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A Nineteenth-Century Maltese Bagpipe in the Metropolitan Museum Collection

Anna Borg Cardona

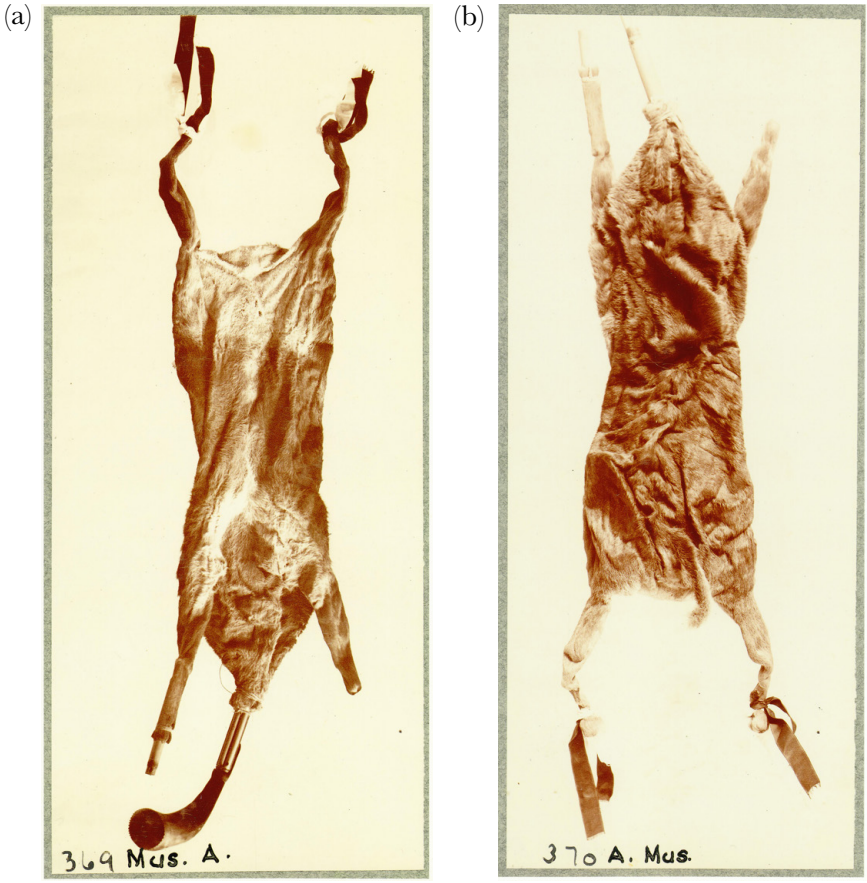
The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York houses a wonderful collection of musical instruments amassed through the efforts of Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown (1842–1918). This was no mean feat for any woman in the Victorian era. With great determination, she wished to create a collection that would represent all cultures. It rapidly grew and today comprises about 5,000 objects, among them a bagpipe from Malta. Mary Elizabeth's husband, John Crosby Brown, encouraged his wife, provided contacts who aided her acquisitions, and must also have partly financed her endeavors. It was her decision to call the collection "The Crosby Brown Collection," giving it the compound surname which was her husband's and, through marriage, also her own. The collection has historically been referred to in this manner by the Metropolitan Museum and in all subsequent publications.

Examining the Maltese bagpipe (catalog number 89.4.2513) in the Crosby Brown Collection, Anthony Baines classed it among what he called the "primitive bagpipes and hornpipes," which also included instruments from Cyprus, India, Macedonia, Albania, North Africa, Egypt, the Greek islands, and Crete. They have in common chanters made of cane and usually a bell made from animal horn. Baines described the Maltese specimen as "an interesting offshoot of the Aegean group of bagpipes."[1] The word "primitive" is now generally not looked on favorably because of its implications of degrees of cultural advancement, but Aegean and Maltese bagpipes have a centuries-long history, which is discussed below.

Mary Elizabeth's interest in the collection of musical instruments evidently began in the 1870s. Within nineteen years she assembled 276 instruments, which she maintained in her home in New York and her country estate in New Jersey.[2] In 1889 she chose to make the collection available to the public by donating it to the Metropolitan Museum of

1. Anthony Baines, *Bagpipes* (Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum, 1960), 43.

2. Emanuel Winternitz, "The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments: Its Origin and Development," *The Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (New York 1970), 337–56.



FIGURES 1a and 1b. (a) Front and (b) back of Maltese nineteenth-century bagpipe. The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments (1889; 89.4.2513). Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art. When photograph (a) was taken, the five-holed pipe had shifted out of its correct position.

Art. In a letter to the trustees, she wrote: "The Collection is the result of the work and study of a number of years. The instruments have all been carefully catalogued, and accurate pen and ink drawings, inscriptions and measurements have been prepared by my son Wm. Adams Brown."[3] She wished, and was allowed, to continue to add to the collection during her lifetime. New acquisitions, including the Maltese bagpipe, were presented periodically until 1913, by which time the collection had reached well over 3,000 instruments, filling five of the museum's galleries. Her col-

3. See Stewart Pollens "Curt Sachs and Musical Instrument Restoration," *The Musical Times* 130 (October 1989): 589–94.

lection was gathered over the years through the assistance of consulates, missionaries, traveling friends and relatives, dealers, and experts from around the world. In her endeavors, she constantly sought the advice of major scholars of the time such as Alfred J. Hipkins, Francis William Galpin, Arnold Dolmetsch, and Charles Mahillon. Mary Elizabeth understood that through her collection she was preserving tangible evidence of vanishing cultures.[4] Education was undoubtedly one of the primary goals of her collection.

Correspondence 1887–1900

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is fortunate to have Mary Elizabeth's voluminous correspondence with musicians, collectors, dealers, agents, advisers, museum officials and missionaries.[5] Sally B. Brown, a descendant of Mary Elizabeth, explains that her contact with missionaries stemmed from her family's actions as devout Protestants and her father's position as a pastor and well-known preacher. Missionaries from all over the world frequently visited their home, creating for her a valuable network.

Among her letters is correspondence relating to her acquisition of the Maltese bagpipe. In this instance, she utilized the services of foreign correspondents of her husband's bank, Brown Brothers and Co. The contact in Malta was the firm of James Bell & Co., which in 1887 is recorded as agent for the Northern Life Assurance Company, with offices in 118, St. Dominic Street, Valletta.[6] Messrs James Bell were already established in Malta as early as 1818.[7] In 1900, the firm opened new banking offices,

4. Sally B. Brown, "Mary Elizabeth Adams Brown—An Incurable Collector of Musical Instruments," in *A Gift of Sound: The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments* (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Summer 2018), 5.

5. The Crosby Brown Correspondence, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. I would like to thank Kenneth Moore, who—when I commenced my enquiries—was curator and administrator of the Department of Musical Instruments and was of great assistance to me throughout this work.

6. *Il Compagno per tutti durante l'anno 1887* (Valletta, Malta: A. Aquilina e Co., 1887), 148.

7. National Archives, Malta, CSG 05/1. Letters from the Chief Secretary to Government issuing permits for importation and exportation of goods. In 1831 the firm Messers James Bell appears as Messers James Bell & Co.

under the name James Bell and Co., Bankers.[8]

In April 1887, Brown Brothers and Co., writing on Mary Elizabeth's behalf, inquired about the existence of any "musical instruments peculiar to Malta." On 12 May 1887, the reply from James Bell & Co in Malta was as follows:

> In reply to your letter of 5 April making inquiry on the subject of musical instruments peculiar to Malta, we hasten to inform you that we have never heard of any which are original to this place. The island has always been peopled by races coming from the mainland and bringing their manners and customs with them and it is thus that the two instruments best known among the peasantry here have found their way to Malta. They are
> 1st A rude kind of a bag-pipe made of a pigskin frequently seen on bas reliefs of the early times in Italy.
> 2nd A rough sort of Tamborine brought from Africa.
> The former is still in use in southern Italy and the latter in most parts of the African Continent.
> We remain, Dear Sirs,
> Your obedient servants, James Bell & Co.

The correspondent from the firm was here giving his own personal comments on a matter regarding which he knew very little. His opinion that the "pigskin" bagpipe came from "Southern Italy" and the tambourine "from Africa" reflects the thought of the time, but is for the most part inaccurate and will be discussed in detail.

There must have been further correspondence between James Bell & Co. and Brown Brothers, which has not surfaced. However, more than thirteen years later the firm, probably with no little difficulty, managed to procure and send Mary Elizabeth a bagpipe. On 20 December 1900, on a letterhead of "James Bell & Co, Bankers and Merchants" which is also stamped in faded purple ink "London Agents, Union Bank of London, Ltd," the correspondent wrote as follows:

> We beg to advise having forwarded to you via Liverpool, 1 package containing a Maltese Calf Skin Bag Pipe, which will be forwarded on to you by Messrs. Geo. W. Wheatley & Co. We enclose our account for same amounting to £1-14- which kindly remit to us by cheque on London. Please note our charges

8. *Daily Malta Chronicle,* Advertisements 24 October 1900; 21 June 1901; 30 August 1901.

include freight etc. to Liverpool only and that Messrs Wheatley's charges must be paid to them direct. We understand that prior to the Pipe being played, the skin should be slightly damped with water, so as to remove the stiffening . . . your obedient servants, [signed] James.
P.S. We trust that the Bag Pipe will give satisfaction.

The result was that Mary Elizabeth received a Maltese bagpipe, which soon entered the Metropolitan Museum collection. As the earliest Maltese bagpipe known to survive, it acquires considerable importance.

Catalog Information: 1904 and 1977

The official catalog of the Crosby Brown Collection, published in 1904, was prepared by Miss Frances Morris, under the direction of the donor.[9] Frances Morris is described by Sally B. Brown as Mary Elizabeth's "invaluable protégée and assistant," who became part of the museum's curatorial staff.[10] The Maltese bagpipe was cataloged as follows:

2513 BAGPIPE. Bag formed of natural deer-skin, two cylindrical chanters of reed, arranged side by side in the same stock, having 4 holes and one hole, respectively, the ends fitted into a carved ox-horn. Single beating reeds. Malta 19th century. Length of chanters, including horn, 13 inches.

Further information compiled by Nancy Crutcher, an assistant in the collection, was entered into the museum catalog in 1977:

ZAPP or ZAMPOGNA: 2 cane chanters, 126 mm, with cylindrical bores, set in cane yoke, with single serrated horn bell, fingerholes: R5/0, L1/0, single downcut cane reed (45mm) in right chanter, left chanter reed missing; cane blowpipe (172 mm) tied directly into foreleg; undressed deerskin bag with red hair outside, hind legs tied with red ribbon.

Condition: bag stiff and perforated, bare in places; chanters and 1 extant reed good, still sound; chanter horn bell untied from yoke; blowpipe good.

9. Mary Elizabeth Brown, *Catalogue of the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments of All Nations* 1, *Europe*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Handbook, no. 13 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1904).

10. Sally B. Brown, *A Gift of Sound*, 17.

> This instrument closely related to Aegean "tsambouna" in structure; the name "zampogna" related to S. Italian bagpipe.

We immediately notice several perplexing discrepancies between the catalog information of 1904 and that of 1977. On top of that is conflicting information when compared to James Bell's letter of 20 December 1900. I will examine these differences individually.

The Bagpipe's Name

From extant correspondence, there is no evidence that Mary Elizabeth was given a Maltese name for the bagpipe. However, "Zapp or Zampogna" was entered into the catalog in 1977 and these have frequently been quoted as the names for the instrument. These are both errors. The correct name for the Maltese bagpipe is *żaqq* (*iż-żaqq*: the bagpipe). Several nineteenth-century prints are similarly mistakenly captioned *zak*, *zap*, or *zapp*, all distortions of the Maltese name *żaqq*. These arise from the unfamiliar Maltese glottal *q*, coming from the Semitic roots of the language. Glottal sounds do not exist in Romance languages, nor in English. Foreigners in Malta therefore generally found difficulty pronouncing the word *żaqq*, often replacing the glottal *qq* by a *k* or a *p*. Hence this error, which appears repeatedly in travel books and captions to lithographs or paintings.

We also find lithographs of Maltese bagpipes captioned as *zampogna*. The instrument is not, and never was, known by this name on the islands, and certainly bears no structural resemblance to the southern Italian bagpipe by that name. The use of the Italian name *zampogna* on nineteenth-century prints arises because Italian was considered the cultured language, spoken by the upper stratum of society in Malta. Maltese, looked down on as the *volgare* or the language of the uneducated, would frequently be replaced by Italian. Furthermore, these prints were mostly produced for foreign consumption, and were sometimes also made by non-Maltese lithographers. The understandably erroneous name in the museum catalogue was later altered to the almost-correct name *zaqq*. This was handwritten above the original typewritten names but the essential dot on the *z* was omitted. There are two different *z* sounds in Maltese

orthography. The dot denotes a sound similar to the *z* in the word "zoo." Without the dot, it would sound *ts*. The sound required is the former and therefore should have the dot over the *z*.

Dating the Instrument

Though Mary Elizabeth was inquiring after Maltese instruments as early as 1887, the letter from James Bell documenting the shipment of the bagpipe is dated December 1900, thirteen years later. The bagpipe, under the supervision of Mary Elizabeth, was cataloged as being a nineteenth-century instrument. The year 1889 appears on both catalogs, perhaps because the instrument was obtained from a bagpiper who had possibly made it some years earlier. We may at any rate continue to refer to it as a nineteenth-century instrument as cataloged and approved by the donor, better specified as "nineteenth century, ca.1889–1900."

The Żaqq *Bag*

James Bell & Co., in the letter of 1887, initially spoke of "pig-skin" used for the Maltese bag. This uninformed error on the correspondent's part was not repeated thereafter. It is curious, however, that the bagpipe sent from Malta in the letter dated 1900, described as having a "calf-skin" bag, was then entered into the 1904 catalog as "deer-skin," a description that persists to this day.

The bag is an animal skin with short reddish fur and a longish tail. Calf and deer are, of course, both possible identifications. Though deer are not native to Malta, deer and gazelles were imported from Benghazi, Libya, in small numbers at irregular intervals throughout the nineteenth century.[11] The possible use of deer skin on the island cannot therefore be entirely ruled out. Bovines of the time were also of a reddish color.[12] A newly born calf is too large to be used as a bagpipe, so it would have had to be a prematurely aborted calf of no more than seven months ges-

11. *Il Portafoglio Maltese*, 24 July 1843, 2307; 30 October 1843, 2422; 25 December 1843, 2490.

12. The native breed of bull known as "gendus," or possibly the imported Ayreshire cow.

tation. This type of bag was still being used by bagpipers in the twentieth century.[13]

Apart from deer and calf, as mentioned in the correspondence and in the catalog, I will add the possibility of dog-skin being used for this bag. Maltese dogs of the "Kelb tal-Fenek" breed (previously referred to as "Pharaoh Hound") are of a reddish color, with short fur and a long tail. The use of dog skin for bags is uncommon in the world, though not unknown. Aristophanes' comic play, *The Acharnians*, written in 425 BC, refers specifically to a dog-skin bag: "You pipers who come here from Thebes with bone pipes blow the posterior of a dog . . . ."[14]

This passage, noted by Anthony Baines, documents an early practice that persisted on the Maltese islands. Literature throughout the nineteenth century repeatedly refers to dog-skin being used for the Maltese *żaqq*, although the bag was not blown through the dog's posterior. We find mention of dog bags in writings of Andrew Bigelow (1831),[15] G. P. Badger (1838),[16] Maturin Ballou (1893)[17] and V. Busuttil (1894).[18] The reddish Maltese *Tal-Fenek* dog was used at times for the *żaqq* bag, as was the hunting dog known as *Tal-Kaċċa*, which is of brown and white color.[19]

A possible way to determine which skin was used for this bag is through DNA testing. In 2013, the Metropolitan Museum laboratories performed such a test.[20] After DNA analysis, the hair was described as "looking like dog," but the test was considered inconclusive, owing to some features that could not be identified.[21] The skin has deteriorated substantially over the years, making DNA testing more difficult. There is also a limit to how

13. For more details on the Maltese bagpipe see Anna Borg Cardona, *Musical Instruments of the Maltese Islands–History, Folkways and Traditions* (Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2014), 192–224.

14. Baines, *Bagpipes*, 60.

15. Andrew Bigelow, *Travels in Malta and Sicily with Sketches of Gibraltar in 1827* (Boston,1831), 178.

16. George Percy Badger, *Description of Malta and Gozo* (Malta, 1838), 83

17. Maturin H. Ballou, *The Story of Malta* (Boston: Houghton, Miffin and Company, 1893), 247.

18. V. Busuttil, *Holiday Customs in Malta* (Malta: 1894, sixth edition 1922), 106.

19. Bagpiper Toni Cachia informed me, 2 June 2000, that he once had used bags made from both of these dog breeds.

20. I would like to thank the Scientific Research Department of the Metropolitan Museum for carrying out this test.

21. Personal correspondence with Susana Caldeira, Assistant Conservator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22 February 2013.

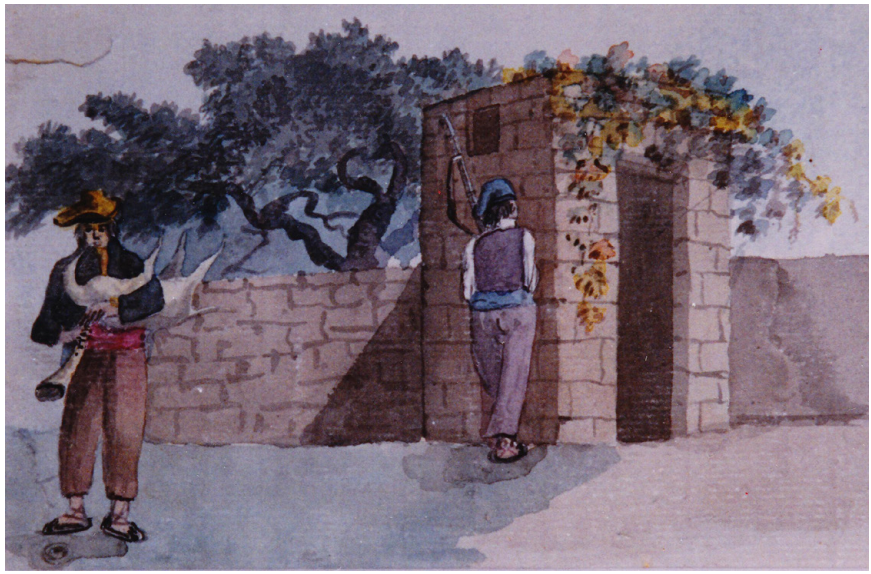


FIGURE 2. Detail of a watercolor depicting a sentry on duty, Malta, ca.1800. Major James Weir. Courtesy Albert Ganado Collection.

much material can be removed and destroyed in these tests without a detrimental effect on the instrument.[22]

Professor Mark Brincat, a scientist who studied the available photographs (not the actual bag), was inclined to exclude bovine and deer.[23] He believes the long hind legs to be those of a dog, and the fine, uniform reddish fur to be very likely of *Kelb al-Fenek*. The tail, he thinks, has probably been shortened. Though DNA tests likewise suggested that the bag could possibly be dog skin, the attribution will have to remain conjectural.

The Metropolitan's Maltese bagpipe is also described as "stiff." The bag was never rubbed and softened during curing, as is the common practice in other cultures and has recently also been adopted among Maltese makers. After legs and all openings were tied, the bag of this Maltese pipe was first inflated with fur inside, the skin side rubbed generously with

22. Ideally, I would have liked to follow this test with a DNA comparison between today's *Kelb tal-Fenek* and the fur of the Metropolitan bagpipe. Tests, however, had to stop there.

23. Professor Mark Brincat, director of the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Department, and chairman of the Research Foundation, Malta, has conducted research and experiments with the aim of preserving indigenous strains of the Maltese bull (*gendus*) and the Maltese goat and has an interest in Maltese indigenous species such as the Pharaoh Hound (*Kelb tal-Fenek*).

FIGURE 3. Toni Cachia *il-Ħammarun* playing a calfskin *żaqq*, 1997. Photograph Anna Borg Cardona.

lime, dried for a few hours, and then very carefully inverted, fur side out, through the neck opening. It was again fully inflated and left to dry for a week or so in this state. The skin thus dried and remained in this stiff position, looking much like the living animal, but with the head replaced by a chanter and horn. Up to the twentieth century, the skins of Maltese pipes were still being treated and dried in this way while fully inflated. A watercolor by Major James Weir captures a Maltese bagpiper (ca. 1800) playing some melodies on the *żaqq* during the tedious hours of sentry duty (fig.2). Tucked beneath his arm is a stiff inflated skin with four legs pointing upwards and a long tail.

It is interesting that James Bell & Co. had been informed that the stiff bag should first be "dampened with water" before being played "so as to remove the stiffening." The late Toni Cachia (known as *Il-Ħammarun*), whom I consider to have been the last of the traditional pipers and bagpipe makers of old, informed me in 1996 that before playing on his bagpipe, he would usually hang it for some hours inside the well, above water

level, in order to dampen and soften it slightly.[24] The information given to Bell therefore seems to have been standard practice that survived into the following century. Oiling of the *żaqq* bag was totally unknown.

Toni Cachia *il-Ħammarun* used lime for the preservation of all skins with the exception of dog skin, for which he preferred to use salt.[25] It would have been interesting to know whether the Metropolitan bagpipe was cured with lime in this way, or with some other preservative, such as salt.[26]

Bag Decoration

It is curious that, unlike many other bagpipes, there was never any attempt to cover and conceal the Maltese bag in any way. The animal skin is preserved in its most natural, crude state and is left looking like the live animal, with fur-side out, showing all legs and even the tail. Most pipe bags the world over do not exhibit fur—it is generally either removed or covered with material. Many bags eliminate the hind legs entirely, thus making it far easier to skin the animal and to cure the skin. The most striking feature present, however, is the tail, which is very rarely seen on any other pipe bags.

The only known form of embellishment (*tiżjin*) of Maltese bagpipes was the tying of ribbons or wool around the legs of the lifelike animal skins. The hind legs of the Metropolitan instrument are in fact tied and decorated with red and white ribbons. This type of decoration persisted and was still recommended by Toni Cachia in the late twentieth century.

Chanter and Reeds

The chanter (Maltese *is-saqqafa*) is traditionally fixed into the neck of the animal; the skin was folded and tied over the chanter while still wet. This is the way the Crosby Brown *żaqq* was made. Later, Toni Cachia made his own improvement on this method by tying the wet skin over a

24. Anna Borg Cardona, "Making the Maltese *żaqq* Bag," *Chanter: The Journal of the Bagpipe Society* (Winter 2005), 22–28. Anna Borg Cardona, *Musical Instruments of the Maltese Islands: History Folkways and Traditions*, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (2014), 192–224.

25. Borg Cardona, *Musical Instruments*, 214–15.

26. Though this test was requested several times it unfortunately never materialized.

(a)

(b)

FIGURES 4a and 4b. (a) Crosby Brown chanter and horn. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art. (b) Mid-twentieth century chanter and large horn. Chanter pipes inserted into longer section of Arundo donax yoke, reeds fitted into them from under-side of yoke. Belonged to Awsonju Bugeja "Is-Sonu" Tal-Grixti. Photograph Anna Borg Cardona, 1996.

turned piece of wood (*il-kunjard*) matching the width of the chanter and coating it in petroleum jelly; this would dry with time, and the wooden dummy would be exchanged for the chanter. After each playing, the chanter could be extracted, to be inserted again into a dry neck for use. Thus the reeds were saved from repeatedly getting wet.

Three different widths of *Arundo donax* (Maltese *qasab*) are used in the making of the chanter. These include a very wide tube for the yoke or stock (*qasba ħoxna*), narrower for the chanter pipes (*il-qimi*), and narrower still for the reeds (sing. *bedbut*, pl. *bdiebet*).[27] Though there is no exact predetermined size or width, these parts all must be found in sizes that will fit comfortably into each other.

The Crosby Brown chanter pipes are described in the catalog of 1904 as having an arrangement of "4 fingerholes in one pipe and one in the other." There is unfortunately no specification as to left and right. The said arrangement of "4 fingerholes" I believe to have been a typing error. The pipes in fact have five fingerholes in the right pipe and one in the other. In Baines's system, this is shown as R.5, L.1 (V). Toni Cachia *l-Ħammarun* informed me that left-handed people would use this arrangement. He himself made this reverse arrangement of his usual L.5, R.1 (V) for a piper who was left-handed. However, Karl Partridge and Frank Jeal, who recorded all the surviving Maltese pipers in the 1970s, found one family from Siġġiewi who had always employed this fingerhole arrangement of R.5, L.1 (V).[28] All other pipers they documented were using an arrangement of L.5, R.1 (V).

In the Crosby Brown instrument, the two chanter pipes with cylindrical bore are 126 mm long with an external diameter of 9 mm, and fingerhole diameter of 4 mm. This can be compared to Toni Cachia's chanters made 100 years later. Of the two made by him in my own collection, in (a) the chanter pipes of equal length are 180 mm long with diameter 8 mm, finger holes 4 mm; in (b) chanter pipes are 165 mm long by 7.5 mm diameter and again 4 mm finger holes.[29] Unfortunately, we do not have a large

27. The Tal-Grixti family in Birgu referred to the whole chanter as *il-qxejra* (Maltese: external skin/cover), which likely referred originally to the yoke. Anna Borg Cardona, "*Tal-Grixti*—A Family of *Żaqq* and *Tanbur* Musicians," *L-Imnara* (Malta Folklore Society) 21 (1997): 91–104. See also Borg Cardona, *Musical Instruments*, 209–12.

28. J. K. Partridge and Frank Jeal, "The Maltese *Żaqq*," *Galpin Society Journal* 30 (1977): 142. Girolamo Buhagiar of Siġġiewi and his brothers all used this arrangement.

29. Karl Partridge compared measurements of various Maltese bagpipes, commenting that older chanters had smaller dimensions. *Quest for the Maltese Żaqq* (Malta: National

number of bagpipers in order to be able to compare chanter construction or to look at differences in performing techniques. However, Partridge and Jeal, who documented the instrument in the 1970s, were still able to hear and record a few different styles of playing. From these, Karl Partridge makes some important observations: firstly that in all cases the L.5 (V) tone hole was never fingered by any of the *żaqq* players, remaining uncovered at all times; more importantly, he notes that "half-holing" or cross-fingering in order to inflect pitches, produce pitch glides, or chromaticism was never employed by any of them.[30]

The single fingerhole in the Maltese chanter pipes provides a drone, whereas the five holes provide the melody, with the lowest (R.5 (V) being left as a vent hole. Toni Cachia always insisted that it should never be fingered.

	Length of chanter pipes	External diameter of chanter pipes	Internal diameter of chanter pipes	Fingerhole diameter
Crosby Brown	126 mm	9 mm		4 mm
Toni Cachia a) 1997	180 mm	8 mm	6.5 mm	4 mm
Toni Cachia b)	165 mm	7.5 mm	6 mm	4 mm

Through the Metropolitan instrument we can also verify the fact that down-cut single reeds were in use in Malta in the latter part of the nineteenth century, just as commonly used later. Reed tongues can be cut in a downward direction or an upward direction; they are referred to as down-cut or up-cut, depending on the way the beating flap is facing. Air is blown directly towards the flapping tongue of down-cut reeds, whereas the flap or tongue faces the opposite direction in the up-cut reeds. With the Crosby Brown instrument, there is only one surviving single reed, 45 mm long and down-cut, which is in the right chanter pipe. Though up-cut reeds were known on the Maltese islands, they were very rarely used.

Archives of Malta & Midsea Books, 2019), 110.

30. Partridge, *Quest for the Maltese Żaqq*, 121.

*The Blowpipe (*l-imserka*)*

The cane blowpipe of the Crosby Brown bagpipe is 172 mm long and tied directly into the left foreleg of the bag. (For a left-handed person, the blowpipe would probably have been inserted into the right foreleg, rather than the left.) *Arundo donax* cane, so easily available on the islands, was once commonly used for the *mserka*. It is now replaced by rubber tubing of the type usually used for gas cylinders. Since there is no non-return valve, the *Arundo donax* blow pipe was merely blocked with the tongue when necessary.[31] The rubber tubing, on the other hand, can be squeezed to block the air from escaping.

*The Horn (*il-qarna*)*

In the Crosby Brown exemplar, a single cattle horn is shared by both chanter pipes. This characteristic feature is amply clear in all examined nineteenth-century iconography of the Maltese bagpipe. Bigelow (1831) describes it as a "bullock's horn . . . with the big end outwards." Horns are known to have been taken from bulls or the Maltese ox (*gendus*). The Crosby Brown horn, described in the 1904 catalog as a "carved ox-horn," is serrated on its outer edge, a detail which does not show up clearly in iconography of the time, but an essential characteristic still found in most twentieth-century horn bells.

The 1977 catalog entry says that "the chanter horn bell is untied from the yoke." The horn bell of the Maltese bagpipe is not normally fixed permanently to the yoke; it is simply cut, carved, and shaped with an extension in the lower narrower end, in such a way as to hold the yoke and support it from beneath when inserted firmly. The Crosby Brown horn bell, therefore, has not come untied but was traditionally made in this way.

The Maltese Żaqq *and the Greek* Tsabouna

Anthony Baines examined the Maltese specimen in the Metropolitan

31. Recently made Maltese bagpipes have a non-return valve and a wooden stock, which were never used previously. A wooden stock is visually very uncharacteristic and makes the bagpipe resemble the Tunisian bagpipe, with which it has little in common.

(a)

(b)

(c)

FIGURES 5a to 5c. Greek Island chanters showing chanter yokes and small horns shaped identically to Malta's: (a) Mykonos (Cyclades), chanter and horn 265 mm, chanter pipes 155 mm, horn 95 mm, cat. number 91.3.127; (b) Greek Islands, chanter and horn 300 mm, chanter pipes 152 mm, horn 150 mm, no cat. number. Courtesy Museum of Popular Instruments, Athens. (c) Maltese chanter by Toni Cachia, 1997, chanter and horn 360 mm, chanter pipes 180 mm, horn 210 mm. Anna Borg Cardona collection. Photographs Anna Borg Cardona.

Museum and concluded that the instrument was closely related to the Aegean *tsabouna* (also spelled as *tsambouna* or *tsampouna*).[32] Some similarities are also to be found with the traditional bagpipe of Georgia, which was occupied by the Greeks as early as the seventh century BC. There is doubtless a close affinity and extraordinary similarities between the Maltese bagpipe and those of particular islands of the Aegean. The Greek musicologist Fivos Anoyanakis has given a detailed account of the varieties of the *tsabouna* of the Greek islands, from which I would like to present some comparisons.[33]

Though varieties of double-piped chanters are common in various regions of the Mediterranean, the Maltese cane chanter, supported by a cane yoke, is most similar to the chanter of the Greek island *tsabouna*; the yoke is similarly cut and shaped in a very particular manner, indicating a common ancestry. The two fingerhole arrangements found in Maltese bagpipes, the L.5, R.1 as well as R.5, L.1, are both available on the *tsabouna*. The large fingerholes are also common to both bagpipes. The L.5, R.1 arrangement, probably most frequent in Malta, is described by Anoyanakis as an arrangement commonly used in the islands of Karpathos, Patmos, Andros, Symi, Kos, and Samos.[34] The R.5, L.1 is less usual, but the Museum of Popular Instruments in Greece exhibits a bagpipe from Symi (Dodecanese) with this arrangement. The museum has in storage other bagpipe cane chanters. Among those showing the same shaping of the cane yoke as the Crosby Brown chanter, there is one from Mykonos (number 91.3.127) and another without catalog number, whose exact place of origin is not known (fig. 5a–b). Down-cut reeds are used in the bagpipe reeds of Karpathos, Patmos, Kalymnos, Kos, Leres, Ikari, Crete (Iraklion), and the Black Sea region. Anoyanakis says that skilled bagpipers believe that they "give a sweeter voice" than up-cut reeds.[35]

The horn of the *tsabouna* is cut and shaped in exactly the same way as the Crosby Brown horn, with an extended narrow section that supports the chanter pipes.[36] Maltese horns, however, are generally much larger than those used in the *tsabouna*. Melted wax is sometimes added to the

32. Baines, *Bagpipes*, 18.

33. Fivos Anoyanakis, *Greek Popular Musical Instruments* (Athens: National Bank of Greece, 1979).

34. Ibid., 180.

35. Ibid., 180.

36. Ibid., 178; 179; 181.

Greek bagpipe horn, in order to fix it more securely to the yoke. This is not generally used in the Maltese counterpart. The simple serrated design used in the outer edge of the horn is a detail also found in both the *tsabouna*, particularly in the Cyclades, and in the *żaqq*.

Some standard practices in *tsabouna* making are also worth mentioning because of their similarities with Maltese practices. In the *tsabouna*, thread is generally tied around the foot of the cane beating reed flap, in order to vary pitch in tuning (a practice also found in other bagpipes). The thread is raised when a higher pitch is required and lowered for the opposite effect. Furthermore, strands of hair are usually placed in the tongue of the beating reed to ensure a constant passage of air and flexibility of the tongue. A drop of wax is frequently added to the tip of the tongue or on the node end of the reed when a lower pitch is required. When not in use, the *tsabouna* bag is usually hung from the neck by a string, while the chanter and horn are dismantled and placed in a drawer.

All the above details, found in certain of the Dodecanese, Cyclades, and Eastern Aegean islands, are also typical of the Maltese *żaqq*. All in all, there are too many similarities of the very particular shape of chanter, the shaping of the horn, as well as finer details, to be dismissed lightly. Particularly worthy of note are practices of the islands of Karpathos, Kalymnos, and Crete, which show the most affinities to Malta's double-piped chanter, horn, fingerhole arrangement, and also finer details of chanter and horn construction, reed tuning method and storing.

The historian Stanley Fiorini, examining the waves of Rhodiot immigration accompanying the knights from Rhodes to Malta in 1530, has found a record of incomers from Karpathos, Kalymnos, and Crete, the same islands that show these striking similarities.[37] In view of this observation, it might seem possible that the Maltese bagpipe type was first imported during this migration of people from the Aegean, accompanying the Order of Hospitaller Knights of St. John, from Rhodes to Malta. These immigrants, we now know, included individuals from all walks of life, among them soldiers, scribes, doctors, herbalists, servants, barbers, masons, candle-makers, and slaves from various provenances. It is unsurprising that records make no mention of bagpipers, however, since this was most likely a secondary occupation.

37. Stanley Fiorini, "The Rhodiot Community of Birgu, A Maltese City: 1530–c.1550," *Library of Mediterranean History* 1, ed. Victor Mallia Milanes (Msida, Malta: Mireva, 1994), 183–241.

Despite similarities between the Aegean and the Maltese bagpipe chanters and horns, however, the very different Maltese bag offers a striking contrast. The long-legged *żaqq* bag, totally dissimilar in appearance to the Greek island bag, suggests that the horn bagpipe could have reached Malta even earlier than 1530, when the Order of St. John arrived from Rhodes. It is possible that the *żaqq* is an older version of the Aegean bagpipe, which retained its primeval characteristics even while its Aegean counterpart evolved a less crude appearance. It is of particular relevance that some Maltese terminology of żaqq parts is of Semitic origin: *Żaqq* (belly/bagpipe), *qxejra* (yoke/cover), *qima* (chanter pipe), *mserka* (blow pipe), *bedbut* (single reed), *qarn* (horn). However, we also find noteworthy indications of Greek/Byzantine influence. The chanter, known as *saqqafa* and in some local dialects pronounced *sakkafa*, is known in Crete by the very similar name *skafi*. In Greek, the work *skafi* signifies a shovel or scoop, and the chanter and bell is constructed and shaped like a scoop.[38] The shape of the Maltese chanter yoke is so particular as to be surely related to the Aegean counterpart. However, performance practices seen today on the *tsabouna* are strikingly different from those on the Maltese counterpart. Malta seems to have preserved very basic fingering well into the twentieth century, without use of half-closed or cross-fingering that is common in the *tsabouna*. Any such fingering seen today on the *żaqq* was not traditionally used, but is an imitation of the *tsabouna*.

The *żaqq* has a relatively complex process of skinning and curing. Iconography always shows us the complete skin (excluding head), but never half or part of it, which would be so much easier to prepare and is also far more commonly used in neighboring countries. The incomplete skin without hind legs and tail has occasionally been used, especially as a first instrument for the young. It is, however, considered exceptional and uncharacteristic. Until recently, a bagpiper would pride himself on a complete skin which includes not only the four legs but also the long tail. The aim of the Maltese bagpiper seems to have always been to have a bag looking as close to a living animal as possible, thus seeming to give the creature another lease of life. This curious fact itself suggests a very early origin and possible ritualistic connections.

The horn bell, generally much larger on the Maltese zaqq than that

38. For this information I thank Chrysa Koulouraki, Museum of Greek Folk Musical Instruments, The Fivos Anoyanakis Collection, Centre of Musicology, 2008.

of the *tsabouna*, deserves notice. In Welch's view, the first hornpipers regarded the instrument as a horn with a pipe added.[39] It was seen as a musical horn capable of melody, at the same time conserving the protective or other religious powers with which the horn appears to have been endowed during prehistoric times. To this day, horns have significance in the Maltese Islands' folklore. How far back does the importance of the horn go? An altar in one of Malta's megalithic temples in Tarxien, discovered by Sir Themistocles Zammit, was found to be crammed with horns. This important find suggests their use in some form of ritual as far back as the Late Neolithic Tarxien Temples period (3300–2500 BC).

Whereas human behavior in prehistory is somewhat conjectural, horns in Malta have traditionally been considered to have strong protective properties.[40] Their spell has not been totally cast off, even now in the twenty-first century. Bull horns can still be seen put up over rustic doorways to protect inhabitants from visitors having malicious intent. Fear of the "evil eye," an ancient belief, has always been very real to the islanders. Small replicas of horns may sometimes be seen dangling around the older folks' necks as a protective amulet. Horns were, and still are, used on some fishing boats to protect against storms and whirlwinds at sea. The horn's protective powers are deeply entrenched in the Maltese psyche.

The serrated edge of the Maltese horn is also of great importance. The serration, according to Baines, dates back to ritual horn blowing,[41] another suggestion of ritual use of the Maltese bagpipe. As sound producers, horns in Malta used to be blown in Carnival up to the end of the nineteenth century, thus possibly connecting them with the ancient rites of spring.[42] There is also evidence of their use in 1813 in a morbid death march leading a Mohammedan to his hanging, when the blast of a cowhorn was heard every ten seconds during the procession.[43] This same

39. Christopher Welch, *Six Lectures on the Recorder and Other Flutes in Relation to Literature* (London: H. Frowde, 1911), 349.

40. George Zammit-Maempel, "The Evil Eye and Protective Cattle Horns in Malta," *Folklore* 79 (Spring 1968), 1–16.

41. Baines, *Bagpipes*, 61.

42. Samuel Sheridan Wilson, *A Narrative of the Greek Mission, or Sixteen Years in Malta and Greece* (London: John Snow, 1839), 43.

43. Francis Bond Head, *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau by an Old Man* (London: John Murray, 1834), 184–85. "I heard a bellowing sort of a blast from a cow's horn which I instantly knew to be the signal that a fellow-creature was going to the gallows. . . . A dismal blast from this horn was heard about every ten seconds."

horn serration is found in the *tsabouna*.[44]

Though there is very ancient belief and ritual connected with the island's uses of the cattle horn, we have no tangible early evidence of musical instruments such as the hornpipe or bagpipe. There is no definite record of the bagpipe before the very late date of ca. 1756, when it appears listed in a Maltese dictionary by Canon Agius De Soldanis.[45] One cannot but be convinced, however, that the search for evidence may yet yield some trace of the instrument at a far earlier date.

Since the bagpipe in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is the earliest available example of the Maltese *żaqq*, it is undeniably of considerable importance. The Maltese people in the past took little or no interest in their own musical culture, and it is mostly through outside interest that some knowledge of this culture has been preserved. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly from which part of the Maltese islands the bagpipe was acquired, or who the maker was. However, thanks to Mary Elizabeth Adams Crosby Brown, we have concrete evidence of at least some of the details of its construction in the late nineteenth century—important details which would otherwise be lost and unavailable to us today. This information, when put with other iconographical and literary evidence, proves crucial to us now in our efforts to construct the instrument in such a way as to preserve its very particular characteristics.

44. Anoyanakis, *Greek Popular Musical Instruments*, 77 (Naxos); 79 (Kythnos); 80 (Karpathos).

45. A manuscript dictionary compiled ca. 1756 by Canon Agius De Soldanis, "Dizionario Maltese Italiano Latino," is to be found in the Malta National Library, Ms.143. Though earlier, shorter compilations do exist, De Soldanis's work remains the most complete early dictionary of the Maltese language, in which several musical instruments are described.