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Readers of this number will notice that this issue has been published by an editorial board appointed by the Publications Board of the University of Malta under the auspices of the Faculty of Education. Hence it is opportune to take the occasion to narrate the story behind the *Journal of Maltese Studies* so far.

The *Journal of Maltese Studies* came into being as an extra-curricular activity of the Chair of Maltese and Oriental Studies at the then Royal University of Malta in 1961, then occupied by Professor J. Aquilina, B.A., LL.D., Ph.D.(Lond.), F.R.A.S. Professor Aquilina not only established this Journal but he also edited its first ten numbers and obtained for it the international recognition of which it can now boast.

Following Professor Aquilina's retirement on attaining superannuation age, another three numbers have been edited: the first by Dr D.Massa B.A.(Hons.), M.A.(Edin.)(Malta), Ph.D.(Edin.) who did so on behalf of the Faculty Board of Arts, and the last two by Mgr. Professor K. Sant B.A., D.D., S.S.D., then Professor of Sacred Scripture at the University, who at the time was also acting as Head of the Department of Maltese and of Semitic Studies.

In recent years, the University has gone through a major upheaval, in the course of which it was shorn of certain faculties and departments, principally, as far as concerns us of the Department of Maltese and of Semitic Studies.

This however does not imply that the teaching of Maltese and of Semitic Studies has been terminated.

The upheavals referred to saw the origin of the Faculty of Education and this has incorporated the teaching of many Arts subjects, which, until then, had been taught in terms of autonomous departments.

The teaching of Arts subjects, including that of Maltese and Arabic, has been carried on through the Faculty of Education, which is seeking to impart not only a knowledge of the language taught but also the pedagogy involved in the language taught. This indicated why the Editorial Board is constituted as it is. It is made up of all the lecturers of Maltese and Semitic subjects (basically Arabic) in the Faculty, together with the Head of the Faculty of Education, and, as Chairman, an outsider, who is also associated with the University, a leading poet in contemporary Maltese, who happens to be Chairman of the Academy of Maltese, the voluntary organisation set up in 1921, which was responsible for the evolution of the current rules of orthography of the Maltese language.

The Board includes also a specialist in the field of Maltese history, in view of the Publication Board's decision to broaden the field of the *Journal of Maltese Studies* to historical papers as well.

The Editorial Board of the *Journal of Maltese Studies* decided to do so, in view of the stature which this Journal has acquired in its field, more specifically where there are points of contact between Maltese linguistics and Maltese history. In special circumstances, other papers on Maltese history will also be considered for publication.

The Editorial Board looks forward towards carrying on the tradition which the *Journal of Maltese Studies* has established, namely that of promoting sound scientific attitudes to the study of Maltese language and its literature.

THE EDITOR

## LOCALISM: A METHOD FOR DESCRIBING MEANING IN MALTESE

by ALBERT J. BORG

### 1. THE LOCALIST HYPOTHESIS

Psychologists are generally agreed that spatial organization is of central importance in human cognition (cf. Clark, H.H. 1973 and Sinclair de Zwart 1973). Assuming an intimate relationship between the development of intelligence in the human baby and the process whereby it acquires its mother language, the localist hypothesis claims that spatial expressions are more basic, grammatically and semantically, than various kinds of non-spatial expressions. Such spatial expressions are more basic linguistically in that they serve as models or structural templates, as it were, for other expressions (cf. Lyons 1977, §15.7 and Anderson 1977, §2.4).

The following sentence:

Ganni mexa mid-dar sa l-iskola

/1/ John – he walked – from the house – to the school  
'John walked from home to school'

is one example of a spatial expression. It encodes a journey from one point to another in the dimension of space undertaken by a traveller, John. 'Mid-dar' is the expression referring to the point of departure, or the source of the traveller's movement, while 'sa l-iskola' is the expression referring to the point of arrival, or the goal of the traveller's movement. We can characterise the prepositions in each of these two expressions as respectively, 'minn' the source preposition, and 'sa' the goal preposition.

Observing now the sentence in /2/:

/2/ Karmnu nqatel minn Pawlu

Charles – he was killed – from Paul  
'Charles was killed by Paul'

we notice the reappearance of the preposition 'minn' before the expression referring to the agent in the passive construction. There is nothing specifically spatial about an act of killing and