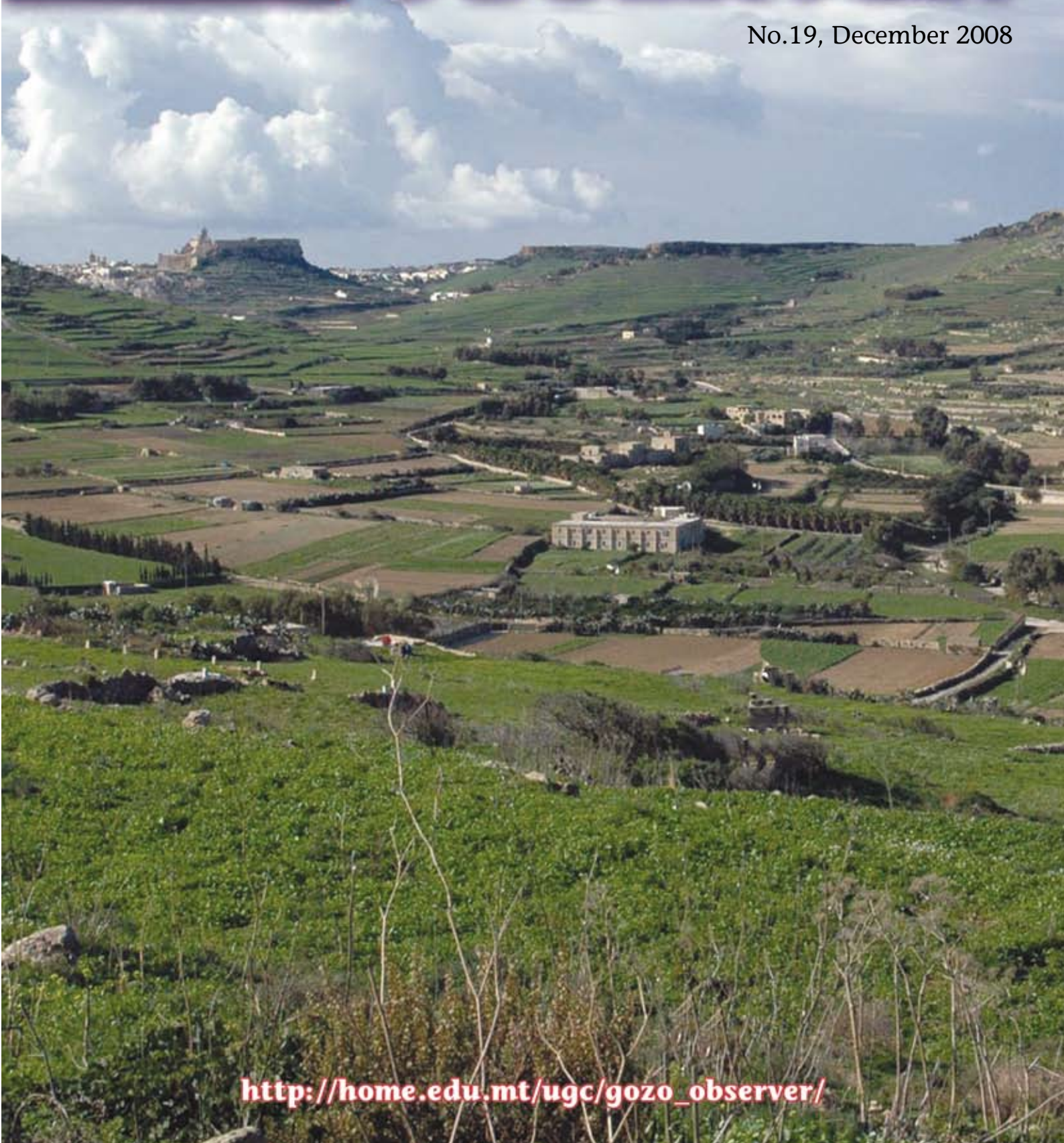


THE G **OZO** **OBSERVER**

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Editorial:

The Demise of Gozitan Dialects

There is no doubt that after skin colour, dialect is the most immediate marker of social identity. Being able to speak fluently in the dominant dialect has been a mark of belonging to the ruling class, an elitist characteristic sought by all within the community. Whether it is Oxford English or Maltese Slemis makes no difference to the kudos associated with ability to speak the accepted dialect.

Those born in outlying areas, distant from this linguistic epicentre, often find themselves disadvantaged. In spite of the relative insignificance of linguistic differences between dialects, and in spite of the fact that the choice of the dominant dialect happens to be a pure co-incidence implying no intrinsic superiority, there is nonetheless a very real psychological disadvantage in being seen as belonging to the village class and ousted from the class of the '*puliti*'.

Such was the situation relating to Gozitan dialects for several generations. Time was when villagers in Gozo could be instantly recognised as belonging to a specific village as soon as they opened their mouth. A distance of a couple of kilometres was sufficient to establish distinct and distinguishable dialectal characteristics. It was also a fact that many made considerable efforts to conceal this characteristic as soon as they crossed *il-Fliegi* and arrived in Malta.

This in itself implied an inferiority complex, an acceptance of the fact that a different dialect implies a societal inferiority. It is curious to note that this feeling was more noticeable in those hoping to be included within the higher strata of society than in those who had no such perspectives: Students, businessmen, politicians, professional people all felt the need to conform and use standard Maltese dialect when in Malta, only to revert back to their village dialect as soon as they came back to Gozo.

How things have changed over the past generation! With increasing mobility, the isolation of one village from another has all but disappeared and with it the tendency to develop a unique dialect. It is no longer possible to identify anyone's locality from their speech, a characteristic retained only by the oldest parishioners who are fast disappearing. Moreover the intermixing now possible between people of all age groups, and their exposure to the levelling influence of radio and television, has now ensured that difference in dialects have all but disappeared.

Is this loss to be mourned and regretted as one of those casualties associated with modern development? There is no doubt that loss of dialects represents an impoverishment of language. Language learned from radio and television with its efforts to translate foreign news into the vernacular, often results in a contraction of vocabulary and loss of concepts. With the necessary introduction of a plethora of foreign words, particularly in the field of technology, there seems to be a marked loss of innate vocabulary which is found to be redundant and unnecessary. But it is the variety of dialect which seems to bear the burden of this intrusion of foreignness within our community.

It is therefore of considerable significance to note events like the *Djaletti Festival*, organised by NGO *VersAgħtini Il-Kelma Maltija* which was held in September at Munxar, where speakers from various villages spoke or sang using their unique dialect. It is hoped that such events do not merely highlight a historical passing of a dying language, a sort of archaeological digging of dead verbiage, but a stimulus to give status to dialects so that they may be maintained indefinitely.

The Successful Promotion of Intangible Heritage in the Hamlet of Santa Luċija in Kerċem, Gozo

MARIA THERESA FARRUGIA

Introduction

The hamlet of Santa Luċija lies to the west of Victoria, the capital city of Gozo just 2.25 kilometres away from It-Tokk, the centre of the city. This hamlet encompasses within its confines what is probably the first human settlement in Malta and Gozo. Truly, the establishment of the first settlements around 5000 B.C. makes this village a pioneer in civilisation and social development in the Maltese Islands.

Location

The place has a host of unique natural and historic attractions. In a 1667 Census, Santa Luċija (then known as Santa Caterina) is documented as a major district under which there were the smaller principalities of Dwejra, Għajn Abdun, Għar Ilma, ta' Kerċem and San Lawrenz. Moreover, the first water aqueduct in 1843 serving the capital Rabat originated from Santa Luċija's own natural springs of Għajn Abdun and Għar Ilma. Also one should mention the *Banda Tad-Dudi*, which is regarded as Malta's first organised string band. In addition, contrastingly to current urban growth and development, Santa Luċija still remains a hamlet, having its own Chapel. Yet, it forms part of the Kerċem Parish and falls under the jurisdiction of the Kerċem Local Council.

Traditional Culture

Traditional culture is still predominant at the village of Santa Luċija. Traces of farming and lace-making are still highly evident. During the past years, farming involved young and old, males and females. Males usually worked out in the fields, while females were in charge of the farm animals that roamed in the yard or the fields at the back of the farmhouses. Families were self sufficient and produced all their vegetables, milk, cheese and meat all year round. In addition, from the 1850s

onwards, an increasing number of females engaged themselves in lace making. Lace, sold both locally and abroad, provided the family with a little extra income that proved to be providential when winter crops failed.



A traditional horse cart in the main village square of St. Luċija

Population Growth

Presently, Santa Luċija is experiencing a growth in population, brought about by a number of people taking up residence in the village. Moreover, it has become a popular location with foreigners who take up permanent residence there. In fact, a substantial amount of farmhouses have been converted in luxurious residences for both Maltese and foreign visitors.

Religious and Historical Heritage

To preserve and conserve the traditional and historical elements of the hamlet of Santa Luċija from the threats of the present population and urban growth, a foundation was setup to identify and promote past traditions of this locality. Since its inception in 2005, the Fondazzjoni Folkloristika Ta' Klula established itself with the sole purpose of revalorising and promoting the area of Santa Luċija through its intangible heritage. To achieve this objective three main activities are being organised on an annual basis, namely:

- *Bis-Saħħa* (A toast to Good Health), a wine festival with local wine, food and traditional dancing and music.
- *Ikla tan-Nanna* (Grandma's Dinner). This is a main event and consists of a 7-course meal of traditional ingredients, cooked locally and accompanied with local wine, folkloristic music, dancing and re-enactments of scenes from the past. The village piazza is decorated in the style of bygone years.
- *The Light Festival*. This is a winter festival that celebrates the Patron Saint of the Hamlet – Santa Luċija – Saint of Light. Young girls with garlands of lit candles on their head light the bonfire in the square. Brass Bands entertain the visitors who can also sample traditional food and local wine. The famous Santa Luċija Buns are distributed to people as they leave the church after the Service.

The events held in the hamlet attract a great number of visitors, both local and from overseas. The success of these activities encourages the foundation to continue in its endeavour to constantly seek assistance of historians and anthropologists and

other experts in local traditions and culture in order to keep these traditions authentic and alive.

Multiplier effects

Besides the organisation of events, Santa Luċija is proving to be a centre of preservation of its intangible heritage in other ways. Local elders of the village, through the promotion of traditional heritage by the Fondazzjoni Folkloristika Ta' Klula, have now been provided with an incentive to keep alive their culture and traditions of bygone years as they are encouraged to teach the younger generations their traditional recipes and cooking methods, and their local crafts. These traditional components are then promoted again during the activities held by the Foundation. The typical way of life is also being re-lived through various social and religious gatherings that are being organised, thus safeguarding the locality's heritage and traditional elements including rural wedding ceremonies, the *Vjalku* (Holy Communion) procession and traditional games.

The rural dimension has been enhanced thanks to the utilisation of products that belong to the Maltese eno-gastronomic identity. The presentation of those products takes place in a typical rural scenario such as that of the streets of the locality. Participants in the events live a wholesome and comprehensive experience of rural life. The organisation of these events has created positive effects on the local farming community. Farmers are appreciating the benefits of multi-functionality of agriculture in that it, apart from the production of crops, may serve as a tourist attraction or as an environmental asset.

Truly, the high assortment of activities, which this hamlet presents, together with its unique historical legacy, has presented a picture, which various



The logo of the village of Kercem (*left*) and the hamlet of Santa Lucija (*right*).



The logos in connection with the European Destinations of Excellence project for Tourism and Intangible Heritage.

visitors to Santa Luċija would never forget. In addition, the involvement of the majority of residents of Santa Luċija has brought about a very positive social impact. The population now has common objectives, activities and missions to achieve. They share more than what they previously used to share and new elements have been brought to the social dynamics of the village. The risk of isolation and exclusion is limited because the events are always organised in the village and all the people make a useful contribution to the events.

Such initiatives also contribute to sustainable development since they serve to preserve Santa Luċija's traditional assets for present and future generations. Truly, Santa Luċija integrates perfectly with the perception of the Gozitan Island as an Eco Island, as it is unique from ecological and traditional points of views.

A European Destination of Excellence for Tourism and Intangible Heritage

In July 2008 the hamlet of Santa Luċija in Kerċem was selected as one of the European Destinations of Excellence for Tourism and Intangible Heritage through a project co-financed by the European Commission. This year's project rewarded localities that through the years ably succeed in promoting intangible heritage and in attracting tourists interested in history and culture. The success in winning this prestigious award is seen as a stepping stone for Santa Luċija itself to establish its locality on the European map.

The award also confirms the Fondazzjoni's professionalism in planning and organising events to help conserve traditions and to involve the people of the hamlet in participating in these activities thus passing on traditions to the younger generation. Thanks to its efforts and those of the local population, it has succeeded in expanding the knowledge of the locality's authentic intangible heritage both locally and abroad. This has helped to enhance the quality of life for the older and younger generations alike and has promoted the hamlet of Santa Luċija as an attractive destination.

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Knight Templar Remains in Gozo?

CHARLES SAVONA-VENTURA

Introduction

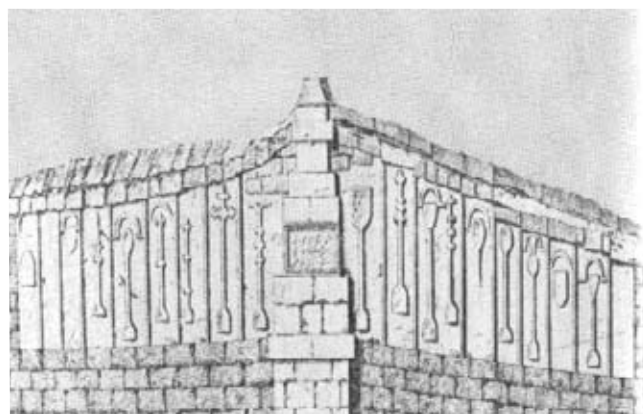
The Maltese Archipelago occupies a central position in the Mediterranean being barely 93 km away from Sicily and 290 km from Northern Africa. Gibraltar is 1836 km to the west and Alexandria is 1519 km to the east. During the medieval period, the Islands lay at the southern most position of Christian Europe which at the end of the 11th century A.D. initiated the first of a series of campaigns to recapture lands under the dominion of Islamic rulers. Some of these Crusades proceeded overland, but a number utilised naval transport. These generally made use of the Ports of larger Sicily to the north of the Maltese Islands and there is no documentary evidence of any of the major campaigns being launched from Maltese ports. The Islands would however have served as a useful stepping stone for campaigns against North Africa especially when maritime conditions were unfavourable for remaining out at sea.

While there is no documentary evidence for any of the major campaigns being launched from the Maltese Islands, there is evidence that minor campaigns originated from the Islands. One of the Counts of Malta named Henry Pescatore is known to have used his island base to launch a personal crusade to the Holy Land. Accompanied by 300 *iuvenes maltenses*, he led a successful expedition to Tripoli in Syria in 1205. This won him the praise of Pierre Vidal, the renowned Provençal troubadour who was his guest in Malta. In the following year with support from Genoa, Henry Pescatore led an expedition against Crete and for six years managed to retain some form of presence on that Island until he was ousted by the Venetians in 1212. Subsequently, in 1221, he participated in the ill-fated naval expedition against Damietta on the African coast (Dalli, 2006: 98-100).

Archaeological Artifacts

Archaeological artefacts from the Medieval period may further show links to the ill-fated Crusade of 1270 led by King Saint Louis of France. Displayed in the

sacristy of the Don Bosco Oratory Chapel at Rabat – Victoria in Gozo, are to be found ten globigerina slabs incised with various Catholic symbols. Three similar slabs are found in the Museum of Archaeology in the Rabat – Victoria Citadel and another is found in the hallway at St. Augustine's Convent also, at Rabat – Victoria. The original provenience of these slabs appears to be a now built-over cemetery situated in the region previously known as *Ta' Fejn Santu Wistin* located near the church and convent of the Augustine Order in the suburbs of the Grand Castello of Rabat. Speculation as to the date and origins of these slabs has fascinated antiquarians since the eighteenth century. The St. Augustine's Cemetery had apparently been established during the medieval period and was extant by at least the early fifteenth century.



Medieval Tomb-slabs mounted on 1770 wall at St. Augustine's Cemetery

The cemetery was first recorded during the Apostolic Visitation made by Mgr Petrus Dusina in 1575 in his report on the Chapel dedicated to St. Michael, wherein he opines that the chapel and benefice were founded by the brothers Giovanni and Paolo Nicolacio, Andrea Santoro, and Giovanni Dalli (Aquilina & Fiorini, 2001: 142). A notarial record shows that this chapel had in fact been established prior to 1441.¹ Dusina further refers to the Chapel dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. This chapel was endowed with a benefice conferred by Viceroy Acugna to Ugolini Manixi in Palermo in 27th July 1489 (Aquilina &

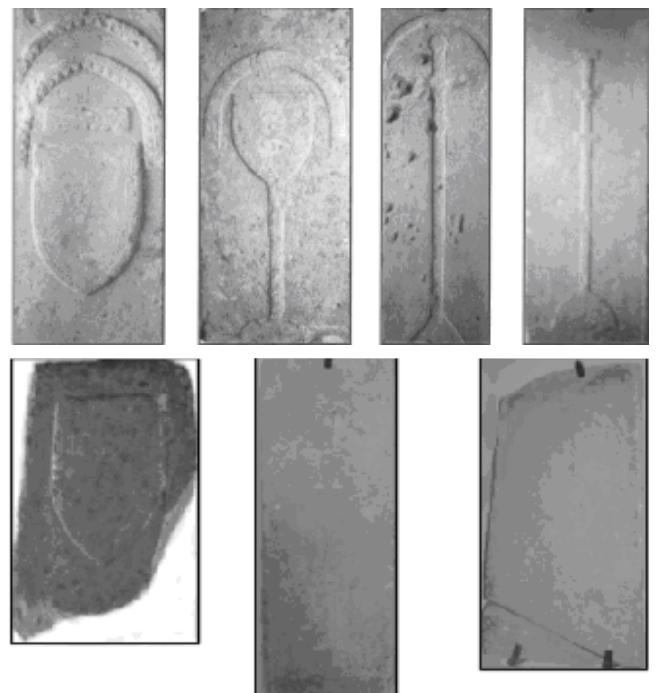
1. Notarial record of Andrea Benjamin 15.xii.1441 as reported by G.P.F. Agius de Soldanis: *Il Gozo. Antico-moderno e Sacro-profano, Isola Mediterranea adiacente a Malta Africana*. Gozo: Manuscript National Library, 1746 [english translation by A. Mercieca: *Gozo. Ancient and Modern, Religious and Profane*. Malta: Media Centre Publ., 1999, p.146]; as transcribed by J. Busuttil, S. Fiorini (eds.): *Documentary Sources on Maltese History. Part V Documents in the Curia of the Archbishop of Malta. No.1 The Registrum Fundationum Beneficiorum Insulae Gaudisii 1435-1545*. University press, Malta, 2006, doc.52 [p.73-75].

Fiorini, 2001: 357). In the mid-eighteenth century, the Cemetery housed ten chapels dedicated to various saints (Mercieca, 1999: 146-147). These included: St. Paul's Chapel [benefice of Mag. Nucius de Episcopo dated 14th November 1435 - notary Andrea Benjamin (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 43-46)]; St. Michael the Archangel Chapel [benefice of Antonius de Raspullo dated 15th December 1441 - notary Andrea Benjamin (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 73-75)]; the Chapel dedicated to St. John the Evangelist [benefice of Viceroy Acugna dated 27th July 1489 (Aquilina & Fiorini, 2001: 141)], St. Bartholomew's Chapel [benefice of Paulus de Manuele dated 8th October 1497 - notary Pinus Saliva (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 10)]; St. Nicholas Chapel [benefice of Petrus Cabrera dated 9th November 1516 - notary Pinus Saliva (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 32-33)]; the Chapel dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot [benefice of Margarita Saliva dated 20th March 1544 - notary Don Laurentius Apap (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 142-146)]; St. Catherine's Chapel [benefice of Johannes Castellata dated 7th January 1544 - notary Don Laurentius Apap (Busuttil & Fiorini, 2006: 126-128)]; St. Blaise Chapel; St. Catald's Chapel; and Our Lady of Mercy Chapel (these were mentioned pastoral visit made by Vicar-General Pietro Francesco Ponteremoli in 1630). The establishment of these benefices dedicated to defined chapels, some in the early decades of the fifteenth century, suggests that the Cemetery may have been in existence even earlier.

Documentation of the Tomb-Slabs

The tomb-slabs were first documented during the pastoral visit of Mgr. Alpheran de Bussan in 1736. He reported that the cemetery had been in use since ancient times and may have been set up to house the remains of the faithful who died in 1270 during the Holy War of St. King Louis in Africa. He interpreted a few of the incisions as representing bishop's symbols including the mitre and a Greek Bishop crosier.² In his unpublished notes Can. Costanzo wrote that "In this cemetery here are buried a number of noble persons thought

to have been brought to Gozo by Sicilian ships two hundred years ago or even more than that at the time when there was trouble with Djerba and Tripoli. There are many slabs that bear crosses that are a sign that important persons are buried under them" (Mercieca, 1999: 148). G.P.F. Agius de Soldanis writing in 1746 described both the cemetery and the slabs. His description remains the only attempt at a complete study of the remains. Agius de Soldanis concurred with Mgr. Alpheran de Bussan's view that the slabs represented the tombstones of abbots, bishops, archbishops, and princes who had died in Tunis during the disastrous campaign against the Muslims led by St. Louis IX, King of France in 1270 (Mercieca, 1999: 146-151). G.A. Ciantar also reported in 1780 the existence of the slabs and included a copy of the inscriptions. He questioned the traditional view that the tombstones belonged to the various bishops and prelates who accompanied King St. Louis in 1270 stating "But what did all these Bishops and Priests do in that war? Maybe they were to celebrate some Provincial Council in the camp where the fighting was taking place?" He proposed that the tombstones may have belonged to several illustrious Maltese and foreign personages who died in Gozo possibly after



Best preserved tombstones from the French Cemetery in Gozo

2. "Coemeterium jam usque ab antiquis temporibus, quibus non in ecclesiis sed in coemeteriis extra castra, & civitatis humabantur mortui, destinatum pro sepeliendis mortuis hujus insulae.... Vel juxta aliorum sensum paratum pro sepelundis Christi Fidelibus defunctis in bello sacro, redeunte anno 1270, exercitu S. Ludovici Regis ab Africa &c... Inspiciuntur multae lapides monumentorum cum aliquibus signis in superficie et specialiter in uno extant insignia episcopalia, nempe mitra et lituus pastoralis, non recurvus, sed instar fulcri subularis, quo utuntur episcopi graeci". As reported in: A. Ferres: *Descrizione storica delle Chiese di Malta e Gozo*. Achille Ferres, Malta, 1866 [fasimile edition: Midsea Books, Malta, 1985], p.566-567; G.A. Ciantar: *Malta Illustrata, Ovvero, Descrizione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano del Commendatore F. Giovan Francesco Abela Corretta, Accresciuta e Continovata dal Conte Giovannantonio Ciantar*. 1780, Lib.I, Not. X, p.358-360

proceeding to that island to recover their health.³

History of the Cemetery

The Cemetery and Chapels had a tremulous history with some chapels falling in disuse throughout the centuries. By the mid-eighteenth century the Cemetery had fallen in disuse and had been abandoned (Mercieca, 1999: 146). In 1770, Bishop Mgr. Alpheran de Bussan instructed that a boundary wall was to be built around the cemetery, this incorporating the slabs. An inscription, which repeated the traditional 13th century origins of the slabs, was put up to commemorate the event.⁴ The cemetery continued to receive attention and restoration throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century⁵ until 1946 when it started to be cleared and the area was used to build the now-standing Don Bosco Oratory.

Foreign 18th and 19th visitors to the St. Augustine's Cemetery were poorly impressed by what they saw. The French visitor Jean Houel visiting Gozo in 1770 wrote that he "went to see a monument locally called The Bishops of Ancient Times: it is in the Augustinian cemetery at Rabat. Despite the fact that the Gozitans boast of it as a curiosity it scarcely deserves to be mentioned. The Bishops is just an assemblage of ecclesiastical trophies composed of mitres, crosses, stoles and so on, sculpted in bas-relief; they seemed to me allegorical, and perhaps the attributes of some bishop interred here. The bas-reliefs are set into the wall, and I did not find them of particular interest" (Monsarrat & Vella, 1999: 41). The Italian visitor Giuseppe Periuoli Borzesi in 1830 wrote that the "burying ground or *Cimiterio di S. Agostino*, which is worthy of much attention, to inspect the tombstones and their inscriptions" (Borzesi, 1830: 85). The English visitor George Percy Badger in the early nineteenth century transcribed the commemorative inscription put up by Bishop Alpheran and wrote "I presume that the sepulchral stones referred to in the above are those which stand in the wall close by the inscription. They are twenty-eight in number, each bearing some symbolical figure roughly cut on

its surface in *alto-rilievo*. The principal figures are crosses differently shaped, and other ecclesiastical trophies, such as chalices, crosiers, etc. The assertion contained in the inscription, concerning the original design of these stones does not appear to rest upon any substantial evidence. Ciantar himself is very dubious on the subject. It is the current tradition among the inhabitants that they were put up in remembrance of so many African bishops, who died here on their way to one of the general council. This is certainly extravagant enough." (Badger, 1872: 305-306).

The Origin and Function of the Slabs

The true origin and function of the incised slabs remains elusive. The location in a confirmed Christian cemetery supports the commonly held view that these were tombstones used to cover sepulchral chambers. The size of the tombstones now kept in the Don Bosco Oratory vary from 70 x 118 cm to 54 x 176 cm, averaging 60 x 143 cm. The short length measurement of some of the slabs makes whole length burial an unlikely option in that tomb as practised during the medieval period. It is possible that these rather small tombs were meant to contain skeletal remains only. It was common practice during the Holy Wars to boil down



King St. Louis collecting the bones of dead comrades for eventual burial in Christian land. (Manuscript illustration from *Le livres des faits de Monseigneur Saint Louis*. Bibliotheque National de France, Paris)

3. "Ma che far doveano tanti Vescovi e Prelati in quella guerra? Doviano forse celebrare qualche Concilio Proviniale nel campo, in cui seguir dovra la battaglia?... Ne' par verisimile che tanti, e tati personaggi fossero morti in un tempo medesimo, in un' isola tali; ma che di tempo in tempo vi fosse morto qualcuno di questi personaggi, in parte nazionali, ed in parte forestieri, che si fossero cola' portati inferme, per recuperare la sanita' col beneficio dell' aria". G.A. Ciantar, 1780, p.358-360

4. "Galli hanc Gaulos insulam imperantes Anno Domini CDCCLXX, ne sacra ossa Praesulum, ac virorum illustrium Qui cum S. Ludovico Francorum Rege, Profecti, Ac ab Africa post Bellum Sacrum Heic translata, oblivioni darent Hoc sacrum Coemeterium Eretere, In quo singulis Lapides Sepolcrales Anaglyphis Distinctos Propriis insigniis decoratos posuere, Ill. ac. Rev. D. Paulus Alpheran de Bussan, Melitae Episcopus Qui hunc dormitionis locum visitavit anno MDC-CLV M. SEPT. die XVI. Ut reliquae ex maximo numero Lapides vetustiores, insignioresq. inventae omnibus pateant Et conserventur, Heic Aere proprio apponi jussit". As reported in: G.P. Borzesi: *The Historical Guide to the Island of Malta and its dependencies*. Government Press, Malta, 1830, p.85-86

5. Note Commemorative Slabs reading: "Can. D. Michael Sammut VI. For. Aamore dei et in veneratione xi fidelium hi quiescentium tum proprio aere tum ex collectis eleemosynis novis portis ho oemeterium exornavit plu ribusq instauracionibus pre para vit anno dni MDCCCLVIII" and "Vetus sepulhretum rite instauratum a arreis acellis septum stipe collecta cura Michaelis Gonzi Episcopi MCMXXVII."



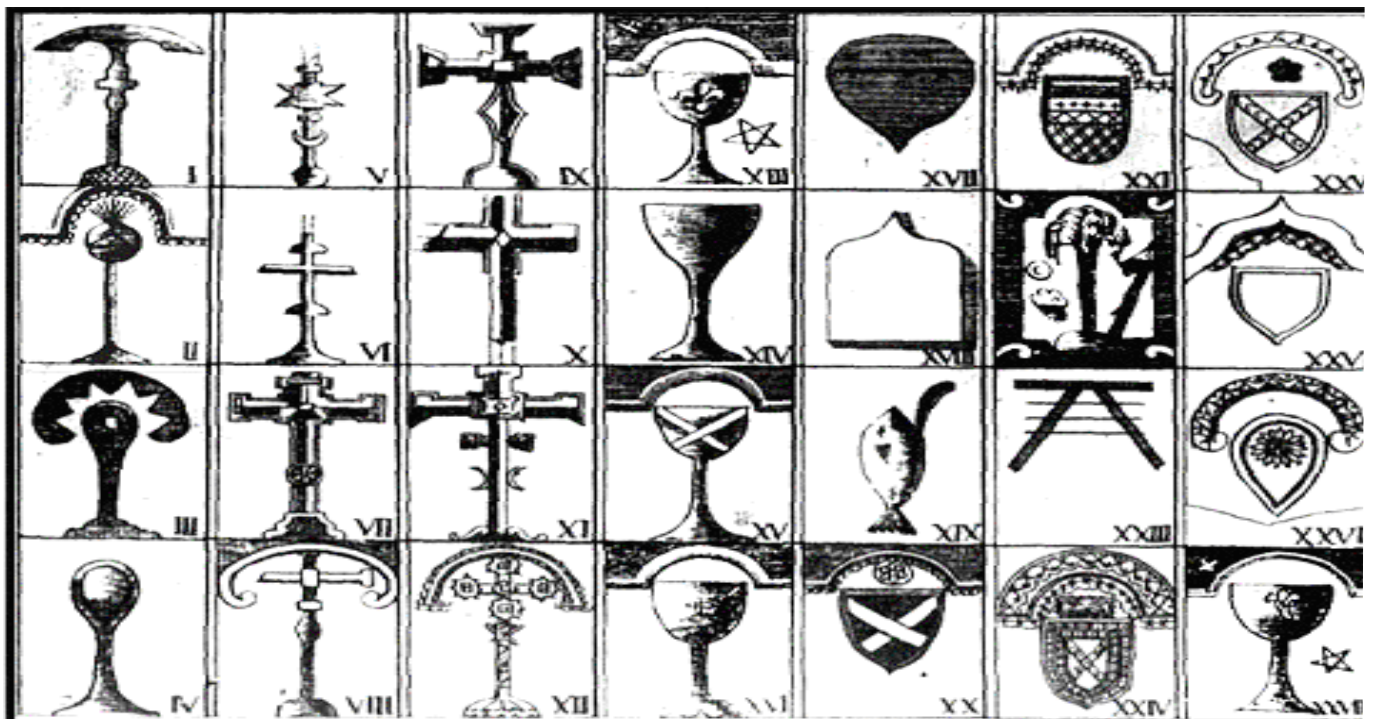
The Death of King Saint Louis (Manuscript illustration from *Grandes Chroniques de France*, xivth century. Condé Museum, Chantilly)

the bodies of distinguished personages dying during the campaign and transport to Christian shores only the skeletal remains and/or the heart of the deceased. This practice was, for example, followed in the case of King Louis IX who died in the Tunisian campaign in 1270. His bones and heart were transported from the battlefield to France and deposited in the Basilica of St. Denis (Paris) where they rested until they were profaned during the 18th century French Revolution. The tombstones held in the Don Bosco Oratory are today in a poor state of preservation. Those kept in the Museum of Archaeology (Rabat, Gozo) are in a better condition. Agius de Soldanis in 1746 described twenty of the slabs, while Ciantar included

a diagrammatic drawing of twenty-eight slabs. The style of the bas-reliefs as depicted and the presumed dating of St. Augustine's Cemetery suggest a medieval age.

The incised patterns bear similarities with other thirteenth century tombstones such as those of Raoul Sarrazin and Guillaume de Vaugrignane in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (inv. Nos. 14252, 18817). Agius de Soldanis had attributed them to the 13th century and grouped these according to what was incised or what he interpreted to have been incised on the slabs:

- Greek Bishop Crosier - one slab measuring 5 feet in length [depicted as fig. I by G.A. Ciantar];
- Maronite Bishop Crosier - five slabs [depicted as fig. II-VI by G.A. Ciantar];
- Cross - four depicting a prelate's cross [G.A. Ciantar depicts five such slabs - fig. VII-XI], one an archbishop's cross [depicted as fig. XII by G.A. Ciantar];
- Chalice - five slabs [depicted as fig. XIII-XVI, XXVIII by G.A. Ciantar];
- Heart - one slab [depicted as fig. XVII by G.A. Ciantar];
- Bishop's Mitre - one slab [depicted as fig. XIX by G.A. Ciantar];
- Armorial bearings - two slabs were noted by Agius de Soldanis, one depicting the armorial bearings of a family, the other the coat-of-arms of a layperson. G.A. Ciantar depicts eight slabs that may depict armorial bearings [fig. XVIII, XX-XXII, XXIV-XXVII].



Medieval Tomb-slabs from St. Augustine's Cemetery

- One design depicted by G.A. Ciantar [fig. XXIII] is difficult to interpret and place within this grouping.

Two near identical slabs (as depicted in Ciantar 1780 fig. XIII, XXVIII) are worthy of particular note since they may help elucidate the origins and dating of the slabs. Both slabs depict a chalice with a fleur-de-lys engraved on it. A cross with equidistant arms is inscribed in the left upper quadrant of the slab, while a pentagram is inscribed in the right lower quadrant.



Tomb-slabs XIII & XXVIII (As depicted by G.A. Ciantar, 1780)

The fleur-de-lys refers to the lily flower and was used in heraldry from the twelfth century onwards being adopted by the Bourbon family. The Bourbon family originated in the 10th century, taking its name from the barony of Bourbonnais in central France. The family was originally of little social or political influence, but became prominent through a series of marriage alliances. This heraldic sign also features on the seal of the French Templar knights Frere Hugues de Rochefort (1204) and Frere Giraud de Chamaret (1234). The depiction of the fleur-de-lys on these two tomb-slabs suggests that these belonged to French personages possibly related to the Bourbon family.



Seal of Frere Hugues de Rochefort [1204]



Seal of Frere Giraud de Chamaret [1234]

The Pentagram and the Knights Templar

The next significant symbol on these tomb-slabs is the pentagram. The pentagram is the simplest star pattern that can be designed with a solitary line. The design was believed to be a powerful guardian against evil and hence it was considered an emblem of protection. The open form of the design is depicted on the two tombstones. This was considered to symbolise preparedness for conflict. Early Christians attributed the pentagram to the Five Wounds of Christ and until

medieval times, the star was a lesser-used Christian symbol. In its heyday, the pentagram was apparently adopted by Knights Templar, a military order of monks formed during the Crusades. Used inverted as depicted in the slabs, with the top point pointing downward, it represents a second or third degree status in the organisation. The interpretation of the pentagram changed during the Inquisitional Period when it was seen to symbolise a Goat's Head or the Devil in the form of Baphomet. At this point in time the pentagram became equated with 'evil' and was called the Witch's Foot. Among other accusations, members of the Order of the Templar Knights were accused of worshipping Baphomet during the persecution of the Templar Order after 1307.

The Knights Templar Order was founded in Jerusalem in 1120 by Hugo de Payens and eight other companions with the purpose of defending the Holy City. The Order followed the rule of St. Benedict according to the Cistercian pattern. Solemn forms of initiations were developed, while the Order was organised into an elaborate hierarchy. After receiving the approval from the Council of Troyes in 1129, the fame of the Order spread throughout Christendom and with an augmentation in its members flourished and grew wealthy and powerful. After Saladin expelled the Order from Jerusalem in 1187, the Templars relocated their main quarters to Paris. By this time, the Order held over 7000 estates, primarily in France and England but also in Portugal, Spain, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Sicily and the Middle East. Its wealth and links established the Order as the banking establishment of the Mediterranean basin having developed a system that transferred money between their preceptories on paper rather than in bullion. Members of the Order held important positions in the courts of various European rulers. Their political mission was to maintain the rights and privileges of the Order, while striving to keep out of local politics. Military brothers of the Order regularly involved themselves in the various Crusades against the Saracens, but were eventually ousted out of the Holy Land with the fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291. In 1307 Philip IV of France turned his attention to the Order's wealth and started a wave of persecution against the Templars ordering their arrest. Pope Clement V, unable or unwilling to prevent the persecution, suppressed the Order in 1312 and granted the Templar properties to the Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, eventually after 1530 also of Malta (Lord, 2002).

The presence of the pentagram on the Gozo tomb-slabs sited in a Christian cemetery suggests that the

slabs most likely dated to the period prior to the demonization of the symbol i.e. prior to the early fourteenth century. It is therefore possible that these two tomb-slabs may have belonged to two French Crusaders, possibly Templar knights, who accompanied St. Louis of France on the 1270 crusade in Tunisia. Templar brothers commanded by Master William of Sonnac had accompanied King Louis IX in his first Crusade of 1248-50. No less than 280 Templars were slain in one of the battles characterising this crusade (Wedgwood, 2004: Supp 2016).

The 1270 Crusade

It is highly likely that members of the Order responded to the King's call for the launching of a new Crusade in 1270. King Louis IX of France embarked on his second Crusade in 1270. The French army sailed for Tunis from Sardinia on the 18th July 1270 and arrived off the African coast two days later where they encamped to await the arrival of the King of Sicily. During their sojourn, dysentery or cholera spread among the troops irrespective of rank. On the 3rd August, King Louis himself sickened and died 22 days later. Louis's brother Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily arrived the same day of Louis's death and assumed command of the crusading army. Active operations were begun against the King of Tunis until a truce was signed on the 31st October under the terms of which the Christians obtained many privileges in Tunis. The army embarked for Trapani in Sicily on the 18th November, but just as it was reaching its destination a terrific storm burst and the eighteen ships were scattered, some sank with significant loss of lives, while some (including the ship holding the remains of King Louis) reached Palermo and Trapani (King, 1931: 266-268). Others may have reached nearby Gozo.

Malta's Links with the Templars

If the traditional origins of the St. Augustine's Cemetery tomb-slabs and the interpretation of the designs are correct, these slabs would then represent the only evidence of a Maltese link with the Templar Order. The only other identified mention of the Order in the Maltese medieval documentation is the brief given by Pope Boniface VIII to Cardinal Bishop Gerarduc sent as Apostolic Legate to the Kingdom of Sicily and the neighbouring islands including Malta in July 1299. Among the powers granted to the legate was an authorization to exact contributions or request provision for his officials from any prelate, dignitary or religious including members of the Order of St John and

the Templars overriding previously granted decree of the Council of Lyons held by Pope Gregory X in 1274 (Aquilina & Fiorini, 2005: 57, 59, 69). The National Library of Malta has in its holdings the Archives of the Order of St. John which include documentation relating to the Templar Order before its suppression (Zammit Gabarretta & Mizzi, 1964: Vol.1 Arch.1-72).

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The 2008 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards

CAROLINE CAMILLERI ROLLS

Introduction

In 2005, the Circolo Gozitano established the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award to honour those persons and organisations who, through determination and hard work, offer outstanding contributions to the economic and social development of Gozo or to the promotion of Gozo's identity. The 28th October is a significant date for the Circolo Gozitano as it commemorates the day when Archpriest Saverio Cassar, the Gozitan patriot, successfully led the Gozitans against Napoleon Bonaparte's French forces in 1798. Following the departure of the French from Gozo, Saverio Cassar became the head of government in Gozo and administered Gozo for two years while Malta, during this period, was still part of Republican France.

The Awardees to Date

The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards were handed out for the first time in 2005. During this first award ceremony, there were six awardees, namely Dr Censu Tabone (Former President of Malta), Prof Lino Briguglio (Director of the University of Malta Gozo Centre), ET Nikol Cauchi (Former Bishop of Gozo), Prof John Cremona (Former Chief Justice), Il-Hajja f'Ġhawdex (Monthly Magazine) and L-ARKA Foundation.



Prof Lino Briguglio receiving the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award in 2005 for his outstanding contribution to higher education in Gozo.

In 2006, four *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards were given to Mr. Anton Tabone (Former MP and Speaker

of the House of Representatives), Ġorġ Pisani (Gozitan Poet who died in 1999), Dun Manwel Cordina (Founder of 'Il-Fondazzjoni Oasi) and the Oratorju Don Bosco.

The 2007 *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards went to Miriam Spiteri Debono (Former Speaker of the House of Representatives), Joe Zammit Ciantar (Writer and Broadcaster) and the Victoria Scout Group.

The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards 2008

The fourth *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards ceremony was held at Palazzo Palina at the Hotel Ta' Ċenċ, on October the 29th 2008. In his speech, Dr Grazio Mercieca, the President of the Circolo Gozitano, said that the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards ceremony had become one of the most important events on the Circolo Gozitano calendar and was one of the activities in which Gozo Day could be commemorated. He stated that the awarding of the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award to a person or group was not just a formal award but a reward in recognition of the contribution these certain individuals have given to Gozo through their hard work so that they would be remembered for it and not forgotten as was Archpriest Saverio Cassar. The *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards, continued Dr Mercieca, are a way to forward the Circolo Gozitano's mission statement in that it recognises the contribution by those who work towards preserving and promoting Gozo's distinct identity. The Circolo believes that through such acknowledgments Gozo, doubly insulated from the rest of the world, can move forward and benefit its hard working, diligent, and entrepreneuring people.

Dr Mercieca then thanked the members of the *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Awards selection board, for the effort they put in to choosing the recipients of this year's *Ġieħ Ġhawdex* Award. He reminded the guests that it was due to the suggestion by Frank Psaila that the Circolo Gozitano started presenting these awards four years ago. He also thanked the sponsors, namely HSBC and the proprietor of the Hotel Ta' Ċenċ.

Finally he thanked His Excellency, the President of Malta, Dr Edward Fenech Adami, for generously accepting to present the 2008 *Ġieħ Għawdex* Awards which by doing so, gave more prestige to this annual activity.

The 2008 Awardees

Franco Masini, *Ġieħ Għawdex* selection board member, read out the curriculum vitae of the three awardees. The first person to receive the award was Ms Maria Attard, the director of the Dar Giuseppe Debono in recognition of her work, which includes her ever present support to unwed teenage mothers. Ms Maria Attard is one of the leading philanthropists in Gozo's social sphere, particularly in the educational and support fields.



Ms Maria Attard receiving the *Ġieħ Għawdex* Award in 2008 for her contribution to Gozo's social and educational sector.

Mr Joseph M. Attard Tabone was given the *Ġieħ Għawdex* Award for his untiring work in protecting Gozo's archaeological heritage. It was the detailed research undertaken by Mr Attard Tabone that led to the discovery of the site of the Gozo Stone Circle.

Chev John Portelli, the third awardee, is renowned for his pioneering entrepreneurship within Gozo's tourism industry. His endeavours proved instrumental in the development of the hospitality industry on Gozo, thus contributing towards the socio-economic development of the island during the past five decades.



Mr Joseph M. Attard Tabone receiving the 2008 *Ġieħ Għawdex* Award for his significant contribution towards the preservation of Gozo's archaeological heritage.



Chev John Portelli receiving the 2008 *Ġieħ Għawdex* Award for his pioneering endeavours in promoting the tourism industry in Gozo.

Guests Present

Besides His Excellency, the President of Malta, Dr Edward Fenech Adami, the audience included Mrs Fenech Adami, the Honourable Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, His Excellency Monsignor Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, Mr. Anton Tabone, Former Speaker of the House of Representatives and Prof Lino Briguglio, Director of the University Gozo Centre.

Caroline Camilleri Rolls possesses the degree of Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies and currently assists in the administration as Academic Coordinator at the University Gozo Centre.

Ġorġ Pisani (1909-1999) – Patriot, Educator, Author and Poet – One Hundred Years from his Birth

PAUL G. PISANI

Introduction

It is a bit awkward to sing the praises of a close family relative. In fact Ġorġ Pisani is my father. He passed away peacefully on 24 February 1999. His life was hectic and busy, spanning almost the entirety of the twentieth century and he has left an indelible mark on Gozo's cultural and social patrimony.

Pisani was born in Victoria on May 6, 1909, to Paul, a Gozitan wine merchant, and Theresa nee' Calleja, a Maltese lady from Cospicua. Pisani had a sister, Josephine, born in 1901, who married Dr. Paul Borg Grech and settled in Malta, and a brother Anton, born in 1904, who married a Maltese lady, Ines Spiteri, and settled in Gozo. Another brother John, born in 1906, died in infancy.

Pisani spent his childhood in Republic Street, the hub of Gozo. In his novels he recounts the advance of progress on Gozo, the electricity and water services, the early emigration, the first motor car in Gozo, the parish rivalries, the San Ġirġor devotional pilgrimage and the unobstructed vistas from his hometown.

Pisani recounts that one could see as far as Marsalforn from the present Republic Street crossroads and that as a child he used to play with other children in the same street. He never wrote an autobiography but he has described his early childhood years in his numerous literary works. He received his early tuition at the Government Primary School and the Lyceum in Victoria.

Drawn to Priesthood

Pisani made several excursions outside the country, some with his cousin and best friend Censu Tabone, later President of the Republic. At a certain point in time, Pisani felt the vocation for the priesthood and joined the Capuchin Order. Here he carried out advanced studies in classical

literature, philosophy and theology. It was during this period that Pisani started to write his first poems. His name as a Franciscan was Fra Alipju. Pisani was not to pursue the ecclesiastical career, but his strong attachment to the charisma of St. Francis was to remain with him for the rest of his life.



Ġorġ Pisani in a promotion of Gozo Cottage Industries. A propaganda photo to advertise Gozo lace.

Pisani collaborated with E.B. Vella in the *Ġabra ta' Ward* series published by Oxford University Press. The poems in this anthology were to make him a household name with generations of students.

Pisani joined the editorial staff of the *Times of Malta* and *Il-Berqa* and in 1933 was the editor of the literary page of *Id-Dinja*. He was appointed the first teacher of Maltese at the Gozo Lyceum between 1935 and 1940. He introduced the teaching of Maltese to the students of the Gozo Seminary and to primary school teachers who attended a

Post Certificate Course in 1936. Between 1931 and 1935 he won several literary competitions organised by *Lehen il-Malti* and the now defunct *Pronostku Malti*. In 1939 he co-founded the *Xirka għat-Tixrid ta' l-Ilsien Malti*.

World War II

In 1940 Pisani joined the Information Department in Valletta. There he worked as a translator and co-editor of the Maltese language version of the Information Service Bulletin and other Government publications. His contribution to the war effort was mentioned by Francis Gerard in his masterpiece *Malta Magnificent* (1943). During these years Pisani also taught Italian and Maltese at the Girls' Secondary School, Valletta and introduced the teaching of Maltese to students at the Sacred Heart Convent School, St. Julian's.



Gorg Pisani with Viscount Gort during his wartime visit to Gozo in May 1943.

In 1942 Pisani was appointed Assistant Information Officer in Gozo. He immediately opened an Information Office in the *Banca Giuratale* at It-Tokk as well as several other information bureaux

in the villages of Gozo. On 29 May, 1943, Lord Gort visited Gozo to view these bureaux and highly commended Pisani for his efforts.

During this period, Pisani was in charge of the collection of wheat to be transferred to the famine-stricken sister Island of Malta. Pisani had to face the diffidence of the Gozitan peasants but his fiery exhortations in the village squares had the desired effect and the farmers willingly released their wheat.



Gorg Pisani in the first Rediffusion transmissions from Gozo.

Pisani immortalised this eventful period in his life in *Il-Ġabra tal-Qamħ* (1945). During the war and before the advent of Rediffusion, he also devised, with the help of a certain Mr. Vella from Hamrun, a primitive broadcasting system for Gozo, whereby Government notices and general information could be conveyed to the public.

Civil Service Career

In 1947, Pisani resumed teaching Maltese and other subjects such as Italian, Latin, History and Religion at the Gozo Lyceum. In 1957 he was appointed Publicity Officer with the Government and in 1963 he was promoted to Senior Information Officer.

During this period, and before the advent of television, Pisani organised open air film shows in various villages of Gozo where documentaries were shown and explained in Maltese to the population. During the same period Pisani contributed several articles on historical and folkloristic subjects to *The Review* and *Tajjeb li Tkun Taf*, publications issued by the Department of Information.

He was due to retire from the Civil Service in 1969 but was kept in Government employment until 1972.

After his retirement, Pisani resumed his writing and broadcasting, notably on the Rediffusion Sunday morning programme *Nofs Siegħa ta' Ghawdex*, later renamed *Mill-Gżira tat-Tlett Għoljiet*.

He also occasionally served as a tourist guide, taking coach loads of tourists around Gozo. Pisani confided to several people that this gave him the opportunity to sing the praises of his beloved Gozo to people coming from all over the world. He also continued writing and published several books.

In 1977 he was awarded the Malta Literary Award for his first novel *Beraq u Qawsalli* (1976). Pisani won the same prize again in 1983 with another novel *Żernieq fuq l-Għoljiet* (1982). In 1983 he was awarded the international prize *Città di Valletta*, and in 1986 he was nominated life member of the *Għaqda Poeti*. Pisani was a very active member of the *Akkademja tal-Malti* since his early youth. In 1992 he was awarded the *Midolja Għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* and in 1997 he was awarded *Ġieh il-Belt Vittorja* by the Victoria Local Council.



Ġorġ Pisani in the last years of his life.

Pisani also served as chairman of the Cultural Council and National Festivities Committee for Gozo between 1977 and 1985, and as a member of the Emigrants' Commission (Gozo Section) and the Gozo Agricultural, Industrial and Cultural Society, up to his death.

Literary Output

Pisani has been a very prolific writer. He published four books of poetry: *Il-Għid taż-Żgħożija* (1945); *Il-Waltz tad-Dellijiet* (1951); *Melodiji u Kuluri* (1953); and *It-Trijonf tal-Paċi u Poeżiji Ohra* (1984). Apart from *Il-Ġabra tal-Qamħ*, he also published five plays: *Is-Sengħa ta' l-Imħabba* (1945); *Għajn tar-Rebbiegħa* (1947); *Il-Kewkba* (1949); *Apoteosi* (1978) and *Is-Sigriet ta' Swor Kristina* (1978).

He has published two collections of Gozitan legends: *Ghawdex Joħlom fil-Legġendi* (1980) and *Mill-Gżira tal-Holm* (1995). He also published a collection of novels *Għoxrin Novella* (1946) and a collection of essays *Evviva l-Hajja* (1963). Some of his works have been translated in English, Italian, German, Esperanto and Russian.

Posthumous publications, edited by the present author were *Id-Duwa tal-Madalena*, (2000), a collection of articles on medical folklore and *Għana Bikri u Għana Wahħari* (2006), an anthology of unpublished poems written in the last years of his life. In 2000, Professor Oliver Friggieri edited an anthology of Pisani's best poems, entitled *Poeżiji. Ġorġ Pisani*. Other works such as collections of Gozitan legends, travelogues, popular history, poems and drama still await the light of publication. It is hoped that these works will be published eventually and not lost in oblivion.

His Final Years

Pisani spent the last ten years of his life writing and receiving the numerous students and researchers of the Maltese language and history at his home in Main Gate Street. Various people remember him reading and writing in the window that faces this busy street, stopping every now and then to acknowledge and reciprocate the greetings that both young and old would give to this fine old gentleman.



Monument to Ġorġ Pisani erected by public subscription in Victoria Gozo.

At times he used to spend hours chatting to persons sitting in the waiting room of his son's notarial office, attached to his residence. He had a kind word for everyone. In summer he used to take a stroll in the shade of the Rundle Gardens, book in hand, and occasionally in the company of his granddaughter Maria, who was a source of much of his joy during the last years of his life.

The Last Adieu

Pisani passed away after a short illness on 24 February 1999 at the Gozo General Hospital. The news of his death was reported in news bulletins of local radio and TV stations that same evening. The morrow's newspapers gave extensive coverage of his death. *The Times* gave it front page prominence. He was even commemorated in Parliament and was given the nearest equivalent to a state funeral in his native Victoria. His funeral was held on 26 February 1999.

A Centenary From his Birth

2009 marks the centenary from his birth. I hope that public spirited persons and entities will not let the year pass by without giving him a fitting commemoration.

Paul G. Pisani graduated diploma of Notary Public in 1985 and Doctor of Laws from the University of Malta in 1986 and currently practices as a notary public. He is currently reading for an MA in Mediterranean Historical Studies at the University of Malta, Gozo Centre. He has published various works on Malta's literature and history in several journals.

A New Future for the Island – Eco-Gozo

THE HON. GIOVANNA DEBONO

Introduction

The vision to have the island of Gozo transformed into an ecological island is an ambitious but achievable one. The eco-island concept is intended to achieve sustainable development goals by promoting a holistic approach to development, taking into account economical, social and environmental concerns.

This approach aims to achieve:

- a better quality of life
 - a society exerting less pressure on the environment
 - a wholesome natural and cultural environment
 - more sustainable jobs
- a caring society for all
 - more quality investment
 - an enhancement of the island's identity

A Change in Mentality

This is by no means an easy task, yet it may be achieved through the right strategy and above all through synergy and cooperation among all stakeholders involved. First and foremost, this requires a change in mentality involving the Public Sector, the Local Councils, NGOs, the business community, together with the inhabitants and visitors to the island. This poses a fundamental challenge to the concept itself, because, from now on, all actions and decisions in relation to the island have to be taken and maintained within the eco-island perspective.



Prof. Lino Briguglio, director of the University of Malta, Gozo Centre, attends a meeting at the Ministry for Gozo as part of the consultation process connected with the Eco-Gozo Vision 2015.



Gozo's beauty: A typical topography of Gozo with the Citadel in the background.

The Process has Begun

The Government has given prominence to this concept in its electoral programme, which in turn was based on its Vision 2015 for the Maltese Islands. At first glance this might seem an over-ambitious target. Will Gozo become a model for other regional and island communities?

When one considers what has happened during recent years one may conclude that perhaps this is not a totally new idea but one which has been fostered through projects and initiatives already implemented under the co-ordination of the Ministry for Gozo. The construction of a new Waste Water Treatment Plant in Gozo, the closure of the sewage outfall at San Blas, the closure of the Qortin dump which is being converted into a family park, the introduction of domestic waste separation, the removal of the incinerator at the Gozo General Hospital and the improvement of the incinerator at the Gozo abattoir can all be considered as attempts to foster sustainable development and as the first steps taken to achieve this ambitious target. To these one may add the courses organised through the

collaboration of the University Gozo Centre some of which focused on good agricultural practices, animal breeding, viticulture, water management and soil conservation.

The Role of Education

Education plays a fundamental role in the success of the eco-island strategy. This does not only refer to classroom education, but will involve educational programmes intended to reach all sectors of society and to usher in the required change in mentality. An example of this approach is the recent experience of the introduction of domestic waste separation. Children went home and explained to their parents and grandparents what they had been told at school about waste separation. An informative publicity campaign complemented school education through the local media. This resulted in an unprecedented success in promoting awareness about the need of waste management. This is the model which may be emulated in the endeavours to foster awareness amongst the general public, but most of all those living on the island, in order that they may



A water catchment area on the way from Rabat to Marsalforn.

appreciate that their contribution is indispensable for the success of the eco-island project.

Launching of a Public Consultation

The Ministry for Gozo is entrusted with the responsibility of this extensive project which will involve all spheres of Gozitan society. The Ministry is seeking to involve the opinion of all those concerned before the appropriate strategy is drafted. Thus a public consultation process has been launched recently where Government and non-Government entities as well as the general public, have been invited to submit their views and ideas regarding this project. Community ownership of their vision is important to ensure the success of the project.

The Ministry for Gozo has widened this consultation by meeting various established NGO's and public entities prior to establishing the final strategy to be adopted. Civil society has an essential role to play in promoting this idea. Environmental groups are of major importance in this regard and will be involved throughout the

whole process. These entities possess invaluable tools and expertise, that are extremely relevant and crucial for the success of Gozo as an eco-island.

Balancing Environmental and Socio-Economic Concerns

Success in this initiative depends on many factors, first amongst them that the stakeholders understand its aims and objectives. All stakeholders will benefit if the quality of life on Gozo is improved, if Gozo provides a healthy natural environment, if the island attracts more tourism and investment. It is thus in everyone's interest to collectively promote and contribute towards steering the eco-Gozo vision on the way to success. Eco-Gozo will surely require large investment to support substantial projects, but its success is critically dependent on each and everyone's contribution.

The eco-Gozo vision aims to see Gozo being transformed into an ecological island within the upcoming seven years. Gozo is beautiful and has unique natural, cultural and social resources that



The Waste Water Treatment plant which is one of the most significant environment-friendly projects realised in Gozo. It has been operating since 2007.

make the island distinct. Through the eco-Gozo project it is envisioned that all these qualities are maintained and enhanced while promoting economic development aspects, keeping the vital balance with the natural and cultural characteristics of the island. This vision aims most of all to render Gozo an attractive tourist destination and a magnet for investment conducive to sustainable development.

It has been very encouraging to note that the concept itself has so far been well-received and this inspires confidence in this ambitious journey which promises a greener and a healthier future for Gozo.

The Hon. Minister Giovanna Debono has been holding the post of Minister for Gozo since September 1998.

The Gozo Discovery Bus: A Successful Experiment

MARYROSE VELLA

Introduction

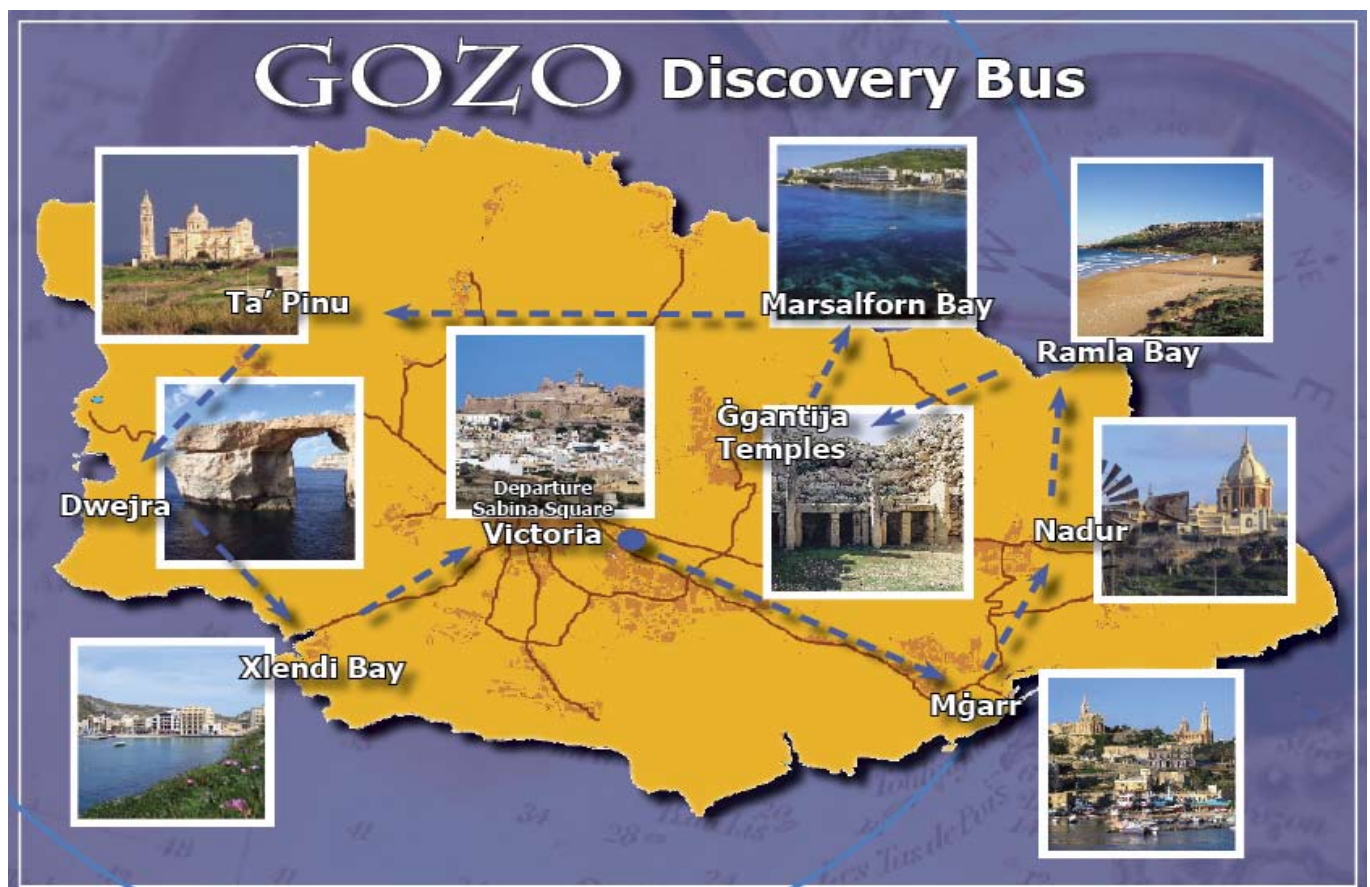
The introduction of a tourist discovery bus in Gozo came about as a result of an EU Project which is part of the Interreg III B Archimed programmes in which the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta participated. Other countries participating in this programme besides Malta, represented by the Islands and Small States Institute, are Italy, Cyprus and Greece.

The discovery bus service was aimed at encouraging more tourists to come to Gozo and enabling them to visit strategic places of interest, some of which are not usually reached by public transport. The idea of having a discovery bus in Gozo has long been debated by the Gozo Tourism Association and came to fruition only after several consultation meetings between local authorities and enterprises whose interests lie mainly in tourism. The intention of this service is to have

more tourists come and stay in hotels in Gozo rather than coming over for day trips. Having tourists stay overnight in Gozo, generates more employment and income for local businesses in which case the tourism industry in Gozo will be rendered more sustainable.

Bus Trip Around Gozo

During the three week trial which was held between 16 July and 6 August 2008, there were five round trips a day, where the Gozo Discovery Bus left Sabina Square in Victoria every two hours between 0930hrs and 1730hrs. The route then took passengers on a round trip through Mgarr, Nadur, Ramla Bay, Ġgantija temples in Xaghra, Marsalforn, Ta' Pinu, Dwejra, Xlendi and back to Sabina Square via Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village.



The brochure distributed throughout Malta and Gozo indicating the places of interest visited by the Gozo Discovery Bus.



Tourists boarding the Gozo Discovery Bus which is displaying the poster advertising the route in the front windscreen.

destination. Thus passengers could choose whether they wanted to stay on the same bus and continue on with the round trip or else stay at a destination of their choice and catch one of the other buses which passed through each destination every two hours to continue their tour of the other destinations on the route at their own pace. The bus was not just used by foreign tourists but also by locals and Maltese tourists who made use of the bus which was in the form of a hop-on hop-off service. During the trial the service was offered without a fee however it is being proposed that the service will operate in the future at a modest fee.

Feedback from the Users of the Service

A survey was carried out during the trial to elicit the opinions of those individuals who used the Gozo Discovery Bus service. During the three weeks of the trial a total of 1126 individuals used the service. Of these 915 were foreign tourists, 176 were Maltese tourists and the remaining 35 were Gozitans. The passengers of the bus were chosen at random and questioned by means of a questionnaire.

Foreign tourists who used the bus came from a diverse range of seventeen different countries of whom half were staying in accommodations

in Malta while the other half were staying in accommodations in Gozo. 78% of the foreign interviewees claimed that they spent an average of €7.87 per person during the trip on food and beverages, souvenirs and entrance fees into the Ġgantija temples. All the interviewees claimed that they thought the service was extremely useful as they were able to visit most of the places of interest in Gozo on one trip. They claimed that without this service they would not have been able to visit all the major attractions in one day. The passengers were asked what in their opinion the most important benefit of such a service was. 86% answered that sightseeing of the major attractions was by far the greatest benefit of having a service such as the Gozo Discovery Bus in operation. They also claimed that education and culture was also another incentive for using this service and also purely for entertainment.

The Maltese tourists and the locals who used the service said that it saved them the problem and also precious time in finding a parking space which is a major problem especially in Victoria. The Maltese tourists who were interviewed claimed that although they drove and owned private vehicles, they chose to leave their cars in Ċirkewwa as they planned on using the Gozo Discovery Bus while

on their day trip to Gozo. They said that they found the service extremely useful as a hop-on hop-off service and most enjoyable at the same time.

When asked whether they thought that the service should be in place in the future, 96% of the interviewees replied that they thought it was important that it was established permanently. They said that the service was a very good idea and much needed in Gozo. Half of the interviewees claimed that the five round trips were quite adequate while the other half said that there was a need for more trips at hourly intervals so that as a hop-on hop-off service, it would be more efficient. Most of the foreign tourists staying at accommodations in Gozo, who used the service considered themselves lucky to have come on holiday during the trial period. They found the service most convenient and some used it more than once during their stay.

Feedback from the Non-Users of the Service

Further on during the same survey, a questionnaire was presented to a number of individuals who had not used the Gozo Discovery Bus during the three week trial in order to see what their opinions were regarding the service. In this case many of the foreign tourists questioned thought it was a shame that the service was not in operation during their stay as they claimed that they would have found it very useful. Some of the Maltese visitors said that had the service been in place they would have been able to leave their cars in Malta and therefore avoid the problem of parking. 100% of all the individuals questioned said that they thought the Gozo Discovery Bus service was a good idea both for taking a round trip and also to use as a hop-on hop-off service.

Approximately 47% of Gozitans said that they would not use the service if it was operating. The reason offered by the interviewees for this being that the Gozitan culture would have to take time to readjust to using buses again as for so long now due to an insufficient public transport service, Gozitans have become accustomed to using their own private transport. 80% of the Maltese interviewees claimed that if the service was in operation, they would use it, while approximately 90% of the foreign visitors said that they would definitely make use of the service. The 10% of

the foreign visitors who said that they would not use the service were return visitors who did not come back to see the sights but to relax in the laid back atmosphere offered by Gozo, although they did say that the hop-on hop-off service might prove useful on occasions. As to the adequacy of the service, the majority of Gozitan and Maltese visitors claimed that five round trips as during the trial were adequate but claimed that as a hop-on hop-off service, the trips need to be more frequent. On the other hand the majority of foreign visitors claimed that more than the five trips were needed daily and at hourly intervals in order to be able to visit the whole island at leisure.

The Service Providers of the Service

The bus drivers who provided the service were also questioned during the survey. 83% of them claimed that the service was worth their while and at the same time offered a new service to locals and visitors alike. They said however that the buses needed to be at full capacity and that they should have some help from the government to compensate low takings during the off-peak tourist season. The majority thought that the service should only be offered between May and October or during the summer months. Overall, 94% of the drivers interviewed thought that the service would serve as an added attraction for tourists visiting the island.

Conclusion

All in all, and based on the opinions of the individuals who took part in the survey, the project was perceived as very successful. Many of the interviewees were curious as to whether the service was to continue in the immediate future. They claimed that just as other tourist destinations have such services offering city tours they thought it as important for island destinations to have island tours. Gozo could well benefit from such a service which would add to the attraction for those visitors wishing to have an island tour in which it is possible to view the major attraction sights during one round trip.

Maryrose Vella possesses a Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies and currently assists in the administration of the Islands and Small States Institute.

Hitting or Missing Niche Markets

JOE MUSCAT

Introduction

Almost every tourist destination experiences fluctuations in visitor numbers throughout any particular period during the year. Island destinations are more prone to experience busy seasons during the summer months and low numbers in the remaining months of the year, especially in Winter. Gozo is no exception to such trends. In fact one of the main obstacles that the tourism industry on Gozo has to face is the high seasonality element in which it operates. One way of mitigating this problem is by extending the busy season in the months preceding and following it. Much can be done in this regard especially on Gozo.



One of Gozo's many beautiful natural areas.

Innovative Marketing Strategies

As trends and expectations of travellers change, the marketing strategies employed by destination Gozo must be constantly evaluated and adjusted. The traditional methods of advertising destination Gozo as a sea and sun attraction, needs to be supplemented by new ways of drawing tourists' attention. Innovative approaches are needed.

As a destination Gozo must define what makes it distinctive in order to adopt the best strategy to attract guests who will appreciate what this little island has to offer, and at the same time leave the much needed positive impact on the local

economy. While the travel and hospitality industry is traditionally considered as a service industry, it is also evolving into an experience industry. Niche marketing presents a most valid, viable option in the foreseeable future, for a small destination like Gozo.

Tourism Niches

Gozo has already established itself in the very important diving niche. This sector is proving to be a valid specialised market helping to extend the tourist season. Practically, diving around Gozo can be experienced from as early as March and well into the month of November.



Divers preparing for a dive at Dwejra.

Another niche activity that is in its fledgling stages is that of walking and cycling. The Gozitan terrain and countryside in spring, autumn and winter is proving to be a visitor puller. But Gozo's infrastructure needs to be more prepared for this type of niche. The upkeep of the island's picturesque countryside, especially in keeping it free from dumping sites and open skips, is paramount in order to make these places more appealing to ramblers. The Gozo country-walks concept, which was initiated some years ago through discussions between the Ministry for Gozo, the Malta Tourism Association (MTA) and the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA), should be revived, intensified and further enhanced. More



A view of the two parishes of Victoria Gozo.

information, including interpretation on site as well as printed matter, will definitely enhance the Gozitan experience.

New Opportunities

Meanwhile Gozo has other opportunities which can be much better exploited to attract tourists in the lean and shoulder months. Carnival in Gozo is an annual event which has recently been attracting many Maltese visitors. Gozo has managed to promote and sell it within the domestic market, but we have not as yet been similarly successful within the foreign market.



Walkers and cyclists can enjoy the Gozitan terrain and countryside in spring, autumn and winter.

Another tourism niche for Gozo relates to lyrical operas which are staged annually in Victoria. Whilst hundreds of co-nationals are attracted to cross the channel and spend the night on Gozo after enjoying the much lauded performances, the same cannot be said for foreign visitors.

Hopefully Government's proposal to turn Gozo into an Eco-Island will also provide another niche for Gozo with which to enhance its tourism product.

Highlighting Differentiation

This short article has highlighted the need for differentiation - a basic element in Gozo's tourism marketing. Gozo needs to market and promote its unique features. Today's travellers are inundated with sea and sun advertising. Gozo needs to compete in this regard also, but it needs to be unique. We need to narrow our focus in order to broaden our sales.

Joe Muscat is the secretary of the Gozo Tourism Association and is General Manager of the Hotel Calypso, Marsalforn.

Recent Activities at the University Gozo Centre

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Rector's visit to the University Gozo Centre

In July Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University of Malta, accompanied by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, visited the University Gozo Centre, where they met Professor Lino Briguglio, Director of the Centre. Professor Briguglio explained the importance of the presence of this Centre in Gozo and how this has had a positive effect on higher education in Gozo. He said that about 400 students graduated after having followed courses at the University Gozo Centre.



Prof Lino Briguglio (centre) making a point during the meeting held at the Centre.

Minister Giovanna Debono stressed the importance of maintaining and increasing the services offered by the University in Gozo, which should result in the strengthening of human resources through lifelong learning in Gozo. She remarked that the Ministry for Gozo will continue to support the University Gozo Centre as it has been during the past fifteen years.

Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University of Malta spoke favourably about the Centre and by the facilities it offers. He acknowledged the importance of the Centre to the Gozitan community and stated that Gozo will need more trained people in order to help it achieve the eco-island status.

The Summer Activity

Once again the central courtyard of the Centre was the venue for its annual summer activity entitled "An Evening with Island Brass". The event, which was attended by an audience of about two hundred persons, took place on Friday 5 September 2008.

The programme included several well-known musical pieces. Soprano Ms Georgina Gauci also joined the quintet.



The event attracted a large audience.

Courses

In October two new courses commenced at the Centre. These are the Diploma in Commerce offered by the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, and the MA in Islands and Small States Studies offered by the Institute of Islands and Small States Studies. A number of short courses were also offered. These included "Introduction to Criminology", "Inclusive Education - Transforming Schools into Communities", "Systems of Knowledge" and "Understanding Young People in Today's Society".

The Ministry for Gozo with the collaboration of the University Gozo Centre offered a number of short courses in "Literacy and Numeracy" and in "Agriculture". Due to the success of these courses, another set of courses in agriculture was offered during November and December. All courses were co-financed by the European Social Fund under the Structural Funds Programme for Malta 2004-2006.

Award of Certificates

On 8 August the Hon. Giovanna Debono distributed certificates to 167 candidates who had followed the courses in "Literacy and Numeracy" and in "Agriculture" offered by the Ministry for Gozo at the University Gozo Centre between November 2007 and July 2008.



The Hon. Giovanna Debono awards a certificate to a successful participant.

Graduation of University Gozo Centre Students

Forty two students who completed courses at the University Gozo Centre received their certificates during the recent graduation ceremonies. The courses completed were those leading to Masters in Islands and Small States Studies (3 students), Post-graduate Diploma in Education - Administration and Management (27 students), Bachelor of Commerce (4 students) and Diploma in Commerce (13 students).



The Gozitan and Maltese graduates of the MA in ISSS.

The students who obtained their Masters in Islands and Small States Studies are Joseph Cassar, Jane Refalo and Carl Scerri,

The students who obtained their Post-graduate Diploma in Education - Administration and Management are Marthese Attard, Angelo Bonello, Pierre Camilleri, Daniel Cassar, Mariella Cassar, Victoria Cassar, Joann Cordina, Dominic Cutajar, Justin Debono, Michelina Debrincat, Joy Frendo, Tony Frendo, Florence Garcia Bugeja, Michelle Grima, Silvio Grima, Mary Rose Mercieca, Helen Muscat, Gineve Refalo, Christopher Saliba, Anna Sciberras, Helga Vella, Joseph Vella, Maria Vella, Maria Vella Muscat, Lino Xerri, Marie-Claude Xerri, and Frankline Zammit.

The students who graduated in Bachelor of Commerce are Marvic Borg, Alexia Cassar, Angela Cauchi, Joline Pace, Joanne Vella and Michael Vella.



The students who received the Bachelor of Commerce.

The graduates in Diploma in Commerce are George Debrincat, Mary Mercieca, Sylvana Muscat, Josline Portelli, Nadine Portelli, Rosalie Refalo, and Alison Zerafa.

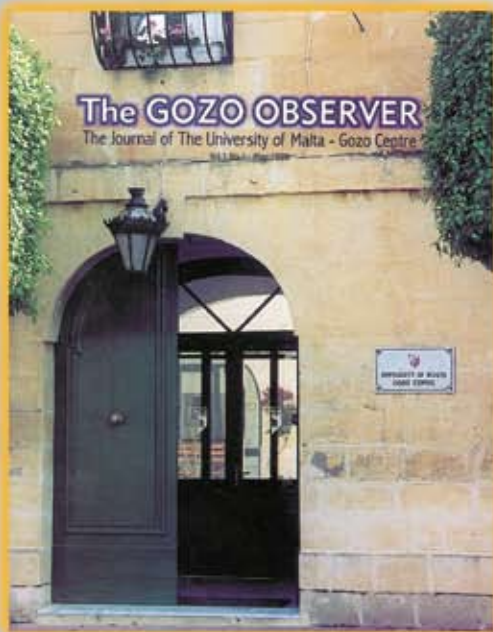
Publications

The 18th edition of the *Gozo Observer* was published in June 2008. As in previous issues, a selection of articles dealing with Gozitan affairs were included.

In this edition Nadia Farrugia contributed an article dealing with her experiences as a lecturer at the University Gozo Centre. Saviour Formosa and Ann Marie Bartolo dealt with the impact of climate change on the island of Gozo, while Godwin Vella presented an interesting article on Valperga's proposal regarding the fortification systems of Gozo during the 17th century. Caroline Camilleri Rolls gave a short summary relating to a training workshop organised for Chambers of Commerce on Small Islands, held at the University Gozo Centre in June 2008. "Gozo as an Ecological Island - Some Reflections" was the theme of an article by Raymond Xerri, while Maria Theresa Farrugia presented an article on the Dwejra Heritage Park as a distinctive natural setting in the Island of Gozo.

Free copies of the *Gozo Observer* and more information can be obtained from the University Gozo Centre, Mgarr Road, Xewkija, Gozo.
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