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Celebrations in prehistoric Malta

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Celebrations in Prehistoric Malta.

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This paper explores celebrations in prehistoric Malta (Figure 1) that were intrinsically linked to the marking of time, a framing of experience that was crucial to early communities. In pursuit of understanding these celebrations, we compare and contrast modern celebrations with ancient celebrations on the Maltese islands, putting the case that archaeologists can be as ambitious as anthropologists in understanding these events, when armed with modern interdisciplinary techniques. Anthropologists remind us that celebrations were dependent on audience, the representatives of the community, because it is “only through the presence of participants who embody and show attention and attachment to the situated presentations are these presentations – and the gathering and the occasion in general – socially realized, recognized, and validated” (Polak 2007: 15). In the case of Malta, we do not need to turn to the distant island of Bali for ethnographic insights, since Jeremy Boissevain recorded the changing celebrations of the island of modern Malta over a period of 55 years, more than two generations of time (Boissevain 1969; Driessen 2016). We bring all these insights to bear on the interpretation of new archaeological fieldwork which is now reaching its conclusion.

The focus of the recent fieldwork (the ERC funded Fragsus project) has been on understanding fragility in the context of the Maltese islands (as an exemplar of cultural intensity and achievement in prehistory) and the resilience of their inhabitants to fluctuating resource availability. This research has assembled detailed results based on palynology, chronology, and osteology that will be reported elsewhere (Malone et al 2016; varied in preparation). The present article exploits the fact that the Maltese islands are blessed by the unusual preservation of stone monuments which have been generally interpreted as temples and mortuary enclosures. We are able to deploy this three dimensional preservation towards deeper interpretation of celebrants and liturgical artefacts in their spatial setting, to a degree that is very unusual in prehistory. These monuments were, we argue, locales of celebration.

We also celebrate the passing of time by reflecting on an earlier paper, *Monuments in an Island Society* (Bonanno et al. 1990), to which two of us contributed nearly thirty years ago. There is a symmetry in our presentation, since this article also reported on new archaeological fieldwork, when we reflected on the (earlier) work of Jeremy Boissevain, and proposed that “a rivalry of [celebratory] consumption was played out within these temples” (Bonanno et al. 1990: 202). We have enlarged the geographical and scientific scope of our work, but a substantial focus has continued to be centred on the Xagħra plateau of Gozo, where celebratory locales of both the living and the dead survive, looking in detail at their inter-relationships.

As already remarked, celebration is very closely linked to the tempo of time and to seasonality. It is, therefore, apt that the recent fieldwork has deployed several hundred radiocarbon dates to give a crucial framework for the timing of celebration. At a *macro-scale*, these dates have been applied to the *longue durée* of the lived experience of the islanders: when they arrived, when they left the islands entirely (perhaps as many as three times), when they returned, and the pace of their impact on their environment. At a *meso-scale*, this chronology has allowed us to follow the changing locales of celebration in the landscape, noting how communities shifted their celebratory activities over the course of their political development. At the *micro-scale*, these dates have been applied to the tempo of celebrations, notably to one crucial mortuary enclosure, revealing a long build-up of activity, a sudden crescendo and then decline, and to one of the temples, where celestial alignments imply a tempo to celebration. This strategy applied to the mortuary enclosure required a great investment of radiocarbon dates to address the nuances that, while not at the scale of celebratory action, do achieve a precision which has not previously been reached. Smaller scales of the timing of celebration can also be revealed from the interaction between architecture and the regular tempo

of the celestial spheres. We can also use astronomical science, identifying the regular traversing of the celestial spheres, to pin-point key moments in the liturgy of celebration. We propose that the temples were designed, constructed and orientated such that the celebrations that occurred there at certain times of the year, took on a special metaphorical significance for the islanders. To this end, one of us (Barratt 2018) has designed computerised virtual environments for two crucial monuments (and by implications a third) on the Xagħra plateau, that give an enormous vigour to the ritual, short of actually experiencing its effects.

A tribute to Jeremy Boissevain

Jeremy Boissevain, the social anthropologist, is famous for his analysis of the celebrations of modern Malta, and the implications that these celebrations had for political activity at the scale of the actor. In this way, his famous ethnographies – *Saints and Fireworks* (1960) and *A village in Malta* (1969) – provide a guide to traditional celebration in the Maltese islands. In his now classic work, *Saints and Fireworks*, he analysed the rhythm of the celebration, described as “pyrotechnic potlatches” by one reviewer (Benedict 1970), and more particularly the social factionalism that supported these activities. In his later book (Boissevain 1969: 56-60), using a fictive name for his study area *Hal Kirkop*, he explained that “the people of Farrug regulate their lives by the periodic religious activities.” and detailed the annual schedule, starting with Easter Day, reaching another peak at the feast of St. Martin on the first Sunday of September (rather than its proper catholic day of 11 November), and culminating on Good Friday (Figure 2). When he first undertook his fieldwork in 1961, there were sixteen major parish religious events (1992b: 139), of which the most important were indeed Holy Week at the beginning of the Maltese summer and the patron feasts at the end of the summer. He reports in his original fieldwork (Boissevain 1965: 56-58), that the Easter cycle started with the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on the Friday before Palm Sunday and had a period of particular intensity (three hours) on Good Friday, with a concluding procession on Easter morning. Each of these feasts has an internal dimension that takes place in the church, organised with prescribed catholic liturgy by the priests and an external dimension that takes place in the streets, organised by the community, and is open to play and improvisation. He further reports (Boissevain 1965: 58-63) that the feast of the patron saint lasted three intense days, set within a longer three to nine day period of spiritual preparation, and, because it was out of cycle with other village feasts, the open part of the celebrations was very well attended not only by villagers, but also by participants from other villages. In this way their inter-village reputation was established by comparison. The feast was made elaborate not only visually “at least one new work of art” and acoustically by “salvoes of aerial bombs”, but by “bombastic panegyric” and “huge luncheons”.

A key feature of the community organisation, particularly the open play, was (and still is) the parish band club (Boissevain 1965: 47-8), that maps onto the factional divisions (*partiti*) of the larger villages (Boissevain 1965: 80). A band club not only has a sense of place, but a sense of community: “formally constituted associations ... with premises of their own”. They were formed in the nineteenth century to organise celebrations and have as officers the most influential individuals of the village, headed by a president. They provide food and drink even outside the festival season. He also pointed out that the church was another focal point of village life. In our 1990 article, we pointed out that prehistoric monuments, normally designated temples, were also the focal points of life, and because they appeared in clusters, a similar factionalism of celebration may have existed in prehistoric times as well.

In his later years, Boissevain (1992a) analysed how Maltese celebrations had changed over the course of his period of study. To his surprise, celebrations endured in spite of (or perhaps because of) the pressures of globalisation. However, there were changes. Thirty years later, the celebrations

of the secondary saints and the Holy Sacrament had faded in importance and participation. The small-scale confraternities and factions supporting these events had died. On the other hand, the two major feasts demarcating both the beginning and the end of summer and celebrating the collective identity of the village with conspicuous parades (the external non liturgical dimension), have retained their importance and expanded. Community solidarity, still based on band clubs, had replaced earlier factionalism. As an archaeological team, we have witnessed the same transformation in another village on Gozo. Over the course of more than thirty years, the importance of the Good Friday processions in Xagħra (Figure 3) has multiplied. We most recently witnessed images of Christ in every possible configuration, surrounded by hundreds of participants. Personal devotion has been replaced by public display and theatrical performance. The active participants are the locals, including returning emigrants, seeking idealised solidarity, but many of the observers are also foreign tourists seeking relief “from anonymous urban areas in northern Europe.” (Boissevain 1992b: 149). Curiously for the Anglo-Maltese elite, this has had a reinforcing effect of legitimisation: “The village festa and Holy Week celebrations became national assets – along with sun, sea, *prehistoric temples* [our emphasis], and monuments built by the Knights of Malta - with which to attract tourists.” The *best* parishes have the largest number of tourist buses. The configurations of celebration in modern Malta have been thus transformed over the last thirty years. Play has promoted identity. The instrumental has replaced the transcendental (cf. Vassallo 1981).

Following Mauss (1979) and Braudel (1972), Boissevain (1981) was also very aware of the seasonal tempo of celebration, particularly in the Mediterranean. Like Braudel, he contrasted the long, hot, dry summer months (April to October) with the raw, wet and stormy winter season, from November to March, heralded by deluges in September. These storms can wreak much damage, as they occur when withering vegetation has exposed the island’s fragile soils to erosion. The current research of Fragsus on modelling the turbidity of sediments recovered from valley fill sequences suggests that previous pluvial patterns had a similar quality (French et al. in preparation).

Boissevain emphasised that traditionally the winter months were times of hardship (Boissevain 1981), “a time of harsh poverty as food and energy supplies dwindled”. If this were also the case in prehistory, the pressure on the prehistoric inhabitants of Malta identified in the evidence of their mortal remains would have been at its greatest in these months (Malone et al. in preparation b). Boissevain highlighted that the tempo of Mediterranean life picked up in the summer months. “Summer, with its warm weather and abundant food supply, was also a period of feasting: patron saints were honoured and weddings were celebrated. Such celebrations were also traditional times of courtship. The celebrations and much of the daily round of business and domestic activities took place, outdoors in public.” The celebrations of modern Malta have always been concentrated in the summer months. We assess whether this might also have been the case in prehistoric Malta.

Linking past and present?

One of the major issues facing our current research, and archaeological research more generally, is how much we can deploy the evidence of the present to understand the past. We face this debate when comparing the ancient and modern soils of Malta. Both draw on the same parent geology, both are subject to similar generalising processes, but can we be certain that the conditioning factors were the same? The same debate tempts us in the application of modern ethnography to the prehistoric social past. How much do these modern patterns outlined by Boissevain match the evidence for the prehistoric Malta? Modern Malta is clearly radically different from prehistoric Malta in a number of key dimensions. Most notably the longue durée political development of Malta has a crucial threshold in the first millennium BC, when the islands moved from a preceding phase largely

of self-dependence (although the degree is much debated) to one of high levels of interaction and even dependency. The human population grew very substantially as a consequence, and today is very much greater than it was in prehistory. However, in spite of these striking differences, the structure of, scale, space and topography remained substantially the same, even though Maltese ethnographers and archaeologists tend to weight differently an internalised focus and interpretation and the wider regional context. In the case of Xagħra, the same plateau was, and is, the locus of colourful rituals both in past and present. We sustain that modern ethnography is not only stimulating for the completeness of our ideas of the past, but is much more than analogy because we can elucidate difference as well as continuities, focused on both the immediate locale, and the island and regional context.

The Macro time of celebration in the Maltese islands

Our earlier and recent fieldwork has uncovered the long-standing uncertainties that must have preoccupied the prehistoric islanders who, unlike today, could not benefit so much from the ease of connectivity with the outside world. The islanders would have had memories of rising sea levels, perhaps even of the creation of their island home, possibly preserved in myth and traditional narratives passed down between the generations (cf. Nunn 2014; Stoddart 2015). They would also have experienced the increasing fragility of their homeland, where, as revealed from pollen cores, sediment was frequently washed into the otherwise dry valleys by flash events, as indigenous tree cover was increasingly removed (French et al. in preparation). Furthermore, many of the young members of the community would not have survived infancy, as recorded in the major recorded burial monument of the third millennium BC, the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle (Stoddart et al. 2009). In these circumstances, a collective and regulated celebration of those elements of certainty in their island world, such as the annual cycle of the seasons and the rising and setting of the sun, would have served an important social and practical purpose.

We suggest that the monumental structures were erected as celebratory locales, where certainties of life and constrained death could be placed within a regulated tempo, and within regulated space and place, probably responding to seasonal constraints of abundance and shortage. The so-called temples have clear regularities of structure. The architecture is preceded by an open courtyard spacious enough to contain scores, if not hundreds, of participants, often paved and frequently facing a concave façade, furnished with curbed benches, tethering places, and presumably for the display of food and images. This façade was generally broken by a constricted entrance focused on a rising line of sight towards a central apse and its elaborate bench or “altar”. Two or four apses, depending on the size of the temple, were symmetrically arranged to right and left (Stoddart et al. 1993; Anderson & Stoddart 2007; Malone 2007). Other features of symmetry seem to have been important, where the left hand of the building appears, for instance, to have been associated with water vessels, and the right hand side with fire pits and sacrifice (Malone 2007), evidently intended for food and feast. These buildings were evidently highly regulated, such that the constricted spaces could be closed off by screens, with ties whose holes are preserved in the door jambs. Celebrants could only have entered when permitted and probably in strictly defined garb, both of the head and of the body (Stoddart & Malone 2018) if the well preserved figurine images are to be believed. Celebratory time was thus matched by celebratory dress (Figure 3). Our sample of well-preserved mortuary enclosures is limited to two, one on Malta excavated from soft limestone and one on Gozo utilising a natural cave system. Both seem to be deliberately enclosed, strictly bounded structures, containing more organic deeper spaces than the temples above ground. These enclosures effectively kept the dangerous dead and their potentially roving and perhaps mischievous spirits within a safe controlled space. The Gozitan example was enclosed by a massive

megalithic wall that protected the corpses within, and was originally only entered between two upright monoliths measuring over four metres in height. Celebration thus had two faces on one conceptual body, one for the living above ground, and one for the dead below ground.

The Meso time of celebration in the Maltese islands

These monumental structures were extremely enduring, so much so that they are still prominent monuments in the landscape today. However, more detailed study of the relative chronologies of these structures does suggest development through time, in the same way as Boissevain has observed for the modern rituals. In common with the observation of Boissevain, ritual seems have become more focussed and concentrated on a smaller number of locations and perhaps even on a smaller number of celebratory occasions. However, whereas in the case of modern Malta, celebration has been taken away from the priests, perhaps even democratised, there is an argument to be made that in the case of prehistoric Malta, it may be that the ritual specialists took control of the opportunities presented by celebration. For some time (Evans 1971), it has been suggested that whereas in the earlier phases of the temples, such as during the Ġgantija period (c. 3400-3200 BC), the temples complexes were smaller and more open, in the second and final phase of the temples, the Tarxien period (c.2800-2400 BC), the temple complexes became more flamboyant in their decoration, that they deployed more figurative sculpture, and that the celebrants in charge of the places began to exclude substantial numbers of the other participants from the inside of the temples.

The recent excavation of the temple site of Santa Verna (Xagħra, Gozo) has added new, stratigraphically proven details to this pattern of structural growth and change (Malone et al in preparation a). Firstly, it is clear from this excavation that an earlier village was reoccupied, after a gap of as much as 1000 years in c. 3800 BC (Zebbug period), by structures that became a typical five apse temple on a scale not very dissimilar from the famous neighbour of Ġgantija and on precisely the same alignment. The building then evolved through at least six phases of remodelling, a period of activity spanning at least a millennium. A further novelty is that the temple appears to have been deconstructed during antiquity, perhaps near the end of the Tarxien period (Figure 4). Subsequent ceremonial attention focused on both the neighbouring Brochtorff Xagħra Circle (where some portable features such as a stone bowl and finely worked plinths may have been transported) and Ġgantija itself. The application of a large suite of radiocarbon dates to the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle suggests a parallel development (Malone et al in preparation b) where the first burials of any number were placed from about 2900 BC (800 years later than the first monumentalisation of temple structures), and reached a culminating crescendo in c. 2500 BC followed by over a century of decline. After the last human interment had been placed, the ritual structures, and a number of liturgical apparatuses, appear to have been deliberately dismantled, and indeed, part of the cave system appears to have collapsed. These stratigraphic details, accompanied by radiocarbon dates, suggest major changes in the setting of celebration over the course of the use of the temples, even if the broader grand tradition endured. These changes may have reflected broader changes in the political organisation of society and its relatively rapid cessation or transformation.

The Micro time of celebration in the Maltese islands

The recent work of one of us (Barratt 2018) has gone some way towards pinpointing the micro-time of celebration. Three-Dimensional Virtual Reality (VR) models have been delivered for two key monuments: the South Temple of Ġgantija and the megalithic Circle of Brochtorff Xagħra. The first required very little reconstruction since the parts that are no longer upstanding were recorded by Charles de Brocktorff shortly after its clearance in the early nineteenth century. The

second required more modelling since the entry uprights demarcating the entrance and the associated circular structure had been dismantled in the nineteenth century and are only recorded in antiquarian drawings by Jean-Pierre Houël and de Brocktorff (Grima 2004).

The recreation of lost architecture within the VR environment offered the possibility to explore different archaeological hypotheses relating to the construction of the monuments. Elements such as the roof at Ġgantija had to be derived from simulation of alternative virtual environments. The same VR technology has also allowed the relationship of the monuments to cosmological alignments to be investigated in great detail, timed and inserted in their correct chronological perspective.

Through custom scripting within Unity3D game engine, tools were created to calculate solar positioning, simulating the effects of sunlight within the ancient sites. The SunPositionScript (Barratt 2018) calculates the angular position of the sun at a given date and time, based on Sproul (2006), Holbert (2007) and Shivalingaswamy and Kagali (2012). It then casts a ray between that point and a chosen location in the innermost central temple apse. For a continuous series of dates and times, if the virtual solar ray collides with a virtual solid surface, such as a wall or roof, no illumination of the inner parts of the temple could have occurred. However, if no collision is detected, sunlight must have been brightly illuminating the temple's interior, and the timing of this alignment can be determined. The SunPositionScript can thereby automatically generate a comprehensive record of the annual cycle of natural lighting within the temple.

The level of preservation at Ġgantija allowed for an in-depth analysis of its alignment. The SunPositionScript was used to simulate the position of the sun throughout the year and calculate whether the light would have entered the temple and reached the far apse through its central corridor. The Maltese temples were dark locations, reminiscent of the underground structures such as the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle (Stoddart et al in press.). The solar alignment would have been an exceptional spectacle, with light slowly entering the temple by illuminating the central corridor in stages, finally reaching the far apse. It would then have lingered at the end of the temple before retracting back to the entrance. This event would have been visible from within the temple itself, but also from the surrounding courtyard.

Results at Ġgantija demonstrate that duration of illumination of the inner temple peaked on the winter solstice (Figure 2). From the middle of November, the morning sun begins to be visible from within the central apse, and the duration of sunlight increases daily until the solstice week. It then diminishes steadily, finally ceasing altogether at the end of January. The alignment occurs early in the day, shortly after sunrise between around 8-9 am, and at its peak lasting for about 35-45 minutes. While many researchers have noted winter solstice alignments at sites throughout the Maltese islands (Lomsdalen 2013, 2014; Ventura and Agius 2017), the SunPositionScript demonstrates it is not necessarily a singular day that was of significance, but rather a short season of alignment. It is possible that associated celebrations were spread out over these weeks, perhaps even with multiple events occurring each day, albeit focused on the solstice.

The Brochtorff Xagħra Circle suffered more extensive structural damage than the Ġgantija temple and while precise drawings by Houël and de Brocktorff provide a ground plan, in situ and above ground remains are scarce or destroyed. As such, the results are less accurate than those offered by the SunPositionScript at Ġgantija. Rather than simulate the position of the sun throughout the year, the site was recreated at key points of the annual cycle and first person perspective was used to note alignment. The winter solstice saw no relevant lighting effects, however the summer solstice creates a significant shadow throughout the site (Figure 2). At the start of the day (about 8am) the two entrance pillars cast a light towards the centre of the site, where the entrance to the

underground complex is situated. The shadow then protracts throughout the morning, reaching the pillars around midday. Visitors of the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle on the morning of the summer solstice would have entered the cave system by walking down a 'corridor' created by the pillars' shadow, thus being guided towards the underworld by darkness. One additional point to add to the observation of the rising sun and its effects is to note the symbolic, mirroring effect, of the setting sun and its potential cosmological meaning. To gain entry down to the subterranean caves, participants would have faced almost directly west, towards a setting sun. The effect of the dying day and sinking sun, in the past and today, is an impressive experience to any person within the elevated location of the stone enclosure.

This work has thus examined in detail two fixed points of celebration: one of death, namely the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle and one of life, namely Ġgantija (and by implication Santa Verna). The results indicate a perfect symmetry between these two monuments in cosmological terms. The entrance of the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle, the enclosure of death, was penetrated during the mornings surrounding the Summer Solstice. The warmth of the summer sun can be appropriately contrasted with cold and desiccated flesh within cave structures of the monument. This time of year also heralded the seasonal end of growth (crops are harvested in June) and the likely ritual slaughter of young animals before the summer drought (McCormick in preparation). The Ġgantija and Santa Verna monuments were entered, on a similarly regular basis, but for a limited duration, six months later by the midwinter sun, during a season of tillage and agricultural renewal. We sustain that the passing of the sun across the entrance may well have defined the tempo of the celebrations within, since the passing of light took place over a period of about 35-45 minutes, traversing from the left (the place of animals) to the right (the place of fire and sacrifice) (Stoddart et al. 1993; Malone 2007). The drama of this shifting pattern of light and dark could have been enhanced by ritual specialists making a great play of the light passing into the inner recesses of the monument; ritualised certainty providing a point of stability in an island world that held so many uncertainties in daily experience.

No human celebration takes places without the serving of food and drink, since these are at the heart of how humans mark events and offer hospitality. Celebration through the cooking, burning and serving of food was central to both the monuments of Life and Death (Malone 2018). Unfortunately, of the life monuments, only Tarxien temple had rich deposits that were still in situ and investigated at a time (1910s – 1920s) when their spatial distribution was considered of sufficient importance to be given some record. Some bones were retained, and certainly Zammit, the excavator, noted in his site diaries the find-spots of major caches of animal horns and food vessels, often set against steps or "altars" or secreted as votive deposits between walls (Figure 5). Other comparable sites were either cleared at an earlier period with scant, but nevertheless compelling record, or have not yet had their faunal deposits properly studied.

The evidence from Tarxien is adequate to give an impressionistic account of the richness and the general distribution of animal remains and particularly of horn cores that increased with intensity within the recesses of the monument (Figure 5). These rich deposits were visually evoked by the engraving of what appear to be stacked horn cores on an altar found in another of the temples, Hagar Qim (Figure 6), cleared at an earlier time than Tarxien. This imagery suggests that the celebrations were as important as much for their visual evocations and their symbolism, as for their consumption of food. We can even suggest that the temples had a structural role that was similar to the band clubs of the modern era, where celebratory food was elaborately served (the range and complexity of the pottery of the period is unprecedented) in vessels that suggest structure and meaning. How plentiful that food actually was, in an environment where predictable harvests may

have been threatened by drought and soil loss, is questionable. The human evidence from the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle suggests nutrition became less meat-based as time went on, although skeletal evidence of malnutrition is surprisingly limited. It is plausible that feasting focused in particular on meat, celebrating the fertility of the stock animals as the annual cycle of celebration intersected the agricultural year (Malone 2018). The systematic recovery and modern study of animal remains from the Brochtorff Xagħra Circle, suggests that some food was deposited with human remains during funerary rituals, placed in ceramic vessels together with trophy animal heads and mandibles, but relatively little bone was found to suggest meat-bearing body parts. Meat, it seems, was simply too precious and scarce to be wasted on the symbolic, whereas the celebratory events at the temples, employing enormous stone and ceramic vessels to stew up entire carcasses, were really the celebratory focus of seasonal and cyclical events. Events that seem likely to have focused on the key moments of the annual cycle of life, death, plenty and frugality.

Conclusion

The Maltese islands provide outstanding evidence of celebratory monuments both in the modern and ancient world. In the ethnography of the near present we can reconstruct, through the acute observations of Boissevain, the foci, the tempo, the changing times and the social context of the rituals and their participants. We have suggested here that, armed with good chronology, detailed observation and scientific research, inspired by the achievements of social anthropology, prehistorians can be equally ambitious in identifying the varied locales, the changes in practice over time, the different temporal scales and tempos of celebration, and the type of underlying social context that sustained these rituals. We suggest that the celebrations which took place in the prehistoric Maltese monuments started with internalised rival factions, in common with their modern counterparts, but, unlike their modern counterparts, they became more focused on major winter solstice rituals at the monuments of life. We register this difference of intensity because of the greater quantity of celebratory food deposits found in “temples” compared with those of death which were dominated by human remains. In contrast to the celebrations of modern Malta, which have increasingly spilled into the public gaze, we suggest that the celebrations of ancient Malta were increasingly hidden by the ritual specialists from the gaze of the majority of the community who were kept outside the facades of the temples and the circles of the mortuary structures. It is within these that we find the deep deposits of human and animal remains set within the recesses of the monumental structure built to enclose them. Ancient and modern Malta had both similarities and differences in their celebratory organisation.

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Figure 1 The Maltese islands, showing sites mentioned in the text. The Xagħra plateau contains the sites of Ġgantija, Brochtorff Xagħra Circle and Santa Verna. (Drawn by Simon Stoddart)

Figure 2. Annual celebratory tempo: 1961 AD vs 2400 BC. The horizontal bars represent activity; the black circles high points of intensity. Figure created by Simon Stoddart drawing on Data from Boissevain (1969) and Barratt (2018)

Figure 3. Celebratory dress: Solstice Day 2400 BC (below) from a selection of sites in prehistoric Malta versus Good Friday 2015 AD in Xagħra (above). The central figure below is based on the old reconstruction of the celebrant. (Figure created by Simon Stoddart, using illustrations drawn by Caroline Malone, Jason Gibbons and Steven Ashley and Photos taken by Simon Stoddart)

Figure 4. The Xagħra plateau: 3000 BC vs 2400 BC. Contour interval 10 feet. (Figure created by Simon Stoddart)

Figure 5 The distribution of ritual largesse from Tarxien. Figure created by Simon Stoddart drawing on Data from the National Museum of Archaeology archives.

Figure 6. An altar at Hagar Qim stacked with horn cores. (Illustration drawn by Jason Gibbons)