

# L-Imdina fi tmiem is-seklu 9: kuntest urban

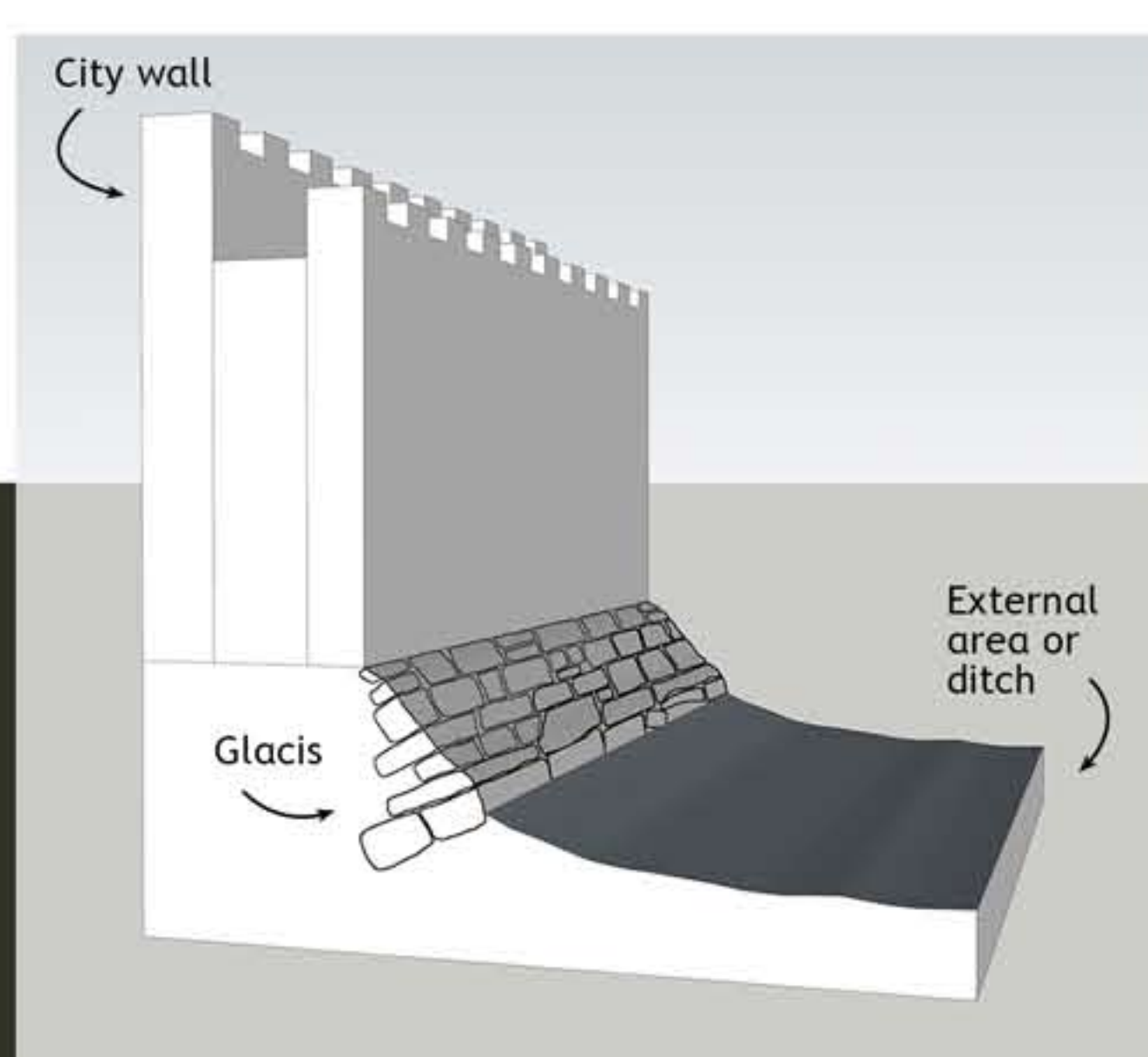
Sorsi tal-qedem jghidu li l-kapitali ta' Malta kienet imsejha **MELITE**, li kienet tinsab taht l-Imdina u r-Rabat tal-lum.

Huwa tradizzjonalment assunt li Melita kienet ukoll il-kapitali Bizantina ta' Malta, u li kienu l-Gharab li bnew mill-ġdid il-belt fuq skala iżgħar bl-isem il-ġdid ta' **MDINA**. Madankollu provi miktuba għal din il-veduta huma limitati. Is-sorsi Bizantini ma jirreferu b'mod espliċitu għall-eżistenza ta' xi belt f'Malta f'dan il-perjodu, filwaqt li s-sorsi Gharab jirreferu għal '*hisn*' (kastell) jew 'post iffortifikat' Bizantin fis-seklu 9.

Bejn is-sekli 7 u 9 hafna mill-Ewropa u l-Mediterran kienu attwalment minghajr bliet. Għalhekk huwa possibbli li l-istess kien japplika għal Malta. L-arkeoloġija qed ttiprovdi informazzjoni ġdida dwar din il-kwistjoni.

Nafu li partijiet miċ-ċimiterji l-qodma ta' Melita - bħall-Katakombi ta' San Pawl - komplew jintużaw sas-seklu 8. Madankollu l-informazzjoni l-aktar sinifikanti ġeja mill-Imdina.

Fl-2008 waqt xogħlijiet ta' restawr u konsolidazzjoni fuq il-hitan tas-swar fuq in-naħa tal-lvant tal-Imdina, inkixfet aċċidentalment stratigrafija tal-Medju Evu Bikri impressionanti. Sar skavar ta' salvataġġ li rriżulta fl-identifikazzjoni ta' żewġ fażijiet ta' kostruzzjoni.



Illustrazzjoni tal-hitan tal-Imdina fil-medjuevu bikri, li turi l-funzjoni tal-glacis f'dan it-tip ta' fortifikazzjoni bikrija tal-ibliet.

A schematic illustration of the Early Medieval city walls of Mdina, showing the function of the glacis in this type of early town defenses.

# Mdina in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century: an urban context

Ancient sources state that the capital of Malta was called **MELITE**, located under modern-day Mdina and Rabat.

It is traditionally assumed that Melita was also Byzantine Malta's capital, and that it was the Arabs who rebuilt the city on a smaller scale with the new name of **MDINA**. The written evidence for such a view is however limited. Byzantine sources do not explicitly refer to the existence of a town on Malta in this period, while Arab sources refer to a Byzantine '*hisn*' 'castle' or 'fortified place' in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century much of Europe and the Mediterranean was actually town-less. It is therefore possible that the same was true for Malta. Archaeology is providing new information on this issue.

We know that parts of Melita's old cemeteries - as St Paul's Catacombs - continued in use into the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However the most significant information comes from Mdina.

In 2008 during restoration and consolidation works on Mdina's eastern bastion walls, an impressive Early Medieval stratigraphy was accidentally uncovered. A rescue excavation was carried out resulting in the identification of two phases of construction.

**L-1 Fażi:** kostruzzjoni ta' xogħlijiet tal-art inklinati massivi miksi bil-ġebel - probabbilment rampa protettiva inklinata 'l isfel imqiegħda fuq quddiem tal-hitan tas-swar difensivi ewlenin. Ir-rampa inklinata 'l isfel hija ddatata bejn wieħed u iehor għas-seklu 9 fuq il-bażi taċ-ċeramika li nstabt ġewwa fiha.

**It-2 Fażi:** serje ta' sulari superimposti fuq il-quċċata tar-rampa, possibbilment parti minn mogħdija koperta jew mill-parti difensiva ta' quddiem ta' fortifikazzjoni. Dawn is-saffi tal-art ta' wara kien fihom frak tal-ghadam tal-animali, qaxur ta' bebbux tal-baħar u ċeramika li jmorru lura għas-seklu 9.



Dehra tri-dimensjonali tal-glacis miksi bil-ġebel fl-Imdina, ibbażat fuq ir-rekord fotografiku tal-arkeoloġisti.

A 3-D rendering of the stone-clad glacis found at Mdina, and its relationship, based on the photographic record made by the site's investigators.

**Phase 1:** construction of a massive stone-clad, sloping earthenwork - probably a protective glacis placed in front of the main defensive bastion walls. The glacis is broadly dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the ceramics found within it.

**Phase 2:** a series of superimposed floors over the crest of the glacis, possibly part of a covered way or defensive outwork. These later floor layers included animal bone fragments, marine shell and ceramics dating to the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Dehra ġenerali tal-iskav tal-Imdina fl-2008, lejn l-aħħar fażi tiegħu, b'parti mill-glacis mikxuf fuq quddiem.

General view of the area of excavation of Mdina 2008. The photo is showing the archaeological sondage towards the end of the investigation, with the exposed side of the glacis in the foreground.



Il-post tal-investigazzjoni tal-2008, direttament taht is-sur tal-lvant tal-Imdina

Location of the 2008 investigation directly under Mdina's east bastion



Dehra sezjonali tal-art li nstabt fit-tieni fażi tal-istratigrafija tal-Imdina tal-2008 u l-hitan maġenbha.

Section drawing through the Phase 2 floors of the Mdina 2008 stratigraphy and the associated containing walls.

## Medieval fortification remains beneath rampart wall, Mdina Section A-A'

