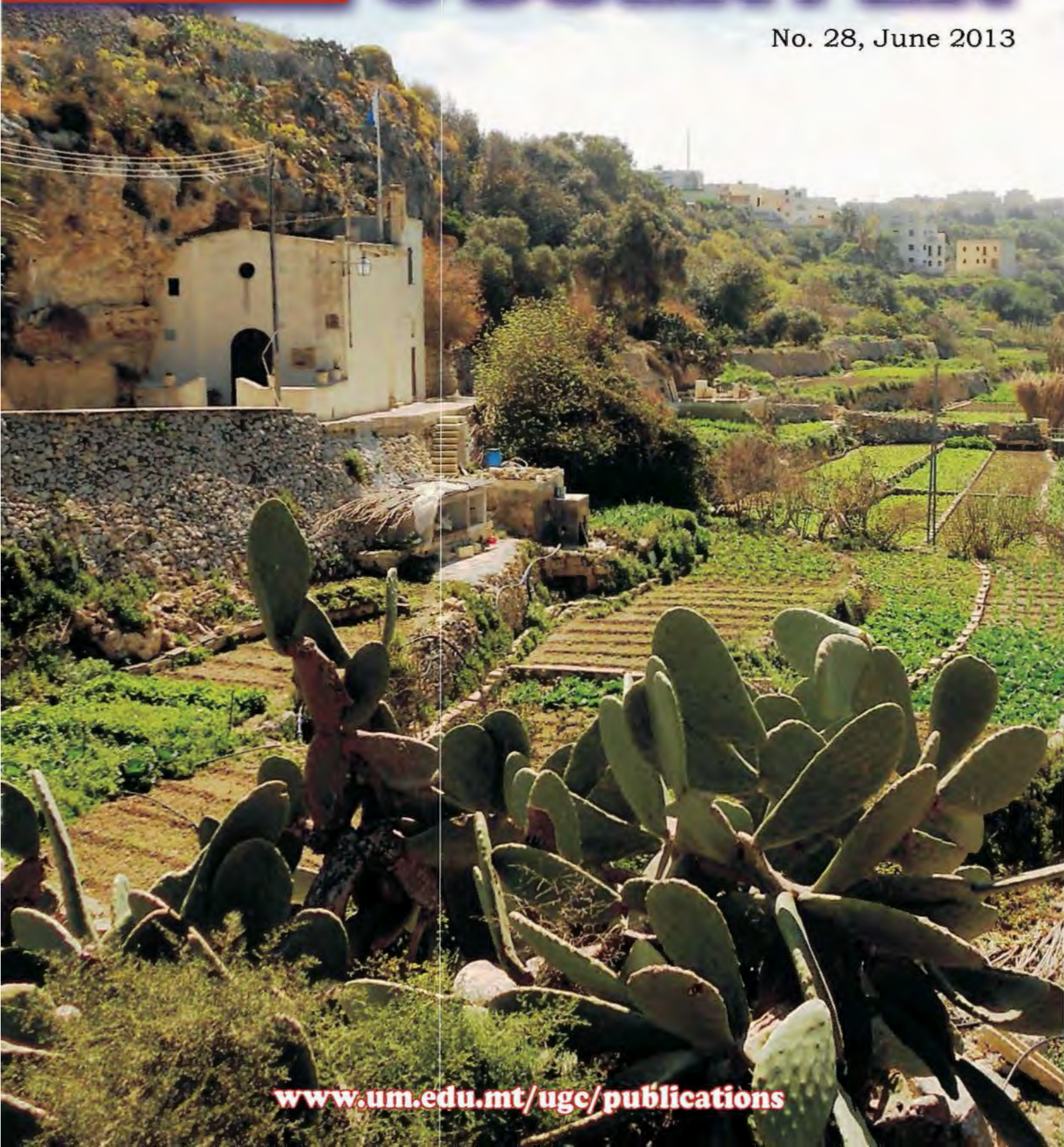


THE **G** **OZO** **OBSERVER**

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The Gozo Observer

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Front Cover Picture: Lunzjata Valley.
Photo: Joseph Calleja.

Editorial:

The Future of Gozo

The history of Gozo reflects the feelings felt by many small islands of being between a stone and a hard place. On the one hand there is a gut feeling that we must preserve our precious natural gifts with which nature has provided us. These include not only the natural pristine environment, both on land and under the crystal water surrounding it, but also the character of the population, with its unique history, dialects, folklore and other characteristics which make this island unique.

On the other hand there are overwhelming pressures to move on, to provide incentives for progress, to attract business activity, to ensure that our standard of living does not drop precipitously, leaving the island as a backwater.

Hence the dilemma in which we find ourselves. We find that the native population of Gozo is actually diminishing, propped up as it is by ID-carrying weekend visitors from the sister island. We find that our children have to look across the channel for a job, which often results in permanent residence there once the family begins to grow and throw roots.

Schemes have been hatched to remedy some of these problems. The latest one was the mammoth development proposal for Hondoq ir-Rummien which planned for the building of a 150-boat marina

surrounded by 285 flats and villas, a five-star hotel, 731 underground parking spaces, ten shops and five restaurants. This would have worked wonders for the Gozo economy, providing work for local people and hopefully a constant stream of tourists and visitors to the island. This plan has been rejected by the Environment tribunal, but an appeal might succeed.

One could ask, what would these extra thousands of visitors be doing in Gozo? Would not this and similar huge developments turn this unique island into yet another spot with nothing to distinguish it from anywhere else? Would it not destroy the very reason why tourists currently seek Gozo: a jewel of peace and serenity which has all but disappeared from everywhere else? The hackneyed cliché of killing the goose that lays the golden egg springs easily to mind.

Yet another major scheme has been the underwater tunnel to join the islands, at a cost of half a billion euro. No doubt this would provide a much enhanced and speedy way to work or study for those thousands who have to cross the channel every day. No doubt it will enhance business efficiency, and encourage better interaction between the two islands. This is not without a considerable cost, as mentioned above. Gozo would become another place just beyond Mellieha.



It is indeed a dilemma on how to balance progress with preservation. The term ‘sustainable development’ means so many different things to different people that it has become simply a cliché behind which politicians and developers tend to hide. It cannot be quantified adequately, and hence remains difficult to judge objectively. Let’s hope those that govern us can find a reasonable solution.

Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay.

(Source: <http://www.malta.com/en/attraction/beaches/gozo/hondoq-ir-rummien> - May 2013)

Maurice Cauchi

The Polio Epidemic in Gozo

MARIO SALIBA

Introduction

Polio was a disease feared by many during the last century. This infectious illness was more common over the warmer months of summer. Many of those who were stricken recovered quickly as they would have had only temporary paralysis but a number of them suffered from permanent paralysis and even death. Many Gozitans remained disabled for life after contracting polio which struck the island during World War II. They are a reminder of the great burden that this disease had on society and on the lives of many people.

“Polio” is the common name for poliomyelitis. The term is derived from the Greek poliós (πολιός), meaning “grey”, myelós (μυελός), referring to the “spinal cord” and the suffix -itis, which denotes inflammation (Chamberlin and Narins, 2005: 1859–70). For a time polio was called infantile paralysis although this disease did not affect only children.

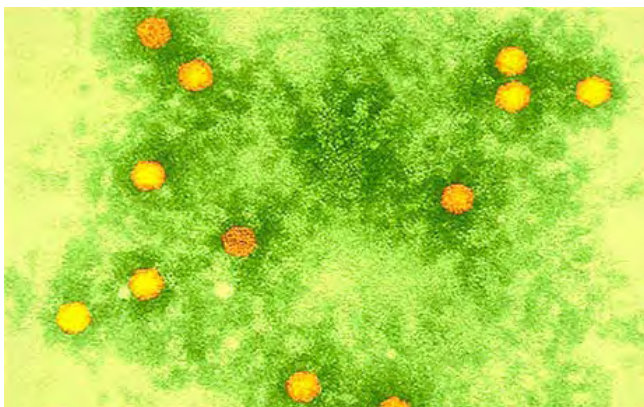
Types of Polio

Polio is caused by one of the three viruses which are members of the genus enterovirus that affects the central nervous system. In approximately ninety-five percent of cases, the person has no symptoms at all. These are known as asymptomatic cases. The remaining cases of polio can be divided into three types: abortive polio, non-paralytic polio, and paralytic polio. The acute phase usually lasts

about a week. This is the most critical time for the patient because it has many symptoms including high fever and even convulsions (Agius, Bartolo, Coleiro and Seddon, 1945: 759). Thus at the onset of the disease it was not easy to diagnosis because the symptoms were similar to other common diseases such as meningitis.

In the abortive polio type the disease was mild. The symptoms included fever, fatigue, headache, sore throat, nausea and diarrhea. These symptoms lasted for a few days and then everything disappeared quickly. In non-paralytic polio cases, the symptoms were typically those of abortive polio, but also included neurological symptoms, such as sensitivity to light and neck stiffness. In the case of paralytic polio the patient, after an initial period of symptoms like those mentioned, also had definitive neurological symptoms. These included a lack of superficial reflexes and muscle pain or spasms. The paralysis was not usually the same on both sides of the body and one to two percent of people remained paralyzed. In many cases the patient recovered completely however a certain number of people had paralysis or muscle weakness for life.

Polio is a highly infectious disease that spreads from person to person through the nasal and oral routes and by contact with contaminated water. The virus enters the body through the mouth and passes into the digestive system where it then multiplies. Unfortunately there is no cure for polio even today, so prevention is the most effective means to combat it. Certain medications and therapies can offer supportive care to patients against some of the effects of muscle involvement. Patients who get paralysis of the muscles involved in breathing will need to be placed on an artificial breathing machine for the period it takes for the muscles to recover. In serious cases of polio where the lung muscles are affected, thirty percent of sufferers will not recover and will eventually die. In Malta fifteen people died in the acute phase of the disease, fourteen of them due to muscle paralysis of the lungs and the other due to a convulsion (Agius, Bartolo, Coleiro and Seddon, 1945: 761).



Polio virus x350,000 - © Dennis Kunkel Microscopy, Inc. (Source: <http://pathmicro.med.sc.edu/mhunt/rna-ho.htm> - Nov 2012)



Polio is a viral, infectious disease which can lead to paralysis or even death.

Due to effective vaccines against the disease, polio was eliminated from the western world in 1994. Today it is still found in a few countries like Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan (WHO, 2011). Vaccination against polio started in Malta in November 1956 (Savona Ventura, 2005: 73). By 1959 thirty-four thousand people in Malta and Gozo had been vaccinated. In 1961 they began to use a new vaccine which was more effective (Savona Ventura, 2005: 74).

Polio in Ancient Times

Polio has existed for thousands of years. In Egypt they found carvings on an old stone dating from around 1500 BC which shows people with deformed and shrunken limbs (Daniel and Robbins, 1997: 5-22). These carvings depict the characteristics of polio.

In ancient times there were epidemics of this disease due to lack of cleanliness. When hygiene started to improve in the rich countries of Europe and America and after the sanitary reforms of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the disease began to decline. But these epidemics have had dramatic effects on family life and societies at a time when infant mortality was high. One must say however that the epidemics were indeed numerically small compared with the epidemics of cholera, typhoid and smallpox in the nineteenth century (Porter, 2002: 78).

The old name for the disease, infantile paralysis, reminds us of when it was primarily a disease of infants and very young children and its outcome was paralysis of the muscles affected. The picture of the child with polio was immortalized by the classical English writer Charles Dickens in the character of Tiny Tim in his novel, *A Christmas Carol*.

Polio in the Maltese Islands

In Malta and Gozo there were only a few cases of polio before 1942 when there was the first outbreak. The polio disease was one which fell under the law of protection from infectious diseases, Cap 36 of 1908, and therefore each doctor was obliged to report every case he had under his care. This law took effect in 1921 (Cassar, 1964: 264). The largest epidemic occurred between November 1942 and June 1943 (Agius, Bartolo, Coleiro and Seddon, 1945: 759). Altogether during this period there were 436 reported cases. Then there was another outbreak in 1950 (Savona Ventura, 2005: 73).

In Gozo the outbreak began in the first week of December 1942 and lasted until February of the following year. In 1950 there was another outbreak that began towards the end of August and lasted until the end of December of the same year.¹ The last case of polio was reported in 1964 in Malta (Savona Ventura, 2005: 73). In Gozo between the 4th December of 1942 and the 29th December of 1962, a hundred cases were reported.² The largest number of cases was in 1942 which numbered thirty-five in all. In 1943 there were only five cases, and in 1945 there were no cases at all. But in 1946 and 1947 there were eight cases each year. In 1948 there was only one case but in 1950 the disease recurred because twenty-one cases were reported. From then on one to three cases a year were reported until 1962.

The disease had spread all over Gozo but the largest number of cases was in Victoria where eighteen cases were reported. Fifteen cases were reported in Nadur and eleven in Ghajnsielem. In Sannat and Munxar two cases were reported in each village. The age ranged between infants of five months and children of fourteen years but the majority were all

¹ Infectious Diseases Register, Public Health Office Archives, Gozo.

² Ibid.

young children under five years of age.³ The two doctors found most frequently listed in the register of infectious diseases were Dr. Alfred Cauchi who practiced mainly in Victoria and Dr. Salvino Debono whose practice was in Nadur, Ghajnsielem and Qala.

Nobody knows how this disease came to the Maltese Islands however it was thought to have been introduced from abroad by the British soldiers who were here during the war, the reason being that over this period there were fifty-seven people working with the Services who contracted the disease (Agius, Bartolo, Coleiro and Seddon, 1945: 759). In Gozo at least as far as it is known, there were no British personnel affected with this disease apart from one. Peter Mather AC 2 RAF who was twenty-two years of age, was reported as a suspected case, although this was not confirmed, on 16th October 1950 by Dr. Alfred Cauchi.⁴ One must remember that the war brought much poverty, starvation and poor hygiene and the mingling of people in shelters could have been the main reason why the disease spread throughout Gozo.

After the Epidemic

Thankfully according to the register of diseases, none of those afflicted with the disease in Gozo died in its acute phase. This was mainly due to the cooperation that existed between the civil and medical service. However the disease did leave many people paralyzed. Consequently the Department of Health requested the assistance of Professor H. J. Seddon, who was the professor of orthopaedics at Nuffield College at the University of Oxford in England, who came over to Malta to assist in the establishment of a department of orthopaedics and physiotherapy. It should be noted that this cooperation between the Health Department and the Orthopaedic Centre in Nuffield still exists today. Twice a year a professor of orthopaedics comes to Malta to see patients who require specialised treatment at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford. Even a number of Maltese doctors go to Oxford to specialise in the field of orthopaedics.



Oral administration of the polio vaccine.

Due to the lack of mobility that this disease caused a number of physiotherapy units were opened around Malta and Gozo. The health department also brought two British physiotherapists to the islands since at that time there was nobody here in Malta specialised in this field. Gradually the department of physiotherapy began to take shape as four other British physiotherapists came to Malta, and the British Red Cross and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta provided appropriate equipment to give massages and care to children affected by the disease. A number of female nurses were also sent to England to train as physiotherapists (Savona Ventura, 2005: 482).

Orthopaedics as a Speciality

From this brief study we can see that medicine in Malta has always been kept up-to-date and abreast with the advances that were occurring outside the country. So much so that the vaccine was introduced in Malta soon after it was developed in 1952 and later tried on humans in 1954.⁵ By 1964 the disease had vanished from our country and today it is just a part of history. We also saw how the presence of a particular disease came to create the Department of Orthopaedics. The first professor of orthopaedics was Dr. Alfred J. Craig. Concurrently the Department of Physiotherapy was set up at the Central Hospital where today there is Bugeja's Institute. This was an important step because these physiotherapists who were trained by British experts were of great

³ Infectious Diseases Register, Public Health Office Archives, Gozo.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ "History of Polio," in *History of Vaccines – A Project of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia*. Source: <http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/timelines/polio> – accessed on 12/4/12.



The Palace of Verdala, one of the residences of Governor Sir Edmund Schreiber, which temporarily served as an orthopaedic hospital for patients who were ill with polio.

help to those patients who had muscle problems due to polio. Physiotherapy is also very important for the treatment and rehabilitation of many other diseases. In the case of patients affected by polio, the care needed was long term and required a lot of patience from both the physiotherapist as well as the patient.

Conclusion

The personal experiences of some of the people who fell ill with polio in Gozo were quite different. One must say firstly that polio was fairly new to Malta and doctors at that time knew very little about the disease and its management. Secondly there was no cure for it and the only treatment was isolation in order to prevent the spread of the disease and physiotherapy to prevent complications as much as possible. But the number of physiotherapists was very small compared to the demand. As always things in Gozo were much worse and patients were sent over to Malta away from their families. Many of the patients I spoke to personally told me that almost all polio sufferers were taken to St Luke's Hospital in Malta, which was still being built at the time. After that they were transferred to the Palace of Verdala, one of the residences of Governor Sir Edmund Schreiber, which temporarily served as an orthopaedic hospital for patients who were ill with polio (Cassar, 1964: 263). The patients were kept in Malta for a number of years but unfortunately little care was given to them. According to some of the patients I spoke to, once they arrived at the Palace of Verdala, they were put in a cast and dumped in a bed without being given physiotherapy or any

other treatment. In fact some of the parents did not like this situation and asked the health authorities to bring their children back to Gozo to be looked after by themselves. Some patients still living today told me that their parents used to take them to Frenç tal-Għarb, the charismatic person, who advised them on how to give massages to their children.

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Burnout and Well-being: An Incremental Validity Study

MICHAEL GALEA

Abstract

Burnout is thought to arise from prolonged disparity between what one gives and receives especially at work (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). In this population study, we targeted all registered nurses working at Gozo General Hospital. A mixed-method, cross-sectional design was employed, measuring burnout, spirituality, personality, well-being, and demographic information. Results: Gozo professional nurses suffer from high levels of burnout, namely low on professional accomplishment, high on depersonalisation, and moderately to high emotional exhaustion. Qualitative data supported these findings. Results and implications were discussed.

Introduction

One of the most fulfilling jobs is saving human life in whatever stage it may entail. It is very rewarding to see someone get better and to know that you are part of that recovery. Saving lives may be a very fulfilling career, but it also comes with a price: it is one of the most stressful jobs out there. Stress is a complex reality and one component closely related to it is burnout.

Research consistently indicates a negative association between burnout and well-being of nurses, even in different cultures (Laschinger & Grau, 2012). High burnout among nurses correlated with a higher intent to quit or change



The Gozo General Hospital. (Source: <http://gozonews.com> - May 2013)

profession, illness-related absenteeism and work place violence (Pienaar & Bester, 2011). Maslach and Leiter (1997), in their extensive research on burnout and their creation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), explain it (burnout) in terms of three aspects: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduction in perceived personal accomplishment. Although burnout may be a more complex reality, their research is definitely meaningful and noteworthy.

Variables that were found to increase burnout included younger age, poor professional experience, lower education, lack of job-fitness, intensive care nursing, nurse-to-patient ratios, personal ethical conflicts, and a mismatch between nurses' expectations and the extent to which the work place is meeting them (Fearon, 2011). Aquilina (2003) found that studies on stress levels among Maltese nurses were a) limited, and b) not well addressed by the authorities. Nurses required assistance but felt they had nowhere to turn to.

That negative life events impact one's well-being is well recorded. However what could result in a deficit to one's holistic well-being can also serve as a predictor of post-traumatic growth. Galea (2009, 2012) found that certain variables, such as one's personality, resilience, spirituality and social support, amongst others, could help predict growth and well-being if factored in.

Given the lack of relevant studies on this reality in Malta, this study could serve to further investigate: (a) incidence of burnout among Maltese nurses, (b) clarify the relationships among key variables such as burnout, holistic well-being, and other relevant variables, and (c) direct future research resulting in practical and valid suggestions for better work practices and quality of life.

Procedure

Inclusion criteria for this study included Maltese nurses working at Gozo hospital. Response rate was 78%. The study had all clearance by the relevant authorities. This study was on a voluntary and confidential basis. A pilot study was conducted prior to the study.

Methods

Participants (65% female) responded to the mixed-method study, including a questionnaire and open-ended questions, which asked participants on strengths perceived at work and recommendations to ameliorate their caring profession.

Measures

Four professional measures were utilised in this study, namely (a) the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin, 1985) which measures cognitive well-being; (b) the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter, 1996), measuring burnout from three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment; (c) Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson, 1993), which measures a holistic sense of focus in life, namely the integration of faith and love; and (d) the Big Five Inventory (Donahue & Kentle, 1991), which is a personality measure which encompasses the Five Factor Model.

Results

The author conducted scientific correlation analysis and found that burnout was strongly correlated with personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

High levels of burnout were found, as hypothesized. It is indicative and worrying that 94% of nurses indicated low personal accomplishment, 88% scored in the high risk range of depersonalisation, and three in ten nurses scored high on emotional exhaustion, while half of the sample scored in the moderate range (reflecting fatigue or stress).

The second hypothesis was also supported. As expected burnout negatively correlated with wellbeing, which is consistent with similar results in research elsewhere.

A qualitative section was also included. This asked participants about their strengths they experienced in their employment and what

recommendations they had that would further their job satisfaction. The majority pointed towards two general suggestions:

- a) enhanced physical environment of the hospital, and
- b) a better professional moral environment.

Discussion

First and foremost, the relevance of this study lies in the fact that this was a population study, and the first such study among Gozo nurses. Considering the high expectations and demands on nurses, such studies are commendable and required for a win-win result of all stake holders. This study found that Gozo Hospital professional nurses suffer from high levels of burnout. The majority scored: a) low on professional accomplishment, low feelings of competence, b) very high on depersonalisation (impersonal towards patients), and c) moderate to high on emotional exhaustion (over-stretched, over extended and exhausted by work).

Reaching one's breaking point through job-related issues is definitely a serious component that any

humane and responsible authority should take heed to immediately. Such serious considerations must be factored in, when considering the satisfaction of workers, to ensure they become more effective, efficient, and fulfilled through their jobs.

Recommendations include a combination of both positive emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies (Fearon & Nicol, 2011). Nursing managers should explore ways of reducing job stress and also techniques for building social support networks at the hospital. Three reasons could be suggested for this: first, to protect nurses against stress; secondly, to protect and ascertain better service to patients, and finally, to lessen the concerns and worries of patients' relatives.

Nursing managers should explore ways of reducing job stress and techniques for building support networks at the hospital (Fearon & Nicol, 2011). Further qualitative results pointed at two key growing edges. First, their physical environment requires immediate and comprehensive attention. Good training is not enough. An appropriate physical environment is just as critical for their



Stress is a complex reality and one component closely related to it is burnout. (Courtesy of freedigitalphotos/imagerymajestic)

humane work. Secondly, the so-called moral environment of their work place, whereby better communication with management, more consultation on issues affecting them, less red tape and interferences by third parties (especially patients' relatives) were called for.

Results from the qualitative section resonate well with Duggleby, Cooper & Penz (2009) findings. They indicated hope as being an important concept in the work of such professionals. Furthermore, supportive relationships, adequate resources, encouragement by others and improving perceptions of self-efficacy could also foster hope. Research indicates that nurses can actively take part in the development of their own resilience which will help reduce the risks of burnout (Manzano & Ayala, 2012). Supportive relationships, adequate resources, encouragement by others and improving perceptions of self-efficacy were found to increase hope, an element so important in resilience (Duggleby, et al., 2009).

Implications for Research

As indicated elsewhere, research in burnout must factor in other relevant variables. As suggested in this research, future studies need to explore the potential interaction between burnout, personality and wellbeing for the holistic wellbeing of individuals.

To surmise, job-related stress and burnout was found prevalent among Maltese professional nurses working at Gozo hospital. Consistent with studies elsewhere, this reality negatively correlates with well-being and thus is destructive to professional nurses' wellbeing. Indirectly this affects patients' health and treatment prognosis.

This study therefore calls for a serious reflection and vigorous investigation of key areas required to understand this realm. Listening more to nurses' concerns is key in this process.

This is an abridged version of a peer-reviewed article presently being considered for publication in the Archive for the Psychology of Religion.

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The Xewkija Parish

MARK ZERAFA

A Historical Perspective

According to an ancient tradition, St. Paul's voice reached the area that is today occupied by the village of Xewkija as he proclaimed the new faith in Mdina. The inhabitants immediately embraced the teachings of Christ and demolished an ancient pagan temple to make room for a Christian church. Another legend claims that it was Paul himself who recommended that the new church should be erected in honour of the Precursor of Christ – St. John the Baptist. Whilst these accounts must be fictional, the remains of a prehistoric temple were indeed unearthed in Xewkija in 1647.

Figures from a census carried out in 1667 show that the hamlet of Xewkija was then the fastest growing community in Gozo, with 403 inhabitants in 90 households. The fertile soil in the area and a proximity to the Citadel that would have provided instant refuge in the event of an invasion must have made the Xewkija area particularly attractive. Notwithstanding a swelling population, the community was still dependant on the Rabat Parish. Practicality and a growing sense of identity

may have contributed to the Xewkijans' desire to establish their own parish.

Bishop Michele de Molina made a pastoral visit to Gozo in November 1678; four Xewkijans - Giovanni Maria Azzopardo, Giovanni Maria Mercieca, Domenico Xuereb and Giovanni Maria Pisano seized the opportunity to promote the cause and petitioned the Bishop to declare Xewkija a parish on account of an ever growing population which had soared to 650 by then. They also reassured the Bishop that the necessary funding to cater for the chaplain's subsistence and the erection of a new temple would be made available, as each family pledged an annual contribution of two tari. The Bishop agreed that the request was justified and on November 27th, Xewkija was proclaimed a parish, making the community the first village in Gozo. Dun Grezz Farrugia was selected to be the first Parish Priest.

The Old Church

The first Xewkija parish church was constructed in 1726 under Dun Dumink Abela (1694-1734) on



Xewkija Parish Church.



The Rotunda.

the design of Ġuzeppi Azzopardi from Birgu. The chief mason was Ferdinandu Valletta, a Gozitan. Ten years later the belfry was constructed and the church would be consecrated in 1755 by Bishop Paul Alpheran de Bussan. The plan was a standard cruciform layout, and had eight side altars with devotions as follows: to the left hand side of the main altar - Souls in Purgatory; the Holy Crucifix; the Immaculate Conception; and St. Andrew respectively; whilst to the right of the main altar were altars to Our Lady of the Rosary; St. Elijah; the Holy Family; and St. Anthony respectively. The first bell to crown the church was a donation by Can. A. Gourgion. The temple received its dome in 1830.

Giovanni Gallucci (1815-1882) was commissioned to create the painting on the dome half a century later. This painting depicted the Glory of St. John the Baptist and showed the Saint, with open arms, being crowned by God the Father. Gallucci received 625 scudi for his work and this is documented in a receipt that has been conserved

within the Episcopal Archives of Gozo. The technique employed by Gallucci strayed from the standard fresco methodology as the oil paint was applied directly onto the stone. Sadly this work was lost when the old church was demolished. Fragments of it still survive however and are exhibited in the museum of sculpture annexed to the present day Rotunda. It seems likely that the sculpture within the church was created by the brother of the celebrated Maltese Painter Francesco Zahra, who himself created many of the paintings.

The main painting in the church's choir was a representation of St. John the Baptist, clad in camel skin, preaching in the desert. This painting has traditionally been attributed to Mattia Preti, but Falzon (2005) postulates that this is in error and is more likely to have been created by Gioacchino Loretta, a close colleague of Preti. It was donated to the Xewkija church by Bishop Molina whilst the lateral paintings in the choir were donated by the Cassar family in 1788 and represented the Birth

and the Martyrdom of the titular saint, loosely based on originals by Caravaggio.

The Rotunda

The Rotunda of Xewkija is an impressive construction; internally, it measures 64 metres long and 43 metres wide. The internal diameter of the dome is 24.5 metres. The dome is supported on eight ferroconcrete columns of height 13.5 metres. The columns represent the eight beatitudes. The church has six transeptal chapels, designed by Ġużè Galea.

The need for a larger church to accommodate an ever growing population became evident and from time to time, renovations were carried out in an attempt to address this problem. Parish Priest Pietru Pawl Ciantar (1865-1908) petitioned the ecclesiastical authorities to approve the construction of a new church. This request was turned down however and in order to mitigate the situation, the nave was extended and the church was given a new facade which was reminiscent of

that of the Gozo Cathedral. The facade may have been built on a design by Ġużè Diacono.

Amongst the reasons for the delay in granting the necessary permits for the erection of the new church were a concern that priceless art may be lost during the demolition of the old structure; and that the Xewkijans may be left without a church to meet their religious needs whilst work on the new one was in progress.

Rev. Joseph Grech was installed as the new Parish Priest of Xewkija on August 9th 1947. He brought with him renewed enthusiasm and energy and spared no effort so that the much coveted project would see the light of day in the shortest time possible. He met on various occasions with the Bishop of Gozo, Mons. Ġużeppi Pace; on the Sunday prior to the feast of St. John of 1948, he proudly broke the joyous news to his congregation, announcing that all stumbling blocks had finally been overcome. He requested that all parishioners help in any way that they could, in the form of prayer, voluntary work and financial assistance.



The interior of the Xewkija Parish Church.

Ġużè D'Amato was born in Sfax, Tunisia in 1886; he designed several churches in Malta, but the Xewkija Rotunda must be his magnum opus; sadly he died on May 26th 1964 and did not live to witness the completion of this monumental work.

Work on the foundations of the Rotunda started on November 19th 1951, on the insistence of architect D'Amato, saying that his major projects always commenced on that date. A cross where the choir of the new church was to be located was ceremoniously placed on May 3rd 1952 after having been processionally carried through the main streets of Xewkija. The foundation stone, weighing approximately one tonne, was blessed and laid by the Bishop of Gozo, Mgr. Joseph Pace a day later. Within a hollow in this stone were placed some silver and gold coins, relics of saints and a parchment bearing the following words:

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM
AMPLIOREMQUE S.J. BAPTISTAE
PATR.
HONOREM
EXCEL. IOS. PACE D.D. PH.D. I.C.D.
GAUDISIENSIS EPUS.
HUNC LAPIDEM ANGULAREM
AQUA LUSTRALI SPARGENS AC
PONENS
AUSPICATUR ILLUD TAM
EXPOTATUM ET EXPECTATUM
NOVA FORMA AC MIRUM SPLENDORE
XEUKIANUM TEMPLANUM
QUOD AFFABRE DESIGNAVIT
IOS. DAMATO INSIGNIS AC DE S.M.
ECCLESIA
VALDE MERITUS ARCHITECTUS
ADM. REV. IOS GRECH
ARCHIPRESBYTERO
PIO XIII PONT. MAX. ELIZABETHA
BRIT. REGINA
FELICITER REGNANTIBUS
a.d. IV NONAS MAIAS
MCMLII¹

In order to ensure that the people of Xewkija would always have a church to cater for their religious needs, the new church was built around the old one. Until 1953, a chapel dedicated to St. Paul was annexed to the old church but this was demolished to make room for the new construction.

Rock for the construction was initially quarried from Barriera tal-Bur, limits of Ġhajnsielem; this was found to be of unsatisfactory quality so stone was then quarried from St. Elizabeth Street in Sannat. Again, this yielded unsatisfactory results so another source was sought. A quarry in Ġharb was the source of material until the temple was completed.

A project of such sheer magnitude would certainly require a steady stream of funding; yet the zeal and determination of the Xewkijans would not be dampened. The construction took eighteen years to complete and at no point did the process come to a standstill due to a dearth of cash. Devout parishioners contributed generously in cash and gold items, whilst members of the clergy conducted door-to-door collections, with households each donating a weekly shilling. On New Year's Day, the Archpriest would receive the *strina* – a cash gift. Farmers and fishermen used to donate a portion of their produce, such as turkeys, rabbits, eggs and roosters, which would have been put on sale alongside various household items on New Year's Day, the Feast of St. John and the Feast of the Martyrdom of St. John. Two major collections used to be held annually; one at end of the Lenten talks and another at the conclusion of talks held on the occasion of the Immaculate Conception. Xewkijan emigrants from various countries also sent generous cash gifts. The eight ferroconcrete columns were each funded by individual benefactors. The whole construction cost £100,000; were it not for the untiring voluntary effort of the parishioners, the cost would have been well in excess of £1,000,000.

¹For the greater glory of God and that of our Patron St. John the Baptist, His Excellency Joseph Pace D.D., Ph.D., JCD Bishop of Gozo blesses and lays this foundation stone. So commences the construction of the much desired and awaited temple of Xewkija, a temple the design of which is entirely new and the beauty of which is unprecedented. The architect, the illustrious Ġużè D'Amato is worthy of all praise from the Holy Church for his untiring efforts during the days of the Very Reverend Ġużèppi Grech Archpriest of Xewkija, during the reign of Pope Pius XII and that of Queen Elisabeth II. 4th May, 1952

The masonry work was entrusted to Joseph Cauchi and Anthony Vella, both from Xewkija; and Emmanuel Saliba from Għarb. Due to deteriorating health, Cauchi retired from the project after four years. Advancing age also forced Anthony Vella to retire in 1958 and his brother, Joseph Vella took over. Joseph Vella will be especially remembered for the erection of the eight columns between 1951 and 1958 and the massive dome, completed on May 31st 1970.

A set of six paintings by Chev. Paul Camilleri Cauchi from Victoria, Gozo adorn the walls of the Rotunda. These depict scenes from the life of the titular saint as follows:

- The Annunciation of the Birth of John
- The Birth of John
- John the Baptist showing Jesus to his Disciples
- The Baptism of Christ
- John Before Herod
- The Martyrdom of John the Baptist

The paintings above the confessionals (showing the Birth of John and John Before Herod) measure twelve feet by eight feet whereas the remaining four measure sixteen feet by eight.

Guzè Galea from Rabat, Malta designed the apse, the six architectural perspectives and the marble floor.

On the same day that the dome was completed, it was crowned with a large wooden cross, some 2.5 meters high and 2 meters wide, and weighing 72 kg. It was blessed by Apostolic Nunzio, Mgr. G. Majoli amid much cheering and rejoicing. Mgr. Nicholas Cauchi, Bishop of Gozo also attended the ceremony.

Fr. Joseph Grech, sadly died following an accident on October 18th 1971 at Mgarr, and his duties taken over by Mgr. Carmel Mercieca, who expedited the demolition of the old church. The



A chapel dedicated to St. Paul was annexed to the old church but this was demolished to make room for the new construction.

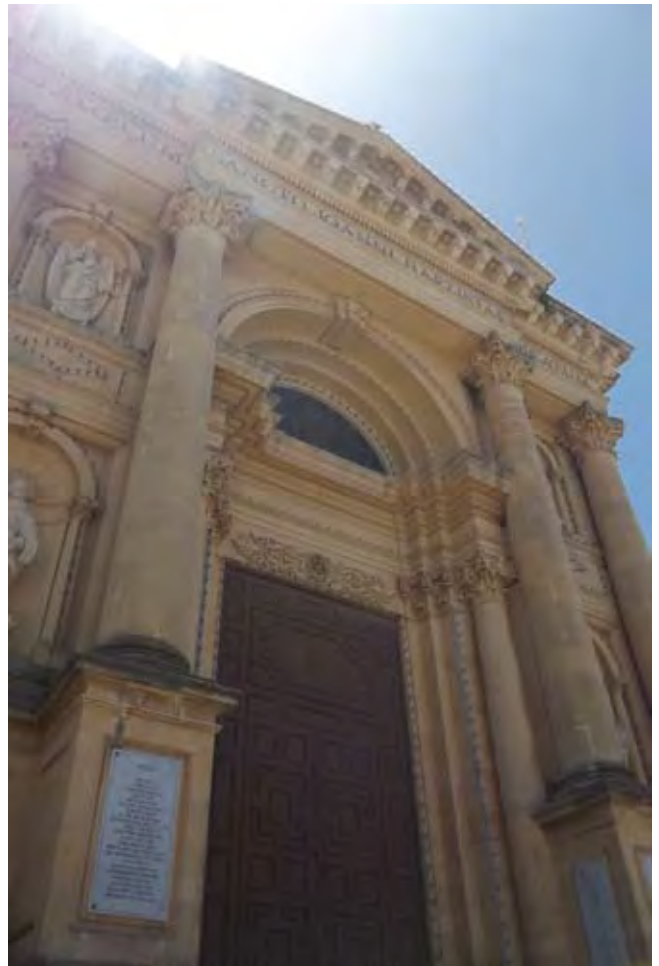
last mass in the old church was said on April 2nd 1972.

The church was consecrated by Mgr. Nicholas Cauchi on June 17th 1978, coinciding with the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Xewkija parish. During the ceremony, Mgr. Cauchi blessed the twelve marble crosses on the walls of the church. These used to hang in the old church but were encased in bronze Maltese crosses, made by the Stefano Sibelio factory in Italy, on a design by Ġużè Galea. The ceremony was also famously attended by Cardinal Silvio Oddi. Marble plaques commemorating the occasion were unveiled by the Cardinal and the Bishop.

The Rotunda became the seat of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Gozo in a ceremony held on Friday, 23rd June, 1978. During the ceremony, the Sacred relic of the hand of St. John the Baptist was placed on the High Altar, lent by the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Albino Luciani who would become Pope John Paul I shortly after.

The old church did not merely cease to exist; parts of it survive today and serve as a Museum of Sculpture. During the dismantling of the old church, each stone was meticulously numbered so that the structure could be reassembled in its present location. The foundation stone was laid on August 29th 1978, on the occasion of the feast of the Martyrdom of St. John.

The Rotunda dominates the Gozo skyline as it will always dominate the memories of those who pay it homage. The temple of Xewkija is indeed impressive in terms of design and proportions. Just as massive however has been the sheer determination of the people of the little village throughout the course of its history to realise their dreams despite the numerous obstacles that needed to be overcome; and despite the pomp and grandeur of the modern temple, it is a fine example of the new blending in harmoniously and seamlessly with the old and the humble.



The facade of the Xewkija Parish Church.

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The Woman in Gozitan Folklore

ANTON F. ATTARD

Introduction

Until very recently it was generally believed in Gozo that women were inferior to men. But strange to say, according to our ancient folklore, the woman is by far superior to the man in many ways. In fact, according to legend, Gozitans are the sons and daughters of a giant woman who got married to a Gozitan man. It was this giant woman who carried on her head the huge megaliths of our prehistoric temples. The Gozitan giantess was a good wife. She used to carry her baby behind her back and spin cotton as she carried the enormous globigerina limestone blocks from Ta' Ċenċ to Xagħra, Ghajnsielem and Qala.

Another famous woman, if she could be called a woman, was the nymph Calypso who lured Odysseus and kept him in captivity for seven long years on her enchanted isle of Ogygia or Gozo.

The third most famous woman in Gozitan folklore is Our Lady herself who, according to legend, is very much concerned with Gozitan affairs. She is interested where Gozitans are to build her temples, she is on the Gozitan side during their struggles against foreign intruders, such as corsairs, pirates and Turks, she assists good Gozitans to escape slavery, and she helps Gozitans to be free from pestilence and to get rid of all strange noises and other nuisances.

In many other legends and folktales, women play the most important part. In legends the woman is praised and regarded as a heroine, but not so in folk-stories. Proverbs about the woman are practical admonitions regarding the diverse natural characters of women who may be wise and good or naughty and evil.

While women share the common folk heritage with men, they have their own particular folklore as regards infancy, childhood, womanhood, marriage, house management as in washing, cooking, clothing, childbirth, folk crafts and industry, dress, funeral and folk medicinal remedies.

Gozitan women's folklore has a lot in common with other similar traditions and practices prevailing in Malta and in nearby countries such as Sicily and the North African Arab countries and all Gozitans should feel proud of their rich folk traditions.

Women's Folklore

The term folklore has been rightly described by the Rev. Emmanuel Magri, S.J., the father of Maltese folklore, as *L-Għerf bla miktub*, 'learning unwrit' of the Maltese and Gozitan people. This popular wisdom and knowledge pertains to the whole population, men and women alike. However each sex has its own distinctive folk traditions and as such the lore of one sex is not always relevant to the members of the opposite sex. This article shall briefly deal with Gozitan folklore about women.



Rev. Emmanuel Magri, S.J., the father of Maltese folklore. (Source: http://www.allmalta.com/folklore/p_060.html - May 2013)

The Gozitan Giantess

Nobody can start saying anything about Gozitan women's folklore without mentioning the most famous Gozitan woman of antiquity: the giantess who carried the huge stone blocks of our megalithic

temples and the other prehistoric remains which in earlier times were more numerous and better preserved than they are today. She was the mother of the Gozitans because according to legend, Gozitans are the offspring of the daughter of a giantess.

What about these remains?

First and foremost we have the Ġgantija Megalithic Temples, which previously were also known as Giants' Tower. We have id-Dura tal-Mara, the Woman's semi-circular stone wall at Ta' Ċenċ, most probably the last remains of a megalithic temple or some other building of the Bronze Age. Apart from these sites we also have il-Ħaġra ta' Grunja, Grunja's Stone, at Qala, also known as il-Ħaġra l-Wieqfa, the standing stone, and il-Ġebbla ta' Sansuna, Sansuna's Stone, the dislodged capstone of a dolmen.

Tradition says that the enormous stones of these megalithic remains were all brought to their present sites by the Gozitan giantess. According to legend this woman of extraordinary strength carried these stone blocks on her head from ta' Ċenċ to Xaġhra or to Qala. She used to have a pocket full of broad beans and she used to spin cotton as she went along. At times she used to balance the heavy stone with her hand so as not to let it fall. Another version of the same legend tells us that this same woman carried the huge Qala stone to use it as a stool and sit on it to guard her field of broad beans. Until recently the people of Qala even used to show visitors the two holes which were supposed to be the exact places where her two giant feet rested on the ground. As long as she had broad beans to eat the giant woman was healthy and strong, but there came a time when



Ġgantija Temples in Xaġhra.
(Source: <http://home.arcor.de/rhoda/History/Temples/temples.htm> - May 2013)

the broad bean crop failed and the Giantess had nothing to eat. Her strength likewise waned and children used to deride her, saying: lift up the huge stone again if you can! After some time the giantess died but the gigantic stone blocks of our prehistoric remains are still here to remind us of her.

Undoubtedly these legends were not created simply because of the presence of the megalithic remains which used to be looked upon with awe by our forefathers. They might have also been inspired by the stone figurines of fat women which in olden times might have been quite numerous and more easily available from the vicinity of the temples.

The Nymph Calypso

I am not quite sure whether the nymph Calypso should be regarded as an ordinary human being or a supernatural creature. Whatever her nature might have been her gender was surely feminine. She used to act like women and so she was a woman. The Island of Gozo is still sometimes referred to as the Isle of Calypso. According to legend she used to inhabit a deep cave overlooking Ramla Bay known to this day as Calypso's Cave. When Ulysses was thrown ashore during a terrible tempest he went into the cave and met Calypso. Although Ulysses was all too eager to sail back to Ithaca to see his wife and his son, Calypso kept him in her lure and promised him the kingdom of the Island and eternal youth. For seven whole years the nymph Calypso kept Ulysses as her captive until the gods took pity on him and ordered her to set him free. It is due to the nymph Calypso that Gozo has another tourist attraction which is visited by thousands of tourists every year.

The Madonna, Our Lady

The third most famous woman in Gozitan folklore is Our Lady herself, the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Madonna, Our Lady, is a Biblical character of the utmost importance and the holiest woman of the Catholic Religion. It is simply impossible for her not to find her place in the folklore of our small island. In fact the first legend about her says that when St. Paul was shipwrecked on Malta he also visited Gozo. Here he dedicated to her the Temple of Giunone situated on the hill of the Citadel. The truth that can be gleaned from this



The Cathedral at the Citadel dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption.

legend is that the first Christian converts changed their pagan temple dedicated to the pagan goddess and put it under the patronage of the most holy woman of the Christian religion. As usual such an important and extraordinary event was attributed to St. Paul himself, the great Apostle of the Gentiles and our Father.

According to tradition Our Lady is that heavenly woman who is still interested in Gozitan affairs. According to legend it so happened that when the Gozitans wanted to rebuild the temple in honour of Our Lady in her Assumption, they were going to erect this church on Ta' Gelmus Hill. However Our Lady herself carried the stones to Citadel Hill because it was on that site that she wanted her new Church to be rebuilt. A similar story is told about the building of the Qala Sanctuary. The Gozitans wanted to build this church at Tas-Salib, but every time the stones were carried away by a 'white lady' to the site at Tal-Halq. It was here where the Sanctuary was eventually built.

Another story is told of how a cripple from birth who was a resident of the Old People's Hospice in Gozo, which up to 1974 was still at St. Francis' Square, once saw a vision of an altar piece of Our Lady of Pompei perched on the prickly pear trees in a field in the vicinity. Some years later it was at exactly that place where the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Pompei was built through the generosity of the pious Carolina Cauchi, the foundress of the Dominican Sisters' Congregation.

It is also said that when the big bell of the Church Matrix of Gozo, now the Cathedral, was being cast

at the foundry (others say it was the smallest bell), a woman appeared with a lapful of gold which she threw into the melting pot at the foundry. It is believed that that woman was no other than Our Lady herself. That is why on 15th August, which is the feast of Our Lady in her Assumption, the bell gives out such a resonant sound and rings so melodiously. It is also said that on the 15th August, hell closes down and Our Lady grants a special grace to all those who happen to die on that date so that they may be saved and go to heaven. She does not want anybody lost in hell's fire on the day of her Assumption into Heaven.

During the time when there was feud between Christians and Muslims, Our Lady in her Assumption of Żebbuġ used to be seen pelting stones at the invaders and making them retreat to the sea whence they had come. As tradition has it, during the Santa Maria celebrations of 1597, both Christian Gozitans and Muslim Turks had visions of Our Lady. The Turks were so frightened that they opened their sails and set off. A captain of a galley who was caught in a tempest made a vow to Our Lady to build her a church on the first land he saw which turned out to be the top of Ta' Dbiegi Hill. He completed his vow because it was on this site that he erected a small church dedicated to Our Lady in her Assumption.

Another story tells of a farmer nicknamed *il-Lindju* who fell into slavery. He made a vow to Our Lady that if he managed to be set free he would build a niche and dedicate it to her. He was in fact set free and as a result he erected a niche dedicated to Our Lady of Angels at Xaghra. The people of Għarb set up a niche at Fgura at the first approaches of their village because they were being frightened by strange noises. Then the strange noises were heard no more.

Women in Gozitan Legends

Gozo is the island of legends. Therefore, women cannot fail to play the primary or most prominent part in various Gozitan legends. It is said that the most famous Gozitan legend is that of St. Demetrius. According to this legend, Żgugina or Żguga goes to pray in front of the altar piece of St. Demetrius beseeching him to bring back her son who has fallen into the hands of the Turkish invaders. Żgugina promised St. Demetrius that she would light in

front of his picture a measure of oil that would burn from morning till late at night. Legend has it that St. Demetrius brought her son back and Żgugina kept her promise, so much so that even when the earth gave in and the original church went down into the sea, the flickering light of Żgugina's oil remained alight and is said to be still shining deep down under water even to this day.

Another legendary woman is named Selika who used to live in the vicinity of il-Belliegħa, the sump, within the limits of Rabat, Gozo. She was the mother of seven beautiful maidens. One unlucky day it so happened that they were looked upon by a strange woman who cast an evil eye on them. Selika sent the youngest girl to fetch water from a natural spring in a nearby deep cave. This girl was sucked into the whirlpool deep down the cave. One by one the girls went to look for the missing ones, and one by one they perished in the whirlpool. The people hated that cave and covered it with debris and flagstones so that it would never again suck down anybody else.

The legend of the bakery at Marsalforn is of common knowledge. It goes back to the times when Turkish marauders pillaged our countryside. In one of their incursions on Gozo they attacked a bakery at Marsalforn Bay. There were several women working there but one of them was lame and could not run fast. When they noticed the Turks coming towards them they all escaped as fast as they could, but the lame girl stayed behind. However she was quick witted. To rid herself of the Turk who wanted to get hold of her she threw her semi-liquid dough on his face and blinded him. A similar legend is told about Kanċla, the woman who lived on a



St. Raphael's Pond, Kerċem.
(Source: <http://www.panoramio.com> - May 2013)

hillock to the west of Ġordan Hill where there is the lighthouse. Likewise another story is said to have happened at Ta' Mulejja Bakery in Qala.

Other legends of the same period relate how Gozitan girls were carried away by the Turkish corsairs. The legend of *It-Taraġ tal-Bniet* (The Girls' Flight of Steps) tells us how some village girls were grazing their flocks nearby when the Turks pounced upon them. They took hold of them and hid them in a pit that existed near a flight of steps. After wreaking havoc all over the countryside, stealing and destroying whatever they happened to look upon, they came back for the girls. They took them away on their galleon which was waiting for them hidden behind the sheer cliffs of Dwejra Bay. A similar legend *Il-Għadira ta' Sarraflu* (St. Raphael's Pond) recounts how other girls were snatched away while they were washing clothes. All these girls were taken away into slavery never to return to their beautiful island home.

In 1736 the Capuchin Friars visited Gozo for the first time to choose a suitable site were to build a new monastery for their Order on the Island of Gozo. They were offered three sites. One of them was that near the old chapel of Our Lady of Graces on the road from Rabat down to Marsalforn Bay. As soon as she beheld them, an old woman who lived in the vicinity exclaimed, "Oh, these are the friars I used to see entering the chapel in procession every day!" When she was told that these friars had never set foot on the island, she insisted on saying that their garments looked very much the same as those of the Capuchin Friars who were there to choose the site. Eventually they interpreted the old woman's story as a sign from heaven that their new monastery was to be erected in that place.



The Chapel of San Dimitri, Għarb.
(Source: <http://www.kappellimaltin.com> - May 2013)

Another legendary woman who is not mentioned by name but who some writers call Maria used to visit the same Church of the Visitation of Our Lady known as *Taž-Žejt* (of the oil) in the village of Ġharb. This woman was very poor and one of her greatest wishes was that of having some oil to offer to Our Lady to light the lamp in front of her effigy in the same church. Once it so happened that by the side of the church a fountain of oil appeared. Maria took her small container, filled it with oil and went into the church all too happy to offer it to Our Lady. Unfortunately several greedy people started collecting and selling this miraculous oil with great profit. Quarrels and disputes among the interested traders steadily increased until one day they found that the fountain of oil had dried up. Nonetheless the old Church of the Visitation retains the title of *Taž-Žejt* till this day.

Woman in Gozitan Folk Tales

In Gozitan folk tales one can find elements that give clear evidence with regard to popular psychology and opinion with respect to women in the Island's social setup. Unfortunately in most cases the woman is not seen in a good light. In the Gozitan folk tale about the man who could understand the language of animals, we learn that the cock can cope with as many as twenty wives, all of which without exception obey his orders as soon as he flaps his wings. So it is inconceivable how a human husband cannot make his only wife do as she is told. The human husband only managed to solve this problem when he took a stick and threatened to beat his wife. Of course in modern times such treatment would appear old fashioned and inhuman, but the lesson learnt here is quite simple: the husband has to prove that he means business and that he is the leader if he wants his wife to respect him.

The anecdote about the hen shows how daring a woman can be. Once there was a woman who had a hen. Someone stole this hen from her. The woman suspected that one of her neighbours did this, so she followed her to church where the neighbour went for confession. She waited until the neighbour was ready and then in an instant the false penitent took her place. She asked the confessor, 'Shall I give her back the hen I stole?' The priest, not suspecting anything and thinking she was the same woman, replied, 'Haven't I told you to give it back?' In this

way the daring woman got to know who stole the hen from her.

The story of the two female bakers demonstrates that there are good women and bad women. The bad baker did not want to give a *ftira* to a poor boy who called at her bakery one cold winter day. She came out with the excuse that all her bread was burnt. On the contrary the good baker gave the poor boy as much as he wanted. The story continues that the bad baker had all her bread burnt to ashes whereas the good baker kept taking out loaves from her oven not only for her clients but for all the people of the locality. That poor boy was Jesus Christ himself who punished that wicked woman and rewarded the good and gracious baker.

Another story deals with the honesty of women. A wife can trick her husband as much as she likes. The story goes that one day a woman made arrangements with a man to hide in a small room in the fields and to hold four sparrows in his hands. While she was walking through the fields with her husband the wife wanted to go to that room alone. As soon as she entered the room, which was without a door, the man hiding there let the birds go. When she returned to her husband he could not believe her when she told him that inside the room there was a man. 'That is impossible,' said her husband. 'If there was a man there, how on earth did the birds fly as soon as you entered the room? There could not be the birds and the man at the same time!' The wife, to show him that this was possible, called out and asked the man to come out. Seeing the man the husband said, 'My dear wife, no husband can make his wife honest. The wife has to be honest of her own accord.'

Another Gozitan story says that the woman managed to cheat the devil but the details of the anecdote are a little bit vulgar and cannot be given here. However now I will tell you the story of the young man who wanted to get married. There was a young man who wanted to marry but everytime he managed to meet a beautiful girl for his fiancée his father would tell him, "My child, that girl is not suitable for you. She is your sister!" Now when this had happened the third time the boy went to tell the whole story to his mother. "Never mind, my boy!" said his mother. "You can marry that girl all right because he is not your father!"

Another story warns us that women are not to be trusted with secrets. Yet another story is about a boy who used to beat his mother. It is a grim warning for all and sundry that whoever does not show respect to his parents will be punished by God.

Proverbs about Women

Another important folk aspect to get to know the Gozitan popular opinion about women is that 'wisdom in a nut shell' contained in our proverbs. Unfortunately when recording proverbs one seldom mentions the place where the proverb was heard for the first time so one cannot say for sure whether a proverb is of Gozitan or Maltese origin. I shall be limiting myself to those proverbs which I consider to be very well known in Gozo.

As far as the people of Gozo were concerned the woman was for ever in the house and where there was no woman, there was nothing: *Dar bla mara, xejn ma fiha x'tara* - there is nothing to see in a house where there is no woman. However this does not mean that in the house the woman should take charge. As a matter of fact another proverb warns us: *Ir-raġel tiġieġa u l-mara serduq, id-dar tinqaleb ta' taħt fuq* - the husband like a hen and the woman like a cock, the house will become topsy-turvy. With regard to management, Gozitans were not known to have a good opinion about women. Another very well known Gozitan proverb says: *Min jisma' minn mara jibqa' wara* - he who takes the advice of a woman will lag behind. In my opinion this means that very often wives interfere in the business of their husbands, in which they are no experts, with



Sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Graces next to which is the convent of the Capuchin Friars in Gozo.
(Source: <http://kapuccinighawdex.freesevers.com/> - May 2013)

disastrous consequences that wreak havoc with their plans as husbands know better. In certain circumstances women lack so much knowledge where men's work is concerned and they are so weak in spite of their robust physical appearance that another old proverb states: *In-nisa twal qatt ma ħattu swar* - tall women have never managed to dismantle any bastions.

In spite of all this, it can be frankly said that our people have a very good opinion of good looking women. The proverb goes: *Mara sabiħa tikber kemm tikber, dejjem tajba għat-tieqa* - a beautiful woman, no matter how much older she grows, is always good for show. In fact another proverb insists that: *Mara sabiħa ta' għoxrin, ġmielha jibqa' u ssir ta' seħer ta' ħamsin* - a woman who is beautiful when twenty years of age will retain her beauty and she will become very attractive at the age of fifty. Nonetheless after her fiftieth birthday the physical attraction of woman wanes very quickly as is attested by another proverb: *Wara l-ħamsin il-mara tidbiel* - after she is fifty years of age, a woman loses her freshness.

Women's charm can be very dangerous to some men. In fact our proverb warns: *In-nisa sbieħ biex thares lejhom* - women are beautiful only to look at. However at this point one cannot fail to mention the irresistible attraction that women have over men: *Darba għadma ta' raġel mejjet resqet ma' għadma ta' mara mejta* - once upon a time a dead man's bone came side by side with a dead woman's bone. A pretty woman gets married soon because all are attracted to her: *Mara sabiħa, id-dota ġewwa* - the beauty of woman is enough for her dowry. Blue-eyed women possess special attraction: *Mara għajnejha żoroq issaħħar it-toroq* - a blue-eyed woman charms whoever happens to be in the street. Well built stout girls, though they should not be fat, have a more charming appearance to men: *Is-simna sabiħa f'debba, aħseb u ara f'xebba* - Stoutness is a beauty on a mare, let alone on a young lady. To be of short stature is not something of a disadvantage to a woman, rather she is more pleasing:

*Kemm hi sabiħa mara qasira,
Donnha xitla ġewwa ġnien,
Xħin itmur biex issaqqiha
Tilħaqha minn kullimkien.*

Oh how beautiful a short woman is,
She resembles a plant in a garden,
When you go to water her,
You will reach her from all sides.

However others prefer a tall woman:

*Kemm hi kerha mara qasira,
Xhin tkun rieqda qisha kobba,
kemm hi sabiħa mara twila,
xhin tkun rieqda timla sodda.*

O how ugly is a short woman,
When she is asleep she looks like a ball
of thread;
O how beautiful is a tall woman
When she is asleep she fills the bed.

A woman with big round breasts has a more attractive appearance than one with a flat chest: *Meta s-sider ma jinfirixx, il-ħannieqa ma tissensilx* - when the bosom does not spread out, the necklace does not fall down properly. A woman without large breasts is like a *kampnar bla qniepen* - a bell tower without bells. Appearance is very important for women: *Mara bla xagħar u bla ħobb la fiha x'tammira u lanqas xi thobb* - a woman without hair and without breasts has nothing to admire or to like. Where nothing could be seen in the dark, there is no difference between beautiful and ugly: *Bil-lejl in-nisa kollha xorta* - at night all women look the same. Of course this may apply to men too but this is how it is recorded. So differences are only incidentals rather than what is essential.

Obviously a woman exerts more attraction on young men than old men: *Wieħed xih, bewsa ta' mara ma tagħmilx bih, wieħed żagħżuġħ, bewsa ta' mara toħroġlu d-dmugħ* - the kiss of a woman does not affect an old man at all, but a woman's kiss will make the eyes of a young man shed tears. A dark-skinned woman can be extremely attractive to a man: *Il-mara sewda lir-raġel tagħmlu għewda* - the dark-skinned woman makes her husband grow as thin as a piece of wood. Kissing is another attractive method of how a woman can win the favour of a man or her husband so that thereafter she can do with him whatever she likes. The proverb warns: *Meta bewsa tagħtik mara, imbagħad trid tara x'ikun wara* - when the woman has given you a kiss, then you have yet to see what the consequences are. Another

proverb warns men to take heed of a woman who has no good sense: *Warda bla fwieħa ma fihiex x'ixxomm, mara bla għaqal ma fihiex x'izzomm* - a flower without fragrance you have nothing to smell in it, a woman without good sense, you have no reason why you should keep her with you.

It is said that some women are hard-headed and they just do not care about their husbands. This is not good because: *Mara li ma tifhimx b'daqqa ta' għajn ma tifhimx b'daqqa ta' ponn* - a woman who does not understand with just a look will not understand by hitting her with your fist. Considering this husbands should be very careful how to deal with their wives where love is concerned: *Mara ħobbha u turihex* - love your wife, but do not let her know. It is said that women can love more than men. However there are women who are after money: *Meta r-raġel jikxefkarusu, il-mara tieħdu għal flusu* - when a man lets a woman know how much money he has, she will marry him for his money.

Without any shadow of doubt, the greatest wish of every woman is to become a mother, as another saying goes: *Mara bla żaqq, bħal tiegħ bla daqq* - a woman without the belly of a pregnant female is like a wedding without music. The woman who has become a mother feels really proud as she has reached the greatest aim in her life: *Mara tqila, ġo did-dinja turi l-ħila* - a pregnant woman shows her real worth in this world.

***This article will be continued in the 29th edition
of the Gozo Observer.***

Anton F. Attard B.A. is a Gozitan writer, translator, folklorist and poet. He is a prolific writer for the local press, and for radio and television on cultural subjects. His main topics are usually Gozitan affairs, folklore and history. He translates foreign folktales and ancient apocryphal writings from various languages into Maltese. As a poet he usually writes both lyrics and other poetry for special occasions and commemorations. He also contributes regularly to Poetry on Gozo with poems relating mostly to old Gozitan folk traditions and customs. Anton F. Attard has also several publications to his credit.

Of Humour and Satire in Clerical Circles: A Gozitan Perspective

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Introduction

The Church has played an important role in the social and cultural life of the Maltese nation since its very beginning. Even before the earliest records of an institutionalised church, religion had an important place in the life of our forefathers with such places as Ġgantija, Haġar Qim and Tas-Silġ proving the point. When the Roman Church became part and parcel of the life of the Maltese and the local church finding itself playing a rival role in contrast with both the Inquisition and the Order of St John, such an institution definitely became part of the social order; it was here to stay.

Gozo being such a small island with a small number of knights living here on a temporary basis and with the Inquisition having its headquarters in Vittoriosa, the church in Gozo hardly ever had a rival to put up with. Although it was only in 1864 that the diocese of Gozo was finally established, Christianity in Gozo is at least one millennium old. The *Tristia ex Melito Gaudio* document is a strong witness in favour of such an argument (Busuttil, Fiorini and Vella, 2010). It is in fact almost impossible to trace the roots of Christianity on the island.

The Gozitans looked up to the Church for guidance in matters both spiritual and temporal. Such can be deduced from the fact that it was Can. Saverio Cassar, parish priest of Victoria who led the Gozitan insurrection against the French. Nicholas Monsarrat's renowned *The Kappillan of Malta* as well as Oliver Friggieri's *It-Tfal Jigu bil-Vapuri* also attests to the importance of the role of the priest in Maltese society. Since the erection of the diocese of Gozo back in 1863, Gozo has thirteen parishes in its villages and two in Victoria. Until quite recently the island had a good number of priests although the number of vocations to the priesthood is dwindling of late. However it is important to notice that around 600 Gozitans priests and many other Maltese have been trained in the diocesan seminary which was opened in 1865 (Bezzina, 2013:7).

Ecclesiastical Proverbs and Sayings

This helpful introduction will definitely put into their proper context the following sayings and anecdotes which though not strictly particular to the island of Gozo, can certainly be identified with the Gozitan milieu. Gozo being populated with priests carrying the title of *monsignor* must have been the birthplace of the following satirical saying: 'What is the difference between a monsignor and an ordinary priest?' Then the reply follows: 'There isn't any. However, the monsignor is not aware'. Another satirical joke focuses on the canons' attire. The canons of the cathedral carry the mitre on solemn occasions. A cruel Roman proverb states that 'la mitra e la continuazione del'vuoto' ('The mitre is the continuity of emptiness'). The local joke asks the following question: 'How can you kill a monsignor?' The reply follows: 'Not by shooting at his heart but by shooting at his mitre'.

Another ecclesiastical proverb or saying that is quite common among the clergy of the Latin Rite is 'Fudge praealatum tamquam peccatum' which loosely translated would be 'Avoid prelates as much as you avoid sin'. This saying must have developed within the Roman Catholic Church since it is in Latin, the official language of Western Christianity for many centuries. The Roman Catholic Church is first of all a hierarchical church thus providing the ideal milieu for such dicta. This particular adage must have been coined in medieval society where nepotism, simony and other similar vices characterised the Curia and brought about the wrath of the Protestant Reformation which divided Christendom into two distinct parts. With the demise of conventional Christendom, Latin kept its importance only within the Catholic Church but the vernacular languages replaced it in the new Protestant strongholds.

A saying that I picked up lately from the locality of Żebbuġ, Gozo is as follows: 'Qassis li ma jafx ikanta bħal għaġeb li ma jafx jiskanta' meaning that

‘A priest who cannot sing is like a fussy person who does not fuss’. The translation into English does lose some of the sense that abides in the original phrase since in Maltese an ‘għageb’ is not simply a person who makes a fuss, but a human being who is capable of wondering. A better understanding can be gleaned from the fact that in the Maltese crib, the local *presejju*, one of the characters is the ‘għageb tal-presejju’. This character looks up to the skies and wonders at the stars. It is in this latter sense that the saying regarding ‘the fussy person who does not fuss’ has to be understood. Pope Pius X with his Motu Proprio *Tra le Sollecitudini* of the 22nd November 1903 restored Gregorian chant as the model for church music (Kelly, 1986: 314). It was after the publication of this instruction on sacred music that Gregorian chant became compulsory in seminaries training candidates to the Catholic priesthood.

A joke with clerical connotations that is not easy to decipher its place or time of origin is related to the Breviary which is the official prayer book for priests and religious; its formal name is ‘the Liturgy of the Hours’. A priest and a married man were travelling together on a boat when the priest asked

the gentlemen what would be the first object to throw from the boat if he were given the opportunity to do so. The man answered by saying that he would throw away his wife. The man then asked the same question to the priest who said that he would dispose of his breviary.

A very cruel saying regarding the clergy which I have heard being uttered more than once in various sacristies in Gozo and which I assume must be also popular on the main island of Malta refers to the difficult character of the Catholic priest. ‘Il-qassisin darba biss ftiehmu: biex joqtlu lil Kristu’.¹ I could not find this saying in any collection of proverbs or sayings of the Maltese language. It refers to the condemnation of Christ before the Sanhedrin. Strictly speaking the Sanhedrin was made up of the Pharisees and the Sadducees but not all of them belonged to the priesthood. However the saying of which I speak tends to consider the Catholic priesthood as the legitimate inheritor or at least the equivalent of the Jewish priesthood.

Conclusion

The above are only a specimen of the various sayings related to the priesthood that have managed to survive to present times. I hope that in the near future some student of ecclesiastical folklore would make it his aim to collect a greater variety of dicta related to the theme before it is too late to do so. I am certain that such a study would be both interesting and engaging to those who are prepared to take it in their stride.

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¹ It is believed that it was Prof. Mgr. Pietru Pawl Saydon who coined this saying. Buttigieg, A. (1980). *Mill-Album ta' Hajti. L-Għażla tat-Triq*, Vol II: 63. Malta: Edizzjoni Klabb Kotba Maltin.

Lorenzo Zammit Haber: Unsung Gozitan Patriot

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Introduction

One of the less renowned Gozitan patriots was undoubtedly Chev. Lorenzo Zammit Haber of Xewkija. Lorenzo was born on the 10th of November 1875 in Xewkija, Gozo, the son of Francesco and Maria n e Haber. He studied under the Jesuits at the Gozo Seminary in Victoria. On the 15th of February 1908 he married Carmela n e Scicluna (Borg, 1978: 96-97). They had five children; two boys and three girls.

Antiquarian

By modern standards, Zammit Haber would be easily described as a first-class antiquarian; he collected all that had to do with Melitensia and Gaultiana. The history of his native country was so much to his heart that by just being a collector of items related to the history and archeology of the Maltese archipelago, he would have also made a name for himself. However he was more than a mere collector; Zammit Haber was chosen by the British Governor in Malta to take Major Hugh Braun's place as an esteemed member of the Ancient Monuments Committee; it was in this capacity that he designed the various *mejjilli* that are to be found sculpted out of stone in the Mgarr ix-Xini Valley in the limits of his native Xewkija. During his life-time he was also considered an authority on the history of our islands and he had in fact an encyclopedic mind. When Professor Luigi M. Ugolini was about to write his *Malta: Origini della Civilt  Mediterranea* he consulted Zammit Haber. So did British Governor in Malta Sir Harry Luke – an admirer of Maltese history – when he wrote his *Malta: An Account and an Appreciation*. Zammit Haber was mentioned by Luke in his book. Lorenzo also helped Professor Aldo Farini in his publication entitled *Fiabe – Tradizioni – Leggende Maltese*.

Heraldry and Painting

Zammit Haber had ties with the Sovereign Hospitaller Military Order of St John known simply as the Order of Malta due to his contribution in the compiling of an important publication about the Order. Count Carlo Augusto Bertini Frassoni, the author of *Il Sovrane Militare Ordine di San Giovanni di Gerusalemme detto di Malta* referred to the help he received from Zammit Haber and acknowledged him on page 103 of this publication. He was later on invested as a member of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta by the then Grand Master and Prince Fra Galeazzo von Thun und Hohenstein on the 13th of January 1927.

Chev. Lorenzo Zammit Haber as he was henceforth known was a collector of portraits and an



Lorenzo Zammit Haber.

accomplished painter himself. He is the author of a collection of portraits of the twenty-eight grand masters who reigned in our islands between 1530 and 1798; he also designed the coat-of-arms of all the villages of Gozo. These items are still kept in the Zammit Haber residence in Xewkija's main square. In 1935 he was commissioned to design the crests of various surnames for Blasinato Pasinati's encyclopedia of surnames at the Bibliotheca Nazionale of Rome. The original copies designed by Zammit Haber are now to be found in New York at number 3, Guido Pitoni, Walnut Street, Rochester (New York). The silver flower-stands around the titular statue of St John the Baptist revered in the Xewkija parish church were designed by him as well as the reliquary of the saint together with two altar-frontals (Ml. ventaltari) and the baldachin. On the 18th of December 1936 he was awarded a diploma of appreciation by the University of Venice for these works of his.

Zammit Haber and Xewkija

One of the lost architectural treasures of Gozo was undoubtedly the Gourgion Tower of Xewkija. The Gourgion Tower at Xewkija, Gozo has been described as one of the architectural gems of the Maltese islands (Calleja and Zammit Haber, 1997: 3). In the historical publication about this tower which has been co-authored by Lorenzo's son, Frans, the latter states that many people had raised their voices in protest against the decision of demolishing the tower in order to make space for an airfield. Foremost amongst the protest there was the distinguished Gozitan Lawrence Zammit Haber. Zammit Haber was in fact so keenly interested in the heritage of his native Gozo that when his pleadings came to naught, he took great patience to collect all the carved inscriptions, pieces of sculpture and coat-of-arms; they were later preserved in the Museum of Archaeology in the Citadel, Victoria (Calleja and Zammit Haber, 1997: 13).

Zammit Haber was also involved in the project of the enlargement of the old parish church of Xewkija. When the new naves were added to the main body of the church Lorenzo was chosen to supervise the work; the project began on the 21st of May 1936

and ended on the 25th of May 1938 (Various, 1973: 33); the old parish church was later demolished so that the new rotunda would take its place. Zammit Haber was one of the founding fathers of the Preskursur Band of Xewkija and served twice as its president; in 1929 as the first president and again from November 1932 to November 1933¹.

Lorenzo Zammit Haber died on the 1st of June 1961 and was buried in the family's burial ground in the Xewkija Cemetery. The Xewkija Local Council named one of the streets of the village after him. The fact that he was left out of the two-volume Dictionary of Maltese Biographies is in itself a sign that Chev. Lorenzo Zammit Haber needs to be known better among the list of Gozitan lovers of history and Gozitan patriots.

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Fr. Geoffrey G. Attard was ordained for the diocese of Gozo in June 2004. He graduated M.Th. in Ecclesiastical History from the University of Edinburgh in November 2005 and he graduated M.Lit. in Practical Theology from the University of St Andrews with a dissertation entitled "Climate Change and the Catholic Church" in 2008; he has recently published his dissertation in book form.

¹ http://bandaprekursur.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=42 (accessed 7th of August 2011).

Book Reviews:

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

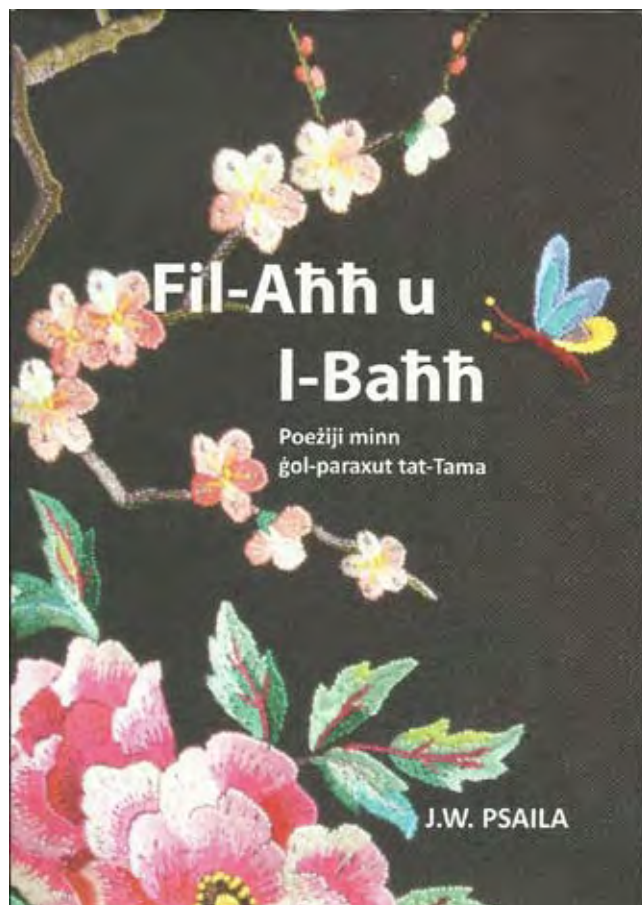
Fil-Aħħ u l-Baħħ. Poeżiji minn ġol-Paraxut tat-Tama

Joe W. Psaila,
Gozo, Gozo Press, 2013, pp. 150.

One of Gozo's less-known poets who has slowly established himself as one of the island's leading poets is undoubtedly Joe W. Psaila, a middle-aged poet from Victoria who spent his life in the education sector mainly as a P. E. Teacher.

Fil-Aħħ u l-Baħħ is the fourth anthology that Psaila has given us. The first anthology was called *Graffiti f'Gerduf* evoking one of Gozo's earliest Christian sites and published in 1993. It was followed by *Xewqat* a decade later in 2003 and the very inspiring *Tabilhaqqiet Varji u Taparsijiet Veri* in 2006. His latest anthology is mainly inspired by the unpredictable death of his dear wife Mary-Jane a couple of years ago, a difficult moment in the poet's life that must have devastated him to the point of creating a barrage of poems inspired by the sad event.

Poetry is the language of the heart. It has been said that every human being is born a poet. However not every human being is given the gift of poetic expression. The poet who writes poetry has therefore a representative role in the sense that he represents the entire community in his expression of the deepest emotions. Psaila's *Fil-Aħħ u l-Baħħ* is the voice of a soul in grief crying out for the presence of its lost partner, the other half that nobody can replace. It is quite common for a married poet to sing his suffering and grief in his melancholically verses. Anton Buttigieg, the 'poet of nature' from Qala and a lawyer by profession, wrote a poem dedicated to his wife who passed away; it is known as *Il-Mewt tas-Sieħba*. Ruzar Briffa, dubbed 'the poet of childhood and beauty' was also influenced by the death of his wife whom he survived and the theme of suffering surfaces quite often in his poetry. Psaila continues on this



tradition airing his sentiments of grief through profound thoughts fossilised in words.

The book's foreword is rich in meaning. It is in itself a spiritual treatise and it uncovers in the most manifest of manners the religious profundity and the rock-hard faith of Psaila the poet who even in his 'dark night' – to use St John of the Cross' classical phrase – remained true to his faith and in the company of God who walks with him. Grief can either lead to the loss of faith or to the enrichment of it. In Psaila's case, death, which he nicknames the great 'leveller' is not to be abhorred but rather embraced and like Jacopone

da Todi, the Italian poet to whom the legendary *Stabar Mater* is attributed, he chooses to make peace with it and live through. The poet's one and only tool that helps him and protects him from falling into the abyss of the existential 'angst' is the 'parachute of hope'. As he opens a dialogue with the creator in the poem *Ordnajt Ħarifa*, Psaila acknowledges the fact that although he has ordered an 'autumn' from the restaurant of life, he has been given 'spring' instead. As Trevor Zahra's *Stella, Jien u Hu* came to mind, I read Psaila's poem *Int, Hu u Jien* in which he comes to terms with the summoning of his wife by God to eternal

life – 'ġbartha għalik bla kliem u bla sliem' (you called her to you unpredictably) – and then he is invited by the Almighty to stand on his feet and continue his earthly journey.

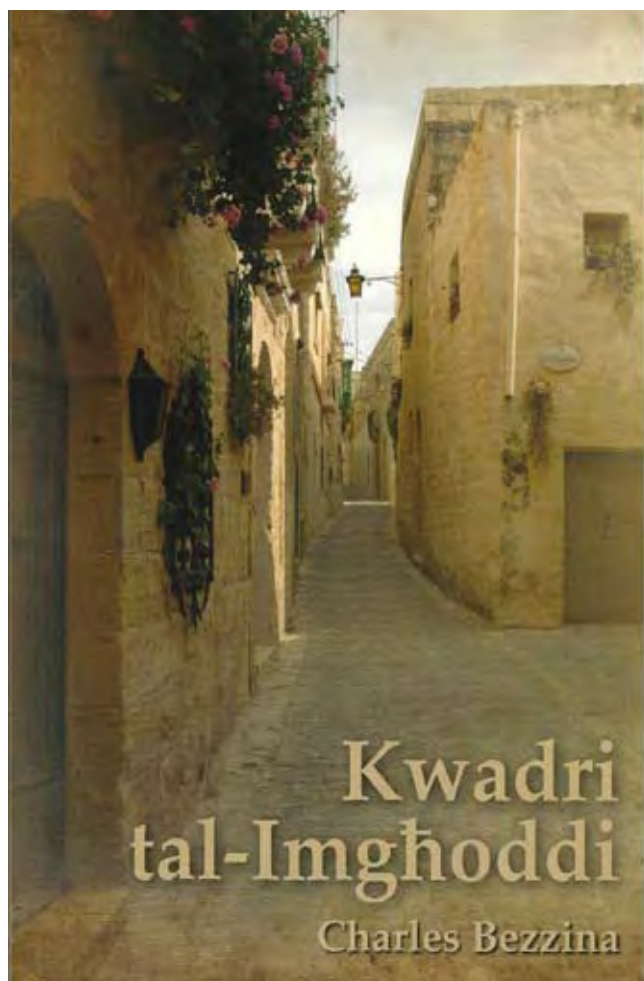
Joe W. Psaila's latest collection of poetry is a hymn in honour of a loving wife who has impoverished the life of her husband with her going away to a better life; one has no choice but to accept Arthur Schopenhauer's famous dictum 'Without death neither philosophy nor poetry would have existed'. Psaila has proved him right all the way.

Kwadri tal-Imghoddi

Charles Bezzina,
Gozo, Self published, 2012, pp. 123.

Kwadri tal-Imghoddi is the name of the latest publication by Gozitan poet and writer Charles Bezzina of Victoria. The Bezzina family has produced a significant number of writers specialising mainly in the field of research. I have in mind Charles' own father the late Frank Bezzina (1925-1996) who wrote various historical accounts of the war in the Gozo as well as his brother John (1932-1998) who contributed to the history of Gozo by a great number of articles most of them published in the now no longer published newspaper *Il-Berqa*. Then, Charles' cousin Rev. Dr. Joseph Bezzina (1950-) is the author of the renowned series *Gaulitana* through which he slowly established himself as 'Gozo's leading historian'.

Kwadri tal-Imghoddi falls under the category of autobiographical literature. This branch of literature is quite interesting because it is a cross-breed between a proper autobiography and a historical novel. As I was half way through the book, what came to my mind was Biagio Galea's *L-Imdina ta' Tfuliti* published way back in 1989. I remember it was one of those books which squared



well with my field of interest. Bezzina's book is different from Galea's because it is not a flowing narration of the writer's experiences divided under different headings according to different aspects. On the other hand Bezzina focuses on many characters which endowed daily life in the sixties in the town of Victoria, where the author himself was born and raised and still lives. Charles Bezzina writes from his own experience. As I read through his rich character sketches in my imagination I could almost see the author throwing his imaginary bucket of life-experiences down into the deep well of his past memories and bringing up beautiful nostalgic experiences of his which he then presents to the reader as life-size portraits. I have to say that although I have not known any of the twenty-one persons (with the exception of one) about whom he writes his sketches, Bezzina has succeeded in instilling the breath of life once again into these otherwise dead Gozitan characters. As the reader reads on, he or she begins to see the very person he is reading about; it is as if the characters are called back to life from beyond the grave. This makes for interesting reading.

Kwadri tal-Imghoddi is written mainly in prose, however, the character sketches have been rightly referred to as 'portraits' (*kwadri*) and it is the poetry that flows throughout the narrative that gives the book that personal touch which makes it both unique and captivating. Each and every sketch is preceded by a poem of a biographical

nature and the reader should not even for a split second underestimate the fact that the writer is also an accomplished poet.

The book has an introduction by Professor Oliver Friggieri and contains photographs of some of the characters discussed within its pages. I would have preferred the book to carry the title *Kwadri Rabtin tal-Imghoddi* since the author writes from his perspective and background as a *Rabti*, a citizen of Gozo's town and the majority of the characters come from Victoria. Although it is not mainly a scientific book of research I believe it is a valuable contribution to *Gaulitana* – the term now used for the history of Gozo – and specifically to the history of Rabat, Gozo's medieval city whose roots go beyond the Middle Ages. It is a book that will also instil among middle-aged and elderly readers such nostalgic feelings that no branch of art – noble and articulate as it may be – can ever aptly express. I recommend *Kwadri tal-Imghoddi* to one and all.

Fr. Geoffrey Attard's bionote appears on page 27.

Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Visit by Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi

On Saturday 23rd February Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi, accompanied by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, visited the Gozo Campus. They were shown around the premises by Prof Joe Friggieri, Pro-Rector for Gozo. During his visit Dr Gonzi had the opportunity to talk to students attending some of the courses.

Visit by the Ambassador of Spain to Malta

On 22nd March the Ambassador of Spain to Malta, H.E. Felipe de la Morena, paid a short visit to the Gozo Campus. He was shown round the campus by Prof Joe Friggieri, Pro-Rector for Gozo.

Visit by the Hon. Evarist Bartolo

On 22nd March, the Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment, paid a visit to the Gozo Campus. He was shown round the campus by the Rector of the University of Malta, Prof Juanito Camilleri, accompanied by Prof Joe Friggieri, Pro-Rector for Gozo. The Minister was briefed about the courses and services offered at the campus. He was also shown round the Atmospheric Research Unit by Prof Raymond Ellul, who directs the unit.

Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership

On the same day Hon. Evarist Bartolo, together with Hon. Anton Refalo, Minister for Gozo, inaugurated a course leading to the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership. Introductory speeches were also delivered by Prof Joe Friggieri, Pro-Rector for Gozo, and Prof Christopher Bezzina, co-ordinator of the course. The course

is being offered by the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo. Tuition for the course is being offered free of charge as a result of financial support by the Ministry for Gozo. The course is part-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) under Operational Programme II - Cohesion Policy 2007 - 2013. Forty one students are attending the course.

Gozo Lace Day 2013

On Sunday 21st April, the Lace-Making Programme of the University Gozo Campus organised the "Gozo Lace Day". The event, which was held for the seventeenth consecutive year, included a number of exhibitions and demonstrations of Gozo lace and talks on matters related to lace-making. Present for the event were the Hon. Anton Refalo, Minister for Gozo, Dr Consiglia Azzopardi, coordinator of the Lace Making Programme, and Mr Amadeo Mifsud as guest speaker.

In her introductory speech Dr Consiglia Azzopardi gave an overview of the courses offered by the Lace-Making Programme at the Gozo Campus. Mr Amadeo Mifsud delivered an interesting talk about some curious aspects related to lace. Among other things he showed the similarity between the stone bas-reliefs at the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary and traditional lace motifs. One bas-relief is actually a representation of the cloth stitch. The same affinity can also be seen between lace and traditional Maltese patterned tiles. And, to top it all, the speaker showed how Michelangelo's paving pattern on the Capitoline Hill is really an English stitch adapted to a curved grid.

In his speech the Hon. Anton Refalo praised the various initiatives taken at the University Gozo

Campus and remarked that the Ministry for Gozo is committed to support these initiatives. The Minister was then shown round the exhibition by Dr Consiglia Azzopardi. He also had the opportunity to meet and talk to a number of lace-makers and visitors.

Examinations at the Gozo Campus

During the May/June Session of Examinations, 383 Gozitan students following courses at the Msida Campus were given the opportunity to sit for their end-of-semester examinations at the Gozo Campus. 247 exams were held. Another 27 exams were held for those students who are following courses at the University Gozo Campus.

Courses at the Gozo Campus

A new course leading to the Certificate in Proof Reading in Maltese started in February. The course, which is being offered by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Malta in collaboration with the Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti, is organised on a part-time basis and is spread over one academic year. Nineteen students are following the course.

Another course, leading to the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership, started in March. The course is being offered by the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta and is designed to cover issues related to leadership in an educational setting. It is being organised on a part-time basis, and is spread over two academic years. Forty-one participants are following the course.

Nine other courses are at present being run at the Campus. These courses are in the areas of Arts (Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology), Commerce, Criminology, and Inclusive Education. Courses in Clinical Nursing Practice, Public Accounting and Master of Science in Sustainable Energy are being offered via video-conferencing.

In October, the University of Malta will be offering a number of other courses at the Campus

at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The courses on offer are the following:

- Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education
- Diploma in Gozo Studies
- Diploma in Commerce
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Commerce (Honours)
- Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Theology
- Executive Master of Business Administration (via video-conferencing)
- Master in Translation
- Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies
- Master of Arts in Hospitaller Studies

These courses will be offered subject to there being a sufficient number of qualified applicants.

Donation of Books

Prof Joe Friggieri secured a gift of 400 books, mostly related to Philosophy, which are now available for borrowing from the Gozo Campus library. The books were donated by Ms Liz Groves of Island Books.

Joseph Calleja is Administrator of the University of Malta - Gozo Campus.



The Gozo Observer is published twice a year by the University of Malta - Gozo Campus. It contains articles relating to all aspects of life in Gozo, including culture, education, business, arts and literature. Those wishing to submit articles for inclusion in the Gozo Observer should contact the Editor of the magazine (contact details below).

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