

# A friend in high places: Demetrios, son of Diodotos, the Syracusan

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## Introduction

The title of this monograph refers to a man mentioned by name, father's name (patronymic), and place of origin (*ethnicon*) as many as four times in a single document, an inscribed bronze tablet reported to have been discovered in Rome in the 16th century together with a similar one originating from the city of Akragas (present Agrigento). Although discovered in Rome, the document is shown by internal evidence to have originated from Malta in pre-Imperial times. The inscription carries a decree issued by the legislative bodies of Malta conferring the status of *proxenos* (as well as that of *euergetes*) upon Demetrios, son of Diodotos, from Syracuse, and on his progeny, in recognition for services rendered. (Fig. 1) Since its discovery in the 16th century it has been repeatedly studied, published, commented, and even used as a historical and juridical document.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, a comprehensive account of this important document for the constitutional, political, cultural and social history of Malta is still lacking.<sup>2</sup> The following is an attempt to fill that gap. This exercise was prompted by the discovery, after an extensive prosopographic search in specialized libraries outside Malta, of two mutually related persons bearing the same names as those of the protagonist of the bronze inscription and his father, in another geographical area, namely, the island of Delos in the centre of the Aegean sea (see below). It was then hoped that this discovery would offer the possibility of producing evidence for narrowing the dating margin of the inscription from two centuries to half-a-century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Such as A. Agustín (1583) pl. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from the standard *corpora* of inscriptions (*CIG* III 679–680, no. 5752; *IG* XIV 250, no. 953) which reproduce the text and earlier bibliographical references, a fuller treatment (including an accurate engraving but not so faithful a translation into Italian) was given by Onorato Bres in his *Malta Antica Illustrata* (1816) 190–200 (Fig. 2). Bres listed various authors who had copied its text from Giorgio Gualtieri (1624) 63, no. 401, including the Maltese Giovanni Francesco Abela (1647) 187–190, but he erroneously classified it as a *tessera hospitalis* and used it and the Greek legends on Roman coins minted in Malta in his argument in favour of a Greek colony in both Malta and Gozo (1816) 190. He also recounted how, as part of the Farnese collection, it had been transferred to Naples, and complained that his immediate predecessor Louis de Boisgelin (1804) had omitted it completely. The best and most comprehensive treatment in 20th century scholarly literature is to be found in the following: C. Michel (1900) 422, no. 554; G. Manganaro (1963) 205–206, 209, 211–213, fig. 2; M. Guarducci (1967) 435–437, fig. 226; L. Moretti (1968) 11–13, no. 3. None of these, however, provide a translation, nor do they enter into the merits of its significance to Maltese ancient history. The Akragas decree (its companion) can be found in the above corpora, namely, *CIG* III 5491 and *IG* XIV 952 as well as *IGUR* 2. Works concerned with the latter but combining the Maltese one with it for various purposes, including dating, are: J.R. de Waele (1971) 34, 36, 176; P.J. Rhodes & D.M. Lewis (1997) 319, 321.

<sup>3</sup> A strong case is made by A.G. Woodhead (1981) 56 for the use of prosopographical indications for dating of inscriptions (such as: 'correspondences among patronymics and demotics, cross-references..., family connexions expressed particularly on funerary inscriptions, the frequent custom of preserving the names in a family and of naming one's son after his grandfather').

## The Bronze Tablet

The tablet (*tabula*) consists of a rectangular sheet of bronze, 37 cm high by 23.5 cm wide, affixed to a projecting frame which makes it look like the front of a Greek temple. The two columns supporting the triangular pediment are fluted, each with a base consisting of a low torus surmounted by an abnormally long tapering trunk, in turn separated from the column shaft by a narrow astragal. The capitals look more like Egyptian lotus capitals, with three visible plain petals, rather than Corinthian capitals with stylized acanthus leaves and spirals.<sup>4</sup> It is very likely that these embellishments were added by Demetrios himself to both his *tabulae* since even the Akragas counterpart has perforations that were probably intended for riveting on to a similar ornament (now lost); in which case they would both be reflecting the rising Egyptianizing fashion in the Roman capital, rather than that attested to in Malta itself. The pediment supported by the columns is plain, with two raking cornices and a plain horizontal architrave decorated by four rectangular depressions (metopes), in imitation of a simplified Doric frieze. The upper end of the *tympanon* is perforated by a circular hole, most probably intended for hanging. The whole architectural frame is affixed to the bronze sheet by means of six rivets: two at the upper ends of the column shafts, two at their lower ends, and two on the base, under the columns.<sup>5</sup>

The iconography of this composite effect makes the tablet fall into a class of bronze tablets which were meant to emulate in smaller scale inscriptions in stone or marble.<sup>6</sup> Inscriptions on bronze tablets are fairly numerous, far less numerous, however, than those in stone and marble. Among the Greeks these bronze tablets were known by the word *chalkomata* (χαλκώματα),<sup>7</sup> the same word used at the end of the Maltese decree. Naturally, bronze was an expensive material, much more expensive than stone. For this reason the tablets were relatively small and became thinner and thinner along the years. Public documents in bronze, like this one, were meant to be affixed to the walls of a frequently visited temple or a public building so that they could be seen by most people, but examples have also been discovered in domestic contexts where, presumably, they were also hung for display.<sup>8</sup> The hole inside the apex of the triangular tympanum probably served this purpose.

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<sup>4</sup> One can appreciate better the difference in the capitals by comparison to the Halaesa tablets illustrated in Figs. 6 (photo) and 7 (drawing). The Egyptianizing aspect of the columns was already perceived by Manganaro (1963) 206, note 3. To the extensive coin evidence for the cult of Isis in ancient Malta noted by Manganaro, one should now add other Egyptianizing sculptural and architectural items in the Maltese collections connected with this Egyptian divinity (A. Bonanno (1998); F. Bonzano (2011)).

<sup>5</sup> The riveting system on the Halaesa tablets (Fig. 7) is almost identical.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Guarducci (1967), 435–437. A useful comparison can perhaps be made with the smaller tablets from Entella in Sicily (C. Ampolo (2001)), but these lack the architectural ornamentation and do not bear *proxenia* decrees.

<sup>7</sup> M. Guarducci (1959–60) 241, n. 5. Note that whereas in 1967 Guarducci dated the Akragas and Melite tablets to the first half of the 1st century BC, here she dated them to the 3rd century BC.

<sup>8</sup> Such as the two *euergesia* tablets which were found in the ‘*Casa dei Doli*’ at Halaesa in northern Sicily (G. Scibona (2009)). I am grateful to Jonathan Prag for calling my attention to this find and for providing me with very useful advice on various points. These inscribed tablets have a similar incised wreath at the top and are similarly affixed to a decorative temple facade. The iconography of the architectural adornment of the Halaesa tablets is more complex and refined, and is much better preserved than in the Maltese tablet which is also illustrated in fig. 5 on p. 99 in the same article. See also J. Prag’s text and comments reproduced in *SEG* LIX 1100.

## The Place and Date of its Discovery

The Malta inscription was found in Rome in the 16th century. Several editions of the Malta and Akragas inscriptions give an account of their discovery and early history until they found their way in their present location, that is, the Museo Nazionale of Naples.<sup>9</sup> Most corpora of inscriptions record their discovery as far back as ‘before 1549’, since their existence was extracted from the private papers of Cardinal Alexander Farnese, or ‘between 1549 and 1553’ when Martin (de) Smedt saw and described them in the Rome residence of Bernardino Mafeo.<sup>10</sup> A few scholars refer to their discovery ‘among some ruins in Rome’.<sup>11</sup> But none of them specifies the exact date and find-spot. Only Pirro Ligorio zooms it down to ‘the vicinity of the Roman Curia’.<sup>12</sup> I have been so far unable to obtain access to Pirro Ligorio’s original writings where he records this find spot – the ten codices for his planned publication entitled *Libri delle antichità* in Naples – but my searches in Oxford have been rewarded by a recently published edition of his planned book on inscriptions, that contains a reprint of what must be the earliest illustrations (by Ligorio) of both the Maltese and the Akragas tablets (Figs 3–5).<sup>13</sup>

This discovery of the two *proxenia* decrees together in Rome is of paramount importance. Provided we can rely on Pirro Ligorio’s claim, they were both discovered in the heart of the monumental area, in the area of the Curia, not far from the ‘Tabularium’ which has the reputation of having been a sort of central archive of Rome.<sup>14</sup> Since the *proxenos* was the recognized representative, in his own city of residence, of the polity which awarded him the title, the official instrument carrying the edict of *proxenia* could have been registered or deposited in the archive of the appropriate institution, whichever that might be. It is, therefore, probable that the two bronze tablets were conserved in such an archive, preferably on public display.<sup>15</sup>

Here it seems relevant to point out that Suetonius (*Vesp.* 8.5) records that after a fire destroyed the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in AD 69, the newly appointed emperor Vespasian ordered a search for the 3000 bronze tablets that had been lost during that fire.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that the bronze

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<sup>9</sup> For example, *CIG* III no. 5752: 679–680; *IG* XIV, no. 953: 141, 250. The other editions follow suit. The most complete account is in L. Moretti (1968) 7–8, 11.

<sup>10</sup> For example, *CIG* III 679; *IG* XIV 250; L. Moretti (1968) 7, 11. See also O. Bres (1816) 190–192 (with references to previous publications).

<sup>11</sup> G. Kaibel (1890) in *IG* XIV 250: ‘*Romae inter quaedam rudera [...] repperit Bernardinus Maphaeus Alexandri Farnesii cardinalis a secretis [igitur ante a. 1549] METELLUS*’; information repeated in L. Moretti (1968), 7, 11 who refers to manuscript *Vatic.* 6039 f. 288–289 (‘*ubi tabula[s] Oct. Pantagathus descripsit*’). Padre Ottavio Pantagato happens to be one of the illustrators whom Ligorio acknowledges as one of his collaborators (S. Orlandi (2008) 455).

<sup>12</sup> As reported in G. Kaibel (1890) (= *IG* XIV): 250: ‘*ove fù la Romana curia* LIG.’. G. Manganaro (1963) 212 accepts this find spot without hesitation. On Pirro Ligorio see D.R. Coffin (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Reproduced from S. Orlandi (2008) 449 (Malta tablet) and 451 (Akragas tablet). Both were reported to be ‘*Nel studio di M.[onsignor] Achille Mafeo gentilhuomo romano*’.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, S. Bocconi (1950) 369; S.B. Platner and T. Ashby (2002) 506–508; G. Manganaro (1963) 212 (with previous bibliography); S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (1996) 1468. According to A. Claridge (1998) 239–240 this widely diffused impression of the ‘Tabularium’ does not seem to be historically documented. According to her each institution in the metropolis is likely to have had its own archive and there is no evidence of a central one.

<sup>15</sup> For archaeological evidence for the display of such tablets on walls of public buildings see M. Bell (2007).

<sup>16</sup> ‘*Ipse restitutionem Capitolii adgressus rudibus purgendis manus primus admovit ac suo collo quaedam extulit; aerearumque tabularum tria milia, quae simul conflagraverant, restituenda suscepit undique investigatis*

tablets were among those tablets that were never retrieved in Vespasian's time, to resurface fifteen centuries later.<sup>17</sup>

## The Inscription

### TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TEXT<sup>18</sup>

ΥΠΕΡΠΡΟΞΕ ΝΙΑΣΚΑΙΕΥ  
ΕΡΓΕΣΙΑΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΩΙ  
ΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΙ  
ΚΑΙΤΟΙΣΕΓ ΓΟΝΟΙΣΑΥ  
5 ΤΟΥ  
ΕΠΙΠΕΡΟΘΥΤΟΥΙΚΕΤΑΙΚΕΤΟΥΑΡΧΟΝ  
ΤΩΝΔΕΗΡΕΟΥΚΑΙΚΙ/ΙΤΗΤΟΣ  
ΕΔΟΞΕΤΗΣΥΓΚΛΗΤΩΚΑΙΤΩΙΔΗΜΩΙ  
ΤΩΝΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝΕΠΕΙΔΗΔΗΜΗ  
10 ΤΡΙΟΣΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΣΔΙ  
ΑΠΑΝΤΟΣΕΥΝΟΥΣΥΠΑΡΧΩΝ  
ΤΟΙΣΤΕΔΗΜΟΣΙΟΙΣΗΜΩΝΠΡΑΓ  
ΜΑΣΙΝΝΑΙΕΝΙΕΚΑΣΤΩΙΤΩΝΠΟΛΙ  
ΤΩΝΠΑΡΑΙΤΙΟΣΑΓΑΘΟΥΠΟΛΛΑΚΙ  
15 ΓΕΓΕΝΗΤΑΙ  
ΑΓΑΘΗΙΤΥΧΗΙΔΕΔΟΧΘΑΙΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΝ  
ΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΝΠΡΟΞΕ  
ΝΟΝΕΙΝΑΙΚΑΙΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΗΝΤΟΥΔΗ  
ΜΟΥΤΟΝΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝΚΑΙΤΟΥΣΕΓ  
20 ΓΟΝΟΥΣΑΥΤΟΥΑΡΕΤΗΣΕΝΕΚΕΝ  
ΚΑΙΕΥΝΟΙΑΣΗΣΕΧΟΝΔΙΑΤΕΛΕΙΕΙΣ  
ΤΟΝΗΜΕΤΕΡΟΝΔΗΜΟΝΤΗΝΔΕ  
ΠΡΟΞΕΝΙΑΝΤΑΥΤΗΝΑΝΑΓΡΑΨΑΙ  
ΕΙΣΧΑΛΚΟΜΑΤΑΔΥΟΚΑΙΤΟΕΝΔΟΥ  
25 ΝΑΙΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΩΙΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥΣΥΡΑ  
ΚΟΣΙΩΙ

### Textual notes

Line 6: The Π of ΕΠΙ has a P inside it, as if the inscriber had incised the Latin version of the letter by mistake and then turned it into a Greek Π by extending the horizontal bar.

Line 7: The second character after K in the second name (ΚΙ/ΙΤΗΤΟΣ) has no precedent and occupies an abnormally long space. Smedt inserts H while Bres leaves an empty space in his engraving. Metellus amends it with O, adopted by most subsequent editions, to read ΚΟΤΗΤΟΣ (gen. of Κοτῆς) with the apparent disapproval by Kaibel (*"quod certe in tabula numquam fuit"*).

Line 8: ΣΥΓΚΛΗΤΩ lacks the iota adscript.

Line 13: ΝΑΙ for ΚΑΙ.

Line 14: ΠΟΛΛΑΚΙ for ΠΟΛΛΑΚΙΣ.

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exemplaribus: instrumentum imperii pulcherrimum ac vetustissimum, quo continebantur paene ab exordio urbis senatus consulta, plebi scita de societate et foedere ac privilegio cuicumque concessis.'

<sup>17</sup> See L. Keppie (2001) 10.

<sup>18</sup> The preferred version is that of *IG XIV*, namely, G. Kaibel (1890) 250 since it reproduces faithfully the text, without any corrections or emendations.

Line 19: TON for ΤΩΝ.

Line 21: EXON for ΕΧΩΝ.

Line 24: ΧΑΛΚΟΜΑΤΑ for ΧΑΛΚΩΜΑΤΑ

### The Text<sup>19</sup>

Ἐπεὶ προξενίας καὶ εὐεργεσίας Δημητρίῳ Διοδότου Συρακοσίῳ καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις αὐτοῦ. Ἐπὶ ἱεροθύτου Ἰκέτα Ἰκέτου, ἀρχόντων δὲ Ἡρέου καὶ Κ.τητος; ἔδοξε τῇ συγκλήτῳ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ τῶν Μελιταίων, ἐπειδὴ Δημήτριος Διοδότου Συρακόσιος διὰ παντὸς εὖνους ὑπάρχων τοῖς τε δημοσίοις ἡμῶν πράγμασιν καὶ ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν πολιτῶν παραίτιος ἀγαθοῦ πολλάκι γεγένηται Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ δεδόχθαι Δημήτριον Διοδότου Συρακόσιον πρόξενον εἶναι καὶ εὐεργέτην τοῦ δήμου τῶν Μελιταίων καὶ τοὺς ἐγγόνους αὐτοῦ ἀρετῆς ἕνεκεν καὶ εὐνοίας ἧς ἔχων διατελεῖ εἰς τὸν ἡμέτερον δῆμον. τὴν δὲ προξενίαν ταύτην ἀναγράψαι εἰς χαλκώματα δύο καὶ τὸ ἐν δοῦναι Δημητρίῳ Διοδότου Συρακοσίῳ.

### English Translation

For his hospitality and benevolence, to Demetrios, son of Diodotos, the Syracusan, and to his progeny. When Hiketas, son of Hiketas, was officiating priest and Hereas and Kotes were magistrates, the Council and Assembly of the Maltese decided that, whereas Demetrios, son of Diodotos, the Syracusan, has been at all times well-disposed to our public affairs, and has often given advantage to each of the citizens, it should be resolved for good fortune<sup>20</sup> that Demetrios the Syracusan, son of Diodotos be a *proxenos* and benefactor of the Maltese people, together with his progeny, on account of his virtue and the well-mindedness that he continues to show to our people; and that this same [decree of] *proxenia* be inscribed on two bronze tablets and one of them to be given to Demetrios the Syracusan, son of Diodotos.

### Format of Text and Style of Lettering

The text is divided in two parts: the **heading**, indicating the subject matter of the decree, is placed in two columns at the top, flanking an engraved wreath; the **main text** is below the wreath quite separate from the heading. Although distributed in two separate columns the text of the **heading** flows horizontally, line by line, across the separating wreath, with only two words cut in two: *proxenias* (προξε- on the left and νίας on the right) and *engonois* (ἐγ- on the left and γόνοις on the right). Two words are interrupted at the end of the right column: *euegesias* in the first line (εὐ - | εργεσίας) and *autou* (αὐ - | τοῦ) in the last line.

<sup>19</sup> Reproduced from G. Kaibel (1890) 250.

<sup>20</sup> *Agathe Tyche* corresponds to the Latin *‘Quod felix, faustumque sit’*. See infra under ‘Format of the Decree’, no 6.

The main text is divided in three parts each introduced by two projecting letters on the left margin. The first part is the **prescript** providing the date of the enactment with the names of three officials; the second part combines the **enactment formula** and the **motivation clause**; the third part contains the rest, that is, the **motion formula**, the **substance**, and the measures for the publication of the decree.<sup>21</sup> The rest of the left margin is justified, but not the right margin.

The whole text is inscribed without separating spaces between words. The letters are neat and plain quadrate capitals, without serifs, generally contained within the same height, though they vary in width.<sup>22</sup> Some characteristics of individual letters are: the upper and lower bars of the sigma are still not quite horizontal; the right bar of the delta is not (at least not intentionally) extended upwards; the crossbar of the alpha is not broken; one omega (the penultimate letter in the bottom line) has the lower horizontal bar separated from the circle above it. It has already been noted that the second letter of the main text seems to have been first carved as a Latin P and then adjusted to a Greek pi.

The grammar is regular, except for the first *Hiketa*, instead of the genitive *Hiketou*. This is a marked dialectic inconsistency since both should be in the genitive (either both *Hiketa*, preferably with *tou* in between, or both *Hiketou*). Judging from the text, Boeckh and Franz believed that the major part of the Maltese population was Ionian, but mixed with some Sicilian Dorians, thus the mixture.<sup>23</sup> The second exception is *pollaki* instead of *pollakis* in l. 14, observed by the same scholars who, however, did not offer an explanation.<sup>24</sup>

## Date

There is widespread agreement that the two bronze tablets date to the Hellenistic age on grounds of provenance and implied political scenarios, in particular those of the Akragas decree, but the proposed dates vary from the last two decades of the third century to the first half of the first century, that is, a range of almost two centuries. The following is a selection of dates assigned to both, or one or the other of the two inscriptions, based on various arguments:-

T. Ashby (1915) 24: 218 BC or soon after

M. Guarducci (1959–60) 241, n.5: third century BC

F. Sartori (1961) 54: 'perhaps in the penultimate decade of 3rd century BC'

J.R. de Waele (1971) 174–7: shortly after 210 BC

P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 319: c. 218–210 BC

F. Gschnitzer (1973) 642–643, 666, 729: 'Late Hellenistic times'

L. Moretti (1968) 11–13: end of 2nd-beginning of 1st century BC

C. Thulin (1914) col. 493, 33: 1st c. BC (cited by G. Manganaro (1963) n. 39)

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<sup>21</sup> These component parts in the decree formula are discussed below in section titled 'Format of the Decree'.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed study of letter forms in Attic inscriptions see S.V. Tracy (1990).

<sup>23</sup> A. Boeckh and J. Franz (1853) (= *CIG* III), 680. In 1853 the scholarship on ancient Malta had not yet awakened to the notion of a predominant Phoenician-Punic component in the pre-Roman population and culture. Compare Rhodes and Lewis (see infra n. 83) who, while incorporating Malta as a 'Greek' state for the purpose of his compilation of decrees of Greek states, emphasize Malta's passage from 'being Phoenician' to 'being Roman'. Similarly, F. Gschnitzer (1973) 642 qualifies the polity of Malta as 'Phoenician'. In both cases 'Phoenician' should really read either 'Punic' or 'formerly Phoenician'

<sup>24</sup> A. Boeckh and J. Franz (1853) (= *CIG* III), 680: '*Nam si terminationem Ἰκέτα et fortasse formam πολλακι exeperis, nihil inest quod aut Dorismum aut Ionismum prodat*'. It could perhaps be an alternative form of the word πολλακίς, only very rarely used in prose, if at all.

W. Hüttl (1929) 72, 124, n. 35: 1st c. BC  
G. Manganaro (1963) 213, 220: first half of 1st c. BC  
M. Guarducci (1967) 435: probably first half of 1st c. BC  
G. Kaibel (1890) 141: time of Cicero.<sup>25</sup>

One purpose of this work was to further contribute towards a closer date. It is now generally agreed that dating inscriptions of the Hellenistic age on the basis of the style (*ductus*) of their letters is tricky and unreliable,<sup>26</sup> so I shall not attempt that route. I find that the arguments brought forward by Manganaro and Guarducci for a date in the first half of 1<sup>st</sup> century BC very convincing. Among these it is pertinent to note that the formula placed at the top of the Maltese inscription (*hyper proxenias kai euergeias*) is identical to that at the head of the Syracusan decree by the artists of Aphrodite in honour of M. Acilius Caninus, *proconsul Siciliae* in 46–45 BC.<sup>27</sup> My effort to investigate the prosopography of the persons mentioned in the Maltese inscription has led me also in that direction.

## The Proxy Decree

The text of a proxy decree, just like those of other decrees, was commonly incised on a wooden tablet covered with a lime wash or layer of plaster, more rarely written on (more expensive) papyrus, or comparable material, which would have normally been deposited in the official archives of the state.<sup>28</sup> Only in certain special cases were such documents inscribed on more permanent materials, like stone or metal. In the Maltese proxy inscription the decision to have the decree inscribed on two bronze tablets, one of which was to be given to the honorand, the other to be retained, is even recorded at the end of the text. Publicity was an important part of the conferred honour. The same happens today among modern states. The lists of honours awarded at the end of the year both in Malta and the United Kingdom, for example, are reported in the newspapers besides being published in the official government gazette. These honorific decrees were often also publicised by being inscribed on stone or, occasionally, bronze, or some other durable material precisely for this purpose.<sup>29</sup>

## The format of the decree

The *proxenia* decree from Malta follows quite faithfully a widely established standard format of honorific decrees. It is formed of the following sections:<sup>30</sup>

1. An optional **invocation** to the gods (θεοί) and/or good fortune (ἀγαθὴ τύχη) is **missing** at the beginning of the decree, but appears at the beginning of section 6 (the motion formula)

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<sup>25</sup>*Huius aetatis decretum civitatis superest in honorem Demetrii Syracusani factum, quod Romae repertum inter urbanos titulos proponam.*

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, W. Hüttl (1929) 72; G. Manganaro (1963) 205, 213; A.G. Woodhead (1981) 62; confirmed by J. Prag who notes that ‘there are almost no parallels available for Greek letter forms in Malta during this period’ (personal communication 09/12/2014). Perhaps a comparison could be made with the Greek script of the bilingual inscriptions (CIG III 5753; IG XIV 600) and the legend ΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΩΝ on the locally struck coins in both of which, for example, the A appears with a broken horizontal bar.

<sup>27</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 213.

<sup>28</sup> M. Guarducci (1987) 89–90.

<sup>29</sup> Hundreds of *proxenia* decrees have been documented in the ancient Greek world.

<sup>30</sup> Based on M. Guarducci (1987) 115–17; P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 4–5.

2. An optional **heading**, indicating the subject matter of the decree is here placed in two columns at the top, flanking an engraved wreath and, because of the latter, distinctly separated from the main text.
3. The **prescript** provides the date of the enactment by the names of three officials, the hierothutes and the two archons.
4. The **enactment formula** (commonly included in the prescript) is the formula indicating that what follows has been enacted as a decree. Here the formula is: ἔδοξε τῇ συγκλήτῳ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ ('resolved by [or 'it seemed good to'] the council and the people'). Instead of *synkletos* one normally finds *boulé*. The substitution of *synkletos* for *boulé* is also found in Naples, Syracuse and elsewhere in the west. The assembly of the people (*demos*) is called *halia* in the Akragas proxeny decree, which is typically, but not exclusively, Doric in the west.
5. The **motivation clause** introduced by the conjunction ἐπειδὴ ('since' or 'whereas').
6. The **motion formula** is here introduced by the invocation to good fortune (ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ). It consists of an infinitive (normally dependent on 'the proposer said' of the prescript, which is left out) δεδόχθαι ('that it should be resolved' [by the assembly], calling on the enacting body to approve the motion put to it. The motion formula amounts to a prayer for good fortune on the state and on the decision which it is taking.
7. The **substance** is expressed in the accusative and infinitive dependent on δεδόχθαι ('it should be resolved'). Here we have two resolutions: 1) for Demetrios to become *proxenos* (an honour to be
8. extended to his offspring), and 2) for the decree to be inscribed on two bronze tablets, one of which to be donated to Demetrios.
9. Measures for the custody and eventual publication of the decree. This is expressed as the second resolution in (7) in the Maltese decree.

Among the motivations for the conferment of this kind of honour, of which Guarducci provides a list,<sup>31</sup> we find here mentioned ἀρετή (virtue) and εὐνοία (benevolence). The formula used here, joining 'virtue' and 'benevolence' by the preposition ἔνεκεν, is also a standard form (ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ εὐνοίας, 'for [his] virtue and benevolence').

### The *Proxenia* as an Institution

The *proxenia* (*pro* = 'for', or 'on behalf of'; *xenos* = 'foreigner', but also 'host') was a very ancient and widely diffused custom in the ancient Greek world by which polities expressed their recognition and appreciation of services rendered to their members by foreign persons within the ambit of the latter's place of residence.<sup>32</sup> This was done through the enactment of an honorific decree by the political

<sup>31</sup> M. Guarducci (1987) 118.

<sup>32</sup> For an extensive treatment of various aspects of the *proxenia* see P. Monceaux (1885); P. Monceaux (1886); F. Gschnitzer (1973); C. Marek (1984); W.B.G. Mack (2015).



institutions of the respective polity. At the same time, the official conferment of the honorific title secured the continuation of the same, or similar, services for the members of the conferring polity in the future. It was used by the polity to safeguard its citizens on their journeys or residence abroad. In many respects, and *mutatis mutandis*, this institution resembles that of our contemporary honorary consulate, the *proxenos* being, in many respects, the equivalent of the honorary consul for a particular country in a foreign country or city.<sup>33</sup> As such he was supposed to protect the members of the state he represented, intervene for them with the local authorities and, if necessary, to give them hospitality in his own house.<sup>34</sup> So, apart from prestige and privileges the role of *proxenos* involved also commitment and money.

These burdens were compensated for by certain privileges and advantages provided by the conceding polity. As in the case of the Maltese decree, the title of 'benefactor' (εὐεργέτης) is often added to that of *proxenos* and the titles are conferred on the honorand and on his descendants (καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις αὐτοῦ in the heading, and καὶ τοὺς ἐγγόνους αὐτοῦ in the body). The Maltese decree does not specify what privileges were involved in this honour for Demetrios and his descendants. In theory they could be substantial, including juridical, financial, commercial and religious ones.<sup>35</sup> In practice, however, for someone like Demetrios, residing in Rome without the need or the desire to travel to and reside in these islands, they might not be significant at all. On the other hand, being able to display such certificates of recognition of service to far away states in public places in the metropolis of his residence, must have enhanced the public image of this wealthy *peregrinus*.<sup>36</sup>

The earliest documented proxeny decrees date to the 7th century BC,<sup>37</sup> and they were still being enacted in the mid-1st century BC. A very late one was issued by the Cretan town of Gortyn in pre-Imperial times. A man from Delphi, Diodoros, son of Dorotheos, received the title from several Greek cities at the time of the second triumvirate and the first years of Augustus' sole rule. Another proxeny edict was inscribed by the Sicilian town of Akragas when it had the status of municipium, therefore not much before Augustus' reform of Sicilian affairs in 36 BC.<sup>38</sup> But other proxeny decrees were issued as late as the 2nd century AD by cities on the Black Sea, including one dated to the late 2nd century AD by the city and townsmen of Chersonesos.<sup>39</sup>

It should be noted that with the proliferation of such honours and privileges, their original value grew smaller and sometimes reduced itself to ostentatious verbosity in which only vain men found pleasure. But the two bronze proxeny tablets for Demetrios of Syracuse (together with a group of other pigraphic documents listed by Manganaro)<sup>40</sup> prove that not only had this Greek institution not lost its value by the beginning of the 1st century BC, but that it had been taken over and integrated in the socio-political system of the Roman world and adapted to the typically Roman concept of *amicitia* and the social phenomenon of *clientela*.

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<sup>33</sup> *Proxenois* were sometimes also engaged in intelligence activity in Classical Greece (see A. Gerolymatos (1986)).

<sup>34</sup> On the various obligations of the *proxenos* as patron and guarantor, besides hospitality, see C. Habicht (1970), 146–147; M. Guarducci (1969) 29–30.

<sup>35</sup> See P. Monceaux (1885) 737–738; F. Gschnitzer (1973) 710–721.

<sup>36</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 212.

<sup>37</sup> Such as the title of *proxenos* awarded by Kerkyra to a man from Locri (*IG IX 1 867*).

<sup>38</sup> *IG XIV 954*. See F. Gschnitzer (1973) 639.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 639–640.

<sup>40</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 220.

## The Political Institutions

The conferring body of a proxeny decree was, by definition, a state (*civitas*), or polity. The latter can be defined as “a political unit, or a combination of units, that claims power (whether absolutely or subject to some overriding power) over an area of territory and its inhabitants”.<sup>41</sup> Malta was such a polity in antiquity, at times the polity of the main island standing for the whole archipelago, as in all allusions to Malta in Cicero, at other times each of the two main islands, Melite and Gaulos, forming a separate territory controlled by a city of the same name (as in Pseudo-Skylax 111, Diodorus Siculus V.12.1–4 and Ptolemy *Geogr.* IV. 3. 13). The conferring polity for the proxeny under consideration was that of Melite, irrespective of whether there was another active polity for Gaulos at the time of its enactment, or not.

“The characteristic machinery of Greek states for legislation and the decision of public policy involved two elements, the relatively small council and an assembly of all full citizens. The former had the initiative, and deliberated beforehand on the measures to be presented to the assembly. The latter gave the final decision on measures laid before it, but could not itself initiate”.<sup>42</sup>

We can add that the same two bodies were, de facto, the bases on which the ancient concept (not only the Athenian one) of democracy was founded. The level of democracy (total, semi-, or quasi-) depended on whether appointments were open to all citizens and on the degree of participation of the citizen body, whether directly or through representation. The Maltese proxeny inscription declares the presence of both elements: the council (*synkletos*) and the assembly (*demos*). The Akragas one had the same but, whereas the council bears the name *eskletos* (plus its component,<sup>43</sup> or alternative name,<sup>44</sup> the *boulè*), the assembly is called *halía*. Indeed, as I had suggested elsewhere,<sup>45</sup> *synkletos* is frequently used for the council in the west (and became the regular Greek equivalent of the Latin *senatus*);<sup>46</sup> *halía* for assembly is particularly Dorian, but its use in the west is not limited to Dorian states”.<sup>47</sup>

The presence of a council may indicate that the state, therefore the population, was not small since the need was felt for a council to prepare the assembly’s agenda. Since only adult men with full membership rights voted in the assembly,<sup>48</sup> the need of a council of, say, 100 men – in the Akragas inscription it numbered 110 – would imply an assembly of over 500 men; which, in turn, suggests a population in excess of 2000 people. Given the absence of surviving remains of public buildings, like a theatre, it is next to impossible to estimate the Maltese population at any given time within the Roman period. This evidence is, in the circumstances and provided it can be relied on, an important source for such a calculation. Calculating the scale of participation in the assembly and, by inference, the number of voting adult males and thence the population of Greek states, is possible when texts provide us with quorum figures or a count of votes. These vary from an exceptionally large voting body for Athens– an

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<sup>41</sup> P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 1.

<sup>42</sup> A. Andrewes (1954) 1

<sup>43</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 209.

<sup>44</sup> P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 321.

<sup>45</sup> A. Bonanno (1992) 16; (2005) 175.

<sup>46</sup> It is probably used for council in Syracuse; it certainly is in Neapolis, as it is in the Maltese decree (P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 506 and 557).

<sup>47</sup> P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 320. For the question of *synkletos*, *eskletos*, *boulè* and *halía*, see the discussion of the text of a decree attributed to the ancient city of Caleacte in Battistoni (2010).

<sup>48</sup> Within a Roman political context it is perhaps advisable to refrain from using the term ‘citizenship’ whenever this might be confused with Roman franchise

attendance of 3,616 is attested in the early 1st century BC,<sup>49</sup> but in the 5th-4th centuries the citizen body may have risen up to 60,000– to a very small one for Knidos about the year 200 BC where, for a population of 1200, 204 votes are recorded in a lawsuit.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the Maltese decree does not enter into the voting details and we thus lack a precious demographic source of information.<sup>51</sup> It is one of those decrees in which the decision is said to be taken, without giving voting figures.

As happened in Greece, so also in other polities under Punic hegemony (like Malta): the power of the previous rulers was supplanted by that of Rome. With this one unrivalled great power there was no room for any illusion of total freedom, especially in external affairs; but there was still room for autonomy in internal affairs, and that autonomy was not always negligible.<sup>52</sup> There was probably never among the inhabitants of Melite the aspiration to freedom (*eleutheria*), that is, freedom from obeying the orders of a great power, as was often the case among Greek city states. But even though this could not be achieved, it was legitimate and acceptable to hope for autonomy (*autonomia*), that is, the right to manage one's own internal affairs while accepting to be subordinate to a greater power with regard to external affairs, as well as taxation.

The assembly of citizens (*demos*) was normally the body with final decision-making power in a state. Most Greek states with a democratic constitution had one before the Roman occupation and continued to have one after. But not all cities had one. In the west, Massalia is a notorious case; it had no assembly either in the Hellenistic or Roman periods.

A Punic inscription from Gozo, dated to the last decades before the Roman conquest, also refers twice to the people of Gozo (*GWL*) who 'constructed and renovated' various sanctuaries.<sup>53</sup> Although the nature of the inscription is different from that of a decree, it does mention what appear to be an eponymous priest and two magistrates (*rab*), which could parallel the *hierothutes* and *archontes* of the Maltese bronze inscription, and the 'people', which recalls the *demos*, but not a council. Whether it can really be cited in support of a preceding political model for that outlined in the decree in question, therefore, is highly debatable; but a degree of continuity cannot be denied. It can only be hoped that more epigraphic documents of the latter type will turn up through archaeological investigations in order to throw more light on the matter.

## The Persons

The decree was issued under the sacrificing priest (*[h]ierothutes*) [H]iketas (gen. *a/ou*), and under the chief magistrates (*archontes*) [H]ereas (gen. */ou*) and Kotes (gen. */etos*).

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<sup>49</sup> *JG* II2 1035.

<sup>50</sup> *IK* 221.

<sup>51</sup> For an idea of the quantity and quality of information derived from such documents see E. Ruschenbusch (1983) 125–143.

<sup>52</sup> A. Lintott (1993) 7, 36–40, 145–148.

<sup>53</sup> *CIS* I, 132. The assigned date varies between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC, but the most probable one is shortly before the Roman conquest in 218 BC (M. Heltzer (1993)).

Outside Sicily the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* lists three mentions of Hiketas (at Amathous in Cyprus, Orchomenos and Oropos) and one of Kotes in Rhodes, while in Sicily Hiketas occurs at least six times (at Akragas, Herakleia Minoa, Morgantina and Syracuse) and Kotes occurs once (at Akragas). Hereas occurs much more often (about 22 times) outside Sicily, spread over at least six centuries (from the 4th century BC to the 2nd century AD), but only twice in Sicily (at Tauromenion).<sup>54</sup> To the latter the appearance of the name Hereas on the aforementioned Halaesa tablets should now be added.<sup>55</sup> The distribution pattern of these three Greek names that appear on the Maltese proxeny decree seems to show a preponderance of occurrences in Sicily, especially in the Hellenistic-Roman age, thus adding further evidence of Sicilian cultural influence on the Maltese islands after the Roman conquest. The question whether these names stand for men of Greek ethnic extraction, or Maltese inhabitants adopting Greek names, or something else, will be discussed below in the section on “Language”. Let me just state at this stage that I find it extremely unlikely that within a century, or a century-and-a half, from the Roman conquest, Malta had been Hellenized to such a degree, especially ethnically, for all three officials to be of Greek extraction. The second alternative is much more probable in the general Hellenizing atmosphere pervading throughout the Mediterranean, where we find even Phoenicians adopting Greek names.<sup>56</sup>

### Demetrios, son of Diodotos

In the Maltese inscription, just as in the Akragas one, the protagonist is Demetrios. It has been reliably reported that both inscriptions were found together a short time before 1549 among some ruins in Rome, not far from the Curia.<sup>57</sup> This location in the heart of the Forum Romanum, is most unlikely to have been a domestic one; so the inscriptions could not have been located in Demetrios’ private residence.<sup>58</sup> The whole area around the Curia was occupied by religious and administrative buildings. One of these could have housed official documents, including ones inscribed on marble and bronze, like the 3000 bronze tablets that went lost in the fire of the Temple of Jupiter in AD 69.<sup>59</sup> The two inscribed bronze tablets, the Maltese one and its companion, were physical records of this type, records of a man, Demetrios, who was clearly asserting himself, both officially, as the person representing the interests of two *civitates* in the metropolis, and socially, as a person held in high esteem by those same two *civitates* of a respected province which at one time, around 70 BC, must have been on everybody’s lips, in view of the notorious trial *de repetundis* against Verres, the former governor of that province being debated in the Roman law courts. The two foremost lawyers of Rome were involved in that case, Cicero on the side

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<sup>54</sup> [http://clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/igpn\\_search.cgi](http://clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/igpn_search.cgi) (accessed in August 2011). These lists combine occurrences recorded in volumes 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4 of the *Lexicon* (P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (1987); (1994); (1997); (2000); (2005)). None of these three names appears on Attic inscriptions of 229–86 BC (S.V. Tracy (1990)).

<sup>55</sup> G. Scibona (2009) 105, n. 18.

<sup>56</sup> See, in particular, Stager (2005). On Delos as many as 29 stele set up by Phoenicians were cast wholly in Greek (*Ibid.* note 102). One should also not forget the bilingual inscriptions on the two identical candelabra wherein the two Punic offerands also assume Greek names (*CIG* III 5753; *IG* XIV 600; *CIS* I 122 and 122bis). On the possibility that these candelabra might not be of local (that is, Maltese) origin, see M.G. Amadasi Guzzo and M.P. Rossignani (2002).

<sup>57</sup> See discussion above under “The Place and Date of its Discovery”.

<sup>58</sup> In contrast to the two Halaesa bronze tablets already mentioned, which were discovered in a domestic context.

<sup>59</sup> Suetonius (*Vesp.* 8.5). See section on “The Place and Date of its Discovery” above.

of the Sicilian plaintiffs, and his senior Hortentius on the side of the defence. It should also be kept in mind that Demetrios himself hailed from that province; he was a Syracusan.

Volume I of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, dedicated to the Aegean islands, Cyprus and Cyrenaica, lists 426 mentions of Demetrios (none of them with the patronymic Diodotos) and 93 mentions of Diodotos.<sup>60</sup> Volume IIIA, dedicated to the Peloponnese, Western Greece, Sicily and Magna Graecia, lists 82 mentions of Demetrios (including four from Syracuse, dating to 173 BC, and the two found in Rome referring to Demetrios the Syracusan, son of Diodotos) and 11 mentions of Diodotos (three from Sicily, including the two just mentioned).<sup>61</sup> There do not seem to be any further references to Demetrios son of Diodotos in written sources, neither literary nor epigraphic, and I am not aware of any in papyrus documents. In my searches for him, however, I have come across an inscription from Delos (Inv. Γ685) which seems to be of some relevance. It is a stele in white marble found in various fragments in 1881, 1909, 1910 and 1911 in the Serapieion C.<sup>62</sup> It lists a certain Diodotos, son of Demetrios (Διόδωτος Δημητρίου) together with three other Diodotos with different patronymics. Given the common custom among the ancient Greeks, indeed among many patriarchal societies, to name first-born sons for their grandfathers, it is possible, even if only just, that the Demetrios, son of Diodotos, honoured in the Maltese and Akragas inscriptions is the Demetrios, father of Diodotos, of the Delos inscription, or the son of the latter. It all depends on how many generations this alternation of the two names lasted, but always within the chronological parameters of the three inscriptions.<sup>63</sup>

There is also, indeed, a Demetrios son of Diodotos mentioned in another inscription from Delos,<sup>64</sup> but he carries the *ethnicon* Apolloniates (Ἀπολλωνιάτης) added to his name, and is tentatively identified as an ephebos in 96/95 BC.<sup>65</sup> But his ethnic excludes him completely from any affinity with our Demetrios, and makes it clear that men bearing the same names did come from elsewhere.<sup>66</sup>

One important missing element in these Delos inscriptions is the Syracusan origin of the two men. The possible connection of this family from Syracuse with Delos, however, is suggested by another inscription from Delos dated to 173 BC recording a certain 'Demetrios from Syracuse' (Δημήτριος Συρακόσιος) as one of the three "Débiteurs". It deals with accounts connected with the sacred treasury.<sup>67</sup> The same man is taken to be recorded in another Delian inscription dated to the same year as "Débiteur" and "Garant". It is an inscription carrying an inventory of the Temple of Apollo.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, another very long inscription from the same island carries accounts of the temple (possibly of Apollo) that were inscribed on the face of a large stele set up for the year 171 BC.<sup>69</sup> In spite of the absence of

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<sup>60</sup> P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (1987).

<sup>61</sup> P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (1997). S.V. Tracy (1990) 283–288 lists four Demetrios as eponymous archons of Athens and three Diodotos, but unrelated to each other.

<sup>62</sup> P. Roussel and M. Launey (1937) 389–391, no. 2616, l. 73: under the heading *Fragments divers postérieures à 166 av. J.-C.*; P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (1987) 134.

<sup>63</sup> On this issue of paternity and/or filiation see P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (1987) xvi.

<sup>64</sup> P. Roussel and M. Launey (1937) 376, no. 2600.

<sup>65</sup> J. Tréheux (1992) 37.

<sup>66</sup> I owe this observation, and the one relating to Demetrios Syrakusanos in the following paragraph, to Jonathan Prag (personal communication 19.12.2014)

<sup>67</sup> F. Durrbach (1929) 231–232, no. 458.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 215–230, no. 455 – while the ethnic is fully legible, here the name of Demetrios has been integrated by the editors.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* 237–259, no. 460. Since inscription no. Γ685 referring to Diodotos son of Demetrios is said to be post-166 BC (see note 61), any attempt to connect this Demetrios with those mentioned in earlier inscriptions has to take into account the expulsion of the ancient population of the island in 166 BC and the importation of a new

the desired patronymic, these three Delian inscriptions might be referring to the Syracusan that we have been looking for. Although this cannot be established with any certainty, in Jonathan Prag's opinion 'it is legitimate to note that if there is a Demetrios of Syracuse who was rich and well connected and spent time in Rome, then it would not be impossible for such a figure to have links in the sanctuary of Delos also.' The only difficulty about this connection is the date of the inscriptions (173–171 BC), a good century before the Verrine episode with which an attempt has been made to involve the Demetrios of the Akragas inscription.

Returning to Rome, since during the trial of Verres the Maltese had a delegation there whose members needed the services of a *proxenos*, and our Demetrios fits perfectly in that role, a Ciceronian date for the decree is also possible. Indeed, the Agrigento decree specifically refers to a cause in Rome dealt with by Demetrios on behalf of the Agrigentines, even if we have no idea which one. Manganaro conjectures an audience for the Agrigentine delegation with the Roman Senate among the favours performed by Demetrios, even though there is no real mention of it in the inscription.<sup>70</sup> In his letters to Atticus and to his friends Cicero makes reference to several men by the name of Demetrios, and to one Diodotus, but none of their descriptions fit our two persons.<sup>71</sup>

Demetrios is likely to have had close connections with the Italian *negotiatores* residing in the main harbour towns of Sicily: Panormus, Syracuse, Agrigentum, and Lilybaeum.<sup>72</sup> Malta must have gravitated mostly on Syracuse as the nearest large and busy harbour in Sicily. This goes some way to explain the loose connection between Malta and this Syracusan gentleman inferred by the inscription. Until we discover evidence implying otherwise, we have good reason to believe that the Maltese class with which this inscription suggests that Demetrios would have been particularly connected was that of the *negotiatores*, presumably local ones. Although the emergence of such a class has been amply suggested by the archaeological evidence,<sup>73</sup> no one of these *negotiatores* has ever emerged in the scanty literary and epigraphic documentation. The story of Diodorus Melitensis in Cicero's Verrine accounts suggests close connections also with Lilybaeum, the other harbour town on the opposite side of the island (*Verr.* II. 4. 38–41).<sup>74</sup> It is not clear to which class Diodorus belonged, except that he was wealthy and somewhat of an art connoisseur, but his name implies, as does that of Demetrios, that he was also a *peregrinus* with close and influential friends in the Roman capital.

## The Language

What is very striking about the Malta proxeny tablet, compared to the Akragas one, is a) the (almost) perfectly standard letter style;<sup>75</sup> b) the standard Attic Greek dialect, in sharp contrast to the Doric one of

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population, including the large group of Italian *negotiatores* that included Greeks from southern Italy and Sicily. The ravages by troops of Mithridates Eupator in 88 and by pirates of Athenodoros in 69 mark the beginning of a rapid decline of the island which survived only as a small village. These dates would mark the end of the possible connection between the Demetrios of Syracuse family with Delos.

<sup>70</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 212.

<sup>71</sup> See letters to Atticus 40, 86, 371; to friends 149, 184–6.

<sup>72</sup> G. Manganaro (1963) 213.

<sup>73</sup> B. Bruno (2004) 55–58.

<sup>74</sup> J. Busuttil (1968); A. Bonanno (2005) 190.

<sup>75</sup> Manganaro (1963) 205 finds the letter forms "impersonal, without rhythm and without characterisation", in contrast with the nervousness of the "elegant, even if irregular" script of the contemporary Akragas decree.

its companion; and c) the (almost) total absence of any linguistic (spelling or grammatical) mistakes.<sup>76</sup> The question is: how can one explain such anomalous perfection in a document from an essentially non-Greek-speaking polity, unless the drafting of the text was commissioned to a Greek literate person? Even if the trading and administrative links with neighbouring Greek-speaking Sicily intensified to the highest degree possible in late Republican times, after Malta was attached to that province, how can one explain the use of standard Attic Greek, without virtually any blemish, in a deeply provincial context (the most remote corner of an administrative Roman province), when most of the trading and administrative partners were Doric speaking, as manifestly and uninhibitedly shown by the Doric inscription from Akragas? On the face of it, the choice of Attic here might indeed point to a different source of Hellenizing influence rather than from Sicily. It is possible, of course, that the commissioning of the engraving of the actual text in Greek was not done by the Maltese administrative bodies themselves, but entrusted to the recipient of the title, possibly at his own expense.<sup>77</sup> In such a hypothetical scenario the deliberations could have possibly taken place in a different language and made by a similar local government setup,<sup>78</sup> but involving people with completely different names, or names that corresponded more or less to their Greek equivalent, very much like the Greek names appearing in the more or less contemporary bilingual inscriptions on the twin candelabra (CIG III, 5753; IG XIV, 600). In fact, the names of the quasi-eponymous officials mentioned in the proxeny do occur, with relative frequency, in nearby Sicily. I am not in the least suggesting, however, that the whole inscription is a total (even if ancient) fabrication by the interested party and that the services rendered mentioned in the Maltese decree were inexistent. On the contrary, they were so real that Demetrios had all the interest to have them officially recognised.

Even if the logically presumed working (that is, currently spoken) language in the Maltese islands in the first two centuries of Roman occupation was Punic,<sup>79</sup> it would not have been considered appropriate to exhibit an honorific and administrative document in Rome in a language other than Greek or Latin.<sup>80</sup> Greek would have been even preferable, as a literary language even Cicero was fond of flaunting.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Noted also by P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 321: "it [the Maltese decree] awards proxeny, in standard Greek terms, to a Syracusan". The only exceptions being *Hiketa Hiketou*, instead of *Hiketa tou Hiketa* and *pollaki* mentioned above.

<sup>77</sup> P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 3, 6 state that the interested honorands were sometimes allowed to publish their respective decree. So this could well have been done in this case even if the explicit instructions at the end of the Maltese decree on how it should be recorded *prima facie* tend to imply otherwise. I say '*prima facie*' because in reality it might equally be construed as making it easier for Demetrios to have the task done in Rome or some other place where Greek inscribers were more easily available, and keep one copy for himself. The decree does not even state what is to be done with the second copy. J. Prag (personal communication 09.12.2014) expressed doubts whether we should 'place the responsibility for both engraving and the Attic dialect with Demetrios since the point of the honour is for the city to bestow the bronze copy upon him, and to prepare two copies at once'.

<sup>78</sup> Or a completely different one, for that matter, but let us not take the hypothesis that far.

<sup>79</sup> During this period the locally struck coins exhibited persisting oriental iconography and Punic legends – though at some point giving place to Hellenized iconography and Greek legends – and the Maltese commoners were still being described as '*barbaroi*' in AD 60 (*Act. Apost.* XXVIII, 1–2). The material culture shows an equally persistent survival of the Punic one throughout the last two centuries BC.

<sup>80</sup> To my knowledge no Punic inscriptions have ever turned up in Rome, even if several (bilingual) ones have turned up in contemporary Athens and Delos, and elsewhere (Stager (2005) 443–446, notes 97, 102). In the

In the alternative scenario I am proposing, Demetrios, with the tacit or official consent of the Maltese local administrators, would have commissioned an expert of Greek Attic, one highly conversant with the respective legal terminology, to draw up a text of a proxeny decree issued by the existing institutional bodies of Malta, but given the right Greek format and Greek onomastics. All the engraver of the inscription would have had to do was to transfer this correct text onto the bronze tablet. Both drafter and engraver, as well as the bronze tablet and its architectural ornament, would have been much easier for Demetrios to procure in Rome, where the Attic dialect would have been more familiar, than they were in Malta.<sup>82</sup>

### Historical, constitutional and social implications

One cannot really qualify Malta as a Greek state at the time of the issue of the decree just because the decree is published in the Greek language and purports to represent political institutions of a Greek kind.<sup>83</sup> If anything, the opposite would be the case. It has, in fact, been argued that the setup involving two archons is a reflection of the suffets of Carthage, and the rabs of the Punic inscription from Gozo.<sup>84</sup> To which I have remarked, however, that the two legislative bodies (the *synkletos* and the *demos*) provide a perfect parallel to the *senatus populusque* of the Roman republican constitution. Similarly, the *hierothutes* would correspond to the *pontifex maximus* and the two archontes to the two consuls.

As far as the constitutional setup prevailing at the time of the enactment of the decree is concerned, therefore, we are given good reason to believe that local affairs and administration was in the hands of a local government with two legislative bodies. Matters of tax collecting, however, and other matters of foreign relations would have been dictated by Rome through the intermediary of the governor of the Sicilian province, as clearly revealed by the episode of Verres vividly illustrated by Cicero.

At this juncture I think that a short mention should be made of the standard membership and function of the council (*boulè* or *synkletos*) in relation to the assembly. In democratic Athens the *bouleutai* (members of the council) were drawn by lot from the demes. The service was paid and by the 4<sup>th</sup> century even the poorest citizens were not excluded. No one could serve more than twice; thus the

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database *Proxeny Networks of the Ancient World*, Rome appears as the residence of ‘proxenoi of other communities’ as many as 49 times, including 19 decrees from Delos, but not including the ones of Demetrios since his ethnicon is Syracusan (proxenies.csad.ox.ac.uk, as on 20.10.2016).

<sup>81</sup> Cicero himself, and his brother Lucius were honoured by the Syracusans with a proxeny inscribed on bronze (*Verr* 2.4.145). In Maltese inscribed documents Latin appears for the first time in an early imperial inscription referring to a certain Chrestion (*CIL* X, 7494). An inscription commemorating Lucius Castricius as an officiating priest of Augustus was cast in Greek (*IG* XIV 601). Another short and fragmentary inscription in Latin with a dedication to L. Sempronius Atratinus, a Roman consul, has now been dated to 21BC-AD 7 (P. Tansey (2008)), but its provenance from the extra-urban sanctuary of international standing might not reflect properly the local situation.

<sup>82</sup> We cannot say the same for the Akragas decree, however, since it is inscribed in Doric dialect.

<sup>83</sup> As was done by P.J. Rhodes and D.M. Lewis (1997) 2: “I shall treat as a ‘Greek’ state or other unit any one which publishes its decrees in the Greek language and which purports to have political institutions of a Greek kind. I thus include: all states within Alexander’s empire which publish Greek decrees, whatever the ethnic composition of their citizen body; Malta, which passed from being Phoenician to being Roman, but from which we have one decree which is Greek in its language and its whole conception; and decrees of rulers like the Hecatomnids of Caria when published in the same form as decrees of constitutionally governed Greek states.”

<sup>84</sup> See, among others, G. Manganaro (1963) 208: ‘*due archonti di Malta (i succedanei dei suffeti)*’.



council represented a fair cross-section of the citizen body. In Sparta, on the other extreme, the two kings were joined by 28 men aged over sixty elected from a privileged group of families within Sparta's restricted citizen body. While Athens had a large citizen body and a large council (500 men or more), Sparta had a fairly large citizen body but a small council. Small states obviously could not have large councils.

In this system prior deliberation was required by the council on every matter on which the assembly was to take a decision. The importance of the assembly in the decision-making process could be affected by the frequency of meetings and the ease with which citizens could attend the meetings. An assembly which met rarely could not transact much business; an assembly which met when many of the citizens were busy (for example with the harvest) and where no compensation was offered for the time consumed, could not attract a representative attendance.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, this lonely decree does not provide us with any information on these matters, so any further hypotheses in this regard will be pure speculation because situations varied from one state to the other and, indeed, within the same state across time. Athens itself is an eloquent example. Sadly, therefore, this inscription does not provide us with much evidence on coeval social relations.

### Cultural and Linguistic Implications

It is important to keep in mind that the need to keep some kind of written record of decisions taken by decision-making bodies implies a degree of literacy in their respective cultures. One wonders to what degree this literacy penetrated down the various levels of Maltese society in the two centuries after the Roman conquest. At some stage the bureaucratic written language – as opposed to the spoken one (Punic) which appears to have survived into the first century AD – was no longer Punic, not even Latin, but Greek. This is attested to by the locally minted coinage of both Melite and (later) Gaulos during the last two centuries BC. The language that takes over from Punic in the legends of the coins is Greek, but it has still not been established at what speed;<sup>86</sup> Latin makes a very timid appearance on the final issue of 35 BC.<sup>87</sup> Beside this proxeny inscription and the Greek version on the bilingual candelabra (CIG III, 5753; IG XIV, 600), both of which belong to the Republican age, the earliest inscription of the Imperial age is also in Greek.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the only votive inscriptions retrieved so far from the sanctuary of Ashtart/Hera/Juno at Tas-Silg in a language other than Punic (or Neo-Punic), are in Greek,<sup>89</sup> with one exception, in Latin.<sup>90</sup> So the process of change, of linguistic acculturation, seems to have been slow, very slow, and might have taken much longer to permeate down to the common people, such as those that gave first assistance to Paul and his companions on the shipwreck of AD 60.<sup>91</sup>

What is *prima facie* surprising in this decree is the apparent Greek ethnicity of the sacrificing priest Hiketas and of the two leading magistrates, the archontes Hereas and Kotes; much more surprising, in

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* IV 1298 A-B; VI 1320 A.

<sup>86</sup> See C. Perassi and M. Novarese (2006) (with previous bibliography). The use of Greek legends on Maltese lower denomination coins must have facilitated their acceptance in neighbouring Sicilian states with which Maltese traders had their closest links, and where some specimens have actually turned up (A. Mini (1979) 497-504; A. Bonanno (2005) 156-157, 181).

<sup>87</sup> See C. Perassi and M. Novarese (2006) 2394, 2402.

<sup>88</sup> The L. Castricius Prudens inscription: IG XIV 601; T. Ashby (1915): 26, 27; J. Busuttill (1972); R. Wilson (1990) 43.

<sup>89</sup> A handful of clay bowls inscribed with the name HERAI/S (M.G. Amadasi Guzzo (2004-2005) 285).

<sup>90</sup> M. Cagiano de Azevedo (1969).

<sup>91</sup> *Act. Apost.* XXVII-XXVIII.

fact, than the Greek denomination of the same official posts and the two decision-making bodies, the *synkletos* and the *demos*. The former is not expected in a polity which had been culturally, if not ethnically, totally Punicized by the time it fell to the Romans in 218 BC. The bilingual inscription on the twin Hellenistic candelabra dedicated to Melqart/Herakles (*CIG* III, 5753; *IG* XIV, 600; *CIS* I, 122 and 122bis) gives also the close Greek equivalent of the Punic proper names both of the god and of the offerands, one of the latter still retaining the oriental (Egyptianizing, in fact) theophoric element in the Greek version (Sarapion). But here we have purely Greek names. It is as if the Hellenizing process, presumably coming from Sicily,<sup>92</sup> had been rapid and, by then, very advanced, if not complete. Such a process could not have taken place overnight or within a few years after the Roman conquest and annexation to the Sicilian province, but would have taken, in my view, more than a century.<sup>93</sup> This lengthy acculturation process, if it really happened, would add further support for a late date for the decree, rather than an early one. Coinciding with such a late date is the presence in Malta of one more gentleman with a Greek name described by Cicero as his friend in 70 BC (Diodorus Melitensis)<sup>94</sup> and yet another in 46 BC (Aulus Licinius Melitensis) whom he calls '*hospes*'.<sup>95</sup> And if there was a time when the Maltese community needed the assistance of someone like Demetrius in Rome, it was during the trial of Verres in 70 BC.

Nor does the language of the inscription imply that the standard working language at the time was Greek. Above, I have already suggested the possibility of the choice of Greek for the inscription being attributable to extraneous circumstances and initiatives. But even if the choice were made by the Maltese legislative bodies, it would only mean that the administrative influence from nearby Greek-speaking *civitates* was so strong that it had become convenient to use Greek at the official level, rather than Punic or Latin. In fact, for this sort of public monument, by its very nature and purpose, the use of any other language but Greek would have been inappropriate. It certainly does not imply that the Maltese population had by then (or had even before, as has been suggested)<sup>96</sup> absorbed a large proportion of Greek ethnicity. The archaeological record suggests, in fact, quite a different scenario, namely, that both the language and the material culture remained substantially Punic, at least up to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.<sup>97</sup> This probable cultural duality, apparent also in the bilingual inscriptions, is unrealistically totally eclipsed in the proxeny inscription which gives the impression of a wholly Hellenized polity.

## Concluding Remarks

Of great significance for the determination of the date of the tablet and for understanding the persona of Demetrius and the historical and political circumstances in which he lived, as well as his social background, is the place in which it was located at the time it found itself buried, to be discovered in the sixteenth century. Demetrius must have been a man of substance and sometime resident in Rome. Even

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<sup>92</sup> Though the use of the Attic dialect in the proxeny inscription suggests some other source.

<sup>93</sup> Unless, that is, it had already started in the last century of the Punic period, as suggested by Prag who prefers a 'later third or second century BC dating' (personal communication 19.10.2016).

<sup>94</sup> See note 73.

<sup>95</sup> J. Busuttill (1967); A. Bonanno (2005) 148, 190.

<sup>96</sup> H.C.R. Vella (2002) 5.

<sup>97</sup> See the hundreds of Punic inscriptions, mostly incised on offering bowls, but not only, from the Tas-Silg sanctuary as well as single ones emerging from rural settlement sites (the villa of San Pawl Milqi and that of Żejtun); not to mention the architectural typology and grave goods characterizing the continuity of burial ritual from the preceding Punic one. See C. Sagona (2002); (2015) 264-295; A. Bonanno (1992) 14-15; (2005) 188-190; A. Zammit (2011).

though he was a *peregrinus*, without Roman or Latin status, he had the means and friends in the right places to permit him to comply with his commitments as *proxenos* of two city states.

Regarding the political status of Malta at the time of the creation of the inscribed tablet, I have presented the reader with two options: either to take the whole decree, its contents and the language in which it is cast at their face value and draw from them the logical conclusions, but with the necessary caveats; or to consider the possibility that there is more in it than meets the eye, and that the historical reality behind it is somewhat different from the apparent one. The resulting scenarios from both options are not outstandingly different if one places the two alternatives within a holistic overview of the social, cultural, linguistic, and political reality, taking into consideration also the more generous archaeological sources of evidence. Without the latter, one is bound to end up with a distorted picture of the general historical landscape of Malta in the concluding two centuries of the last millennium before the present era.

The most creditable dates proposed for the Maltese proxeny inscription – and of its Agrigentine companion – range from the last two decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. In my attempt to narrow that margin of 170 years, I have tentatively suggested a possible connection with another inscription from the Aegean island of Delos reproducing the same two names by which the protagonist of the two *proxenia* decrees is designated, but in inverse order. Since the date assigned to that Delian inscription is the “end of the II or beginning of the I century BC”, if my identification of the Maltese Demetrios as the son of the Delian Diodotos is correct, the Maltese inscription would fall around 60 BC, a generation later. If, on the other hand, he is to be identified with his father, our inscription would be dated a generation earlier, that is, around 140 BC. If I am correct in dating the Maltese *proxenia* inscription to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – along with the scholars with, in my view, the stronger arguments – and in daringly assigning all the above mentioned Delian men with the names Demetrios and Diodotos to the same family I would be extending the connections of that same family from Syracuse with Delos back by another two generations. The problem with this hypothetical connection is that the two names involved were very common and the Delian Diodotos son of Demetrios could have hailed from anywhere. The crucial Syracusan ethnonim is missing but it is present in four other Delian inscriptions datable to 173-171 BC. With these last dates in hand, Prag has now identified several features which, in his view, would push the Maltese decree “back at least into the second century BC – and even the third”.<sup>98</sup>

In the section devoted to institutions I have defined a state as a ‘political unit or combination of units’. The Maltese archipelago most probably fitted in the second category, whatever the decree’s dating within the last two centuries of the Republic. If the decree goes back to the years 218-210 BC, that is, the years immediately following their conquest by the Romans and their integration within the Roman province of Sicily, then the ‘state’ emanating the decree was, most probably, a combination of two units, the *civitas* of Melite and that of Gaulos, just at a time when there would not have been much sense in distinguishing between one and the other.<sup>99</sup> If the decree belongs to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC,

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<sup>98</sup> “In particular, these are the fact that the sigma is generally slightly open, the general width and openness of the letters (including the M), the fact that omicron is generally slightly smaller than the others, the traditional form of the omega, and, above all, the pretty much consistent use of iota adscript throughout the text.” (personal communication 18.10.2016)

<sup>99</sup> Even though the two major islands, Melite and Gaulos, had already been distinguished one from the other as separate geographical (but not necessarily political) entities by Pseudo-Skylax (4th century BC) and, later, by

it is even more probable that the Maltese 'state' incorporated both islands. The fact that Cicero not only never mentions Gaulos but regards the Maltese islands and their inhabitants as a single geopolitical entity called 'Melite' appears to confirm this combination of two units in one state for the period immediately preceding 70 BC. Allowing for a possible short-lived separation of the two political units resulting from Caesar's planned Sicilian reform,<sup>100</sup> the situation remained the same in the early years of the Empire since an inscription of that time styles a certain Chrestion as procurator of Augustus for both islands.<sup>101</sup>

As for the political power wielded by the 'state' of Melite over the territory of the two islands and their inhabitants, it would have been, in any case, limited in both instances to internal affairs and subject to the overriding power of Rome.

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Illustrations are available on the Hard Copy. The captions are as follows:

1. a) The original bronze tablet with Maltese proxeny decree. National Museum of Archaeology, Naples. b) Plaster cast donated by the National Museum of Naples. National Museum of Archaeology, Valletta. (Courtesy of the National Museum of Archaeology, Naples)
2. Drawing of the tablet taken from the original and published by Bres 1815.
3. Drawing of the tablet with Maltese proxeny decree from Pirro Ligorio's manuscripts (reproduced by Orlandi 2008).
4. Pirro Ligorio's Latin version of the Maltese proxeny decree (reproduced by Orlandi 2008).
5. Drawing of the tablet with the Akragas proxeny decree from Pirro Ligorio's manuscripts (reproduced by Orlandi 2008).
6. The Halaesa tablets (after Scibona 2009).
7. Drawings of the Halaesa tablets (after Scibona 2009).

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Diodorus Siculus who, though writing in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, was clearly referring to the geopolitical setup preceding the Roman occupation.

<sup>100</sup> As gleaned from, among other sources, Cicero's letters (discussed in A. Bonanno (2005) 175).

<sup>101</sup> *CIL X 7494* : "*procurator insularum Melit. at Gaul.*" The ephemeral minting of a separate coin type for Gozo, dated to the years of the standoff by Sextus Pompeius, might well belong to the same interlude (Coleiro (1976-77); C. Perassi and M. Novarese (2006)).

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*CIG: Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*

*CIS: Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum.*

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