There are various explanations for this. Most old and new clocks having Roman numerals rely on the typography IIII. Although nowadays the Arabic numeral system is preferred, the Roman numerals are still widely used on both watches and clocks. When Roman numerals were created, around the 1st century BCE, the original way to write the number four was to use IIII. This was commonly confused with III, hence they changed it to IV. The first reason why clockmakers use IIII, might be that they still follow in the footsteps of the earliest sundials made by Romans. Ancient Romans did not use IV out of respect for their supreme deity Jupiter. Since Jupiter in Latin was called *IVPPITER*, the Romans might not have been comfortable using the first two letters of their deity's name. Another possible explanation is that the earliest clocks were mounted on churches to serve the whole community. This was done at a time when most people did not afford to have a clock at home. Illiterate persons would have found it easier to use addition instead of subtraction, hence the numeral IIII was easier for them to read. Furthermore, IV might have easily been confused with VI. Another theory, and perhaps the most plausible one, is that IIII is preferred for reasons of aesthetic balance. Clocks use twelve numerals, which can be divided into three thirds. By using IIII instead of IV, the dial uses I in the first third only, V in the second third only and X in the last third only, thus achieving a more symmetrical and elegant dial composition (Goulard, 2018).

The background of the dial of a Maltese clock is normally painted white. This was done to create a contrast against the numbers. The center of the chapter ring is painted with a scene

that typically is a seascape, a landscape, or a historical sea battle. These frequently feature galleons, towers and flowers (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). Scenes are generally Maltese, however some chinoiserie can be spotted on certain clocks (Benoit, 1992). According to Galea-Naudi and Micallef (1989) the colours used to depict the scene are usually green, terracotta and pale blue. Black and orange were rarely used. Busuttil (1992) remarks that in the spandrels, flowers or flower patterns are often present. However, one can also find examples of clocks having birds, country scenery, or rustic landscapes. Benoit (1992, p.44) calls these different manifestations of nature "a celebration of life", "a Symphonie pastorale" and "a combination of poetic impulse and technical virtuosity". Between the bottom spandrels, a small aperture, shaped like a crescent, shows the swinging pendulum at work (Busuttil, 1992). The pendulum is also decorated, typically having concentric circles (Formosa, 1992).

The wooden case normally has a pediment on top that ends with a finial (Formosa, 1992). In its centre, one typically finds the coat of arms of the person commissioning the clock, or other motives such as the eight pointed cross, the sun or flowers (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). The sides of the clock are slightly concave and when the clock has a striking mechanism, there is an aperture on each side to allow the chimes to be heard better (Formosa, 1992). At its bottom, the wooden case may also have a bracket. This gives the clock the ultimate baroque. feel (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1993).

2.5.6 The Mechanism of the Clock

The Maltese Wall Clock is not just a decorative object, but a utilitarian one as well. The mechanism of a Maltese wall clock is pendulum driven. The whole mechanism of the clock used to be manufactured locally by hand. It is described as simple and primitive. It, however, required precise workmanship and painstaking work (Formosa, 1992). Galea-Naudi & Micallef (1989) describe the mechanism as small when compared to the size of the clock. This mechanism was fixed to the back of the clock face and enclosed in the wooden case. On the other facet of the wooden panel, the hour hand or the hour and the minute hand were fixed. These were connected to the mechanism by means of an axle which passes through a hole in the centre of the dial (Formosa, 1992). The mechanism consisted of various parts that work

collaboratively to permit the owner of the clock to keep record of the time. The mechanism had three brass wheels to move the hands and two strong cords, referred to in the local language as *lanez.* The first cord was tied to the drum of movement and to the other side of the pulley whilst the second cord was tied to the smaller weighted pulley. The clock had two rough leaden weights, called *mażżri.* These hung on the cords so the clock could be wound. One served to reset the time and the other for striking the hours. The length of the cord enabled the clock to run for 24 to 30 hours. The longer the cord, the less frequent the need for winding (Formosa, 1992).

The clock could be wound by pulling down the weights. In order to keep the clock running, when the weights go up, they need to be pulled down again. In most cases, the winding of the clock must be done from the inside, so to wind the clock, both doors need to be opened. Clocks that date to the end of the 19th century, started to be wound through the front part of the dial (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). Some of them by means of a cranked key (Formosa, 1992). The clock mechanism also has a pendulum to regulate the movement of the clock which does not usually have a suspension (Busuttil, 1992). The time keeping movement of the clock could differ from one clock to another. Some clocks are simple timekeepers that can have either the hour hand only or both the hour and the minute hand. Other clocks, apart from showing the time, also strike the hours. Others strike the half hours too and they can have either one or two hands. A number of clocks have both hands, strike quarters and can also have an alarm. Special, yet rare ones show the date and the day of the week (Busuttil, 1992).

Busuttil (1992) provided an exhaustive description of different types of clock mechanisms that govern various Maltese wall clocks. It aids interpretation of the clock to a certain point, since to be able to understand the various mechanisms, one must be familiar with the world of horology. It is difficult to comprehend how the clock works just by reading about it. One has to see the components and mechanisms involved to actually appreciate its complexity.

2.5.7 The Artisans

The Maltese wall clock is a pure Maltese product, crafted to perfection by Maltese artisans who were highly praised for their work (Formosa, 1992). For the manufacture of the Maltese wall clock, various artisans were involved. The three main artisans needed were the cabinet maker, the gilder/painter and the clockmaker. The cabinet maker was commissioned to make the wooden case according to the size and shape requested by the customer. Making the niche like form with perfect symmetry called for a high level of skill and could not be made by just any carpenter (Formosa, 1992). The gilder was in charge of the time-consuming task of applying various layers of white gesso on the wooden case, always leaving each layer to dry before applying the next one (Pace, 2012). The gilder then painted the case of the clock and later gilded it. In most cases, this was done using real 23.5 carat gold leaf and rabbit skin glue with a coating of bole. Bole is a very refined and fine clay. When the customer could not afford real gold, silvering was used by mixing silver with a varnish locally called *mistura*. Finally, the case was burnished for a brighter look (Pace, 2012). The same artisan who applied the gilding on the clock also made the painted decorations, thus he acted as both a gilder and a painter. The clockmaker was paid to make the mechanism of the clock and transform the piece of art into an item of utility.

When commissioning a Maltese wall clock, the customer first needed to go to the gilder/ painter, the artisan who was in reality the last one to work on the clock. He showed the customer how he/she could have the clock customised to his/her liking by choosing the colours, the decorations, the size and the shape. The gilder/painter took notes of the required dimensions and decorations and then commissioned and paid the cabinetmaker and the clockmaker (Formosa, 1992). When the clock was finished, the customer collected it from the gilder/painter and paid him the total price.

It was not customary for the artisans to sign their work, and it is therefore difficult to discover who these skillful individuals were. Dating the clocks is also a challenge. Some clockmakers had their own hallmarks. A case in point is Pisani who placed the bells at the top of the mechanism. He also liked to de-boss his name, whilst Clerici made engravings of his surname. Other clockmakers' work can be identified through their distinguishable uses of different

shaped pillars between plates. Many others, like Tanti never signed their mechanisms (Formosa, 1992).

The case of the clock was never signed, since they were considered to be a useful piece of furniture to enclose the clock and not a work of art. During the same period in England, one rarely finds a clock with the case maker's name. Conversely, in France, the clock was regarded as an adjunct but not superior to the case, hence the cases were frequently signed by the cabinetmaker (Smith, 1987). Artisans of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries were capable of producing clocks that were not just beautiful and decorative, but also worked properly, thus fully serving their purpose.

2.5.8 The Evolution of the Clock

The Maltese wall clock as it is known today, bears little resemblance with the earliest surviving specimens. Indeed, the wall clocks manufactured in the 17th century looked simple and rustic. They had large square cases without the pediment and bracket. The clock was presented in a boxed frame (Formosa, 1992). The case was made of pine and featured some gilding designs and motifs. The forepart of the case had a glass pane to show the clock face. The clock face featured a hand painted dial with Roman numerals and the mechanism used the hour hand only (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). An example of such a clock, features in one of Antoine Favray's (1706-1798) paintings named "The Visit".

With regards to design, since the early 18th century, the clocks started to be produced in a smaller case and with an attachment at the top (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). The upper part, in the shape of a curvilinear pediment, gave the clock a more elegant look and also acted as a screen to hide the bells of the mechanism. Subsequently, towards the late 18th century, when the Maltese wall clocks became especially popular, a bracket started to be incorporated at the bottom of the clock, which gave the clock more detail and sophistication (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). The Maltese wall clock reached its most splendid appearance when the overall decoration and gilding of the case and the dial became more refined, and more attention was given to detail (Formosa, 1992). This attests to the fact that by the 19th century,

the Maltese society had acquired a taste for elegance and refinement (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989).

As stated previously, the mechanism of the clock also experienced improvements. In the first phase of the Maltese wall clock, the models sported the hour hand only, thus showing only the hour of the day. During the second phase, the minute hand was incorporated, whilst some clocks also had a striking mechanism that struck the hours and at times, also the half hours. Eventually, the clocks started to strike the quarters. Striking was considered to be important, since one could know the time just by hearing the strikes, especially when the clock only had the hour hand (Formosa, 1992). In this case, the owners of these clocks told the time by counting the number of chimes which marked the quarters of each hour. This meant that at 12:45 the clock struck 15 times! Ultimately, clockmaking continued to develop and some Maltese wall clocks were fitted with particular and remarkable mechanisms. One such clock from the early 19th century, signed "Cleus Malta", had six dials and marked the time, the month of the year, the day of the week, the zodiac sign, the sunrise and sunset and the phases of the moon (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). This clock demonstrates an advancement by local horologists and a break with traditional design and mechanism (Formosa, 1992).

It is evident that since the beginning of the production of Maltese wall clocks, their style changed to meet new fashions that surfaced. Although new ideas were reaching the Maltese islands through foreign influences, some traditional styles were never discarded by the local craftsmen. These included the aforementioned naturalistic and picturesque elements. Hence, the clocks that were produced in the late 20th century reflect the mid- 19th century clocks which recaptured the gilding and designs of the 18th century clocks (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1993). Indeed, even though fashions changed, and more sedate neo-classical styles took over, the wall clocks retained their baroque design. Furniture became simpler, but the clock retained its elaborate composition (Galea-Naudi & Micallef, 1989). In 1886 Dr Nicola Zammit, a professor of philosophy at the University of Malta, wrote that in Malta there are several skillful clockmakers and repairers, capable of making complicated clocks, that are "rebels against all innovation" and "blindly follow ancient customs". These colourful descriptions of the Maltese wall clock were recorded in her essay about arts, crafts and industries in Malta that featured in the Great Colonial Exhibition in London (Bonello, 1992).

2.6 Gaps in the Literature Available

Writers mentioned in this literature review researched the history, designs and mechanisms of the Maltese wall clock and also revealed information on the artisans involved in its production. This data is important but falls short in meaning making. The literature at hand about Maltese wall clocks does not deal with personal experiences, feelings, and human intentions. Freeman Tilden (1883-1980), considered to be the father of heritage interpretation, proposed six principles of interpretation. According to him, heritage interpretation goes beyond giving factual information. It seeks "to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media" (Tilden, 1957, p. 8).

Cultural heritage is defined to be an array of resources which the present generation inherited from the past generation and is passed on to the future generation (UNESCO, 2009). Few authors have delved into the value of the clock as a specimen of Maltese cultural heritage. Cultural heritage can take on various forms which can be tangible or intangible. Tangible heritage refers to physical artefacts, such as buildings, monuments, sites, and artistic creations whereas intangible heritage refers to nonphysical heritage such as oral traditions, social practices, knowledge, and skills. The tangible is as important as the intangible (UNESCO, 2009). Indeed, an artefact may only be deemed heritage due to its meanings and associations. A tangible object is shrouded in its intangible connotations and must therefore be interpreted as a whole. The intangible being covert, relies on interpretation in order to be recognised. The Maltese wall clock is considered to be an artistic creation which therefore falls under the umbrella of tangible cultural heritage. However, within its craftsmanship, decoration and narratives hide multiple forms of intangible heritage. It encompasses memories, knowledge and skills that need to be brought out in its interpretation. The value of a Maltese wall clock comes both from its worth in cost and from its meanings. It is an heirloom, of priceless sentimental value and a reminder of a family's identity. The Maltese wall clocks that are displayed in museums are separated from their stories relating to the family who purchased them. This leads to a sterile interpretation, stripped of its emotional essence.

Authors did not write about the family narratives that surround the Maltese wall clock. Narratives play a very important role in heritage interpretation. People learn more through narratives than through facts. Stories help in information building and help people to understand better the objects' cultural value. Stories are more easily comprehended and memorised (Lakerveld & Gussen, 2016). This research seeks to discover stories behind a number of original Maltese wall clocks that are hung in museums and house museums. Every clock has a number of stories to tell. Their owners might be able to recount stories and anecdotes. Stories can also be derived from family histories and any surviving documentation of the clocks. According to Tilden's (1957) fourth principle, interpretation's main aim should not be to inform and instruct, but to provoke. Stories derived from the Maltese wall clocks may provoke people to react and interact.

In the literature available, the context of the clock was not given much importance. It is, however, necessary to learn about the political, social and economic circumstances in which the Maltese wall clock developed and changed. By connecting the Maltese Wall Clock to the daily life of society back then, it becomes more relevant to the public. The fifth principle of heritage interpretation states that it should aim to present an object in its totality, not just parts of it (Tilden, 1957).

Likewise, the book that was published to complement the exhibition about antique Maltese clocks that was held in 1992 by F.P.M. also includes very limited information. Each clock had an accompanying small paragraph outlining its overall decoration, the type of clock mechanism it incorporates and occasionally an estimate production date. This exhibition that was a once-in-a-lifetime event, presented synthetic information about the exhibited clocks. This type of information does not engage the visitors, is easily forgotten and does not motivate them to discover additional information liberally. There was no mention of the families who own the clocks. Indeed, most of the families who loaned their clock for the exhibition preferred not to be named. Consequently, the exhibition failed to present the clocks as family heirlooms, which was ultimately their main purpose. The only interesting fact about the clocks was their artistic traits, through which the visitors could marvel at the incredible skill of the foregone Maltese artists. The interesting family stories that shroud each clock were not revealed to the public, leading to a sterile interpretation.

The writings about Maltese wall clocks mostly describe the antique clocks in general rather than as individual pieces of art. Categorising different aspects will highlight distinct trends and at the same time distinguish new developments, variations, and individuality. Data emerging from this literature review revealed incoherences and conflicting information that at times make the story of the clock difficult to comprehend. The creation of a typology categorisation will lead to a clearer understanding of this unique Maltese heritage.

Another shortcoming lies in the fact that most of the literature about Maltese wall clocks date to 20 to 30 years ago. This research will provide updates and ulterior insights on themes connected to the Maltese wall clock that are in line with modern trends in heritage interpretation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is the qualitative method. This research methodology was deemed as the most suitable in order to best tackle the research questions of this thesis. In contrast with the quantitative method, the qualitative method is language-centered rather than focusing on numerical data. This research does not involve numerical data so the quantitative method could not be applied. On the other hand, the qualitative method deals with non-numerical data that is collected through a flexible and open-ended manner (Merriam, 2002). This method allows the researcher to explore complex inner thoughts, perceptions, and interpretations of participants. Research about understudied topics is best explored using the qualitative method which allows space for the insider's perspective. It is also known to generate rich narrative descriptions by engaging in naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2005). Consequently, the qualitative research method was chosen for this study to gather an in-depth perspective on clocks and to generate new ideas for interpretation.

3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was mainly gathered through books and online material. Published material on Maltese clocks is limited. Due to this, different sources were studied, thus piecing together a broad spectrum of information on the Maltese wall clock. The main source of information was the book called *Antique Maltese Clocks* published in 1992 by F.P.M. on the occasion of the exhibition held by the same organisation. This publication includes chapters by various authors each dealing with different aspects relating to antique clocks that were produced in Malta. There are no other books that specifically focus on Maltese clocks, but several books about Maltese furniture include some information about Maltese clocks. These books yielded minimal yet significant information. The main publications used were *Antique Maltese Furniture* by Galea-Naudi and Micallef published in 1989, *Guide to Maltese Furniture* by the same two authors published in 1993 and *Antique Furniture in Malta* edited by Manduca and

published in 2002. The book *European Clocks* by Tyler written in 1968 provided a general overview of the clocks that were produced in various European countries since their invention. Other data was acquired through local and foreign newspaper articles and online articles. This data was grouped under the following different topics – The Context – The Origins of the Shape of the Clock – The Origins of the Name "*tal-Lira*" – The Essential Elements that make up a Maltese Wall Clock – The Decoration and Ornamentation – The Mechanism – The Artisans – The Evolution. This data was then analysed. The analysis of the literature provided the groundwork on which the observation and interviews were conducted.

3.3 Primary Data

Primary data was collected namely through observations and interviews. Initially eight clocks were identified, four of which are located in historical house museums and the other four in museum galleries and religious buildings. Historical house museums are different from the other museums because they are directly linked with the family that owns the building, hence the clocks exist in their designated context. In other museums the clock is an exhibit and not part of the history of the family and the building. The clocks were chosen strategically in order to represent the different clock typologies that exist. This was done to create comparisons between the different types of clocks. The different clock typologies trace the timeline of how the Maltese clock evolved along the centuries. After the eight clocks were identified, observations were carried out at the museums. This was done to investigate how different people including children, adults and elders interacted with the clocks. In most cases it was noticed that when visitors approached the clock, they just gave it a glance and passed by the clock without paying attention to its details. In other cases, no notice was given to the clock. Age did not seem to be an influential factor, as this was felt across people of all age groups. It was also observed that little information accompanies the clocks in historical house museums, museum galleries and religious buildings, therefore having a lack of interpretation.

Next, each museum and house museum were contacted by e-mail requesting an interview to discuss the clocks housed there. A number of interviewees agreed to sit for a face-to-face interview whilst others preferred to answer the questions by e-mail. The interview was semi-structured, and it consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Key people at

most historical house museums responded instantaneously and were willing to contribute to the study wholeheartedly. They imparted all the information that they had about their clocks and answered any questions about their families. Not all the questions could be answered by the participants due to lack of information. In some cases, the information obtained from the interviews was very scant. On the instances when the interview was held at the museum itself, photos of the clock were captured on the same day. Photographic images are data generators. In this research the images served to record the current manner how the Maltese wall clocks are presented to viewers in tourist attractions. This offers an understanding on the current method of interpretation. When face-to-face interviews were not possible, visits were made to the museums to take photos of the clocks. In some instances, it was possible to open the clocks to view their mechanisms and inspect the interior of their cases. This was an important exercise and new intriguing stories about some of the clocks emerged. For instance, at Palazzo Falson cuttings of old magazines were found stuck to the back of the clock, these revealed interesting insights on one of the members of the family.

3.4 Methods of Analysis

For the analysis of information, the data collected through observations, interviews and photographs was organised in a themed manner. Primarily, a detailed description of the clock that includes descriptions of its case, its gilding designs, its painted decorations on the dial and mechanisms was made. Personal observations of various decorative elements found on the clocks were included. Clocks were then categorised according to date of manufacture and typology. The different categories of clocks are as follows: clocks having no pediment and bracket, clocks with the pediment only, clocks with both pediment and bracket each of which can be one- or two-handed clocks. This categorisation gives an indication of the date of manufacture of the clock. Theories about the date of the clock by other authors are discussed and, in some cases, questioned. The location of the clock is then described along with its current interpretation. Criticism and suggestions are put forward to provide a better interpretation. Lastly, the family narrative concerning the clock is chronicled including any stories that were revealed during the interviews. In the case of the two clocks found at MUŻA and the Inquisitor's palace, the Museum Annual Reports were consulted to investigate the clocks' provenance.

3.5 Limitations of the study

When conducting the research for this study, various limitations were encountered. During the interviews, there were many questions that could not be answered by the participants due to lack of information and documentation. The clocks do not usually carry any marks of the artisans who made them or their date of manufacture. This limits the information supported by evidence about the clocks. In other museums it was difficult to conduct an interview. Some participants declined to meet due to lack of information on their end. They felt that an interview would be useless and just forwarded any scant information that they had by e-mail. Others seemed to be unavailable and sent the available data by online correspondence. Another limitation was that some museums did not allow for their clock to be opened. This impeded the researcher to view the clock mechanism and the interior of the case which are also important features and contribute to their interpretation.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion of the Results

In 1992, an exhibition entitled 'Antique Maltese Clocks' was organised by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti with the aim of boosting the popularity of the Maltese wall clock. The exhibition was housed at the Auberge de Provence, presently the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta (Manduca, 2007). It featured a variety of unique baroque clocks that were manufactured exclusively in Malta, 73 of which were wall clocks. In order to give a good overview of antique Maltese clocks, the exhibition included also table clocks, grandfather clocks, turret clock mechanisms, and sundials. Additionally, a diorama displayed full scale workshops of the artisans that were involved in the making of Maltese clocks (Manduca, 2007). The exhibition was accompanied by a publication that included a series of essays and a catalogue of the exhibited clocks that could be bought for LM16.50 (Benoit, 1992). This publication remains to this day the most noteworthy publication about clockmaking in Malta and is difficult to acquire.

The timepieces were sourced from museums and from private collectors. The vast majority came from the latter, after a public call was made for individuals to allow their heirlooms to be put on display (Stivala, 1992). Families were reluctant to lend their clocks to an organisation that was still in its founding stages, but a good number of them ultimately agreed to loan their treasures to be part of the exhibition. Most of them preferred not to have their name mentioned whilst a few others wanted to be named. The exhibition allowed the public to appreciate a part of Malta's heritage that is stowed away in the houses and palaces of private families.

Whilst it cannot be disputed that the exhibition helped in raising awareness of the history of the clocks, their aesthetic uniqueness and cultural value, it separated them from their families and their stories. The families that own the clocks are the main subject of the clocks. Whilst the visitors could observe and admire the uniqueness of each clock, they had no opportunity to learn about their background. Who were the owners of the clock? Was it part of an inheritance? Was the design chosen by a member of the family? Are there any anecdotes linked to the clock? Where is the clock normally displayed? The clocks' unique characteristics

were explained but the human element was totally lacking. This reflects the way clocks are being displayed in local museums. This approach does not conform to Tilden's principles.

Tilden's first principle states that interpretation must be relevant. Interpretation should also be personal to the audience, revelatory and provoke and stimulate people rather than present facts. It should aim at building links (Tilden, 1957). The Maltese wall clocks chosen for the purpose of this study are displayed in places that attract many visitors. The methods of heritage interpretation currently adopted by the exhibitors are largely limited to the display of the clock. Visitors are often left wondering where the clocks came from and wishing they knew more about the history of the clock itself. The current interpretation of the clock is sterile. This chapter seeks to dig up information on the origins of select wall clocks and family ownership, and record histories, memories, and anecdotes. All the clocks in this study are displaced family heirlooms that are divorced from their original owners. This chapter shows the need for the proper heritage interpretation of the Maltese wall clocks in tourist attractions. It seeks to record narratives before they are lost. Case in point are the clocks displayed in Heritage Malta sites. It suggests that family histories and narratives linked to the clocks need to be offered through guides, panel descriptions or audio guides for these clocks to be given their rightful importance, value, and place in Maltese history. Reuniting the clocks with their family unit and habitat can transform these unique heritage pieces from obsolete artefacts to living heritage.

In order to achieve a holistic heritage interpretation of the Maltese wall clock, its different typologies and contexts must be represented. The eight clocks that feature in this study were strategically selected to include the different genres of Maltese wall clocks and their different settings to create comparisons. The study includes clocks with and without the bracket and/or the pediment, one handed and two handed clocks that are presently found in historic house museums, museum galleries and religious buildings open to visitors. Four historic house museums were visited; Casa Bernard, Palazzo Falson, Casa Rocca Piccola and Villa Bologna. Historic house museums are buildings of historical importance that are conserved in their original condition containing furnishings and collections amassed by current or past occupants. The emphasis is on the ineraction between the whole collection and the residents of the house. They have the power to evoke atmospheres from the past and allow the visitor

to experience it directly. Subsequently, the research presents the clocks in museum galleries and religious buildings. In this category, MUŻA, the Mdina Cathedral Museum, the Wignacourt Collegiate Museum and the Inquisitor's Palace were visited. Museum galleries are buildings whose functions are to collect, preserve, present and interpret works of art to the public. The Mdina Cathedral Museum used to serve as a seminary for the diocese of Malta. MUŻA is the national museum of fine arts. The Wignacourt Collegiate Museum was the former residence of the chaplains of the Order of St John who administered the church and the grotto of St Paul. The Inquisitor's Palace served as the inquisitors' residence for 224 years when the Holy Roman Inquisition was one of the power-houses in Malta.

4.1 Maltese Wall Clocks in Historic House Museums

4.1.1 Casa Bernard, Rabat



Figure 1 Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Bernard, Rabat, Malta. Photo by Author.

The Maltese antique wall clock at Casa Bernard is a gilded wall clock in a dark red shade. It has a decorative pediment with two small finials on each side. The clock face has a plain white background with flowers on the spandrels painted in dark red and green. The inner chapter ring features the hours in Roman numbers and the outer ring features smaller Arabic numbers denoting the minutes. The centre of the chapter ring features a seascape with a tower and a galleon, in which colours were not used. In contrast with the simplicity of the clock face, the case is elaborately decorated with a flowery design in shimmery gold. This could imply that the decoration of the clock face does not date to the same period as the decoration of the case. Alternatively, the case has been restored. At the centre of the pediment one can see a flower. To its left and right there are two identical designs that are peculiar. They look like a pendant with three balls on top of each other. They could be just decorative elements, but they could also be representative of the three knots on the rope worn by the Franciscan friars.

The Order of the Friars Minor wear a brown habit with a corded rope around their waist that has three knots representing their vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty. In such cases one has more questions than answers however the fact that the person who commissioned the clock may have been a devotee of the Franciscan Order or had strong links to the Franciscans in Rabat is a possibility. The clock has two doors that can be opened by means of a hook. Upon opening the doors, it was discovered that the clock mechanism has C. Pisani debossed on it. This could indicate that it was made by Calcedonio Pisani of Siggiewi, who was working in the 19th century. Its winding time is that of eight hours. The bottom part of the cabinet of the clock shows imprecise joinery, suggesting that this part of the clock may have been manufactured earlier on.



Figure 2 The mechanism of the Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Bernard. Photo by author.

The clock at Casa Bernard is a two-handed clock with a pediment but no bracket. The owners believe that it was manufactured between 1735-40 due to the simplicity of the background and its form. According to Galea Naudi and Micallef (1989) this clock was made in the late 19th century. It is unknown when Calcedonio Pisani died, however, according to Vassallo (1992) he was Michelangelo Sapiano's mentor. Sapiano (1826-1912) is regarded as Malta's most famous clockmaker of all-time. Consequently, the clock probably dates earlier than the late 19th century. The clock has features that are contradictory in terms of age. The simple decoration on the clock face, the inaccurate woodwork, and the fact that the clock does not feature a bracket indicate that this clock was manufactured towards the late 18th Century. Conversely, the two-handed mechanism, the lavish gilding on the cabinet and the name of the clockmaker suggest that the work was done in the 19th century. It is thus possible that the clock mechanism was restructured, and the case was regilded.



Figure 3 The Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Bernard. Photo by author.

The clock adorns a wall in the *sala grande* of the house, on the *piano nobile*. It surmounts a locally made desk. The *sala grande* is the largest and most important room in the house. It is meant to manifest the status of the family and is mainly used for entertaining guests. The *piano nobile* refers to the first floor of the house that contains the main living area. The clock faces the door of the room, therefore facing the visitor who enters the room. The wall of the room is decorated with many framed paintings, that include paintings attributed to renowned artists like Mattia Preti (1613-1699) and Antoine Favray (1706-1798). It can be noted that the colour of the curtains and the sofa is red like the antique clock in the room. Josette Magri, the owner of the palazzo, commented that whereas in the past they commissioned a clock to match their curtains, she matched her curtains with the clock.

Mr and Mrs Magri invite visitors to enter their home to view their collection. They welcome visitors and personally they tell them stories about their family, their palazzo, and the pieces in their collection. Audio guides are not available at this house museum. There are no labels that indicate that it is an antique Maltese clock or that give any kind of information about it. The same can be said for all other items in the room. This clock has intriguing aspects that should be pointed out to the visitor. Its most intriguing aspect is the fact that it is not symmetrically perfect. Interpretation of the clock should make the visitors aware that at the time of its manufacture, the artists had little tools available and were using any material that they could find. The clock also boasts of the name of the clockmaker, a detail that is not easily found on all clocks. Its interpretation can be strengthened by supplying the visitors with more information about the clock and the family.

Casa Bernard is a 16th century palazzo located in Rabat, Malta. The site has been used since Roman times, it evolved into a watchtower in the medieval period and eventually into a palazzo with a touch of baroque in the early modern period. Its present owners are Georges

and Josette Magri, former language teachers of Maltese, English, French and Italian. They bought the palazzo in 1993 after Mr Magri inherited a small part of it through his French ancestors. Upon restoring and converting the palazzo to reflect their longtime vision, which took two decades, they brought their collection to this palazzo. Casa Bernard is not just a museum; it is the permanent home of the Magris. The palazzo is not merely a museum but has a homely feeling, reflecting the style of residence and the lifestyle of the aristocracy in the past centuries. They named it Casa Bernard because from 1723 until the second quarter of the 20th century it was inhabited by the Bernards, who were doctors by profession. The Bernards were in the medical field, Lady Bernard used to run a hospital. The Magris had no connection at all to the Bernards. The whole collection at Casa Bernard was accumulated by Mr and Mrs Magri, which was mostly inherited from their families.

The antique Maltese clock housed here was acquired by Mrs Magri through her parents' inheritance from her mother's side. Her parents were Lucia Portelli Demajo and Joseph Portelli. They were keen collectors of antiques and so were their parents. Lucia's parents were Pascal and Mary Demajo who had six children and lived in Ħamrun. The Demajo family achieved formidable academic achievements. Pascal was a dental surgeon, three of his children including Lucia were chemists and two of them dental surgeons like their father. Pascal used to work in the dockyard but was later awarded a scholarship and travelled to America to study. He was skilled and came to invent a tool for dental surgery. Mrs Magri recounts that at times his patients paid for his dental services by giving him antique objects. Other factors that contributed to the growth of the Demajo family collection were that two of his siblings were spinsters, so he inherited some of their possessions and his uncle was a Monsignor who left his collection to his nephews and nieces. This is how Pascal managed to amass many antiques. Pascal and his wife left their possessions to their children. Lucia received her part, including the Maltese clock exhibited at Casa Bernard. Lucia and her husband Joseph Portelli lived in Birkirkara and later moved to Sliema. They had three children and bequethed their inheritance to all three. Mrs Magri acquired the Maltese wall clock amongst other items. The present owners plan to leave their possessions to their son in the hope that their collection will remain intact and in the same location.

Those who visit Casa Bernard can witness an antique Maltese wall clock in the residence of a wealthy family, amongst other valuable items. The setting reflects the way a clock acquired through inheritance is displayed in a heritage home. Even though the clock did not belong to the Bernards, it belongs to the Magris who are the current owners and was inherited through the wife's Demajo family line. The direct attachment to the clock provides a personal point of view and revelatory information on the clock that stimulates interest and engages people.

4.1.2 Palazzo Falson, Mdina



Figure 4. Maltese Wall Clock in Palazzo Falson, Mdina, Malta. Photo by Author.

Palazzo Falson houses a dark green and gilt antique wall clock. The case, made of white deal, is decorated with leaves and flowers in gold. The gilding is matt, the brightness of the gold is toned down. The colour of the case is also matt, this reflects its authenticity. The pediment of the case is slightly decorated, having a gilded curvilinear border, a couple of leaves and at its centre, a flower. The sides of the cabinet are plain. The glass door has a hook and eye closure at the side. Upon opening it, one can notice that the gilded border of the clock face door looks brighter than the gilding on the rest of the case. This shiny border is reminiscent of how the gilding on the whole case looked. It was able to retain its brightness probably because it is protected by the glass door. The frame of the door of the clock face is not painted. This indicates that the artisans had no material to waste. Since this border is hidden behind the glass door, the artisan preferred to save paint. When one opens the glass door only, the clock looks unrefined. Since it could be covered, it did not matter.

The clock face is painted on a white background. The dial has Roman numbers to mark the hours. The centrepiece depicts a provincial seascape showing some rocks, a galley, and a building having arches and a tower. In the background there is a mountain amongst clouds. The scene looks like an idealised seascape. The artist used browns, greys, and blues. In the

four corners of the clock face the artist painted two types of stylised flowers in red and blue, matching diagonally. The overall craftsmanship of the clock appears to be expertly executed.



Figure 5 The interior of the clock in Palazzo Falson. Photo by Author.

The back part of the case which holds the clock mechanism has a series of old posters stuck to it. It has a page with representations of different pastimes or jobs, two advertisement pamphlets dating to c. 1890, a poster of an attractive woman and a print of an 1878 painting by Joseph Stallaert (1825-1903) depicting a monk attempting to separate two gladiators. This mundane mode of decorating the back side of the clock which is not normally available to viewers is intriguing. The choice of material stuck to the back cover reveals important insights on the owner. This information can certainly be used to inform and entertain viewers.

The clock is one-handed and has a dark green and gilt case. It has a pediment but no bracket. The pediment is detachable. This could indicate that the pediment was made at a later date than the rest of the clock. This may have been done to update it according to later fashion trends. The earliest clocks were made without a pediment and a bracket, whilst later ones started to incorporate a pediment. According to Galea Naudi (2011) this clock dates to the late 18th century. Clocks having only one hand were made in the 18th century and it was towards the end of the same century that the pediment started to be added to the clocks. With regards to its mechanism, it had a winding time of ten hours, but it is no longer functional.

The antique Maltese wall clock at Palazzo Falson is hanging at the landing facing the main staircase. It hangs amongst framed paintings and on top of a world globe that sits on a chest of drawers. The area is well lit, having natural light. Upon climbing the stairs, the visitors encounter the clock directly opposite them. The clock hangs on an orange-brown painted wall right across the stairs. It is at the centre, attracting the attention of the visitors going up the stairs. No written information about the clock or any of the exhibits is available. However,

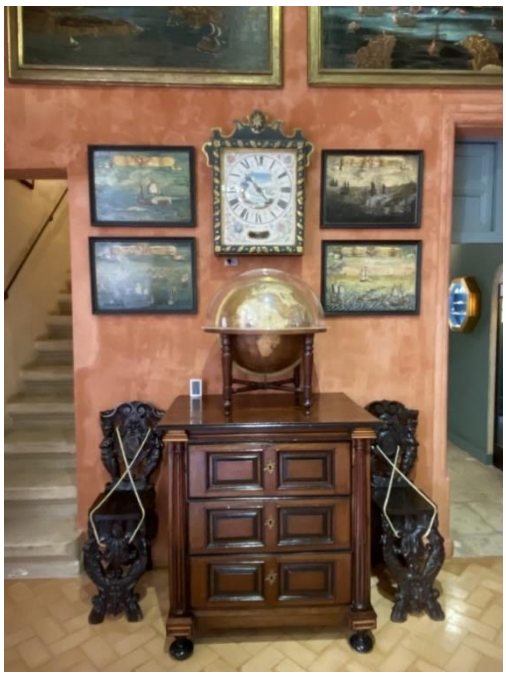


Figure 6 The Maltese Wall Clock in Palazzo Falson hanging at the landing. Photo by author.

the museum provides an audio guide with the entrance ticket that gives information about the most interesting items in each room. It speaks of the date when the clock was manufactured, it explains that the clock was made in Malta and that it is a decorative clock that it was normally found in the houses of noble families. This information can be enhanced with explanations that portray the uniqueness of the clock and viewers can be further engaged through stories linked to this clock. Narratives on this particular clock and other similar clocks can at times be sourced through word of mouth. This is particularly important in view of the fact that no documentation survives. Being a house museum, information panels might inhibit the feeling of a home, which could be the reason why these are absent. There are visitors though who would prefer to learn by observing and reading rather than by listening. Having written information would allow visitors to take a photo of it, with the possibility of referring to it again to refresh one's memory.

The museum has an avant-garde application for a game that can be played whilst touring the museum. The game is called 'Secrets of Palazzo Falson' and uses Augmented Reality (A.R.) technology whereby players walk around the museum looking through their phone cameras. The game revolves around the story of a ghost, Lady Caterina, who asks the users to discover her assassin (Reljic, 2020). Upon pointing the camera around, some objects come to life. The clock was made part of the story, its hand moves around, and it chimes. Whilst in no way giving information about the clock or its historical importance, the game manages to engage the audience in a seamless way, especially the younger generation. This might in turn lead to inquiry-based learning. This type of pedagogy is widely used in schools but can be successfully used in all learning environments including museums. It is a learner-centered approach. Inquiry-based learning focuses on progressing the learners' acquisition of knowledge by moving beyond their curiosity through critical thinking (Guido, 2017). They are encouraged to

explore material, ask questions, share ideas, and investigate in order to understand better and learn more about what sparked their curiosity. By developing strategies to solve their questions and using their own preferred methods and thinking styles, they take ownership of their learning. Ultimately, inquiry-based learning helps the learners realise how fulfilling it is to discover new information and therefore learn to enjoy the learning process itself (Guido, 2017).

Palazzo Falson is a historical building, partly dating to the 13th century. In 1927 it was acquired by Olof Fredrik Gollcher (1889-1962), an art enthusiast, a scholar, a collector, and a philanthropist of local Maltese cultural heritage. Through purchase and inheritance, in his lifetime he amassed a substantial collection that included paintings, furniture, rugs, weapons and suits of armour as well as jewellery. Gollcher's will stipulated that his house and its contents had to be preserved as a museum and opened to the public. Palazzo Falson was opened in 2007 displaying Gollcher's house and collections inherited and amassed during his lifetime. Amongst the items he possessed, he had at least three antique Maltese wall clocks, two of which are currently displayed in the palazzo with the third's whereabouts unknown. The official inventory of the museum does not indicate whether the clocks were inherited or purchased by Gollcher. Olof purchased antiques whenever the opportunity arose. He also inherited many items from his ancestors. His father's side, the Gollcher family were originally from Gdansk, Poland but in the 18th century they emigrated to Sweden. Olof was the son of Gustav Gollcher who was in the shipping business. The company O. F. Gollcher & Sons was set up by Olof Fredrik Gollcher, Gustav's father. In 1854 Olof set up offices in Malta since at the time, Malta was an important maritime hub with a busy port. He remained in Malta for the rest of his life, as did his descendants. His company ran its ships between Malta, North Africa, Sicily and the Adriatic coast. It kickstarted the first regular ferry service between Malta and Gozo. Gustav Gollcher married Elisa Balbi and they had one child, Olof Fredrik Gollcher. Olof and his mother bought property together, including part of Palazzo Falson. When he was 25 years old, he joined the British Army and served in both world wars. At 49 years of age, he married Teresa Lucia Prior, an English nurse. Soon after, he bought the rest of Palazzo Falson, which he called The Norman House. This property became Olof and Teresa's home. They did not have children (Caruana Galizia, 2007). Old photos of the palazzo show the clock that was



Figure 7 An old photo showing the clock at Palazzo Falson hanging in the room that served as a dining room when Olof Gollcher was living there between c. 1930-1962. Photo from Kevin Casha Collection, Mario Cianco Collection.

chosen to be included in this research hanging in two different rooms when Gollcher was living in the palazzo. In one photo, the clock can be seen hanging in the old dining room on the ground floor level that is presently a shop. Another photo shows the clock hanging in the present dining room on the *piano nobile.* It seems that Olof Gollcher preferred to hang the clock in the dining room rather than in the main sitting room.

Although oral history is difficult to corroborate, at times it provides invaluable information about the past. Oral history gives a voice to individuals whose histories have been overlooked as trivial or not important and recognises their value (European Heritage Days, 2020). They are crucial in keeping cultures alive as they are a means of passing on knowledge, cultural and social values as well as collective memory. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was drafted in 2003 to safeguard intangible cultural heritage including oral traditions and expressions (UNESCO, 2003). Oral History is especially important for interpretation when there is a lack of documentation. According to a museum employee whose family history is tightly knit with that of Palazzo Falson, this clock used to belong to his grandmother. Mr Joseph Debono, custodian of Palazzo Falson used to live in the palazzo when his father oversaw the general upkeep of the residence. He is a descendant of the Theuma-Castelletti family, one of the old noble families of Mdina. As a little boy, Mr Debono used to live with his grandmother, Teresa Debono née Micallef who had inherited many antiquities through the Theuma-Castelletti family line. He recalls that at his grandmother's house, at the entrance, near the staircase, there used to hang an antique Maltese wall clock. Teresa's great-grandfather was Count Luigi Theuma-Castelletti who owned many antiques and valuables. The Count had ten children but left all his belongings to his son Carmelo. Carmelo had six children, one of them Luisa Theuma Castelletti, was Teresa's mother. Luisa married Antonio Micallef, a non-noble. They had six children to whom they left their assets. Teresa married Giuseppe Debono, who was a commissioned officer in the army. They lived in the house number four in Zondadari Street, Rabat. They had six children, one of them was called Nazzareno. Nazzareno

Debono who worked in the army was later employed for the general upkeep of The Norman House (now Palazzo Falson) after he had retired from his career in the army. Initially he spent his working hours there and then went home. Eventually he moved into the palace with his family, including his son, Joseph Debono, who later took on his dad's occupancy and is currently employed by Palazzo Falson. According to Joseph, his uncle Paolo insists that he used the clock's box as his secret hiding place for prohibited items such as cigarettes. He said that he was the one who stuck the pamphlets and posters to the case's interior. The poster's source seems likely that it was from British military publications. Paolo's father was a storekeeper at St Elmo which housed provisions for the army. At the time, children did not have much to play with, so they had to make do with anything that they came across. This shows that the clock was really inseparable from the family. It was not simply a timekeeping device. In this case it was a play object for children, and a hiding place for youths.

The channel through which the clock became part of the Gollcher collection is obscure. Palazzo Falson holds most of Olof Gollcher's documents including receipts of most of the items he purchased. To date however they have not identified a receipt or written record of this clock. It is possible that certain artefacts were acquired through informal networks like for instance house sales, or through acquaintances. Mr Debono also mentioned a door-to-door trader known as *'Il-Lesu r-Rigattier'* who in the 1940s used to collect unwanted furniture from homes and sell them in Mdina. This is another informal channel through which some Maltese wall clocks may have been acquired by some families living in Mdina. Anecdotes on informal channels of bartering and buying and selling antiques along with family narratives transform the clock from a wall piece to a living object. These real-life stories are what bring the clocks alive and what need to be documented and shared with viewers before memories fade. The moving parts of the clock included in the A.R. game attract visitors' attention. Clearly people are excited and intrigued to see the hands move and hear the chimes. The experience is further enriched in the audio guide with some information that can be broadened to include the meaning of the clock to Maltese heritage by providing information on the household experiences of noble families and provoking emotions through narratives linked to the clock. Information on how it ended up in the Palazzo and family narratives shared with visitors will help people understand the value of this clock as an important part of

Maltese heritage. Storytelling is a colourful form of expression, enjoyed by all age groups. The recorded stories have the potential to target people coming from different age groups and social backgrounds.

4.1.3 Casa Rocca Piccola, Valletta



Figure 8 Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Rocca Piccola, Valletta, Malta. Photo by Author.

At Casa Rocca Piccola there is an antique Maltese wall clock that has a red gilded case. The clock has a pagoda style pediment with a central motif reminiscing a scallop shell and ends in an imbricated spherical finial. The bracket is decorated with gilded leaves and is unusually shaped, being flat on the sides but becomes broad towards the centre. The sides of the clock have leaf ornaments which extend out at the bottom, giving the clock a peculiar shape. Although this is a striking clock it does not have apertures at the sides to allow the chimes to be heard better. Another unusual feature is the cornice that is fitted to the top and the bottom of the case. The case is still in pristine condition. To wind the clock, the door can be opened by turning a key located at the side of the clock.

The clock face is elaborately decorated. The dial is hand painted with black Roman numerals on a white circle. The central painting depicts three putti in a cloudy sky. The artist uses a dark green colour for the background and the two putti on the left and on the right are wearing a blue and a red sash respectively. The space that surrounds the dial is totally painted using the same dark colours of the central painting. The lower part shows an idealised country scene with two human figures at the two spandrels. The lower scene seems to be a reminder of the ephemeral nature of life. On the left there is a young man next to a spring of water that can possibly symbolise the fountain of youth. There is also a tree with small branches. To the right there is an old man with a cane almost kneeling. Next to him there is a tree that looks more mature, with thicker branches. He faces the younger man and appears yearning to go back to

his youth days. In between, exactly on top of the aperture opening, there is an hourglass with angel wings. This is the universal symbol to indicate that time is fleeting. The top spandrels show a ribbon and leaf decoration in gold. Unlike most of the clocks that have decorations in the corners only, in this case the decoration is across the whole clock face. It has not been restored or changed in any way and it is still in working condition. Its makers are unknown. It is in very good condition.



Figure 9 The mechanism of the Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Rocca Piccola. Photo by author.

The clock at Casa Rocca Piccola is a one-handed clock with an ornate red gilded case. It has both the pediment and the bracket. It has an hour striking clock mechanism. According to its owner Marquis Nicholas de Piro, this might be one of the earliest ringing clocks produced in Malta due to it being one handed. However, Busuttil (1992) states that it was customary for hour striking clocks to be single handed. The overall manufacture of this clock contradicts the theory that clocks that were made in the 18th century were one-handed and that they were made with the pediment only and no bracket. This clock being one-handed indicates that it is one of the earliest types dating to the 18th century, but since it has both pediment and bracket it suggests that it was made in the 19th century. On the other hand, at this time, they were making more advanced clocks, having two hands. These features challenge the date of its production and make this clock an enigma.

The clock is located on the *piano nobile* of the house, in the so-called Porphyry room. The word porphyry refers to granites and coarse-grained crystals. The room carries this name owing to the porphyry pattern of the floor tiles in the room. The clock hangs on top of a fireplace. The walls of the room are decorated with many framed portraits. The room houses other pieces of furniture made in Malta. The Maltese wall clock is fixed in between two portraits also having others on top of it. The red colour of the clock contrasts well with the white background and the rest of the dark paintings.



Figure 10 The Maltese Wall Clock in Casa Rocca Piccola hanging in the Porphyry Room. Photo by author.

Several portraits have adjoining information slips with the name of the person in the painting and their life span. The clock is not labelled. Being the only red object in the room, it attracts the attention of the visitor. However, on the mantel shelf of the fireplace sits a table clock that covers part of the bracket of the Maltese clock. This hinders the ability of the visitor to view the clock in its totality. This can easily be rectified by placing the small table clock elsewhere. The house museum offers audio guides, tours by expert guides and private tours by the Marquis and Marchioness de Piro themselves. The visitors can choose the tour that suits their preferences and their budget. The tours provide the visitors with information about the house, the exhibits, and the customs of the Maltese nobility.

Marquis Nicholas de Piro inherited the 16th century palace, known as Casa Rocca Piccola along with many antiques and archives collected by his ancestors. Nicholas de Piro is the 9th Marquis de Piro. Being the eldest of five children and the only son, he inherited the title of his father, Jerome de Piro, the 8th Marquis de Piro. Nicholas inherited the clock from his father's side of the family. The clock originally belonged to his grandmother, Nicolina Apap Bologna, known as Granny Cola to her family. She was the daughter of Felicissimo Apap Bologna, who was the Marquis of Ġnien is-Sultan and Carmela née Manduca. Her parents occupied beautiful, well furnished residences in Mdina and Siġġiewi. Nicolina was married to Igino de Piro d'Amico, the 7th Baron of Budach. Her husband was an officer in the King's Liverpool Regiment. He fought the Boer War in South Africa and the Siege of Ladysmith. He was later eleceted as the President of the Senate in Malta. On the occasion of George VI's coronation, Igino was Malta's representative. The couple had four daughters and a son, Jerome de Piro d'Amico who was Marquis Nicholas de Piro's father. It is unknown how Nicolina came to

acquire the clock. The clock previously hung in the drawing room of Villa de Piro, in Attard where Nicolina used to live. Subsequently, it was transferred to Jerome de Piro's residence in Valletta at 103, Archbishop's Street. When Nicholas inherited it from his father, he relocated it to Casa Rocca Piccola. It is difficult to discover who the original owner was, especially since the clock bears no decoration that ties it to the family, and it does not carry any marks of its artisans. Casa Rocca Piccola is not just a museum but also a family home. It was the first aristocratic house to be opened to the public in Malta. By visiting Casa Rocca Piccola, the private residence of a local noble family, the visitors get to experience the family's lifestyle. The exhibits that occupy the *palazzo* are part of the family's long and interesting history. The visitor can learn about them at their original place, the family home. This clock was part of the 1992 exhibition organised by F.P.M., therefore signifying that the owners willingly offered their clock to be put on display, although they preferred not to be named.

The ancestors of Nicholas de Piro were collectors and antiquarians. They are in Nicholas Depiro's possession, and he takes great pride in being guardian and owner of such an incredible collection. The clock was made some 300 years ago to decorate a rich and noble home and it presently still hangs in the same context. The clock is still used. It is surrounded by portraits of family members who are part of the story of the clock. This along with the physical presence of the de Piro family, provides the clock with family narratives for a meaningful interpretation. The subject of the painting of the clock, the ephemeral nature of life, has never been interpreted. The interpretation of the clock should seek to focus not only on the historical facts and the appearance of the clock but also on the family stories and on the painting because it can elicit powerful meanings. The theme of the painting might imply that the original owner of the clock was mature at the time of commissioning the clock. In the painting the elderly man has his hand drawn out and he seems to have a yearning desire to return to the days of his youthful strength. The person who commissioned the clock possibly chose this subject to reflect his/her personal desire to renew youth. This representation has the power to invoke intense feelings in the visitor such as the longing to go back in time to restore lost years. In this regard, a painting such as this on a timepiece is fitting. One might wish to turn back the clock to go back to a healthier, happier, or more adventurous time in life.

4.1.4 Villa Bologna, Attard



Figure 12 Maltese Wall Clock in Villa Bologna, Attard, Malta. Photo by Author.

The clock at Villa Bologna is an antique Maltese wall clock with a green gilded case. It has a pediment with a gilded curvilinear border which is decorated with acanthus leaves. The pediment has a central coat of arms divided in four quarters displaying two distinct emblems duplicated diagonally. One of the emblems is a white Latin cross on a red background. This represents the State flag of the Sovereign Order of Malta. Pope Innocent II made the symbol synonymous with religion in war in 1130. It has been used by the Order since 1259 when the Bull by Pope Alexander IV allowed the Knights to wear a red mantle with a white cross when defending their religion at war (Order of Malta). The other emblem shows three fleurs-de-lys in a triangular formation on a yellow background. The fleur-de-lys has been used extensively used in heraldry in Europe but especially in France where it was used also to represent royals and saints (Bellew, 1951).



Figure 11 A side view of the Maltese Wall Clock in Villa Bologna showing the missing part of the pediment. Photo by author.

Indeed, the coat of arms of the langue of France bears three fleurs-de-lys. These three decorative flowers are also found on the armorial shield of two Grand Masters who bore the same surname, Alof de Wignacourt (1547-1622) was Grand Master between 1564 and 1622 and his nephew Adrien de Wignacourt (1618-1697) was Grand Master from 1690 to 1697. Although the coat of arms on this clock is not identical to either one, it draws closer to that of Adrien de Wignacourt, because that of his uncle included a label above the fleur-de-lys. Nonetheless, there are a few differences. The crest of Adrien the Wignacourt has the cross on the first and fourth quarter, whereas the one on the clock has it on the second and the third quarters. Additionally, the fleurs-de-lys on Adrien's coat of arms are one above two

on a white background and not two above one on a yellow background as depicted on the clock. It is possible that the artist was instructed to paint the coat of arms of Grand Master Aidren de Wignacourt but did not check how it looks exactly and failed to paint it precisely. This does not necessarily mean that the clock was manufactured during the magistracy of this Grand Master.

The doors of the clock have a hook and eye opening mechanism. The clock face shows a dial with Roman numerals painted in black. The centrepiece depicts a seascape showing four sea vessels docked together. The artists used soft earth colours. At the spandrels the artist painted stylised flowers in yellow and brown. The clock is not in the best condition, having part of the pediment missing. Unfortunately, it does not operate on its original mechanism. The clock is a green and gilt Maltese wall clock. It has a pediment but no bracket which suggests that it dates to the late 18th century. Currently it is two handed but as has been mentioned, it is not running on its original clockwork. Presumably, it used to be a single-handed clock, typical of that period. The hands of this clock are very simple in design, unlike the original ones on antique Maltese clocks. Clocks that were made with two hands usually have an outer ring with minute markings on the dial. This clock does not have minute markings which therefore implies that this clock was originally a single-handed clock.



Figure 13 The Maltese Wall Clock in Villa Bologna hanging in the drawing room. Photo by author.

The clock hangs in the drawing room of Villa Bologna, Attard. The room is typically used to entertain guests, so it is an important room. For the noble families, image was very important so they would have placed their most valuable possessions where their guests would certainly notice them. The clock is fixed to a green wall on top of an antique cabinet. To its sides high windows are dressed in mustard curtains that complement the colours used in the clock decoration. The overall decoration of the room harmonises well with the clock, seemingly on purpose. The clock captivates the visitor who enters the room. There is no information available to the visitor about the clock or any other item in the room.

Anyone who wishes to visit Villa Bologna will be accompanied by a guide, who recounts to the guests the history of the villa and family stories. To help in the storytelling the guide refers to the various portraits of family members. The clock does not seem to be given much importance, even though it is part of the family story and has been for hundreds of years. By learning more about the clock and identifying ties to the family, it could be integrated meaningfully into the history of the villa and its residents, past and present.

The clock is housed at Villa Bologna, a fine privately owned house in Attard. It is remarkable for its history, architecture, and gardens. Originally, it was the residence of Maria Teresa Grech and Nicola Perdicomati Bologna, later second count della Catena. It was completed in 1745 by Maria Teresa's father, Fabritio Grech who was senior advisor or *uditore* to Grand Master Pinto and given to his daughter as dowry (Spiteri, 2016). When the marriage of his daughter was announced, society criticised him for having money, but neither class nor a suitable dwelling. This was especially upsetting for the Bolognas who were not pleased with the union of one of their own with a non-noble. Coerced by the harsh comments and the need to fit in with the high ranks, he went on to build a national monument, Villa Bologna (Spiteri, 2016). He spared no expenses in its construction and decor. Its ideal location, so close to San Anton Palace built by Grand Master Antoine de Paule, also proves that Fabritio was truly a powerful man. Portraits at the villa show Maria Teresa wearing beautiful lace and gold jewellery, demonstrating her wealth.

Villa Bologna and the family title was later bequeathed to her eldest and youngest daughter consecutively and then to the latter's son, Nicholas Sciberras Bologna who died without issue. Putative heirs litigated Nicholas' possessions and title which were eventually awarded to Gerald Strickland his nephew in 1882. Taking on the title of the 6th Count della Catena, he became Gerald Bologna Strickland but was known as Lord Strickland. He was a very successful politician both in Malta and in Britain. He married Lady Edeline Sackville-West in 1890 and had eight children. Due to Lord Strickland's work duties, the couple mostly lived away, so in their absence he allowed nuns to reside in the villa. Lord Strickland got married again in 1926, to Margaret Hulton, Lady Strickland. She worked tirelessly to modernise the villa, especially by extending and decorating the garden.

Upon his death in 1940, Lord Strickland left Villa Bologna to the eldest son of his daughter Cecila, Gerald Edward Hubert de Trafford who married Helena Catherina Charlotte Hallo. Their son is the current owner, Jesper Peter Paul Sybrand de Trafford. According to Ms. Charlotte, the clock was inherited by her husband from his grandmother Margaret Strickland. It is unknown if Margaret purchased the clock or inherited it. Its antiquity implies that it predates Margaret's lifetime, however since she liked decorating, she might have bought it herself.



Figure 14 A Portrait of Maria Teresa hanging in Villa Bologna. Photo by author.

The residents of the villa can all be considered as the potential patrons of the clock. It could have belonged to Maria Teresa, the first owner of the house. Noble families were competitive, and it is not unreasonable to think that at a time when all the wealthy families had a Maltese wall clock, Maria Teresa purchased one for her own house. The coat of arms on the clock might be an indication that it belonged to Maria Teresa. The fleur-de-lys is particularly associated with France. Fabritio, Maria Teresa's father wanted the best for his children and used France as the best-known example for their education (Spiteri, 2016). Moreover, Maria Teresa's husband was part of King Louis XV's entourage, thus living for a period of time in France. It is also noted that the family were fluent in French and decorated the villa with French furniture (Spiteri, 2016). Therefore, the clock probably dates to the late 18th century, the same period when the villa was built. This would mean that the clock has been in the villa for at least 200 years. It is hence greatly intertwined with the villa and its occupants' history. At the reception of the Phoenicia hotel there is an antique Maltese wall clock that bears the coat of arms of Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt. It is interesting to note that this hotel was built for Lord and Lady Strickland. Since both clocks have similar shields, it is possible that the clocks were

commissioned by the same person or family. Possibly, the clock currently at the Phoenicia Hotel was originally housed at Villa Bologna.

Villa Bologna is an architectural gem that boasts with a huge garden. The owners currently only accept large groups that want to visit the villa for a tour. It is alluring for the public to enter a private residence, to meet the occupants and to discover the interior. Allowing public viewings can contribute to the expenses needed for the upkeep of such a large property. The clock housed here is the only one in this study that does not have its original mechanism. This makeover devalues the clock considerably. Unfortunately, many other antique Maltese wall clocks faced the same fate. Certain restorers and inheritors do not understand the value of an antique item and end up devaluing their treasure. When restoring antiques, one must seek professional help. Other activities can contribute to the restoration funds of the villa and at the same time aid in interpretation. The villa having a huge garden would be the ideal location for the setting up of a workshop where visitors learn about Maltese clocks and make their own mini-Maltese clock. This can be decorated to their likings and taken back home as a unique and authentic souvenir.

4.2 Maltese Wall Clocks in Museum Galleries and Religious Buildings

4.2.1 Mdina Cathedral Museum, Mdina



Figure 15 Maltese Wall Clock in Mdina Cathedral Museum, Mdina, Malta. Photo by Author.

The antique Maltese wall clock at the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum has an ornately gilded red case. The pediment is decorated with a central crowned medallion and a pointed finial. The medallion is decorated with diagonal lines that cross perpendicularly, creating many diamond shapes. This pattern, which may be called lozenge pattern, recalls the coat of arms of Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan-Poduc (1725-1797). The same pattern denotes the Cini coat of arms. It is unknown whether it is just a decorative design or the symbol of an individual or a family. The bracket has an elegant scroll motif and

ends with a rounded finial. The dial is painted on a cream-coloured background, and it has Roman numbers marking the hours and Arabic numbers for minutes. At the centre of the dial there is a seascape with a sea vessel painted in subtle blues, greys, and browns. At the spandrels the clock has painted flowers in red and blue that match diagonally. It is made out of red deal. The sides of the clock are relatively plain. There is an aperture towards the upper part and below it a decorative motif. The glass door and the clock face can be opened by means of a lever in the shape of an imbricated spherical finial, an unusual opening system. The names of the artisans are unknown.

This clock is a red gilded two-handed wall clock that has a pediment as well as a bracket. The gilding looks shiny and bright indicating that gold was used. It has a quarter striking mechanism, although presently it is not functional. According to Galea Naudi & Micallef (1989) it dates to the late 19th century. Since it is two-handed and has both the pediment and the bracket, the clock represents the Maltese wall clock in its most developed form. Hence, dating it to the late 19th century is reasonable.

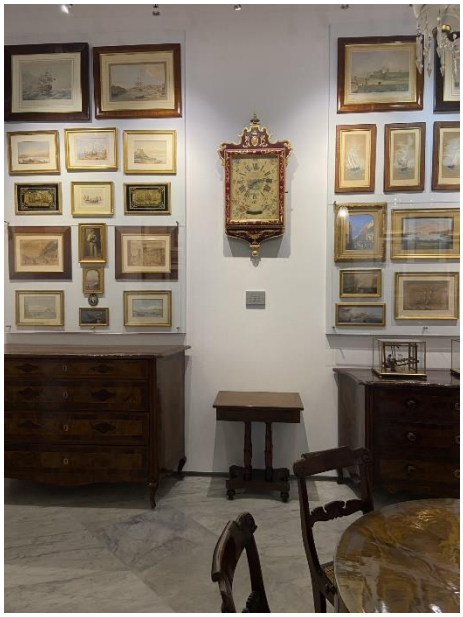


Figure 16 The Maltese Wall Clock in Mdina Cathedral Museum hanging in the Jimmy and Doris Farrugia Hall. Photo by author.

The clock is hung in the Jimmy and Doris Farrugia gallery at the Metropolitan Cathedral Museum in Mdina. It is hung on a white background. To its sides there are many other framed paintings mainly depicting landscapes and seascapes. In the room there are also various other items that were manufactured in the Maltese islands such as silver, furniture, paintings, watercolour drawings, prints and other fine arts.

The white wall behind the red clock creates striking contrast, allowing the clock to attract the attention of the visitors. This is further enhanced by not having any frames hanging on top of the clock and below it. There is a small placard underneath it indicating that all of the contents in the room were donated to the museum by Dr Jimmy and Mrs Doris Farrugia. This pays tribute to the couple who donated their *objets d'art* to the museum. However, there is no information about Dr Jimmy

Farrugia's interesting and eventful life. None of the items in the Dr Jimmy and Mrs Doris exhibition rooms have information panels. Audio guides are not available hence the heritage in this section is not interpreted.

The clock and all the historical artefacts in this section of the museum were donated by Mrs Doris Farrugia. The inauguration of the Dr Jimmy and Mrs Doris Farrugia gallery took place at the museum on 17th November 2008. It was blessed by Bishop Paul Caruana. Mrs. Farrugia donated the collection to fulfil her deceased husband's wish. She transferred the entire collection in a room they referred to as their "Maltese room" in their Villa in Tarxien to the Cathedral Museum. It is unknown whether the couple had acquired the clock through inheritance or whether it was commissioned by the couple or purchased from an antiquarian.

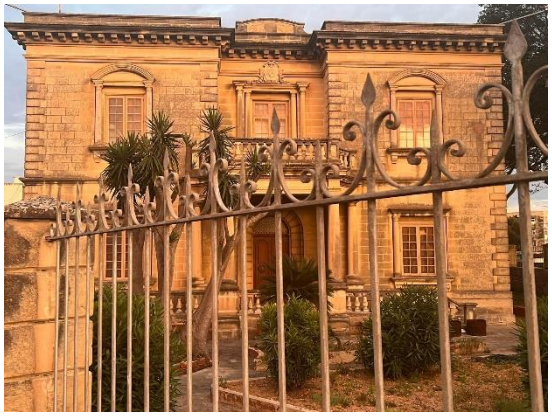


Figure 17 Front view of Villa Annunzjata in Tarxien, the house of the late Jimmy and Doris Farrugia. Photo by author.



Figure 18 Side view of Villa Annunzjata, Tarxien, the house of the late Jimmy and Doris Farrugia. Photo by author.

Dr Jimmy Farrugia (1922-2006) was a highly respected medical doctor from Tarxien. He was married to Doris Farrugia née Tanti and they did not have children. Dr Jimmy Farrugia was also a politician. He was a Member of Parliament with the Nationalist party [1976-1986] and Speaker of the House of Representatives [1987-88], later serving also as Acting President of the Republic on various occasions. He also occupied the role of ambassador of Malta to the Vatican. Dr Farrugia was an avid collector of antiques and an erudite author. He specialised in domestic silver. He wrote a number of books and articles on the subject. During Dr Jimmy Farrugia's funeral, the Nationalist Party delivered a eulogy praising his contribution to the party, his dedication, his loyalty and his commitment towards his country. Dr Farrugia was also a patron of local art and culture. During his lifetime he donated fine art gifts to the nation that included, rare silver objects (Times of Malta, 2006).

The Cathedral Museum belongs to the Archdiocese of Malta and not to the State. In the Maltese Islands it is customary for noble individuals to leave part of their inheritance or even at times their full inheritance to the church. Persons having no children or close relatives preferred to leave their estate to the local parish or a close priest. Frequently, priests themselves also transferred their assets to the church. These individuals leave their possessions to the church to help in its mission. This resulted in the Church in Malta owning land estates and substantial fine arts collections (Vella, 2022).

This clock was on display in the 1992 exhibition organised by F.P.M. At the time, it was still hanging in the private residence of the Farrugia family. This means that they accepted FPM's appeal to loan their clock to be exhibited but preferred not to be named. Although this clock hangs in a museum, it is still indirectly connected to the family that owned it. An explanatory panel narrating the interesting biography of Jimmy Farrugia, a highly respected medical doctor and one of the country's leading politicians would make its interpretation decisively more interesting and engaging for visitors at the Cathedral Museum.

4.2.2 National Museum of Art, MUŻA, Valletta



Figure 19 Maltese Wall Clock in MUŻA, Valletta, Malta. Photo by Author.

The antique Maltese wall clock that hangs at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta has a dark green and gilt case of large dimensions. Its pediment is heavily decorated and gilded with flowers and leaves. It is crowned by an urn shaped finial, which gives the clock a distinctive look. The bracket is gilded with matching designs and ends with a central orb. Its sides are concave and have apertures. The door has the usual hook and eye opening mechanism. The dial is painted in black on a white background. Unlike all the other clocks featured in this research, this clock has Arabic numbers to denote the hours. An outer ring has smaller Arabic numbers to mark the minutes. The centre of the dial is left plain. The spandrels are embellished with flowers.

The clock was part of the exhibition held in 1992. Photos of the clock from that year show a very visible vertical crack along the whole length of the clock face. Currently, the crack is very faintly visible, meaning that it has been restored.

This clock is a wall clock with both the pediment and the bracket. Its clock mechanism makes it a two-handed quarter striking clock. According to Micallef (2002) this clock dates to the late 18th century, whereas the catalogue of the 1992 exhibition dates it to the early 19th century. Considering that this clock has both the pediment and the bracket, it is two-handed with both minutes and hour markings, and it is a quarter striking clock. Dating it to the early 19th century appears to be more reasonable. The gilding and the construction of the clock also attest to a high level of skill and increased preciseness. Additionally, the absence of a centrepiece may reflect modern trends.

The clock hangs in a showcase that presents a setting of an 18th century living room in an affluent Maltese house. It hangs on a blue wall amongst framed paintings and mirrors. Next to it in the same showcase there are Maltese made pieces of furniture, a ladies' corset top, and more paintings. At the far end hangs 'The Visit', a painting by Antoine Favray (1706-1798) that portrays the typical aristocratic interior of a house of a wealthy family in the 18th century (Degiorgio & Fiorentino, 2004). There is also a portrait of Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca by the same artist. The setting of the showcase where the clock hangs is a replica of a typical house of the 18th century. The room is entitled 'Style for Status' implying that for the upper classes, having good style brought with it status and good social standing. This places the clock in the appropriate context, enabling the visitor to picture better where the clocks used to hang in houses. 'The Visit' by Favray boosts the interpretation by supplying first-hand evidence of what the interior of an 18th century affluent house looked like. In this painting, Favray portrays the decor and ladies' attire of that period. On the wall hangs a



Figure 20 'The Visit' by Antoine Favray. Photo taken from www.muza.mt.



Figure 22 The setting of the showcase where the Maltese Wall Clock hangs at MUŻA. Photo by author.

Maltese wall clock amongst other frames and paintings. The clock depicted in this painting is of the earliest sort, having neither a pediment nor a bracket. Unfortunately, the glass showcase that encloses the clock, the paintings and the furniture pieces is somewhat clouded which inhibits the viewer's ability to clearly see the exhibits inside it. The details of the clock and the paintings cannot be well observed. Moreover, it is difficult to take a photo due to the glass reflections. No written information accompanies any of the exhibits. A small panel in the room carries information about the execution of the painting and its artist. Another Maltese mantlepiece clock in a different room carries information about its manufacturing date, its material and it indicates that it is the product of Maltese craftsmanship but the Maltese clock under study in the Style and Status room does not. The National Museum of Fine Arts occupies a prominent location in Valletta and has recently been extensively redone, therefore attracting many visitors. Glass showcases should be kept in optimum condition to allow better visibility through their glass. Information panels that highlight what the visitor is looking at in the showcase would also be beneficial for heritage interpretation.



Figure 21 The Visit by Favray as seen through the showcase at MUŻA. Photo by author.

The provenance of this clock is unknown. There are no decorations on the clock that suggest that it used to belong to a certain family. Not knowing where it came from, who it belonged to, if it was purchased by the museum or donated to the museum is problematic. The family or individual who owned it are integral to the story of the clock and without their story the clock loses a considerable part of its importance and appeal. Nonetheless, in view of the fact that paintings of noble families and noble houses are on display in the room, one

can include general information on the noble families of the island and their background and give the clock a context.

The clock has an urn, which is its most distinctive feature and might shed some light on the story of the clock. The urn is a vessel used to hold the cremated remains of a deceased person. Indeed, the word urn is derived from the Latin word *'uro'* meaning 'to burn'. It evolved into a decorative item in ancient Greece and has been used in art as a symbol of elegant beauty (Peters, 2010). The practice of cremation has been used since prehistory. Burial became the more used method of laying a person to rest, but the urn retained its connotations of death, the body decaying into dust and the soul uniting with God. This symbol became especially popular in the Neoclassical period featuring on tombs but also in jewellery, fashion, and architecture. The mourner would commission the symbol of the urn to represent their deceased loved one (Peters, 2010). For instance, a person wearing a necklace having an urn pendant was commonly a person who lost someone and wears the urn as a remembrance of that person. In the late 18th up until the early 19th century, the urn was used to commemorate a departed soul (Peters, 2010). This possibly suggests that the person who commissioned the clock found at MUZA lost a loved one and wanted the clock to have an urn to represent him/her. It is possibly also indicating foreign ownership as cremation to date is not practiced in Malta. One can surmise that this clock may have been commissioned and purchased in the 19th century by a high-ranking British official stationed in Malta.

4.2.3 Inquisitor's Palace, Birgu



Figure 23 Maltese Wall Clock in the Inquisitor's Palace, Birgu, Malta. Photo by Author.

The Inquisitor's Palace in Birgu houses an antique Maltese wall clock in a painted and gilded case. According to the catalogue of the exhibition held in 1992, its case is painted dark green. It presently looks black rather than green. Galea Naudi and Micallef (1989) preferred not to mention a colour. The gilding on the case is not golden but has a bronze colour. The decoration in gilding is floral. The sides of the cabinet are totally plain. The doors of the clock can be opened by pressing a pin, which is not a smooth opening system. The dial is hand painted with Roman numerals to denote the hours. At the centre of the dial, the artist painted an idealised landscape having leafless trees, small bushes, birds, and distant mountains. Soft colours were used, principally blue, green, and brown. At the spandrels, the clock has painted stylised flowers in blue and red. The flowers painted at the top corners are small whereas the ones painted at the bottom are larger. The gilding on the frame of the dial retains its golden colour, possibly due to being protected by the glass door. The mechanism is a timepiece, which has its original alarm missing.



Figure 24 The mechanism of the Maltese Wall Clock in the Inquisitor's Palace. Photo by author.

The clock is plain oblong and single-handed. It does not have a pediment or a bracket, the only such example that features in this research. According to Galea Naudi and Micallef (1989) it dates to the mid-18th century. Since it is a one-handed clock and it does not have either a pediment or a bracket, this date seems logical. The earliest Maltese wall clocks were simple oblongs and they started to be made in the 17th century. However, as can be observed in 'The Visit' painting by Favray, these had a thicker frame, resembling t hose used to mount paintings. It is thus probable that this clock dates to the early or mid-18th century.



Figure 25 The Maltese Wall Clock in the Inquisitor's Palace hanging in the bedroom. Photo by author.

The clock hangs in the bedroom of the Inquisitor's Palace, found on the *Piano Nobile*. It hangs above a chair next to the door. The same room is furnished with paintings and other pieces of locally made furniture. A small placard below the clock reads "Maltese clock known as 'tal-Lira' 18th century". It also indicates that it is made from polychromed wood and that it has traces of gilding. The same information is available in Maltese. Although scant, this information informs the visitor that the clock is characteristically Maltese. Additionally, the nickname might provoke the visitors to look up its meaning or ask about its origins. An accompanying explanation about the different theories that surround the meaning of the clock's most common name would provide interesting information to interpret the clock.

Its provenance is unfortunately unknown. The staff at the museum do not have any information about its origins. It was recorded in the museum's inventory in 2001 and it was already the property of the Inquisitor's Palace in 1992 when the exhibition was held because it was part of the exhibition. Annual reports dating from 1903 were analysed individually but led to no conclusive information about the clock. The same applies for all Maltese clocks in heritage sites run by Heritage Malta including a second Maltese clock at the Inquisitor's palace and the previously described clock at MUZA. Reports kept by the Museums' Department in Malta, record the purchase and acquisition of hundreds of items throughout the past decade. It seems that not all items donated to the museum or bought by the museum are listed. The entries that possibly refer to the clocks at the Inquisitor's palace or at MUZA are the following.

- "1 large old clock" from the annual report of the year 1927-28. This is listed with the purchases made that year by the museum.
- "Maltese bracket clock XVIII century" from the annual report of 1931-32, also listed with purchases. However, a bracket clock usually denotes a clock that sits on a surface.

- "Old carved XVIII century wooden and gilt frame" from the report of 1933-34. Although this entry does not indicate that it is a clock, it may be possible that it was described as a frame.

The annual report of 1977-78 states that some objects were acquired by the Museums Department for the new folk museum, which refers to the exhibition were the Maltese clock is hung. Various annual reports specify that certain individuals bequeathed items to the museum department. Mr Olof Frederik Gollcher is named as one of the individuals who donated several articles of furniture to the palace. Hundreds of people donated antiquities over the years. Unfortunately, the entries are not specific. It is therefore impossible to trace the clock's origins. Consequently, the story of the clock and its owners is lost, thus considerably reducing the clock's attractiveness. The clock is not tied to the building where it is housed. At this point the clock was just hung in the bedroom for decorative purposes. The information on the placard is limited. In such cases it would be beneficial for museums to include information on benefactors and purchases. This information helps in contextualizing the Maltese clock and gives it importance as a unique Maltese cultural work of art. It also communicates its value as a Maltese status symbol and a family heirloom to visitors.

4.2.4 Wignacourt Collegiate Museum, Rabat



Figure 26 Maltese Wall Clock in the Wignacourt Collegiate Museum, Rabat, Malta. Photo by Author.

At the Wignacourt Collegiate Museum in Rabat there are three antique wall clocks, each with its own distinct character. The one chosen for this study is a wooden clock with a carved decoration on top. It was chosen for having a particular decorative top, thus including its typology in this research. Additionally, the provenance of the other two clocks is unknown, limiting their interpretation. The case is gilded but not painted, which is not very common in antique Maltese wall clocks. A photo taken in 1992 reveals that the case of the clock was gilded but looking at the clock

presently one can barely notice any traces of it. The intricate decoration fixed on the top of the case gives the case an artistic touch, without which the case would be just a plain wooden box. The ornamentation on the upper central edge has a shell motif. The case indicates the age of the clock. From below, one can see the hinges that tie the pieces of wood together to make the case. Various cracks in the wood suggest that it may need restorative intervention. The overlapping doors can be opened by releasing the hook on the side of the case. The door of the clock face has a vertical crack along its right side, already present in 1992 suggesting that it has not been restored since then.

The dial is painted on a white background having black Roman numerals to mark the hours. Some black paint has become smudged. The central scene is a seascape showing trees, a galleon, and a building in the distant background. This marine scene was painted in neutrals, mainly blue, green, and brown. At the four corners the artist painted Maltese wildflowers that resemble the corn-flag and the southern crupina in blue and red. The flowers diagonally opposite each other were painted to complement each other. The central and the flowers on the spandrels, closely resemble the decorations found on the clock at Palazzo Falson. This could suggest that they were executed by the same artist. Alternatively, one of the artists reproduced another artist's design. This clock has been dated to the 18th century (Azzopardi, 2013) whereas the one at Palazzo Falson was dated to the late 18th century. Both clocks are one handed, but this clock probably predates the Palazzo Falson clock due to it having a less elaborately decorated case. Indeed, this clock is not painted, it barely has any gilding, and it only has a sculptured top decoration. The clock at Palazzo Falson is painted, has gilding decorations and has a pediment. The clock under study at the Wignacourt Museum is a simple timekeeping device.



Figure 27 The Maltese Wall Clock in the Wignacourt Museum hanging in the upstairs corridor. Photo by author.

The antique clock at the Wignacourt Museum is a gilt single-handed wall clock with a decorative carved wooden motif on top. This kind of decoration can possibly be considered as the forerunner of the pediment. The clock does not have a bracket. These features suggest that it was manufactured in the early 18th century. It does not have the usual painted case with gilded designs. It is the only such clock to feature in the 1992 exhibition by F.P.M. The artists who worked on this clock are unknown and permission to open it in order to inspect its interior and determine if it has a working mechanism was not granted. The clock is located in the upstairs corridor of the Wignacourt Museum, Rabat. It hangs in the middle of an arch, above a doorway and a framed painting. This area gives access to various other rooms of the museum; therefore, most visitors pass by it to visit other areas.



Figure 28 The Maltese Wall Clock in the Inquisitor's Palace. Photo by author.

As previously noted, the clock is fixed above a doorway. This poses an obstacle to its interpretation, due to it not being at eye level. It is difficult for visitors to observe its particular features from down below. The most observable details are the hinges at the bottom and the fragile looking timber. The other interesting details of the clock such as the decorations on the clock face and its unique carving on its upper edge cannot be easily observed from ground level. Since it hangs on a relatively plain white wall, with only one other painting, it is an eye-catching piece. There is no written information about the clock anywhere in the room. Other pieces of furniture are accompanied by a brief description. Hence interpretation is non-existent. Visitors are denied important historical information

like for instance the fact that this clock is an 18th century clock with unique Maltese features. The museum provides audio guides in various languages that facilitate interpretation of the museum's displays, but no reference is made to the clock.

The Wignacourt Collegiate Museum is located at Rabat, Malta. Inaugurated by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, it served as the residence of a group of Chaplains of the Order of St John who used to run pilgrimage to St Paul's Grotto. The building that has recently been fully restored and refurbished was built in 1749. It houses an eclectic collection that includes paintings, furniture pieces, silver items, relics, coins, and rare books. About a third of the exhibits, including the clock, belonged to Francesco Catania (1872-1960), a notary by profession, a scholar and a keen collector of arts. Catania instituted St Paul's Collegiate Church at Rabat as his heir. The Wignacourt Museum presently conserves only a fraction of his treasured collection since much of it was sold in a seven-day auction by the Church.

Francesco Catania was the son of Antonio Catania and Marianna née Xuereb. His mother came from a noble family, being a direct descendant of Ferdinando Theuma-Castelletti, the first Count of Għajn Tuffieħa. In his will, her paternal uncle, Rev. Fr Pietro Paolo Xuereb bequethed her property and jewels before she got married. This included the imposing house where the Catania family lived, 23/24 Gusmana Navarra Street, Rabat (Bartoli, 2013). This confirms that Francesco Catania came from a well-to-do family. His father and paternal grandfather were master carpenters who instilled in Francesco a love for art. He had a sister but neither of them married or had children. It is impossible to determine if Catania bought the clock, commissioned, or inherited it. Having lived a long life, he spent 62 years working as a notary (Bartoli, 2013). This enabled him to afford many valuable *objets d'art* at a time when antiques were not expensive and various auction sales were taking place. Francesco Catania was a deeply religious man and a strong supporter of St Paul's Church, Rabat. His grandfather, his father, his uncle and his cousin were active in the same parish, also having held important roles (Azzopardi, 2013). Along with his artistic legacy, he bequeathed to the Church various properties, money and a collection of gold. Much of Catania's estate was sold. Upon his death, Auctioneer Edward Gingell Littlejohn was entrusted to auction Francesco Catania's inheritance. In their inventory they include a "One gilt Maltese Wall Clock £15" (Bartoli, 2013, p.201) and on the advertising poster of the auction, a "genuine antique Maltese wall clock in gilt case" (Bartoli, 2013, p.14). This could be referring to the clock extant at the Wignacourt

Museum. Being the son of a carpenter, he must have had a good collection of high-quality furniture. Only the clock and a cabinet were kept, whereas the rest were sold for ridiculously low prices, showing that Maltese furniture did not carry much value at the time. These two items of furniture were either not put up for auction or else no one offered to buy them. Fortunately, it is now in a museum, where it can be viewed and enjoyed by the public.

The clock at the Wignacourt museum is, however, not given its merited importance. It is not mentioned in the audio guide and no information about it is available. Visitors can easily miss this unique clock during their visit to the museum. Including information on the historical and culture importance of Maltese clocks in the audio guide and biographical data on Notary Francesco Catania and his bequest would most certainly help in its interpretation. Since this is one of only two surviving furniture items of Catania's bequest this makes the story of the clock more intriguing. Interpretation would also be more effective if it would be lowered down to eye level.

4.3 Reuniting the Maltese Wall Clock with Family Narratives

The most salient issue that emerged from research conducted on Maltese wall clocks on display in various attractions on the island of Malta is the lack of information that is available to visitors. Questions regarding Maltese clocks revealed that most museum administrators possessed scanty information about the clocks and their provenance. When asked about their clocks, the information provided was fragmentary and mainly included an estimate date of production, the colour of the case and some general information. This research showed that the Maltese Clock that is a unique Maltese heritage and a unique family heirloom is not presented to visitors in a meritorious manner. Proper heritage interpretation needs to be actioned to give Maltese clocks in museums their rightful place in history. Notwithstanding the fact that Maltese clocks in museums have been taken away from their original settings and families, it is possible to recontextualize and reunite the clocks to their owners through interpretation. This study has dug up intriguing stories and family narratives that need to be shared with visitors.

Wealthy people managed to gather a collection of antiques through bartering and inheritance. Family histories, as described for each clock are part and parcel of the clocks' interpretation. For the interpretation to be successful, the family stories and histories cannot be left out. The old noble Maltese families have incredible lineage that is complicated but interesting. It is engaging for the visitors to learn about the original owners and their motivations for commissioning the clock. Also interesting is to discover how the clocks were passed down through generations and how eventually it has found its way to its current place and owner. Such stories are better comprehended by visual means, namely by being supported by portraits of family ancestors and family trees and genealogy. This provides an encounter between the visitor and the original owners of the clock. Family stories assisted by visual aids yield a stronger understanding of the clock as the family heirloom that it is.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research flagged up the importance of rethinking through the heritage interpretation of Maltese clocks in museums. This study identified eight clocks displayed in different tourist attractions. Other clocks in local museums need to be researched and interpreted. The current information about these clocks is very limited or non existent. In view of the fact that information on these clocks relies heavily on living memory, the data gathering process is urgent. People's recollections on these clocks no matter how minute or insignificant need to be recorded. When researching clocks found at Heritage Malta museums, it was discovered that the museum annual reports were not properly investigated. These reports that span more than 100 years may yield interesting information on the museums' acquisitions over the years. It would be interesting to research items found in the inventories to discover their provenance and research stories about the families that originally owned them. These stories can be used to create different interpretation platforms. Future studies can consider reviewing other sources such as dowries and wills. This historical research can provide researchers with valuable information about who the Maltese wall hung clocks belonged to, how much they cost, who and how they were acquired and under which circumstances.

The Maltese wall clock is Malta's archetypal clock, a true emblem of Maltese heritage. It is a bespoke Maltese creation that has survived for hundreds of years. It incorporates painting, gilding, timekeeping, and woodwork by skilled Maltese artisans. No clock is like the other, yet all have similar characteristics that unequivocally brand them as Maltese clocks known as *Arloġġi tal-Lira*. Originally manufactured to adorn the private households of well-to-do families, they represent the histories of noble Maltese families, as well as histories of Maltese artists and craftsmen. This research revealed that literature on the artists and craftsmen is limited but available, information on the noble families who owned the clocks is sorely lacking. The latter is the path this study pursued. The objective being to give the *Arloġġi tal-Lira* an effective heritage interpretation and their rightful place in Maltese history. Reuniting the Maltese clocks with their family histories, and relevant anecdotes and human experiences can inform and entertain viewers, it can also stimulate interest and excitement. A number of antique specimens are to be found at museums, enabling the general public to see and admire

Maltese clocks. All are currently represented solely as decorative objects. This compromises the visitors' experience and their engagement with the clock. Interviews with museum administrators affirmed that the main issue stemmed from the fact that no written records on the clocks' histories existed. This was the starting point of this research that initiated with more questions than answers.

Reuniting the clock with its human history was a challenging but rewarding journey. The first step was to identify people who had recollections on the clocks in this study and salvage whatever data could be collected. The data was then organised under different themes and that were used as a platform on which biographic descriptions were constructed through bibliographic research. The data was then collated and compiled. The results of this research exposed a wealth of information on the *Arloġġi tal-Lira* that provided a human dimension that brought the clocks to life. Heritage Interpretation is compromised when family heirlooms are divorced from their families and households. Information on manufacturers and estimated dates offer visitors shallow details that fail to engage viewers in a deep and meaningful manner. Reuniting the clocks with their owners and houses where they were once placed through user friendly placards, inclusions in audio guides or tourist guide explanations can effectively address this void. In cases whereby families want to maintain anonymity or when no information is available, cryptic descriptions can be used to engage people. This can be presented in the form of general information on local noble families, and descriptions on Maltese houses and the traditional rooms where such clocks would have been displayed. Narratives about how antiques were acquired through informal channels can also be used to captivate the visitors. The different informal methods of purchasing antiques in the past such as through bartering, from fairs or by offering to take someone else's unwanted items may be incorporated to devise a stronger interpretation of Maltese clocks.

Most of the information about the clocks gathered through this research came from living memories. Since these stories are mostly passed on by word of mouth, they are temporary, and can easily be forgotten. Most of my informants were elderly people whose stories on the clock I recorded before they are lost forever. In cases whereby clocks are donated, museums need to record all available information at source. This can be applied to the Jimmy and Doris Farrugia bequest to the Mdina Cathedral Museum. The Maltese clock that now forms part of

the collection exhibited in the Farrugia's section has no information about the couple or their house where it came from. Both the Farrugias passed away, they had no children, hence there is no one who can relate any interesting stories about the clock or the couple. When the donation was made Doris was still alive. Since the museum did not source any information about the clock or their acquisitions from her, a golden opportunity was lost. It is therefore imperative for the data and stories to be collected by museums and other beneficiaries. Museums also need to create opportunities for the exchange of stories. Elderly people are an incredible source of information. This will help safeguard knowledge and interesting anecdotes that can bring heritage to life. Stories can be documented orally and made available to the public via audio guides or on the museums' websites or social media pages. They can also be video recorded. Video recording is currently a popular way of sharing information. Alternatively, stories can be compiled in literary form.

This research revealed how important these clocks are to some guardians at museums. Some individuals were willing to share their experiences, memoirs, emotions, and sentiments about the clocks. Storytelling skills are integral to human relationships. Stories are easily understood and relatable, they form an integral part of local culture. Stories on various clocks shared with the researcher during the course of this study can offer visitors a unique form of interpretation imbued with shared ideas, values and beliefs. At the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, the "Factories of Stories" project was launched in 2019. It seeks to shed new light on masterpieces through storytelling from personal experiences of museum staff and local citizens (Bianchini, 2019). The same idea can be applied to the *Arloġġ Tal-Lira*. Curators of museums can create opportunities for people to come forth with their stories. Stories can be recorded and integrated into the interpretation of museum exhibits. When Joseph Debono opened the clock to show me the pictures that had been stuck to the inner part of the clock by his uncle Paolo, the picture that stood out was that of a beautiful Maltese lady with an open hand. She appears to be drawing viewers towards her. Her image metaphorically represents the journey this research pursued. Behind the faces of the *Arloġġi tal-Lira* lie beautiful, hidden human stories waiting to draw viewers closer to the unique Maltese wall hung clocks.

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Appendix: Interviews

Clock in Casa Bernard

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?

   No, we have no idea.
2. How did you acquire this clock? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Did your parents inherit it? From which side of the family?

   It was inherited from my parents (Josette's) who had inherited it from their parents and their parents from their parents. Both my parents and grandparents were collectors. The family's name was Portelli Demajo. We will leave it to our son so it will hopefully remain here.
3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?

   It was located at Mrs Magri's parents' house in Sliema in their sala.
4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?

   We believe that it was manufactured during 1735-40 from the colours of the clock and from its mechanism. Also, from its form and the background's subtlety. It also does not have an apron, so it indicates an earlier date. It looks that it is handmade, it is not straight. The wood does not match. The glass also indicates that it is old.
5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?

   No.
6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?

   No, I have no idea.
7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?

   No, nothing. I am afraid to do it.
8. Is it still working?

   It must be opened to wind it. For them it was normal but for us it is difficult. To my knowledge it is still functionable. It used to work for 8 hours before it needs winding again. We have too much to do, so we do not do it.
9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?

   It does not display coat of arms, it has flowers. No decoration links it to the family.

10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?

    The lack of precision it portrays in its craftsmanship and the quality of the wood indicates that it is an old clock.

Additional Comments:

It used to provide work to many people – the artist for the background and the colour, the gilder the gold, someone who makes the wood and glass and the clockmaker for the mechanism of the clock which used to be simple.
When they ordered it the lady of the house wanted it to match the curtains in the room. We did the opposite, we matched the curtains with the clock.

We placed in the *piano nobile*. It hangs amongst many paintings. We have four paitings by Favray, that we inherited, portraits of wealthy individuals and a painting by Mattia Preti as well.

Upon looking closely at the clock and opening the door, it was discovered that the clock mechanism was made by Pisani since it bears his surname on the mechanism. This was also a new discovery for the owners.

The clock is not straight at the bottom, it was not built precisely.

The dimensions of the clock are large – indicative of an early clock.
A hole at the side may indicate that it used to be opened by a button.

Clock in Casa Rocca Piccola

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?

   It could have been my grandmother, Nicholina de Piro.

2. How did you acquire this clock? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Did your parents inherit it? From which side of the family?

   I inherited it from my father's side of the family. My father's name was Gerome de Piro. Originally it belonged to his mother, Nicholina Apap Bologna who was married to Igino De Piro, a baron.

3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?

   It used to be hung in the drawing room in Villa de Piro, Mosta Road Attard. When Gerome de Piro inherited it, he took it to 103 Archbishop Street, Valletta. He left it to his son, Nicholas de Piro who brought it to Casa Rocca Piccola.

4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?

   No, but I would say that since it is one handed and it rings, it might be one of the earliest ringing clocks produced.

5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?

   No.

6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?

   No.

7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?

   No.

8. Is it still working?

   Yes.

9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?

   It has no decoration that ties it to the family.

10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?

    This clock was part of the 1992 exhibition.

Clock in The Mdina Cathedral Museum

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?
   The Clock formed part of the Melitensia collection of the late Dr Jimmy and Mrs Doris Farrugia.
2. How did this clock reach this museum? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Was it later inherited? By whom? From which side of the family?
   The clock reached the museum through the donation of Mrs Doris Farrugia together with a whole collection of other Melitensia artefacts. The inauguration of the Dr Jimmy and Mrs Doris Farrugia gallery took place at the Cathedral Museum on 17th November 2008 and was blessed by Bishop Paul Cremona.
3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?
   As Doris, then widow, clearly expressed several times, she was fulfilling the wish of her late husband that the "Maltese room" in their villa in Tarxien be transferred to the Cathedral Museum during her lifetime.
4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?
   The clock was manufactured in late 19th century according to "Antique Maltese Furniture" p. 166, fig.201.
5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?
   No answer.
6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?
   No information on the cost and no receipts are at hand.
7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?
   It was placed in the J.D.F. Gallery and never touched.
8. Is it still working?
   When it was in the Villa it was not working.
9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?
   No answer.
10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?
    Part of 1992 exhibition, plate no. 37.

Clock in MUŻA

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?

   No

2. How did this clock reach this museum? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Was it later inherited? By whom? From which side of the family?

   We do not know where the clock came from but it was probably acquired by one of the early curators of the art collection. Provenance Research is still ongoing. You can go through the Museum Annual Reports, most of which are available online, but they will not tell you who it was brought from, just the year. https://culture.gov.mt/en/culturalheritage/Pages/Museums-Annual-Reports-(MAR).aspx

3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?

   Our own tal-Lira clock is on display at MUŻA in a showcase that presents a setting of an 18th-century living room in an affluent Maltese house. We do not know much about it unfortunately. It is published in the book 'Antique Maltese Clocks' issued by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 1992, which includes a catalogue of clocks in private and museum collections.

4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?

   I'm afraid we don't know at this point. We have come across acquisitions of two bracket clocks, 18th century, one of them described as Maltese, made in the 1930s, but 'bracket' clock refers to a clock that stands on a surface not hanging. We are still looking into later acquisitions of the Museums Department. Colleagues of mine who have been at the museum for many years also do not know its provenance. I can only suggest that you go through the reports but, like I said, this will only give you a date, if you find a clock listed, and the acquisition might refer to one of the clocks now at the Inquisitor's Palace; there is no way of knowing as they would not be described in detail.

5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?

   No answer.

6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?

   No answer.

7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?

   No answer.

8. Is it still working?

   No answer.

9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?

   No answer.

10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?

    No answer.

Clock in Plazzo Falson

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?

   This clock was part of the collection of Olof Gollcher. We do not know if he was the original owner. We only have info as recorded in the inventory.

2. How did this clock reach this museum? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Was it later inherited? By whom? From which side of the family?

   It was part of Gollcher's collection. He could have inherited it, collected it or bought it himself. It was his wish that his collection be converted into a museum.

   His collection consisted of items inherited from both sides of his family (Father's side: Gollcher, who had business in shipping, Mother's side: Balbi) and also items that he bought himself.

3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?

   Old photos of the Palazzo:

   a. Photo 13, KEVIN CASHA COLLECTION from MARIO CIANCO COLLECTION, was in the room that previous served as a Dining Room of Norman House on the ground floor during the time Olof Gollcher was living there between c. 1930-1962. When Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti undertook restoration works before opening the museum in 2007, the wood panelled dining room was transformed into a museum shop. Presently the shop is the retail outlet of Valletta Glass on lease from Palazzo Falson.
   b. Photo 006 was provided to us by Din L-Art Helwa (no date available) showing the oldest Maltese clock hanging in the present Dining Room in the piano nobile.
   c. Photo 8 from the collection of St John's Museum London also shows the oldest Maltese clock hanging in the panelled dining room from a different angle. One can notice the door leading to the foyer of the house (i.e. the door between the present shop area and the foyer of the museum).

4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?

   An article by Galea Naudi in Treasures of Malta no 52 Christmas 2011 Vol XVIII no 1 p. 48-51 dates it to the late 18th century.

5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?

   No.

6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?

   We do not know but can be estimated when compared to similar clocks that are sold in auction houses.

7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?

   Still to check with our restoration records but highly likely that they haven't been restored. You are welcome to visit and study the clocks further to come to your own conclusions.

8. Is it still working?

   No. It had a winding time of 10 hours.

9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?

   No answer.

10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?

    It is a one-handed clock, which is why it was dated to the 18th century. It was dated to the late 18th century because it has the upper part. The upper part is detachable. It has 2 doors.

    Dimensions: 75 x 49.5 x 16 cm

Clock in Villa Bologna

1. Can you name the original owner of this clock?

   No, I have no idea.

2. How did you acquire this clock? Do you have any recollection of who bought the clock? Did your parents inherit it? From which side of the family?

   My husband inherited from his mother. Villa Bologna originally belonged to Maria Theresa Grech who married Nicholas Percomati Bologna, hence the name of the villa. Built by Maria's father who was advisor to Grand Master Pinto. Eventually in the 1880s Lord Strickland inherited it. When he was away nuns used to live here. He came her with his wife and children in 1915. After a few years his wife died and remarried. One of his children from the first marriage was Cecilia. Lord Strickland left Villa Bologna and its collection to her eldest son, Gerald de Trafford who married Ms. Charlotte.

3. Where was it located? Where was it hung? Is it still in the same place?

   No answer.

4. Do you have an indication of a date when it was produced?

   No answer.

5. Do you know who manufactured it or where?

   No answer.

6. Do you know how much it cost? Do you have a receipt?

   No answer.

7. Has this clock gone through any kind of restoration/ change?

   Its mechanism was changed.

8. Is it still working?

   It is no longer operates on original mechanism.

9. Why was this decoration (landscape, coat of arms, floral motifs, colour, etc.) chosen? Did it have a special meaning to the patron who commissioned this clock?

   No answer.

10. Can you mention any distinguishing features or recount any interesting anecdotes about this clock?

    No answer.