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[p.123] THE XPRUNARA

Joseph Muscat

The *xprunara* originated in Malta and was always designated as such,[1] although a few were copied, or bought and operated in Sicily, Livorno and North Africa.[2] As the Maltese word *xprunara* is part of the local vocabulary the Maltese rending ought to be preferred to the rendition of *speronara*.

If we are to search for the first references to a *xprunara* we have to go back to the sixteenth century. In Malta at that period one would find the brigantine from which most probably the *xprunara* evolved.[3] The open boat type brigantine with a *sperone* at the bows, double ended, using sails and oars first appeared in the Mediterranean in the thirteenth century and was very popular in the Muslim world. The *xprunara* was influenced by the brigantine and in time it developed the use of movable side washboards. The first written information about the *xprunara* goes back to 1576[4] but more reliable sources refer to the years 1614, 1618 and 1663.[5] The first dated iconographical evidence of a *xprunara* is found at Tal-Ħerba Sanctuary, in an *ex-voto* painting dated 1740. After that date one can trace the complete evolution of the *xprunara* up to the twentieth century mostly in the great quantity of *ex-voto* paintings in many churches in Malta and Gozo.

Influences on Maltese boat building

It is believed that the first men to cross over to Malta came from Sicily. Communications by sea continued for centuries influencing the whole social **[p.124]** aspect of the Maltese Islands.[6] The Phoenicians, a great seafaring people, came to Malta and their influence must have been great. Unfortunately, they never left one design of their ships in Malta. Local boatbuilding must have been influenced by their expertise but no one can qualify the extent of this influence.[7] The ship graffiti at the Tarxien Temples do not offer any basis for a comparison of the Maltese type of boat building with that of early ships.[8]

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1 P.A. Hennique, *Les Caboteurs et Pecheurs de la Cote de Tunisie*, Nice, 1989, 49.

2 NAR Lib 3 April 1746 mentions the *xprunara* of Terranova; D. Manetti, Marina militare e costruzioni navali nel Granducato di Toscana (1815-1859) in T. Fanfani, *La Penisola Italiano e il Mare*, Napoli, 1993, pp.402-3; Hennique, 52.

3 J. Muscat, Le xprunara - Un batiment traditionnel maltais, in *Neptunia*, no. 185 March 1992, Paris, 23.

4 P.P. Castagna, *Lis Storia ta' Malta bil-gżejjer tagħha*, facsimile edition, Malta 1985, I, 22 might have misinterpreted the nomenclature of the *xprunara* when it should have been a galleot.

5 NLM 413, 98; AOM 1759, f.426v; MMV 1, 87.

6 J. Muscat, Influences Affecting Maltese Ships and Boats, unpublished paper read at the Conference "The Evolution of Wooden Ship Building in the Eastern Mediterranean, 18th-19th Centuries" held in Athens in November, 1992.

7 J. Muscat, The Dgħajsa - In Memoriam in *Mariner's Mirror*, London, vol.77, no.4, 1991, 389.

8 J. Muscat, Maltese Ship Graffiti in Villain-Gandossi, C., *Mediaeval Ships and the Birth of Technological Societies*, vol.2, Malta, 1991, *passim*.

Sicilian influence can be traced on local boat building both in structure affinities and linguistic terminology. The Arab domination of the Maltese Islands lasted for centuries and North African influences must have affected the local boat building trade. The same type of boat must have sailed in the central Mediterranean between the countries of North Africa and Sicily right up to the thirteenth century. One would have expected that the long Arab or Saracen domination of Malta would have left clear signs of influences on local boats but it is not easy to establish these similarities.

The arrival of the Knights of St. John, brought a degree of French technological expertise especially from 1700 onwards that can be traced to present day Maltese boats.[9] As a general rule these boats are built exactly to the same pattern from family *galvi* or moulds and the experience was transmitted from father to son. But the uniformity of the design is complemented by the diversity of colour schemes and decorative elements which two features are to be found on modern Maltese boats.[10]

The now obsolete *xprunara* was no exception to this line of development and it followed stricily the Maltese way of boat building. The *Tal-Latini* boat was the direct descendant of the *xprunara* and one can still see the last example of such a boat in Gozo.

[p.125] A Maltese boat invariably shows a high forestem, little or no sheer except at the bows and stern where it rises smoothly to match the stems, moustaches at the bows and the stem, side washboards in the case of boats sailing outside the Grand Harbour as well as side catwalks or gangway deck and tambourets at the bows and the stem. The *xprunara*, apart from such characteristics, showed a beak or spur at the bows which was reminiscent of the long functional *sperone* found on the first *xprunari*. Those boats were double ended open boats, without a deck, an awning at the stern and sails and oars. The brightly coloured *xprunara* was rated as a small vessel.

Registration of *Xprunari*

The registration of ships under the Order of St. John in Malta followed certain rules of control which were comparatively loose by modern standards. There was no direct checking on the tonnage of merchant ships although warships were rated as in any other country. Loading was left entirely to the discretion of the master with one condition. He had to certify when applicable, that certain cargoes were loaded on deck since such cargoes were not usually covered by an insurance policy.[11] As the *xprunara* was an open boat or sometimes half decked, masters were at liberty to take on board what they deemed fit for each trip. It must be pointed out that the greater ships, employed on the grain carrying trade for the *Università*, were actually checked by two *capi mastri* of the Arsenal, certifying that the ship was fit for sailing and that the loading mark in the hold had been respected.[12]

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[9] In the eighteenth century out of 300 Knights who resided in Malta 200 were French; their influence is reflected in the Maltese language, too.

[10] Muscat, The Dgħajsa, 393 *et seq*.

[11] *Del Diritto Municipale di Malta*, Malta 1784, 197-8; AGPV 44, 1 for a sample of *Polizza di Sigurtà*.

[12] Del Diritto,197.

After the Napoleonic Wars, under British rule, Malta experienced a period of great mercantile expansion. British standards replaced the old methods adopted by shipbuilders and merchants under the Knights. Registration of ships became more comprehensive and included the nomenclature of the ship, its name, tonnage, number of decks and masts, dimensions of length beam and hold, description of deck, bowsprit, stern, galleries and of the figurehead if applicable. The registration included also the name of the master shipbuilder, the launching date and details of the owner. The registration of *xprunari* included such amendments indicating modifications affecting the capacity of the vessel such **[p.126]** as the lengthening of the hull and the transformation of the vessel from a simple boat to a *xprunara*.[13]

With the availability of such data for the period 1820-55 one has a wealth of information about *xprunari* when compared to the rather meagre information about these vessels as described in the records of the Order. Yet the pre-British records abound with inventories, descriptions of cargoes carried by the *xprunari* and the personal reasons given for the movements of passengers from one country to another.[14]

The wave of innovation under the British rule affected also the mentality of some local masters of *xprunari* who chose to adopt profane names for their vessels instead of names of saints. While all the *xprunari* operating under the Knights' rule bore the name of a saint[15] under British rule such names as *Abbondanza, Gioiosa, Sirena, Giannina, Giuseppina, Susanna, Speranza, Rondinella, Carmela, Superba, Generosa* and others were introduced; however some *xprunari* retained the names of saints. The *xprunara* was generally allotted a feminine name although there are a few instances when the name *Salvatore* was used.[16]

The registration of ships during the period 1820-55 included fifty *xprunari*; when such boats changed the ownership they were registered *de novo*. The registration footnotes included such events as sales of part or the whole number of shares of a boat, when declared unseaworthy or lost at sea or taken as a prize of war. From time to time, registration certificates were to be shown when required in other countries as a means of identification. The change of name of a *xprunara* often created confusion in further registration and identification. The case of the *xprunara Pace vis-a-vis* the Consul in Tripoli is one such example.[17]

[p.127] From a perusal of the Register of Ships built in Malta, one could establish the principal master shipbuilders working in the French Creek area who constructed the *xprunari* for the period 1820-55. It seems that the Piscopo family, specialised in building such vessels, Giocchino Albano and Francesco Orlando both of Cospicua, Antonio Gauci from Vittoriosa

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[13] J. Muscat, Maltese Ship and Boatbuilding 18th and 19th Centuries in K. Damianidis, *The evolution of wooden shipbuilding in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 18th and 19th centuries* First International Workshop, Athens, 1993, 76-77.

[14] NAR Lib is a series of booklets which contain interesting material as regards the movements of passengers from one country to another; NAMCons contains hundreds of volumes which show the inventories of local ships.

[15] The study of *ex-voto* paintings showed that saint names were always used on the *xprunari*. It has been observed that in the series of NAR Lib a double name of *Il Santissimo Crocefisso* followed by another saint name has always been used.

[16] NAR RSB *passim*.

[17] The study of the Register of Ships Built in Malta provided valuable information about the latest methods of registering shipping in Malta under British rule; NAR RSB *passim*.

and the brothers Antonio and Agostino Piscopo built just one *xprunara* each. But Giuseppe Piscopo, Antonio Piscopo both from Senglea and Benedetto Ellul from Cospicua, launched nine, four and four *xprunari* respectively. Lorenzo Drago from Cospicua, Agostino Piscopo from Senglea and Lorenzo Piscopo from Cospicua constructed four, two and two respectively. The more renowned ship builders of the period such as Salvatore and Lorenzo German and Gioacchino Bonnici from Senglea and Giuseppe Camilleri from Cospicua, while concentrating on the construction of brigs and barques never refused a commission to build *xprunari*. There was an instance when four *xprunari* were being built concurrently in four different slipways at the French Creek.[18]

The Register of Ships built in Malta provides technical information for the study of Maltese ships. The *xprunara* was built by master shipbuilders and perhaps also by non-professionals following traditional methods which had proved their worth over the centuries. No plans of a *xprunara* or other Maltese boat exist; indeed they were not required. All builders applied the rules which govern the design of the middle section of a boat. Such a practice continues to the present day. The owner of the *xprunara* dictates the length of his boat in the Maltese measure, the *xiber*, and the builder translates the length into feet and inches. A boatbuilder at Marsaxlokk is still in possession of an old type of conversion wooden ruler showing the *xiber* on one side and the equivalents in feet and inches on the other.[19] Once the length is agreed between the owner and the builder, other dimensions would be calculated following the family trade "secrets"[20] governing the *galvu* or moulds. While all *xprunari* were built to the same pattern the length between the perpendiculars determined the size and hold capacity. A twenty six foot *xprunara* registered a three ton burthen[21] while a fifty foot one a forty five ton burthen.[22]

[p.128] Inventories

Whenever the *xprunara* was hired to undertake a journey transporting merchandise an inventory by a public notary was compiled for insurance purposes. In some cases the estimated value of the *xprunara* was assessed by Michele Scolaro who was a *capo mastro* employed in the galley Arsenal of the Order at Birgu.[23] The one masted *xprunara* named *Il Santissimo Crocifisso e la Madonna del Rosario* belonging to master Santo Vella was valued at one hundred and ninety *scudi* on 4 March 1740[24] while another one masted *xprunara*, *Il Santissimo Crocifisso e l'Anime del Purgatorio* was estimated at a value of one hundred *scudi* on 5 November 1739.[25]

The study of such inventories provides further information about such vessels which were equipped with regular navigational instruments, cooking utensils and the necessary carpenters' and caulkers' tools for minor repairs. The navigational instruments included a compass or one or two hour glasses and a small lamp, all kept in a small wooden cupboard

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[18] Muscat, Maltese Ship, 76-77.
[19] Information kindly provided by Mr Joseph Maniscalco of Marsaxlokk.
[20] J. Muscat, The Arsenal 1530-1798 in L. Buġeja, *Birgu A Maltese Maritime City*, vol. l, Malta 1993, 274.
[21] NAR RSB 84.
[22] NAR RSB 20.
[23] Muscat, The Arsenal, 291.
[24] NAMCons 4 March 1740.
[25] NAMCons 5 November 1739.

known as *chiesola* or *gisiola*. A great lantern was hoisted on the mast at night but the *xprunara* also carried two lanterns. When caught on a deserted beach there was provision for the preparation of meals and therefore the *xprunara* was provided with great or small copper pots, frying pans and gridirons.[26]

Notwithstanding the restricted space available on the vessel it managed to carry barrels of drinking water and wine, water wooden jugs and wooden shovels for bailing when necessary. The frequent beaching of a *xprunara* necessitated the carrying of a number of wooden keel blocks, wooden and iron stakes, a great wooden mallet and various lengths and types of strong ropes and strops. A small, movable wooden capstan[27] which was operated by two levers while fixed strongly on land to pull the *xprunara* on the beach was also carried.

[p.129] The stern awning was always rigged in place for the benefit of paying passengers but there were sometimes two other tents. One was rigged on an *antenna* when the *xprunara* was caught in bad weather and the other was rigged on land for the night or other circumstances for the benefit of the passengers when the *xprunara* was forced to land on a deserted beach. Besides the tents, the inventories also include two or three items of waterproof clothing *incerata*.

A two masted *xprunara* was provided with two anchor cables, one five hundred and fifty feet and other four hundred feet long and carried also a reserve *antenna*, oars and tillers. Space was to be provided for a sail or two when they were not in use. Both spritsails, one great and one small, with a jib, were rigged up only in fine weather, otherwise two would have to be stowed away when the boat faced a slight sea. A two masted lateen rigged *xprunara* would normally sail under two sails; a third emergency sail and a jib were carried. Remembering that passengers quite often had to take on board their personal luggage together with a supply of food for the duration of the journey, the hold capacity of a *xprunara* was quite limited.[28]

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[26] The study of numerous inventories for *xprunari* contained in the NAMCons series constitutes the basis for a thorough knowledge about the evolution of the ship.

[27] W. Schellinks, Journey to the South 1664-1665, Rome 1983, pl. 48b shows a picture of a wooden portable capstan; see also NAMCons 21 *Inventario della Barca speronara nominata Il SSmo Crocifisso padroneggiata da Pn. Francesco Camilleri* where it mentions amongst other items *più un argano*.

[28] Examination of inventories from 1701 to 1737 in NAMCons proved to be extremely interesting. The following is an inventory for the *xprunara* whose master was Bartolomeo Agius:

Il buco
Un albero e due laste
due vele et un pollacone
tre tende
otto remi un timone
cinque parati
un argano con suoi fornimenti
due tagli e due galochi e due mazzi
un capo con sua ferro
un capo per tirare et una maglietta
una bragha un caldarone

Sail Evolution

The sail evolution on the *xprunara* merits attention as the boat's history spans over three hundred years. Maltese masters strove to obtain better speeds under different weather conditions. It must be emphasised that the *xprunara* sailed all **[p.130]** through the year and its crew were always ready to adapt themselves to the ever changing conditions of the elements and the exigencies of the market when for economic reasons, speed was the main asset.[29]

The early *xprunara* like its forerunner, the brigantine, must have sailed under one lateen sail with a jib at the bows. As early as the end of the fifteenth century the simple rig of a spritsail made its appearance on boats. The spritsail, or *tarkija*,[30] immediately attracted the attention of Maltese crews. A *xprunara* was manned by a relatively small crew when one considered the distances covered. The sprit rig required very few men to handle it and was the ideal sail arrangement for the *xprunara*. But greater versions of the vessel introduced a second mast which necessitated the installation of the lateen rig on both masts with a jib or *pollakkun*.

The sprit and lateen rig on *xprunari* continued concurrently up to the second half of the nineteenth century when the greater boats with a length of sixty feet introduced the third mast at the stern. Such a *xprunara* with lateen sails on three masts and a jib was an indication that Maltese masters were competing with the greater and faster brigs and barks.

In the 1850s there was an attempt to add a small lateen sail at the stern rigged on a mast situated in front of or behind the awning of the passengers with a sprit rig on the main mast. The sprit rig on one mast included the larger sail for normal sailing with a jib, the smaller sail for rough weather. Both sails with the jib rigged as a topsail was the normal rig when the *xprunara* ran before the wind. The chequered white and blue, small spritsail was quite popular with local masters of *xprunari*.

By the end of the nineteenth century there were individual attempts to introduce a schooner rig on the *xprunara* when it faded out completely into obsolescence.[31]

[p.131] Roles of the *Xprunara*

The *xprunara* was primarily a passenger carrying vessel designed for speed and the accomodation of a few people under cover without any means of defence except its swiftness. Round the Grand Harbour one could always find a *xprunara* ready to go over to Sicily against payment. Such boats were built in great numbers as there was a constant communication between Malta and Sicily. One could always hire the services of those boats either from Malta or Italy. As the *xprunari* were in great demand all through the year the charges were reasonable. A trip from Naples to Malta in 1777 was effected for just two hundred *livres de*

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barrili buglioli sassoli e tutti li fornimenti della spironara.

[29] For more information about the Maltese sail cloth see Muscat, Arsenal, 297 *et seq*.

[30] One can see a model of a *ferilla* under the sprit or *tarkija* rig in the Maritime Museum Birgu.

[31] The study of the evolution of the sail arrangement on the *xprunara* was possible after examining a great number of Maltese *ex-voto* paintings which otherwise was not possible to trace except for few pages by Hennique where he explained the boat in the 1880s.

France[32] according to the itinerary of the route and the number of crew on the boat. The *xprunara* undertook much longer routes in the Mediterranean than those to Sicily when required and even ventured out of the Straits of Gibraltar.[33]

Normally two passengers were enough incentive for a master of a *xprunara* to put to sea. But when required the boat could accomodate a party of passengers and greater numbers on short crossings, say from Malta to Gozo. Religious people made frequent use of the *xprunara* as most of the religious orders in Malta depended on their respective Mother Houses in Sicily or Italy.[34] Even the Bishop of Malta residing in Reggio had his own *xprunara*.[35] Another bishop travelling on a *tartana* was put down in a *xprunara* some distance from St. Elmo and later entered the Grand Harbour.[36] This perhaps explains why the internal lining of the awning of the cabin at the stern is shown in red in one *ex-voto* painting depicting a *xprunara*. The dignitaries of the church and other nobles were treated with some distinction. When a *Ricevitore*, a high ranking officer of the Order of St. John, had to call at Augusta to pay for the supplies of biscuits consumed on the ships of the Order, his *xprunara* was for security reasons escorted by the galley squadron.[37]

[p.133] Passenger comfort was reasonable. Food was kept in a large basket[38] and passengers were expected to take their own food with them. On at least one occasion, we read about a crew who shared with the passengers their frugal supplies which were kept in their hammock.[39] They slept whenever they liked. When there were more than two passengers[40] they had to lie on the hard boards of the cabin and had to become accustomed to the rhythmical swinging of the boat. Borch wrote his diary while on the *xprunara* which danced continually but this does not seem to have affected him.[41] Moreover, the confined space of the cabin was sometimes infested by vermin causing an unpleasant and irritating itchings.[42] But at least on the non-decked *xprunara* one would never be annoyed by the bad smell from the *sentina* as experienced on all other types of decked vessels.[43] In rough weather the terrified passengers could be consoled by the hardy crew who instead of continuing on a steady course might haul down the sail and head for the nearest port or shelter waiting for better weather conditions.[44] Arriving in Malta the *xprunara* would have to approach the *Piccolo Barriera* for sanitary certification. A quarantine officer would question under oath all passengers and crew

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[32] Borch, Le Comte De, *Lettres sur la Sicile et sur L'Isle de Malthe*, Turin 1782, 6.
[33] L. Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta*, London 1805, vol. I , 114.
[34] NAR Lib 30 April 1746 and 18 October 1746 show religious and secular priests using the *xprunara* for crossing over to Sicily or Italy but there were other Maltese ships like the *tartana* in NAR Lib 15 October 1746 which amongst other passengers it carried five ecclesiastics. Various *ex-voto* paintings show religious people travelling on the *xprunari*.
[35] NLM 280, 193-4.
[36] NLM 280, 196.
[37] NLM 280, 103.
[38] P. Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta*, second edition, London 1774, 319, and Burch, 133.
[39] Borch, 14.
[40] *Arte*, 7 March 1864, 32.
[41] Borch, 42.
[42] Brydone, 323.
[43] Burch, 5.
[44] *Arte*, 7 March 1864, 32.

in a most polite manner, about the circumstances of their voyage before issuing the sanitary certificates.[45]

A typical journey from Naples to Malta entails the loading of provisions in greater quantities than the luggage carried by the passengers. That was necessary as the boat might be compelled to beach in deserted areas where one could not find any food.[46] It was customary to pull such boats ashore at the least sign of approaching bad weather.[47]

[p.133] Usually the predictions of the master of the boat as regards the weather proved to be correct and when in doubt he never faced the open sea but kept close to the coast[48]; he was able to read the signs in the sky as so many Maltese fishermen do to this very day. An imminent tempest could force a *xprunara* to beach on a deserted coast if necessary for various days.[49]

The unexpected delay left the crew and passengers without bread or meat although they usually had some wine. They all had to sleep in the *xprunara* which sometimes was equipped with mattresses and blankets.[50] So the crew had always to be prepared for the unexpected. On one occasion the sea was so rough that the beached *xprunara* had to be pulled three metres further inland.[51] As soon as weather conditions improved the passengers were advised to prepare for departure although it was almost midnight.[52] Such nocturnal seafaring was normal for the crew of a *xprunara*, to evade marauding corsairs. However, when they arrived at harbour late in the night they usually had to wait till day break before proceeding with the customary checking of passports and quarantine formalities.[53]

Another role of the *xprunara* included the carrying of great quantities of grain imported from Sicily since Feudal times.[54] The *xprunara* was kept busy also with the carrying trade together with other auxiliary vessels.

A good number of *xprunari* were employed on the transport of corn and other provisions from Sicily.[55] But sometimes the boat was also loaded with live cattle which were lashed fast to the thwarts of the boat for safety. Licata,[56] Augusta, Siracusa, Messina and other places in Sicily were also frequented by Maltese armateurs.[57] Even the few *xprunari* bought by North African masters were employed for the transportation of grain.[58]

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45 Brydone, 306.
46 Borch, 6.
47 *id*., *ibid*.
48 Burch, 5.
49 Burch, 16, 25, 26.
50 Burch, 13.
51 Burch, 14.
52 Borch, 24.
53 Borch, 42, 64.
54 Burch, 230.
55 Boisgelin, I, 114.
56 *id*., *ibid*.
57 B. Dal Pozzo, *Historia della Sacra Religione di Malta*, vol. I, Verona 1703, 788.
58 Hennique, 52.

[p.134] Most of the time the *xprunari* unloaded in one of the various warehouses in the Grand Harbour. But when required the boats had to call at St. Paul's Bay to unload the corn especially if it belonged to private owners or to the Università.[59] St. Paul's Bay was equipped to cater for such transactions and it was covered also by the right of anchorage. The place was used, from time to time, by *xprunari* to embark passengers for Sicily and Italy.[60]

Bills of lading were always required when handling cargoes of grain and other material subject to fiscal duties. The master of a *xprunara* had to fill in the certificates before departure and to hand in a copy to the *Consolato del Mare* clearly declaring the provisions and money carried.[61] For that reason the master was obliged to employ a suitable person to act as clerk of the vessel.[62] Even those boats proceeding to Gozo with cargo had to produce a bill of lading.[63]

In his plight to persuade Grand Master Pinto to procure his pardon from Rome, Chevalier de la Richardie insisted that a *xprunara* should be sent at his own expense.[64] A waiting boat was always ready at the Customs House in the Grand Harbour to convey an urgent message anywhere. Such boats were constantly employed for such work or the carrying of despatches for the Order of St. John.[65] While at sea Fra Suffren received a message to return to base in 1798 by means of a *xprunara*.[66] Exchange of letters at sea was frequent and provided a fairly efficient service for those who could afford it.[67]

[p.135] In this context the speed of the *xprunara* was well recognised and its services frequently used. It was referred to as a nimble vessel[68] and perhaps the fastest sailer in the world.[69] Brydone left a different appreciation of the speed when he said that it sailed at four miles per hour from Sicily to Malta but in face of a strong wind.[70] This means that the boat would finish the crossing in fifteen hours. It seems that the crossing would normally take twelve hours with a fair wind and most probably in less when running before the wind and helped by the oars. Others are less optimistic and suggest that such a passage of sixty miles always took about a day.[71] Brydone remarked also that there would remain a three hour

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59 Castagna, II, 150.
60 *id*., *ibid*.
61 Del Diritto, 196; *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali*, Malta 1724, 145.
62 *Leggi e Costituzioni*, 147.
63 AFFV Misc.1, f.26 says: *Transportandosi l'orzo dal Gozzo niun marinaro o padrone di barca avuto l'ordine di trasportarlo senza prima aver dal secreto un polizino di rotta al Notaro della secretia del gozzo, il quale notaro ogni qualvolta inviera orzo dovra dare al padrone della barca in scritto la quantità che avera imbarcata per presentarla nel suo arrivo o al gran visconte o ad altra persona ben vista al Secreto*.
64 C.E. Engel, *Knights of Malta*, London 1963, 148.
65 *Scientia*, vol. 37, no.3, July/September 1974.
66 F.W. Grenfell, *Malta in 1798 its capture by Napoleon*, Malta 1902, V and Appendix B.
67 AOM 1768, f.64; AOM 274, f.223; *Arte*, 7 March 1864, 32.
68 R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders*, London 1960, 248.
69 C.S. Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, London 1800, 46.
70 Brydone, 313.
71 Cavaliero, 52.

sailing period from the first sight of Malta on the horizon till arrival at the Grand Harbour.[72] Borch maintains that fifteen miles off Capo Passero, Malta would be visible.[73] If we put these two assertions together, it seems that a distance of forty five miles used to be covered in three hours, a speed of fifteen miles per hour. But Borch gives a time factor of seventeen hours for the sixty miles crossing between Malta and Sicily, a speed of three and a half miles per hour.[74] The galleys of the Order of St. John were always accompanied by their respective caiques and *feluccas*. But on two specific occasions the *xprunara* was also employed although it was never classed as a fighting unit. On 21 August 1618 three *xprunari* were impressed by the Order of St. John to accompany the galley squadron for an attack by fire on Muslim ships at Susa. Due to a poor mixture of the gunpowder only two out of the ten enemy ships were destroyed.[75] In 1663 the Council of the Order of St. John decided to replace a *felucca* of the galley squadron by a *xprunara* which was appointed to accompany the galleys *Santa Maria*, *San Giovanni* and *San Luigi* for the duration of a month each.[76]

Spying and *reconnoitre* missions for the galley squadron of the Order were always assigned to caiques, brigantines, *feluccas* and *fregati*; such boats were **[p.136]** used by Muslims as well. The *xprunara* was too conspicuous and would be recognised quite easily from a distance. Yet on 9 August 1733 one such *xprunara* was sent near Corfu to keep an eye on the movements of the Ottoman ships operating in that area.[77]

The Grand Harbour of Malta was guarded twenty four hours a day. For that purpose the Order of St. John erected a tower under Fort Ricasoli to watch out for any escaping slaves. But there was also a lateen rigged brigantine or a *xprunara* on guard duties usually moored close to Neptune's Fountain to keep an eye on all traffic entering the Harbour and at the same time to check all ship movements up to the Marsa area.[78]

Normally a *xprunara* carried no arms[79] but when assigned guard duties it would be furnished with muskets, pikes, bucklers, powder and shot and other necessary provisions. When a guard boat would not be able to stay at its normal station near Neptune's Fountain because of strong winds it would move to the opposite side under Fort Ricasoli. The *Congregazione* or committee for the running of the galley squadron controlled the guard boats.[80]

The *xprunara* on guard duties was utilised also with other caiques to tow ships out of harbour.[81] When required the same *xprunara* would sail at night to convey an urgent message to the ship squadron of the Order at sea. It would return the day after with the answer from the

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[72] Brydone, 332.
[73] Borch, 159.
[74] Borch, 158.
[75] NLM 413, 98.
[76] AOM 1759, f.426v.
[77] AOM 269, f.18.
[78] *Leggi*, 77.
[79] G.A. Vassallo, *Storia di Malta Raccontata in Compendio*, Malta 1854, 386.
[80] *Leggi*, 76.
[81] AOM 1773, f.70.

squadron commanders.[82] Even when not on guard duties the *xprunara* was engaged to tow a becalmed *tartana*.[83]

The flat and somewhat narrow *xprunara* was not adapted to rough seas.[84] For that reason it followed coast to coast routes keeping as close as possible to land,[85] except where there was the hazard of unchartered reefs.[86] Such a system **[p.137]** of sailing guaranteed a speedy approach to shore[87] at the least sign of trouble from rough seas or corsairs.[88]

The Barbary corsairs were always a hazard for the *xprunara* although it normally outpaced all their boats.[89] Even the Gozo *xprunari* were a favourite prey of the African pirates and Barbaresque vessels.[90] The sea round the Maltese Islands was infested with corsairs right up to 1830 when they were blasted out of their last stronghold in Algiers. Two Maltese *xprunari* were anchored safely at Mazzarelli in Sicily but unfortunately they were ransacked on 26 May 1798 by two well armed Turkish caiques.[91] Such stories were repeated quite often as the *xprunari* travelled between Malta and Sicily regularly.

Maltese *xprunari* were often employed on smuggling.[92] Maltese sailors were notorious corsairs and smuggling was their principal occupation.[93] Maltese corsairing continued even when Malta passed under British rule.[94] A *xprunara* with twelve crew and led by the Knight Fra Luigi d'Anneville subdued a small Barbaresque *londro*.[95] Therefore, the *xprunara* was not always that frail vessel persecuted by corsairs but it could be armed for attacking small enemy vessels when required.

When Napoleon took Malta in 1798 the Grand Harbour was teeming with *xprunari*. Ransijat referred to the many Maltese *xprunari* in the Harbour.[96] This boat was to play an important role both for the benefit of the French garrison blockaded in Valletta and by the blockaders.[97] The *xprunari* which happened to **[p.138]** be outside the Grand Harbour before Napoleon entered the Harbour with his fleet, were utilised by the Maltese and their allies for various purposes It was used by the blockaded and blockaders to carry despatches, link up communications between Africa and Sicily or Naples and for the transport of provisions.[98] The French authorities in Valletta were compelled to arm a *felucca* to intercept the *xprunari*

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82 AOM 1773, ff.81v, 82.
83 NLM 280, 194.
84 Hennique, 49; Brydone, 312.
85 Brydone, 312.
86 Borch, 64.
87 Schellinks, pl. 34; Hennique, 51.
88 Borch, 157; Brydone, 318.
89 H. Luke, *Malta An Account and an Appreciation*, London 1960, 144; Borch, 152, 157.
90 Vassallo, 386.
91 AOM 277, f.9v.
92 Boisgelin, I, 114.
93 Hennique, 49.
94 G. Segond, *Storja ta' Malta u Għawdex*, vol. 5, Malta 1930, 259.
95 AOM 271, f.256v.
96 B. Ransijat, *Assedio e Blocco di Malta* (*Giornale*), Malta 1843, 17, 49.
97 W. Hardman, *A History of Malta during the period of the French and British Occupations 1798-1815*, London 1909, 292; Segond, V, 156.
98 Hardman, XXIX, 104, 110, 292.

operating round Malta.[99] After 1800 the arrivals and departure columns of the Malta Government Gazette register a very busy level of activity of the *xprunara*.[100]

While Sicilian armateurs introduced some elements of the *xprunara* on their boats, North African masters from Hamamet, Sfax and Gerba operated with *xprunari* bought and built in Malta.[101]

The Crew

The crew of a *xprunara* normally consisted of a master and six rowers who also had to handle the sails.[102] The number of the crew could also include a master and four rowers[103] or six[104] in all depending on the size of the boat. A specially prepared *xprunara* carried a crew of twelve with a Knight in command.[105] It is rather surprising to find a Sicilian rower on a Maltese *xprunara*. It might have been one of those rare occasions when such a boat ran short of a rower and the master recruited a Sicilian for the return journey to Malta.[106]

The Maltese sailor had no specific uniform. There might have been an attempt in the 1860s to dress the *dgħajsa* man and the sailor of the *xprunara* with a sort of uniform influenced by British standards. The experiment failed. A picture depicting a Maltese sailor presents him with a typical Maltese dark blue headdress, **[p.139]** the *milsa*; which was surrounded with a broad white band on the part round the forehead. His white shirt is open at the neck and he wears a white and dark blue thin striped trousers. In place of the belt the sailor uses the traditional Maltese waist band or *terħa*, which is also striped to match the trousers. The heavy blue jacket hanging from the shoulders is fitted with white or silver buttons. The man is shown barefoot and holding a certificate or an identity card in his hand in testimony of his status.[107]

Generally speaking the crews of *xprunari* as depicted in *ex-voto* paintings are shown with white shirts and sleeves rolled up. The *milsa* was generally worn by all members of the crew in different shades of red, white, blue and green. Sometimes, the little money and the chewing tobacco was kept in the funnel end of the *milsa*. The *terħa* is shown on every crew member, sometimes of one colour and on occasion in a mixture of reds, whites, blues or browns. The Maltese sailor always kept ready well tucked in his *terħa* a short, broad knife and a pouch for the few coins that he may carry apart from those tucked away in the *milsa*. By the middle of the nineteenth century the straw hat was to replace the *milsa*, an introduction influenced by the advent of the Royal Navy. Long trousers were always worn in dark colours and sometimes shown rolled up to the knees. The Maltese expressed a trait of vanity by using a golden ring on one ear and the growing of the bushy moustache on the upper lip. The master is invariably shown standing at the tiller wearing his heavy coat complete with *capuche* or

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[99] Hardman, 170.
[100] MGG 1829, 4 February 1836.
[101] Hennique, 52, 77.
[102] AOM 277, f.9v.
[103] Hennique, 52, 77.
[104] Hardman, 170; Brydone, 324.
[105] AOM 271, f.256v; Boisgelin, I, 114.
[106] G. Belli, *Storja ta' Malta u Għawdex*, vol. 7, Malta 1932, 2496.
[107] NLM 1145 shows a picture annotated as *Marinaro di Speronara Maltese*.

hood as a protection against the spray, rain and heavy sea. In fine weather his dress followed the pattern used by his crew including also the use of the straw hat.[108]

"The *xprunari* are navigated by the most intrepid seamen;" this remark by Sonnini[109] was repeated by others who remark favourably on the expertise of Maltese sailors at sea. The Maltese had to go to the sea for their survival since prehistoric times and their activities on boats as fishermen or corsairs were always appreciated.[110] The chronicler of the Order of StJohn, Dal Pozzo, refers to a naval encounter dated 13 June 1636 between three Tripolitanian warships and the galley squadron saying that the Maltese proved themselves excellent soldiers **[p.140]** and sailors.[111] Brydone wrote in his diary that the crew of a *xprunara* preferred to sleep in their boat, "having much more confidence in their own element" and absolutely refuse to sleep under cover on the shore.[112] They had such a thorough knowledge of the normal route between Naples and Malta that they would decline the services of a pilot even where a precise knowledge of the area was essential, for safe navigation.[113] The boldness of the crew was beyond description; "though constantly exposed to the dangers of a storm, they seldom experienced any serious misfortune."[114]

The crew of the *xprunara* could be judged at their best when rowing in perfect rhythm and synchronisation. As a rule the boat travelled under sail but when greater speeds were required the crew entered in action. The oars were handled with great dexterity with the crew facing the bows pushing them, while standing, thus applying all the weight of their body. This method of rowing effected a better push on the oar with the least exertion of the muscles. Maltese rowers seldom sit down while they row.[115] The sailors of the *xprunara* were able to face the sea from all angles, under adverse conditions and undertake the longest voyages without risking the lives of the passengers.[116] Their method of breaking through the waves shortened the duration of the voyage. Such manoeuvres were possible and proved to be a credit to the method of Maltese boat builders.[117] Ransijat wrote to the *ecrivains* of the Order of St. John ordering them to produce a list of sailors formerly engaged on the ships and galleys of the Order including "also those employed on merchant and corsair ships, *esperonars et bateaux de pecheurs*." The French needed every able bodied seaman and the order by Ransijat included practically all categories. It should be noted that the *speronaro* or *xprunara* sailor and the fisherman were rated as regular sailors.[118]

[p.141] The crew on a *xprunara* was allowed a break for supper and some time for sleeping.[119] The Holy Rosary was recited every evening together with other devotions.[120] The

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[108] The examination of a number of *ex-voto* paintings was required to determine on the type of clothing worn by the *xprunara* crew.
[109] Sonnini, 46.
[110] A.A. Caruana, *Frammento Critico della Storia*, Malta 1899, 474.
[111] Dal Pozzo, vol.2, Venice 1715, 23.
[112] Brydone, 325.
[113] Borch, 13.
[114] Boisgelin, I, 114.
[115] Brydone, 313.
[116] Borch, 5.
[117] *ibid*., 6.
[118] H.P. Scicluna, *Actes et Documents*, third edition, Malta 1979.
[119] *Arte*, 7 March 1864, 32.
[120] *id*., *ibid*.

Maltese crews and passengers were good Catholics and the fear of corsairs or rough sea prompted them to daily prayers for Divine assistance.[121] Brydone left us a touching picture of the crew singing their midnight hymn to the Virgin Mary while keeping exact rhythm with the oars. Most probably the crew were singing the *Salve Regina* and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. "At last they sung us asleep, and we awoke forty miles distant from Sicily."[122] Holy pictures were carried by some passengers for protection against all mishaps.[123] While the passengers sleep the crew members are busy at their oars, and the master guides his vessel by the light of a lantern[124] hanging on the mast and a profound faith in the assistance of God and the holy saints.

Departures

Although eighteenth century primary sources are incomplete they provide samples of reliable data as regards the departures[125] of *xprunari* from Malta. The *xprunari* were always available, moored by Neptune's Fountain or in the vicinity ready to sail anywhere in the Mediterranean. They sailed out of the Grand Harbour on any day of the year. June and July were the most popular months mostly chosen by passengers for their voyages to all parts of Sicily, the West coast of Italy in the Tyrrhenian Sea to France and Spain.

It has been observed that in June 1773, 1778 and 1781 the number of *xprunari* that left Malta to various destinations was ten, eleven and seventeen respectively. This may explain the popularity of the boat as a fast means of transport and at the same time reflects also on the great numbers of such boats that were available **[p.142]** in the Grand Harbour. On 16 and 25 June 1777 six and seven *xprunari* left Malta on the respective days for the same place namely Marsamemi in Sicily.[126]

A charge of ten *grani*[127] was imposed on all small sailing vessels such as *xprunari*, brigantines, chebecs, *martiganas*, *feluccas* and *fregate* paid at the Castellania prior to departure to Sicilian ports. When such vessels sailed further away to Naples and round the Western coast of Italy to Marseilles and Spain they were charged one *scudo*. But one comes across exceptions to such charges without a plausible explanation. The greater ships with a better hold capacity such as a *pinco* or *tartana* where also charged one *scudo*.[128]

Arrivals

Booklets[129] dated 1744 to 1747 contain valuable information regarding the timing, crews, cargoes, and passengers on ships arriving in the Grand Harbour. The booklets for the year 1746 are complete while the others contain many gaps. The month July 1746 registered forty

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[121] Vassallo, Malta 1854, 386.
[122] Brydone, 331; Borch, 43.
[123] See two *ex-voto* paintings dated 8 March 1791 and 10 February 1804 at Tal-Ħerba sanctuary, B'Kara.
[124] AOM 1773, f.82.
[125] NARRP; *passim*. The registers for the years 1747, 1770, 1772, 1773, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, 1781, 1782 and 1785 were consulted.
[126] NARRP 1773, 1777, 1778, 1781 *passim*.
[127] NARRP 15 July 1777, no. 18.
[128] NARRP 17 November 1777, no.61.
[129] NARLib 1744, 1747 *passim*.

one *xprunari* arriving in Malta which was the greatest number for any one month. This number includes a few *xprunari* coming from Terranova.[130] During other months in the period registered the arrival of sixteen and fewer numbers of *xprunari* monthly. The *xprunari* sailed all through the year depending on the prevailing weather conditions. Predictably in winter the smallest number of arrivals is registered.

One can safely say that the *xprunari* arrived in Malta between sunrise to sunset. Every hour or fraction of it are listed between 6 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. Other time indication is given as first *Ave Maria*, between the two *Ave Marias*, half an hour after the second *Ave Maria*, *Pater Noster* and the second *Ave Maria*. The registered places of departure include all the places in Sicily, Reggio, Naples, Rome, Leghorn, Genoa, Mareseilles and Spain; the Adriatic or the East side of Italy is hardly ever mentioned.

It is very interesting to read how the *xprunari* were employed to collect information, to carry personal letters and despatches, to transport merchants and **[p.143]** passengers, to run personal errands for the General of the galley squadron, to transport quantities of tunny fish from Sicily, at other times they are engaged in fishing, carrying sundry items to be sold elsewhere and on one occasion picking up an indisposed caravanist at Augusta. One can appreciate the fact that the great numbers of *xprunari* available in the Grand Harbour ensured a service at any hour of the day from sunrise to sunset.[131]

As one might expect the *xprunari* carried small cargoes; the great ships were employed on the bulkier merchandise. But the *xprunara* was deemed more suitable for the carrying of perishable items like *ricotta*, cheese, *casciocavallo* and fish. But the transportation of snow, which was highly in demand for iced drinks, was undertaken by the special *fregata della neve*.[132] Pigs and poultry were imported from Sicilian ports quite often together with livestock including calves in somewhat smaller quantities. Other food commodities included honey, spices, nuts, rhubarb, olives, salami, salted meats, dried lentils, fresh fruit, cocoa and tea. Cloth, cotton thread, socks, handkerchiefs, glassware and books were regularly transported by the *xprunara*.

Quarantine laws were strictly observed and the booklets specify the restriction of sailing to a specific number of days. One can guess the hardship imposed on a master of a *xprunara* whose daily bread depended on its regular employment. Sanitary officials[133] imposed quarantine periods ranging from thirty days to just a couple of days at Marsamxett without a plausible or explicable pattern emerging. A *xprunara* was granted a clean sanitary certificate in bringing back to Malta a caravanist and his valet while another such boat had to undergo four days quarantine because it carried a passenger most probably not covered by a clean certificate. A *xprunara* which was carrying *una scatola di seta* was subjected to the quarantine laws. The days spent by a *xprunara* at Marsalforn[134] due to bad weather were counted as part of the quarantine period. A *xprunara* was granted clean certificate *per non*

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[130] NARLib 10 and 29 July 1746.
[131] NARLib *passim*; the available number of *Libretti* provide ample material for the study of the role of the *xprunara*.
[132] NARLib 8 October 1746, but sometimes a brigantine transported the snow, too; see NARLib 22 January 1746 and 16 June 1746.
[133] Brydone, I, 306.
[134] NARLib 15 June 1746 refers to a *xprunara* which was carrying *una scatola di seta* and NARLib 7 March 1744 mentions the *xprunara* which was sheltering at Marsalfom, Gozo.

aver pratticato.[135] When a *xprunara* entered the Grand **[p.144]** Harbour with all its crew in a sick condition, it had to undergo ten days quarantine[136] Such laws necessitated the availability of a great number of *xprunari* to cater for the daily needs and services required at the quays of the Grand Harbour.

Passengers travelling on the *xprunara* included people from all the social strata of those days including Knights, counts, and other noblemen, the Consuls of Holland, prelates, priests and friars, merchantmen and slaves. On one occasion a *xprunara* carried up to eight passengers; this means that on such occasions the vessel would not be able to carry much cargo.

A *xprunara* crossing over to Sicily or Italy with passengers returned invariably with other passengers travelling to Malta. It has been observed that there was quite a great deal of activity by the *xprunari* carrying ecclesiastics including Domenicans, Capuchins, Franciscan Conventuals and Minors, Jesuits and diocesan priests who were always ordained in Sicily and in Italy.[137]

Sanitary Register 1714-15

Like all other ships leaving Malta, the master of a *xprunara* was supplied with a sanitary *patente* or certificate against payment. A *Registro di Patente* 1714-15[138] contains valuable information about the movements of *xprunari*. The register includes day to day entries from September 1714 to August 1715 covering a full year of activities. It lists ninety eight movements of *xprunari* to all parts of Sicily, Reggio, Naples, Rome, Leghorn, Genoa and Spain; it lists also two journeys to Sardegna and Venice.

There was a standard charge of one *tari*[139] per passenger for any destination. While Knights and noble people were charged the normal *tari*, it was observed that religious friars, priests and in certain instances slaves were granted a health certificate *gratis*.[140]

[p.145] The register includes the names of both the masters and of the *xprunari*. It was observed that the *xprunari* were always given the name *Il Santissimo Crocifisso* with a second name of the Blessed Virgin under various titles. Other saint names include St.John the Baptist, St.Joseph, St.George, St.Francis de Paule, St.Anne, St.Catherine and the Holy Souls of Purgatory. There is no apparent reason why *xprunari* and brigantines were given the name *Il Santissimo Crocifsso* first followed by another name of a saint.[141]

Ex-Voto Paintings

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[135] NARLib 14 October 1744.
[136] NARLib 21 November 1746.
[137] NARLib 8 June, 26 and 27 September 1746.
[138] NARRPat *passim*.
[139] NARRPat 8 October 1714.
[140] NARRPat 22 December 1714.
[141] NARRPat 3 November 1714.

Frequent references to Maltese *ex-voto* paintings[142] depicting local *xprunari* [have] been made for the compilation of this study. Indeed Malta and Gozo offer a wide range of varieties of ships and boats in storms at sea shown in hundreds of *ex-voto* paintings. As the *xprunara* was a purely Maltese boat there has been little or no literature describing it. Therefore it was imperative to study Maltese *ex-voto* paintings to establish at least certain characteristics. *Ex-voto* paintings are not always works of art and can never be an infallible source for technical details.

But certain Maltese *madonnari* or professional *ex-voto* painters, knew their job quite well and produced good portraits of ships. Particularly reliable are the *ex-voto* paintings of Vincenzo Gonzi and Nicholas Camilleri. There were others who painted good pictures but quite a number were executed by the donors themselves with a rather naive presentation and results.

Eight out of thirty one centres of devotion in Malta and Gozo contain *ex-voto* pictures showing the *xprunara* as follows:

Tal-Ħerba Sanctuary, B'Kara	25
Mellieħa Sanctuary	7
Tad-Dawl Church, Wied il-Għajn	1
Żurrieq Parish Church	1
The Redeemer Church, Għaxaq	1
The Żabbar Sanctuary	1
Tal-Ħniena Church	1
Private collection	1

[p.146] Most of the *ex-voto* paintings were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary but others were offered to:

Our Lord the Redeemer
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
St.Joseph
St.Catherine
St.Genivieve
St.Paul
St.Anna
The Holy Souls in Purgatory.

The dates shown in the *cartouches* of the paintings confirm that the *xprunara* sailed practically all through the year from January to December. But quite naturally the crew always feared the winter season although they were always ready to sail if good money was offered.

The first dated *ex-voto* painting depicting a *xprunara* goes back to 1740[143]; yet there may be others which are undated and perhaps had been donated earlier. The greatest number

[142] A.H.J. Prins, *In Peril on the Sea*, Malta 1989 and A. Cuschieri, J. Muscat, Maritime Votive Paintings in Maltese Churches, in *Melita Historica*, vol. X, no. 2, 1989.
[143] One can see the *ex-voto* painting dated 9 September 1740 at the Tal-Ħerba Sanctuary, B'Kara.

of *ex-voto* paintings showing the *xprunara* is found at the Tal-Ħerba sanctuary B'Kara; at the Mellieħa Sanctuary one can see the last sail arrangement of the *xprunara* in an *ex-voto* painting dated 1907.

The study of the complete evolution of the sail arrangement on *xprunari* depended exclusively on the examination of the *ex-voto* paintings. Amongst the hundreds of nautical *ex-voto* paintings existing in Malta and Gozo depicting a great number of different ships the *xprunara* is represented more often than any other type of vessel because its service was in great demand especially during the eighteenth century.

The stories behind the *ex-voto* paintings of *xprunari* are the basis for a further study of such vessels which proved their worth for at least three centuries of constant traffic in the Mediterranean. The case of the two Capuchin fathers travelling on a *xprunara* which was attacked by Algerian pirates deserves a seperate study. The incident is completely recorded in the *cartouche* of the *ex-voto* painting dated 1850 at the Tal-Ħerba Sanctuary but it refers to a story which started in 1799. When a boat loses its rudder at sea it becomes helpless. An *ex-voto* painting at the Mellieħa Sanctuary dated 1843 shows the master of a *xprunara* holding a rudder from the tenon, while a member of the crew is in the **[p.147]** water trying to fit the rudder in its pintles. A second sailor is held by the feet by two other members of the crew, head downwards, holding tightly the man in the water. Such an operation in a rough sea goes to explain the resourcefulness of the Maltese sailor in the face of adversity.

The *xprunara* disappeared from the local scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. The *barkun*, *ferilla*, *Tal-Latini* and the fast disappearing of the last Maltese passenger boats *Tal-Pass* together with the *xprunara* are few of the Maltese small crafts that were badly affected by the fast changing conditions of technology and modern social and economic standards.

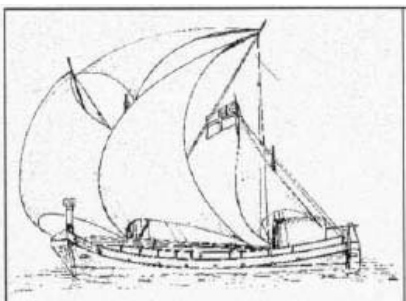
The study of such local small crafts is important for a complete history of our Islands. Such vessels as the *xprunara* together with many other sailing ships and boats formed the home fleet of the Maltese Islands. Those humble vessels on their daily voyages maintained an essential link with other countries ensuring the provisioning and an economical sustenance so vital to our islands.

As the *xprunara* was built locally, manned by Maltese crews and was a means for the earning of the daily bread for so many people, it deserves a better acknowledgment as regards its history and a better evaluation of its potentialities.

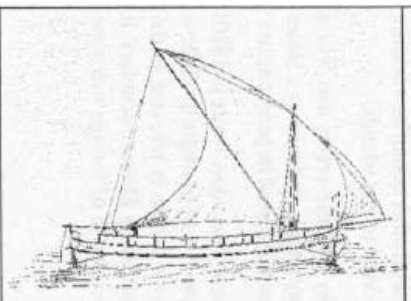
Augustin Jal,[144] the author of the famous *Glossaire Nautique*, wrote in 1840: "Je n'ai presque rien a dire du speronier." The *xprunara* is an example of Maltese craftsmanship that has fulfilled a vital maritime role which is relevant to the social history of Malta. It deserves to be studied further by Maltese scholars. It is not likely that this humble vessel will attract the interest of foreign maritime scholars.

[144] Jal, A., Archeologie Navale, Paris 1840, I, 463.

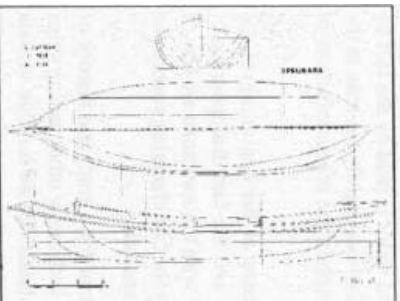
[p.148]



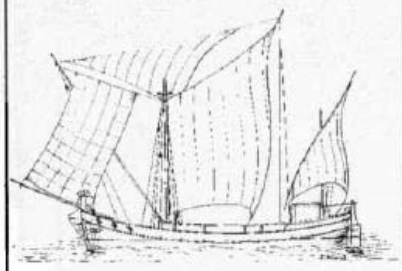
Xprunara - 1850 - under all sail with a small lateen rig. Note the oars stowed away on iron forks.



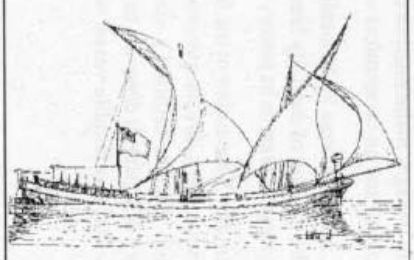
Xprunara - 1830 - using one sprit sail and a jib. Note thole pins on washboards and iron oar forks.



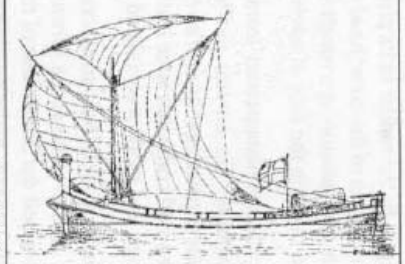
Lines drawing of a Xprunara.



Xprunara - 1850 - under all sail with a small chequered sprit sail.



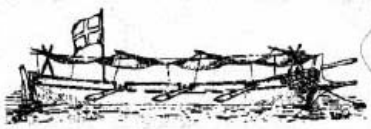
Xprunara with two lateen sails and a jib - 1832



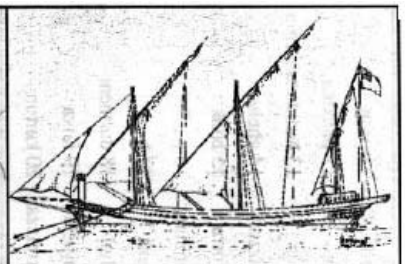
A 1740 Xprunara with two sprit sails and a topsail

[p.149]

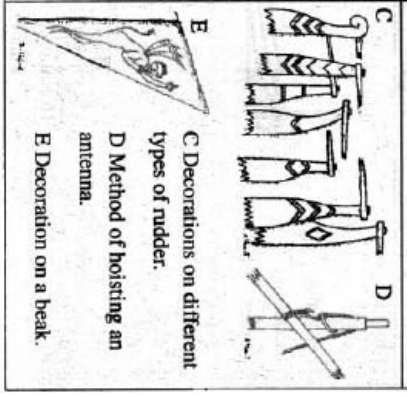
A Decorations on the beak.
B Decorations on the tappiere at the bows.



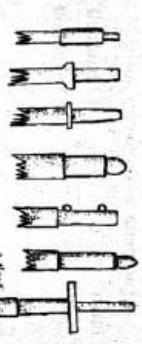
Xprunara del Gozo - 1750
Note that no tappiere or cabin are used; the best is shown under an awning.



Xprunara with three lateen sails and a jib - 1853.

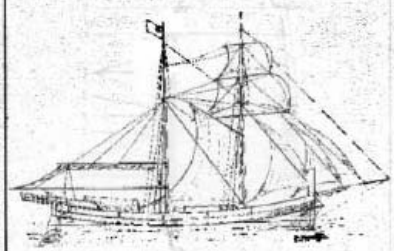


C Decorations on different types of rudder.
D Method of hoisting an antenna.
E Decoration on a beak.



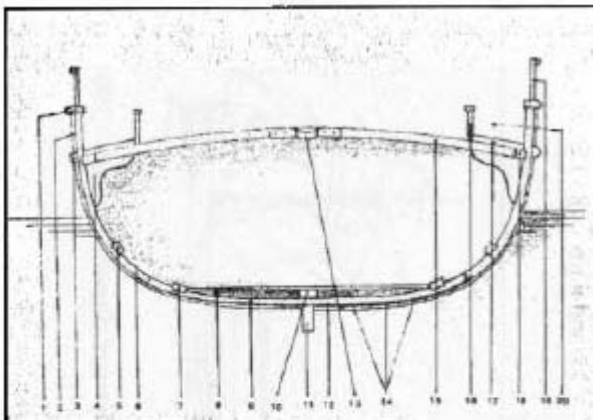
Different types of calcets or mastheads.

Decoration on the stern falka and tappiere.



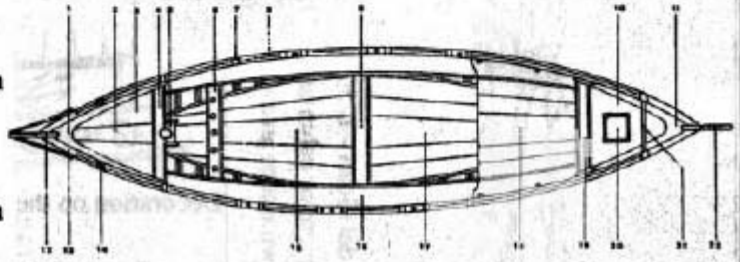
Schooner rigged Xprunara - 1904.

[p.150]



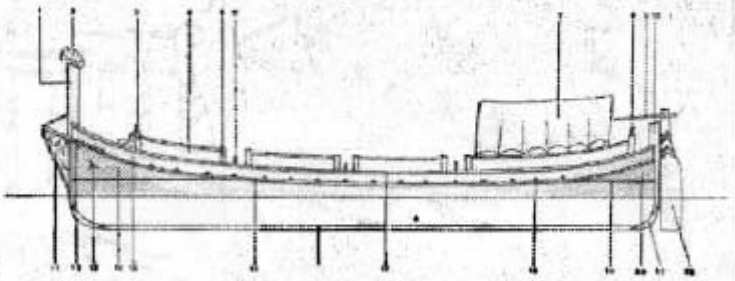
1 bardnell
2 tappiera
3 ċinta
4 brazzol
5 inforra
6 stamnara
7 skuza
8 paljol
9 majjiera
10 permizzan
11 prim
12 paxxma
13 ħadida tal-arblu
14 għeluq
15 bank
16 pestiera
17 trinkarin
18 durment
19 falka
20 kurtun

1 brazzol tal-pruwa
2 ħanżira
3 tamburett tal-pruwa
4 bank
5 minċott tal-arblu
6 bank il-lasta; melqa
7 makkarunetta
8 falka
9 bank
10 tamburett tal-poppa
11 brazzol tal-poppa
12 rota tal-pruwa



13 bardnell
14 skalmott
15 can
16 kurtun
17 can
18 paljol tal-kabina
19 bank
20 bokkaport taz-zannur
21 farfett
22 tmun

1 rota tal-pruwa
2 suf tan-nagħaġ
3 skalmott
4 falka
5 skalm
6 makkarunetta
7 tinda tal-passiġġieri
8 farfett
9 laċċ
10 rota tal-poppa
11 xprun
12 tisħih tal-ixprun



13 għajn
14 mustaċċ tal-pruwa
15 tappiera
16 ċinta
17 bardnell
18 burdnari
19 bastun
20 mustaċċ tal-poppa
21 zokk
22 tmun