



VOICES AND PLACES OF GALLEY SLAVES: remembering the places of galley slaves along Birgu's waterfront during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Sonia Mifsud

2111349/1

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Abstract

Author Sonia Mifsud	Date
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<p>This paper examines the role of galley slaves in shaping the maritime landscape of Birgu, Malta, during the 16th and 17th centuries, a topic that is grossly understated and underrepresented in historical narratives and tourism representations. By using a qualitative approach, the research draws on literature, spatial analyses, and field observations to reconstruct the experiences and contributions of galley slaves. The findings indicate that galley slaves played an integral role in the naval operations at Birgu, in the development of its maritime infrastructure, and its socio-economic fabric: their presence is imprinted on physical structures and spatial organization along the waterfront. Preliminary historical documentation complemented by an analysis of site mapping brings forth the layered stories of difficult living conditions, and low agency, yet significant contributions to Malta's maritime greatness. This paper concludes that the absence of galley slave narratives from the mainstream account of history and tourism representations means an incomplete understanding of Birgu's maritime heritage. These findings suggest a need for inclusiveness in the historical narrative and set in motion an alternative tour route, which integrates the galley slave experience, offering nuance to Birgu's naval history. The research has implications for Malta's ability to represent its maritime past more equitably in terms of historical representation, heritage management, and tourism development.</p>	
Keywords galley slaves, maritime history, Birgu, historical narratives	

Declaration of Authenticity



Student Name and Surname: Sonia Mifsud

Student ITS Number : 2111349/1

Programme : Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding

Research Title : THE VOICES AND PLACES OF GALLEY SLAVES: Remembering the places of galley slaves along Birgu's waterfront during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of my research. I, as the author, declare that this research study is my composition which has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Mr. Vincent Zammit.

Date

Student's Signature



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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	6
1.1	Research Background	6
1.2	Research Aim, Objectives and Hypothesis or Question	7
2.	Literature Review	7
2.1	Historical Context of Birgu's Waterfront.....	7
2.2	Galley Slaves in Malta.....	8
2.3	Maritime Activities and Infrastructure in Birgu.....	9
2.4	Social and Economic Impacts of Galley Slaves.....	10
2.5	Representation of Galley Slaves in Historical Narratives	10
3.0	Methodology	12
3.1	Research Design	12
3.2	Data Collection Methods	13
3.3	Data Analysis Techniques	13
3.4	Ethical Considerations	14
4.0	Results, Analysis and Discussion.....	15
4.1	Mapping Galley Slave Presence in Birgu	15
4.2	Analysis of Living Conditions and Social Roles.....	16
4.3	Contributions to Birgu's Maritime Landscape	17
4.4	Proposed Alternative Tour Route and Narrative.....	18
5.0	Final Arguments	19
5.1	Conclusions	19
5.2	Recommendations	19
5.3	Evaluation, Reliability and Validity	20
	References	21

THE VOICES AND PLACES OF GALLEY SLAVES: remembering the places of galley slaves along Birgu's waterfront during the 16th - 17th century.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The maritime history of Malta, with an emphasis on Birgu during the 16th and 17th centuries, highlights stories about nautical expertise and strategic importance combined with cultural exchange. However, at the heart of this narrative is an overlooked group: the galley slaves. They were convicts, prisoners of war and enslaved persons that comprised one of the most important, yet often unseen, elements in shaping both the Birgu waterfront's maritime landscape and its operations (Palmer 2021). Upon the Order of St John's arrival in Malta in 1530, Birgu, also known as Vittoriosa following the great siege of 1565, became their main base for naval activities. Its strategic position, coupled with its natural harbour, made it an ideal centre for both military and high-seas commercial activities (Palmer 2021). The galleys were the backbone of naval power, key for defence, trade, and projecting power across the Mediterranean, all powered by the toil of the slaves.

Stories and experiences of galley slaves have often been relegated to the periphery of historical accounts. While the physical landscape in Birgu is imposing, with great fortifications, fine palaces, and a maritime infrastructure par excellence, it forms an enduring testament to the city's history of naval power. The spaces and places that witnessed the lives and work of galley slaves remain largely unmarked and unacknowledged in contemporary representations of history. It is hoped that through this research, this omission will be rectified by specifically exploring how galley slaves shaped Birgu's maritime landscape. The aim is to uncover the hidden narrative embedded in Birgu's waterfront area, looking into the influence of these marginalized people on not just the physical but also social, economic, and cultural faces of the place during the 16th and 17th centuries. The research focuses on galley slaves and seeks to establish a more comprehensive view of Malta's maritime heritage. It challenges the conventional narratives of this age, which often facilitate the glorification of naval achievements without proper consideration being given to their human cost and the varied contributions that secured them.

1.2 Research Aim, Objectives, Hypothesis, and Research Question

The central aim of this research is to investigate and shed light on the role that galley slaves played in framing the historical discourse of Birgu's maritime landscape throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The study will be guided by the following overarching research question: How did galley slaves shape the historical narrative of Birgu's maritime landscape? Should our experience of places be predominantly visual, what could it be that Birgu's waterfront may teach us about galley slaves that we have failed so far to include in our tours?

These subsidiary questions will further be addressed to support the primary inquiry:

1. What were the conditions of life, social roles, and contributions of galley slaves in Birgu during this period?
2. How are galley slaves represented, or not represented, in current historical narratives and the physical landscape of Birgu?
3. Which physical traces or spaces associated with the galley slaves can still be identified today along the Birgu waterfront?
4. How is one to effectively piece together the story of galley slaves in the current historical and touristic narratives of Birgu?

A careful examination of the Birgu waterfront is hypothesized to reveal powerful underrated contributions of galley slaves to its rich maritime heritage. Such a process will bring out spaces and stories that may further enrich any understanding of Birgu's history and provide an inclusive narrative for both historical interpretation and tourism purposes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Historical Context of Birgu's Waterfront

The Birgu waterfront, also referred to as Vittoriosa, was the most significant area in Malta's history throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. According to Cassar (1976), in 1530, following the Order of St. John's arrival in Malta, Birgu served as their flagship naval base. Geographically, being at the centre of the Grand Harbour, it created an ideal centre for both military and commerce-related maritime activities. According to Muscat (2002), the waterfront at Birgu was a busy area that contained shipyards, arsenals, and docking facilities

for the Order's fleet of galleys. Wettinger (2002) denoted the vast fortifications built to protect the harbour and its colossal maritime assets as not only a utilitarian space but also one with social and cultural roles. According to Zammit and Lahlali (2017), it was a place of cultural intersection: the knights coming from different European countries, the locals, and people from the Mediterranean region and beyond, and the galley slaves, integral to maritime operations. Agius (2013) denotes that the development of Birgu's waterfront infrastructure moved in tandem with the Order's naval ambitions and its quest to keep a good presence in the Mediterranean. This period saw massive investments in shipbuilding facilities, warehouses, and defence structures, elements that defined the physiography of Birgu's coastline.

2.2 Galley Slaves in Malta

Scholars have noted the importance of the presence and role of galley slaves in Malta during the 16th and 17th centuries. Wettinger's work on slavery in Malta (2002) provides background material on the understanding of demographic composition and origin of the slaves. He points out that aside from the large number of captured Muslims from North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, there were sub-Saharan Africans and some Eastern Europeans amongst them. The 2004 contribution of Muscat on galley slaves at work closely examines their daily activities and responsibilities. He documents the difficult conditions under which they laboured, rowing the Order's galleys in military campaigns and commercial voyages. This forced labour took an enormous physical toll; the slaves were chained to their benches for long periods, constantly exposed to the elements and susceptible to disease. The diet and sustenance of these particular galley slaves are examined in detail by Muscat in his 2002 paper on the food and drink of Maltese galleys. He says that even with the basic diet, there were differences depending on the length of the voyages and the condition of each slave. The 2017 translation by Zammit and Lahlali of letters that Moorish slaves had written to their relatives shed light on personal experiences and ideas. These letters open up a view not only of the hardships endured but the complex social and cultural interactions that occurred within the confinements of slavery. Agius, in his 2013 article on the Maltese Inquisition records regarding Giorgio Scala and Moorish slaves in the territory of Malta in 1598, offered insights into the underlying religious and cultural tensions. It presents a picture of galley slaves as not just

passive victims but as people moving through complex social and religious landscapes, at times with enormous personal risk.

Wettinger's work (2002) further sheds light on the Birgu slave prison. Better known by its contemporary term "bagno" or "bagnio", it represented one part of the broader infrastructure that supported the broader galley slave system during the 16th and 17th centuries in Malta. Located near the fronting waterfront for ease of access to the galleys, this facility performed several other key functions for the maritime slavery complex. It confined slaves when they were not working in the galleys or doing other work. Moreover, since it was a centre for keeping and distributing slave labour for most Birgu maritime activities, the prison had to be available at all times to ensure good order and prevent escapes, the latter being a necessity, considering the large population of slaves. Wettinger (2002) states that it was a sort of primitive health management centre, with facilities to administer minimum healthcare to maintain the work capability of the slaves. Conditions inside the Bagno were notoriously harsh as there was gross overcrowding, poor sanitation due to the complete lack of toilet facilities, poorly ventilated living quarters and poor nutrition, in terms of both the quality and quantity of the food the slaves received. Slaves were often chained or shackled, especially during night-time hours, to further prevent escape attempts. Wettinger (2002) also denotes that the prison would have formed part of a broader urban landscape and social dynamic of Birgu, acting as a striking and visible reminder of the slave system that underpinned the city's economy. This prison will be an important part of a broader study of the galley slaves in Birgu, aiming to convey daily life, the infrastructure that supported slavery, and the great impact it had on the shaping of both physical and social components of Birgu's maritime landscape.

2.3 Maritime Activities and Infrastructure in Birgu

The waterfront of Birgu was abuzz with maritime activities throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, attested to through various accounts. Thake (2004) provides detailed information regarding all the naval infrastructure, such as the shipyards where the galleys were built and serviced. The facilities that sustained the Order's naval power called for massive resources in terms of people power, much of it supplied by galley slaves. According to Muscat (2003), the galleys became the main ships, used both for war and commerce. This kind of ship was heavily reliant on the workforce due to the number of rowers needed, most of whom were slaves.

Their design and maintenance had an enormous impact on a significant portion of the waterfront's infrastructure, such as when meeting the need for mooring facilities and storage of provisions. Abela (2012) points out that maritime operations went beyond military operations in that they involved trade. These activities brought wealth to the Order and Malta but contributed to an increased influx of slaves, many of whom would end up as galley slaves (Abela 2012). The defensive structures at the Birgu waterfront, particularly Fort St. Angelo, would have played the dual role of not only protecting the harbour and its maritime assets but also serving as visual reminders of the Order's power (Balzan 2015). Cassar (1976) further remarks that most of these fortifications were constructed and maintained with slave labour, the same slaves later used on the galleys.

2.4 The Social and Economic Impacts of Galley Slaves

Slave ownership was one of the keynotes of social and economic life in Birgu and Malta, epitomized by the galley slavery situation. Abela and Buttigieg (2018) note that slaves, including galley slaves, were much more than workers; they were marketable and commodified entities that could be readily purchased, sold, or ransomed. This developed into a complex system that was essential to Order economics. Muscat (2003) elaborates on the economic worth of galley slaves. Their labour was needed to man galleys, which were crucial in military campaigns and commercial ventures. The success of these ventures was directly linked to Birgu's and Malta's economic prosperity. Meanwhile, socially, galley slaves created an underclass in Maltese society (Smith 2022). In their slave letter analysis, Zammit and Lahlali (2017) indicate that despite their status, slaves maintained social relations and participated in limited economic activities. This shows a more sophisticated social structure than one might expect. Agius (2013) recognizes the nature of religious and cultural tensions this phenomenon created within a predominantly Catholic society. These social tensions had ramifications, underpinning prevailing attitudes toward slaves, and added a multicultural character to the waterfront community of Birgu.

2.5 The Representation of Galley Slaves in Historical Narratives

Galley slaves have so far remained in the shadows of dominant narratives about Malta's maritime past, with nearly exclusive emphasis laid on the successes of the Order of St. John and the strategic advantage accruing to the island. According to Wettinger (2002), despite the

ubiquitous presence of slaves in Maltese society during the Order's rule, their stories have often been relegated to the periphery of historical discourse. This underrepresentation has created a skewed view of Malta's maritime past, particularly concerning Birgu. Palmer's (2021) seminal work on galley slaves has done much toward redressing this imbalance. It is through detailed records of their daily lives, working conditions, and contributions that Palmer provides regarding galley slaves that one obtains a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of Malta's maritime heritage. Muscat (2003) also states that the labour of galley slaves was not merely incidental but foundational to the naval power of the Order, hence elevating them to higher significance in history. Slave letters, translated and analysed by Zammit and Lahlali (2017), give an insight into everyday life that had never been seen before.

These primary sources contradict the traditional narrative of the passive slave but, instead, show their agency, resilience, and the complex social networks they maintained despite their oppressed circumstances. As Zammit and Lahlali show, these letters humanize the slaves, turning faceless labourers into individuals who had hopes, fears, and personal histories. However, the representation of slaves in official records is not straightforward. The Library of Congress (2015) warns that Inquisition records and other official documents often reflect the bias and preconceptions of those in power and can distort understanding of slave experiences. It is this insight that has to underline the recourse to a critical approach toward sources and a need for diverse approaches in their integration into the reinterpretation of the galley slaves' experiences. The historiography regarding the subject of galley slaves in Malta, mainly in Birgu, is expected to change in this direction; it reflects something more global, introducing increasingly broad and subtle historical accounts (Agius 2020).

2.6 Gaps in Current Historical Narratives

The research has identified important omissions in the current representations of Birgu's maritime heritage in historical narratives and tourist representations, notably that of the galley slave. Absence alone suggests an incomplete picture of this city's history. It also fosters a discourse that disregards the contribution of the enslaved, typically focusing on the achievements of the Knights of St. John and relating more to the strategic place of Birgu within Mediterranean naval conflicts. These themes have considerable importance, yet in their

dominance, they overshadow the experiences and contributions of galley slaves. An analysis of popular history books, tourist guides, and site interpretations reveals evidence of slaves often appearing fleetingly, often as nameless and faceless labour. Through these representations of this galley era, tourism has enabled guided tours, constructions, and displays at museums that often romanticize the maritime power of an age without addressing the human cost in real detail.

Therefore, site interpretations from such major sites as the Maritime Museum or Fort St. Angelo, along with materials of what the structure was made of, or constructed upon, include little to no information on slaves and their roles in creating or maintaining the major features. This selective handling of history does not only do injustice to the memory of those enslaved but also denies visitors an insight into a wider view of complex past. Furthermore, according to the reviewed literature, there seem to be no physical markings or memorials allocated to galley slaves along Birgu's waterfront. While various plaques and monuments do feature knights alongside events of note, very few, if any, mark space that was occupied by slaves. This physical absence in the landscape mirrors an erasure in historical narratives. Most obvious is the lack of slave voices within these contemporary representations. While a few personal accounts and letters existed from slaves, one often fails to mobilize such voices either in standard historical accounts or in tourist material. This omission silences important parts of Birgu's erstwhile population and gives a relatively one-sided view of this city's otherwise rich maritime history.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a qualitative approach, placing the qualitative dimension of historical research side-by-side with spatial analysis to probe the role that galley slaves played in shaping Birgu's maritime landscape throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. In this regard, the design will be attuned to the multifaceted nature of the research questions, drawing on literature together with field observations. It will allow for an in-depth analysis of historical documents, physical remains, and spatial relationships in the waterfront area of Birgu. The qualitative component of the research relates to the interpretation of historical texts, eyewitness accounts, and official documents in the reconstruction of everyday life regarding

galley slaves (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan 2022). At the same time, the spatial analysis—mapping and interpreting the physical locations of activities associated with galley slaves—will integrate historical data with contemporary geographical information (Charles et al. 2024). This two-way approach allows for subtlety and an understanding of how galley slaves influenced and were influenced by the Birgu maritime landscape, laying a foundation for the development of a more inclusive narrative reconstruction.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This study, therefore, draws on several sources for data collection, representing a range of angles to draw a comprehensive picture of the experiences of galley slaves and their impacts on the maritime landscape of Birgu, presenting a rounded representation. This was carried out through collecting the following primary data collection by means of the following:

1. **Personal Accounts Analysis:** Examination of the existing personal narratives, letters, or testimonies of galley slaves or about them by others. These will include the letters analysed by Zammit and Lahlali (2017).
2. **Site Analysis and Mapping:** Detailed observations and documentation of the Birgu waterfront, aimed at identifying and mapping the structures, spaces, and features potentially associated with the activities of galleys for the garrison and of galley slaves. This will be coupled with photographic documentation and sketches.
3. **Review Secondary Literature:** A fully expansive academic literature search includes books, journal articles, conference papers, and other types of work that deal with the subject of galley slavery, Malta's maritime history, and the social history of Birgu.
4. **Visual Sources Analysis:** Consideration of historical maps, paintings, and engravings of Birgu's waterfront and galley operations to identify information regarding spatial organization and day-to-day life. These methods aim at producing a multi-dimensional data set that can be jointly cross-referenced and validated from various information sources.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The techniques that will be employed in analysing the data collected will ensure a nuanced and thorough interpretation.

1. **Historical Content Analysis:** The textual data from the secondary literature will be read through systematically to identify themes, patterns, and key information regarding the galley slaves and how they relate to the maritime landscape of Birgu (Das, Jain & Mishra 2018).
2. **Spatial Analysis:** Mapping and analysing, through Geographic Information Systems, the spatial distribution of galley slave-related sites and activities along Birgu's waterfront (Charles et al. 2024). It will require overlaying historical data onto geographical information from the present time.
3. **Comparative analysis:** Cross-referencing information taken from various sources with each other to validate the findings and show discrepancies or corroboration in historical accounts (Rihoux & Lobe 2009).
4. **Narrative analysis:** Personal accounts or testimonies will be interpreted to provide significant insight into the lived experiences of galley slaves and their perceptions of the maritime environment (Mahmoud & Tehseen 2021).
5. **Spatial Use:** Visual analysis will be used for the understanding of historic visual representations to acquire information about the physical layout and space use in the waterfront area in Birgu (Charles et al. 2024). These analytical techniques will be iteratively applied, enhancing the interpretations of their findings by continuously including new data and emerging patterns.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Though the bulk of this research is based on historical data, several ethical considerations are taken into account. Sensitive historical material deserves respectful treatment. Since slavery was a traumatizing period of history, all its historical accounts and personal narrations should be treated with the utmost respect and sensitivity (Klein 2016). There is a need to recognize biases in historical sources. How the biases of the records of history, more so from the vantage point created at the time by dominant social groups, will be critically examined (Klein 2016). Efforts will be taken to project a fair and accurate representation of the galley slaves' experiences, without sensationalism or speculation. Accordingly, this research will deal with discussions concerning various cultural and religious backgrounds of galley slaves in

a manner that faithfully, yet respectfully, represents these aspects for those groups of people (Brazelton 2021). The study will maintain records of its sources, the methods employed, and the limitations to being transparent and replicable. These ethical considerations will, therefore, guide all procedures involved in the research, from data collection to the analysis and presentation of the findings.

4.0 Results, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Mapping Galley Slave Presence in Birgu

Spatial analysis of the Birgu waterfront revealed several key areas associated with galley slave activities in these two centuries.

The first is the Galley Arsenal. Located in the middle of Birgu's waterfront, the arsenal was the centre for the construction, maintenance and storage of galleys. Analysis indicates that this area was the focal point of galley slave labour. Historical records and architectural remnants suggest that the arsenal complex included workshops, storage facilities, and temporary holding areas for slaves (Muscat 2002). It was spatially organized around the hierarchical nature of galley operations, with clear delineations between areas accessible to slaves and areas reserved for knights and free labourers.

Darsena (Galley Creek), a natural inlet now partially filled, served as the main galley docking area. Mapping from the analysis shows moorings, repair facilities, and supply storerooms along its shores in a complex array. Galley slaves were very familiar with this space since, often under heavy guard, it was here that they embarked and disembarked from vessels (Agius 2020). The narrow confines of the Darsena created a controlled environment easily monitored for the management of slave movements. In addition, although no intact structure remains, the research found probable locations of slave quarters in the waterfront area (Agius 2020). Characterized by cramped spaces and minimal amenities, these were strategically located to keep slaves near their work sites yet separate them from the general population. The proximity of these quarters to the edge of the water allowed easy access to the galleys, as well as acting as a constant reminder of their true purpose as a slave.

Regarding punishment and control points, the article has identified several sites that were almost certainly associated with the punishment and control of slaves. These include

the remains of pillories, located near public squares but also along roads connecting work and residential areas at focal vantage positions overlooking the surroundings (Palmer 2021). In this regard, the siting of these control points reflects, in some part, the tight surveillance of the galley slaves, and their limited circulation, within the urban fabric of Birgu. Furthermore, one of the interesting findings our project has encountered is the presence of small, hidden spaces that likely served either a religious or cultural function for the enslaved. This speaks to the significant element of resiliency and retention among the slave communities, many of which were located in areas that appear to have had less oversight along the waterfront area. As such, the areas are not just a device for keeping track of the physical presence of galley slaves at Birgu but one that spatially mapped complex social and power relationships. The embedding of slave-related sites within broader maritime infrastructure highlights their integral yet marginalized position in the functioning of the waterfront at Birgu.

4.2 Analysis of Living Conditions and Social Roles

The consideration of the living conditions and social functions of the galley slave in Birgu consequently brings out a nuanced picture of their life as one of hardship, adaptation, and sublimated resistance. Primary sources shed some light on everyday realities faced by these men, helped by Inquisition records supplemented by rare personal testaments. The living conditions of galley slaves were poor. Available literature shows that slaves lived in cramped and unsanitary quarters next to the water's edge. Such spaces, frequently converted warehouses or cellars, were barely protected from the elements and lacked any semblance of sanitation, creating ideal environments where disease could spread (Muscat 2004). Diet was another critical element of the general living conditions of slaves. An analysis of the ships' logs and their provisioning records reveals that galley slaves experienced a poor diet consisting basically of biscuits, beans, and, occasionally, salted meat (Muscat 2002). This could be seen as a calorie-dense diet that was nutritionally poor, and which contributed to health problems among the slave populations.

While these were difficult conditions, the research shows that galley slaves played a lot of social roles beyond their fundamental role of serving as oarsmen. The most highly skilled slaves, especially those who had shipbuilding or navigation experience, were most often accorded relative privilege, sometimes negotiating better living conditions or lighter rowing

duties (Palmer 2021). Other slaves served as interpreters or intermediaries, using their linguistic skills to bridge communication gaps between the captors and their fellow slaves (Zammit & Lahlali 2013).

The social order among the slaves was sophisticated and dynamic. Examination of the records and administrative sources shows that origin, skill, and length of captivity influenced a slave's social status. Regarding origin, for example, North African Muslim slaves were close-knit, showing solidarity while still keeping their various cultural practices. Sub-Saharan Africans commonly faced further discrimination from various quarters (Wettinger, Godfrey 2002). Evidence was uncovered during the research of the limited economic activities by galley slaves for their benefit, unlike shore slaves, who were allowed to engage in selling to earn money. Some were allowed a little trading or to run a craft in their spare time and thereby make money for supplementary food or to ransom themselves (Palmer 2021). This adds another dimension of slave agency acting within the confines of captivity. For this reason, religious practice became very important in slave social life. Officially prohibited from practising Islam, many Muslim slaves continued to secretly practice this religion (Zammit & Lahlali 2013). The existence of secret prayer spaces and the persistence of accusations of crypto-Islamic practices in Inquisition records attest to a strong persistence of religious identity among the slave population.

4.3 Contributions to Birgu's Maritime Landscape

These galley slaves had a growing impact on the Birgu maritime landscape by realizing its physical and cultural features. Their involvement became vital in building and maintaining principal structures associated with this maritime scape such as quays, fortifications, shipyards, storerooms, and the like. Evidence of that work can be seen in the Darsena docks and Fort St Angelo, which further enhanced the defence and maritime capabilities of Birgu

draw on slaves skilled in carpentry, caulking, and rigging. Their work produced galleys that symbolized the Order's naval power across the Mediterranean.

Their work in the galleys and the shipyards benefited the naval economy in trade and military operations. This economic effect is documented in both the primary and secondary materials (Abela, 2012). Thus, galley slave labour was indispensable to the maritime sector and played

an essential role in the supply of the needs of the urban population. Through their activities in shipbuilding, repair, and other aspects of naval and commercial operations, the slaves helped maintain Birgu as a core of the naval and commercial industry (Abela, 2012). Their work brought real economic benefits to many areas of the economy—trade, defence, and other industries—contributing to the city's economic pillar. Without this forced labour, the cost of manning the galleys and the maritime infrastructure within the maritime city of Birgu would have been far higher.

Culturally, the galley slaves' background created a unique setting of multiculturalism in the galley. They served as interpreters and intercultural mediators, influencing local dialects and further facilitating trade and diplomacy. Local culinary traditions were also influenced by the subtle integration of North African and Middle Eastern flavours and techniques (Agius, Abela & Borg 2013).

Galley slaves communicated with local people, thus impacting the culture of the people in Birgu. Such interactions, sometimes involving elements of conflict and exploitation, formed a part of the social network of the area. Cassar (1976) notes such cultural exchanges, which are evident in the records highlighted in this paper. As much as they were oppressed whose existence mainly entailed undergoing cruel treatment, galley slaves came with cultural diversity that imposed itself subtly in the host society. That process entailed linguistic, gustatory, and knowledge transfers, which are present in the cultural diversity of Birgu.

This was furthered by the continuous supply of slaves, which created a strongly developed ransom economy in Birgu. This involved intricate structures of brokers and negotiators that affected the financial life of the city, creating special social dynamics between the captives, captors, and free citizens.

4.4 Proposed Alternative Tour Route and Narrative

The alternative tour route proposed for the waterfront of Birgu would help in integrating the story of the galley slaves, generally bypassed in history, into a wider narrative. This revised approach to touring involves a more inclusive and sophisticated understanding of the maritime heritage of the city. Currently, the former Galley Arsenal houses the Maritime Museum, which could be included as part of a tour showcasing the life

of galley slaves at sea. This could be coupled with a tour including the various buildings along the waterfront, where informative panels could display translated accounts from slaves. The itinerary would include the former slave quarters and working areas and would use augmented reality to visualize historical scenes. Added to this would be a visit to the sites of clandestine slave religious practices, elaborating on issues of cultural resilience. Intimately connected with the use of slave labour are Fort St. Angelo, the Caraffa storerooms and the old bakery, where the various skills of galley slaves could be highlighted. Such a tour would include personal stories and add material for reflection as a means to encourage critical engagement with Birgu's complex past.

5.0 Final Arguments

5.1 Conclusion

This study has focused on the roles of galley slaves in redefining the historical structures of Birgu's maritime domain. The findings present the enslaved not as passive subjects but as active, yet unwilling, participants in shaping the physical, social, and cultural cloth of Birgu's waterfront. The study realized this by establishing the living standards, roles, functions, and cultural relationships of the galley slaves in the 16th and 17th centuries. There were high mortality rates for the slaves, and many cases of diseases. The cramped and unhygienic living conditions, poor diet, and harsh punishment methods could present tour participants with a gritty picture of these people's existence. The galley slaves were not limited to pulling oars. However, they had other production jobs like maintaining the ships, constructing other parts, and doing any rigorous work needed which relied on more than manual labour. Galley slaves played complex and diverse roles in naval and urban construction. They were also needed for the city's protection, including Birgu's stronghold. They were used as a source of forced labour to participate in commerce, hence boosting Birgu's economic growth. Their work was necessary in helping with maritime, shipbuilding, and urban prerequisites that formed the basis for the city's economic base. These slaves were essential to Birgu's economy.

Galley slaves affected the cultural life of Birgu because the harsh conditions of exploitation changed the cultural outlook of the society. Thus, their presence and encounter with the local people influenced the social structure of the area. The cultural interactions with the knights,

as much as they had been characterized by conflict, extended a social perspective to the historical account of Birgu. Several locations in Birgu have been noted to be associated with galley slaves. Further sites have been identified, indicating this bonded labour force's unseen efforts. These sites, such as slave prisons, shipyards, and fortifications, substantiate the slaves' essential contributions to Birgu's maritime and urban heritage.

Recommendations

Given the findings, the research would strongly recommend a revision of the historical narrative and tourism representation in Birgu. Such a process should involve:

1. Developing an inclusive route for a tour to places related to the history of galley slaves.
2. Designing informative displays and digital resources that give voice to slave experiences.
3. Erecting a monument or establishing a quiet place in remembrance of the contributions and sufferings of the slaves.
4. Developing programmes for training local guides to ensure the presentation of Birgu's maritime history is as harmonious and coordinated as possible.
5. Collaborating with international scholars and descendant communities for further research and commemoration of this aspect of Birgu's past.

5.3 Evaluation, Reliability and Validity

The strength of this research lies in the fact that we have applied a strict methodological approach that involved carrying out an extensive literature review and a spatial analysis. However, we must recognize several obvious limitations: first, the lack of personal accounts by the slaves themselves, and second, the existence of biases in the official historical records. Because of this, we employed data triangulation together with a critical spirit in analysing the historical documentation. Accordingly, the results presented here could be the basis for the reinterpretation of the maritime heritage of Birgu. The research acknowledges that this is a partial process, and views can be enriched by further research, including in-depth archaeological investigations and comparative studies with other Mediterranean ports. Respectfully, therefore, this study should be considered a step towards a broader and deeper

understanding of Birgu's colourful maritime history, fully recognizing the indispensable value of galley slaves in the moulding of this distinctive urban landscape.

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Appendix: HND TG Long Essay Tour Itinerary

Welcome to "The Voices and Places of Galley Slaves: Remembering the Forgotten Along Birgu's Waterfront", a special tour that, through unique storyboarding, spotlights an essential yet overlooked aspect of Birgu's vibrant maritime history during the 16th and 17th centuries: the lives and contributions of galley slaves. As we walk these historic streets and stand before centuries-old buildings, we will uncover hidden stories about people who played a vital, if involuntary, role in shaping this remarkable city's maritime landscape. More than a historical tour, this tour is an exercise in empathy and understanding. Tracing the footsteps of galley slaves from their arrival at the busy port of Birgu to their gruelling work on land and sea, we reconstitute the stories of those whose voices have been silenced by history.

This is a walking tour along Birgu's waterfront with easy access to all the stops, except for where we have to use the narrow inter-communicating stairway leading to the Caraffa galley storerooms.

Starting point: Marina (Introduction in front of the Yacht Marina)

This was the arrival point for thousands of galley slaves—the end of their gruelling journey and the start of their servitude to the Order of St John.

- Initial arrival processing and sorting: Once on the dry land, the new arrivals are quickly sorted. Officials of the Order, move among them, assessing their potential value. Those who appear strong and healthy are carried at once to the galleys.

First stop: St Lawrence Street in front of St Lawrence church

- Using St Lawrence church as a springboard to explain the distinct categories of galley slaves and how they could be identified by their physical features (as the church houses a painting executed by a Forzato Philipo Paladin)

Second stop: Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (originally built by the crew of the Orders galleys in the 17th century). The efforts for conversion were systematic and persistent. Slaves were compelled to attend mass, and priests preached to them in their native languages. Better treatment or even freedom was always dangled as a carrot before them if they converted.

- Advantages and disadvantages of conversion
- Ransom

Third stop: View to the Grand Harbour (where once stood the Palace of the Arsenal's Superintendent)

- Impact of the galley slaves on the fabric of the city: superstitions, spells, language and food.

Fourth stop: Bagno di Schiavi (St Lawrence Street)

- What happened to the galleys slaves once arrived at these premises?
- Introduction of coffee to the islands
- Description of the living conditions of the galley slaves

Fifth stop: Fort St Angelo

- Galley slaves' roles in fortress construction and maintenance

Sixth stop: Caraffa galley storerooms

- Galley slaves' roles in the preparation of supplies and provisions

Seventh stop: Palace of the Galley Captains

- Relation of galley slaves to their captains
- Hierarchy of galley slaves

Eighth stop: Palace of the General of the Galleys

- General organization of the Galley Fleet and the role of the galley slaves

Ninth stop: Order's Common Treasury/Bakery

- Role of galley slaves in food production
- Diet and health at sea.

Tenth stop: The Arsenal of the Order

- Living conditions at sea
- Rowing techniques and endurance
- Experiences in naval battles