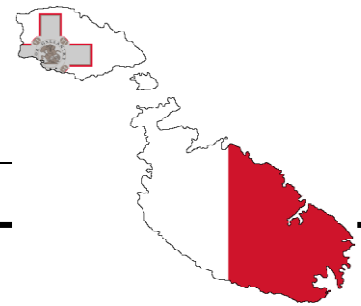


## S4.1 MALTESE PERSONALITIES



### S4.1.5

We will look at primary sources for these personalities.

#### A. WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?

Primary sources can bring history to life. Primary sources provide us with direct evidence of the era and the people we are learning about. They are documents and objects that existed in the period we are studying. Some of the most common primary sources are: photos, letters, diaries, poems, paintings, sculptures, logbooks, documentaries, films/videos, recordings, etc.

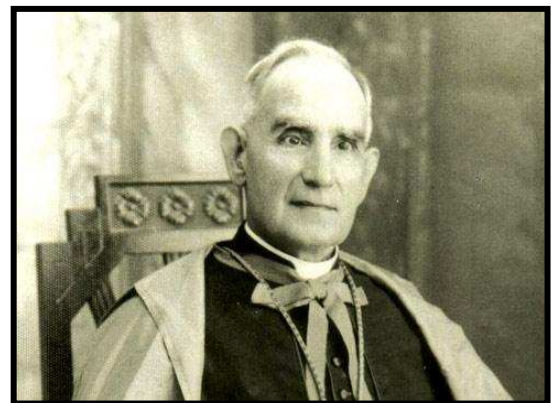


#### Primary Source A - DUN KARM PSAILA

Watch the video:

[http://youtu.be/7Dgj\\_NusaNA](http://youtu.be/7Dgj_NusaNA)

We will listen to Dun Karm Psaila, reading his own poem: *GĦAL DUN MIKIEL XERRI*. (For Dun Mikiel Xerri)



#### *GĦAL DUN MIKIEL XERRI* - written in 1937

Kont għadni, nista' ngħid, ċkejken tarbija (I was just a toddler)  
meta ktieb il-ġrajjet ħabbibni miegħek, (when I read about you)  
għax fik għagġbitni l-ħila barranija, (and marvelled at your courage)  
u l-kelma sħiħa bħall-għeruq ta' driegħek. (and your strong words)

Izda kif ġejt fuq l-għatba tar-rgulija (However, when I grew up)  
u xtaqt inbus lil dak li qatt ma tmiegħek, (and wanted to pay you  
homage)

u fittixt, imm'għalxejn, fuq l-art Maltija (I looked everywhere in vain)  
ħagra li turi fejn hu l-qabar tiegħek, (I couldn't find your grave)

jien regħ'xt u bkejt, għax rajt kemm kienet xħiħa (I was angry and  
sad because this land had been really miserly)

miegħek din l-art li int ħabbejt fis-sewwa, (with someone who'd loved  
her dearly)

bi mħabba safja u bla nuqqas sabiħa; (with a pure and beautiful love)

għax tajfitna\* b'għamilek sfat mirquma, (because you left your mark  
on our nation)

u għall-qawwa li wrejt quddiem l-għedewwa (and the courage you  
showed in front of the enemy)

kienu jitkabbru bik Atene u Ruma. ( would have made Athens and Rome  
proud)

(\* *ir-razza taġħna*) (our race)

## Primary Source B - DUN MIKIEL XERRI

Let's watch the video:

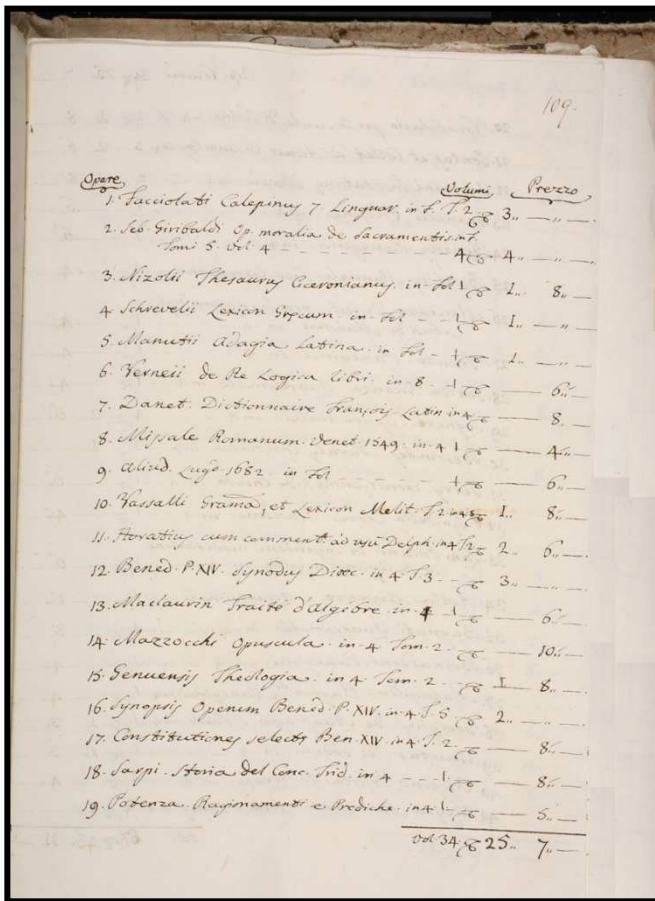
<http://youtu.be/3Ef5ao9Cztk>



The primary source we are presenting to the students in the case of Dun Mikiel Xerri is an **inventory**, that is a LIST, of the books Dun Mikiel Xerri had. The inventory was made on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1799, that is, seven months after Dun Mikiel Xerri was executed by the French soldiers.

Dun Mikiel Xerri was born in Zebbug but lived in Valletta for a long time. He became a Professor of Theology at the seminary. One goes to the seminary to study to become a priest. Dun Mikiel Xerri also became a professor at the University of Malta. He will always be remembered for the part he took in the plot to overthrow the French. The French found out about the plot and Dun Mikiel Xerri, along with about 40 other men, was shot and killed in St George's Square, in front of the Palace in Valletta. This happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 1799.

A little time before he died, Dun Mikiel Xerri asked to see the notary Giuseppe Bonavita to write his will. A "will" is a writing one does in front of a notary. Through the will, people would know what should be done with a person's possessions. Thus we know that Dun Mikiel Xerri left all his books and their shelving to the Seminary of the Maltese Church. Dun Mikiel Xerri had 509 books in total, kept in five bookcases. The books were about subjects such as Theology, Philosophy, Literature, Science and Maths.

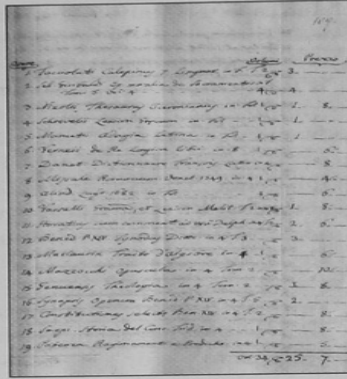


This is a photo of one of the pages of the inventory (the list) of Dun Mikiel Xerri's books. On this page are the names of nineteen books. Note the list of books on the left and the price of each book on the right. During those times the currency consisted of "skudi" (about 20c) and "tari" (an antique Sicilian coin).

Mr Noel D Anastas published copies of this inventory in an article with

the title "Kollezjonijiet ta' Kotba f' Ħaż-Żebbug" (Collections of books in Zebbug). The article was published in a book by St. Philip's band club for the feast of Zebbug in the year 2003.

The following photo shows part of Mr Noel D Anastas's article. Note, for example, that Dun Mikiel Xerri had a copy of the famous book by Mikiel Anton Vassalli 'Grammatica et lexicon melitensis'. This book was valued at the price of one 'skud' and eight 'tari' (look at number 10 in the photo).



• Dan huwa l-inventarju tal-kotba li kellu Dun Mikiel Xerri li kien intghamel fis-6 t'Awissu 1799.<sup>23</sup> Ghalkemm fil-passat inkiteb xi taghrif dwar dan l-inventarju,<sup>24</sup> jidher li qatt ma' gie ppubblikat. Ghalhekk, ghall-ewwel darba qed tiġi stampata l-lista shiha ta' kotba li kellu dan il-patrijott. Fil-kolonna ta' hdejn it-titlu u l-awtur tal-ktieb, hemm imniżżel id-daqs tal-ktieb, il-volumi f'dak it-titlu, u l-prezz kemm kienu ġew smati.

			Vol.	Prezzo	
				scudo - tari	
1	[Jacobi] Facciolati. <i>Calepinus septem linguarum</i>	Folio	2	3 scudo	
2	Sebastiano Giribaldi. <i>Op. Moralia de Sacramentis. Tomi 5 Vol. 4</i>	Folio	4	4 scudo	
3	[Marii]Nizolii. <i>Thesaurus Ciceronianus</i>	Folio	1	1 scudo	8 tari
4	[Cornelii] Schrevelii. <i>Lexicon Grecum [manuale græco-latinum &amp; latino græcum]</i>	Folio	1	1 scudo	
5	[Paulli] Manutii. <i>Adagia Latina</i>	Folio	1	1 scudo	
6	[Aloysii Antonii] Verneii. <i>De re logica libri</i>	8va	1		6 tari
7	Danet. <i>Dictionnaire Francois-Latin</i>	4to	1		8 tari
8	<i>Missale Romanum. Venetia 1549</i>	4to	1		4 tari
9	Aliud Lugd. [Lugdunum] 1682	Folio	1		6 tari
10	Vassalli. <i>Grammatica et lexicon melitensis</i>	4to	2	1 scudo	8 tari
11	<i>Horatius cum comment. ad usu Delph.</i>	4to	2	2 scudi	6 tari
12	<i>Bened. P. XIV Synodus Dioc.</i>	4to	3	3 scudi	
13	[Colin] Maclaurin. <i>Traite d'Algebre</i>	4to	1		6 tari
14	[Giacomo] Mazzocchi. <i>Opuscula</i>	4to	2		10 tari
15	[P. Antonio Genovesi] <i>Genuensis. Theologia</i>	4to	2	1 scudo	8 tari
16	<i>Synopsis Opusum Bened. P. XIV</i>	4to	5	2 scudi	
17	[Benedetti XIV]. <i>Constitutiones selectae</i>	4to	2		8 tari
18	[Paolo] Sarpì. <i>Historia del Concilio Tridentino</i>	4to	1		8 tari
19	Potenza. <i>Ragionamenti e Prediche</i>	4to	1		5 tari
20	<i>Vocabolario per la scuole di Torino</i>	4to	2	1scudo	8 tari
21	[Jean] Pontas, et Collet. <i>Dictionarium casuum conscientiae</i>	4to	3	2 scudi	6 tari
22	Arignani. <i>Institutiones Morales</i>	4to	2	1 scudo	8 tari
23	[Giovanni] Granelli. <i>Prediche</i>	4to	1		6 tari
24	[Francesco] Venini. <i>Panegirici</i>	4to	1		6 tari
25	[Michaelis] Bauldry. <i>Manuale Sacrarum Caeremoniarum</i>	4to	1		4 tari
26	[Miguel de Vargas] Macciucca. <i>Dissert. Sopra la riforma degli abusi de Ministeri.</i>	4to	1		4 tari
27	Trento Panegirici	4to	1		4 tari

Where is this list (inventory) of Dun Mikiel Xerri's books?



One can go to see this document at the National Archives, in the section in Villegaignon Street in Mdina. In the photo on the left we can see the building in Mdina where we can find the inventory of Dun Mikiel Xerri's books.

Acknowledgements:

- ❖ Mr Charles Farrugia, National Archivist and CEO of the National Archives of Rabat Malta, who kindly provided us with a copy of Dun Mikiel Xerri's inventory.
- ❖ Mr Noel D Anastas, archivist in the Mdina section who guided us in our research and provided us with copies of the inventory of books and of his article about the subject.

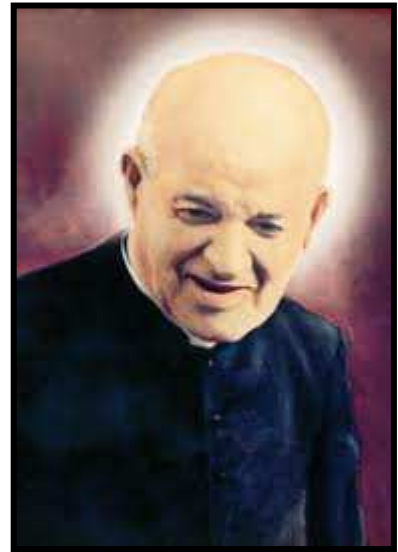
## Primary Source C - DUN ĠORĠ PRECA

Let's watch the video on YouTube:

<http://youtu.be/XaBlf3-je6c>

In the video we can see a number of different primary sources, amongst which:

- ❖ photos taken when Dun Ġorġ was still alive
- ❖ footage filmed when Dun Ġorġ was still alive



Thanks to these primary sources we can tell that:

- a) Dun Ġorġ loved teaching; many photos show Dun Ġorġ teaching crowds of people during what he used to call 'Sajdjet Mużewmini', which were a series of outdoor religious meetings;
- b) Dun Ġorġ was always surrounded by MUSEUM members, called "Soċi", and many children who attended Catechism Centres he called 'Oqsma'.

The last part of the video reminds us of the day in 2007, when Dun Ġorġ was declared a saint by Pope Benedict XVI.