

THE **G**

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Editorial:

A Pressing Problem: The Economies of Time-Wasting

It is a matter of considerable concern that, at a time when speed has become of the essence, and when means of communications have reached lightening speeds, travel between Gozo and Malta has still remained largely at a snail's pace.

We are now giving serious consideration to spending half a billion euro to construct tunnels or build bridges to improve communications between the two islands. That could improve the situation considerably, at a considerable cost and at a considerable distance in the future.

What has never been given serious attention, by governments of either colour, is the fact that an immediate response is necessary. We cannot just sit back and wait for a long-term solution to a problem which can be improved, if not completely resolved, almost immediately.

I am of course referring to the horrendous experience to be faced every working day by Gozitan workers, students, and business people in their struggle to reach their destination at a reasonable hour. I speak with limited but typical experience on this matter. In order to give a talk at the University at 7 pm, I had to leave home at 4.30 of an afternoon. The return journey took almost as long.

Who in this day and age can cope with such an unreasonable situation? Who has all this time to waste? Time is money, and an hour wasted by

thousands of people every day soon mounts to a mountain of waste, and invisible 'Maghtab' which is equally destructive of economic and social existence.

Time was, generations ago, when a bus, distinct by its red colour, provided by the Post Office, provided an express service between the ferry and Valletta. Sixty years later there is no such facility. There is no link-up between ferry and bus. The time-table of the two means of transport seem to fly in different directions. There is no express service. The bus trundles on, stopping at every bus-stop, picking up shoppers or tourists in their swimming gear who have no particular urgency to reach their destination.

Time is money. Waste is to be abhorred. Wasting time is economic suicide.

All Gozitans have been let down by those whose responsibility it is to provide a rapid, efficient express service. Compared to the planned expenditure of millions on alternative transport procedures, the amount of money required to set up a couple of express buses on the hour, every hour during business hours, would be a pittance.

Not even in the largest metropolis around the world would the average worker be expected to spend five to six hours, more than half a working day, on actually travelling. Any other group of people, except for staid and easily assuaged Gozitans, would have been up in arms long ago, demanding equity, and a reasonable but urgent response to this situation.

No wonder that young Gozitans are 'voting with their feet' and leaving our island, to settle closer to work and to avoid the daily hassle and the unconscionable waste of time, time better spent attending to their business or with their families.

Maurice Cauchi



Saverio Colombo Pluchinotta: a Young Sicilian Patrician in Gozo (1890)

ARNOLD CASSOLA

Introduction

Amongst its holdings, the *Archivio di Stato di Ragusa* has acquired the *Archivio Pluchinotta*. This rich documentation, which runs from 1623 to 1914, was acquired by the Ragusa Archives in 1991. The Pluchinotta family was based in Modica and belonged to the small nobiliar classes that developed between the 16th and 18th century. Originally, this family was interested in various commercial activities and in the management of its fiefs in Sicily. Amongst the most prominent members of the family, one finds “il cavaliere Saverio *senior*, protonotaro e apprezzato giureconsulto, vissuto nella prima metà del Settecento, il canonico Vincenzo, rettore del Real albergo di Palermo, e il baronello Giuseppe, giudice d’appello nella Gran corte civile di Modica” (Iozzia, 2008: 31-32).

Amid these many holdings, one finds three letters sent from Gozo in 1890 by Saverio Colombo. These are catalogued as *Archivio Famiglia Pluchinotta* (1623-1914), Record 37, B. 37. Very little is known of Saverio. He was the son of Emanuele Colombo and Margherita Pluchinotta, both of Modica, the seventh of nine siblings. Saverio’s grandfather, Michele Colombo, had been a member of the *Comitato Rivoluzionario* of Modica, led by the Abate Giuseppe De Leva during the Risorgimento period, in 1860 (information provided by Dr. Rosario Di Stefano, in June 2013).

Saverio’s exact date of birth has been hitherto unknown but, according to notes compiled by the Ragusa Archives staff, led by the Director Dr. Giovanni Calabrese, he must have been born between 1871 and

1872. However, other sources differ on his date of birth. According to the *Archivio Parrocchiale S. Giorgio*, Modica, Saverio Colombo was born in 1875. The *Archivio Parrocchiale San Pietro* records his death in 1894, at the age of 19. One suspects that he could have committed suicide (Di Stefano 2013). As regards schooling, what was known until now was that he had frequented the *Convitto Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele*, in Palermo.

However, in reality this was not the only school he frequented. The three ‘Gozitan’ letters reveal some more information about his schooling and tastes. His first letter was written on 30th March 1890 and is addressed to his “Carissimo Papà”, who had written to his son on the 20th March. This letter starts with an explanation about a mix-up in the correspondence between son and father. The explanation *per se* is quite an irrelevant one but, in the process, Saverio states that the “Padre Ministro” had placed two differently dated letters in the same envelope.

The reference to the “Padre Ministro” points to the fact that Saverio must have been attending a Catholic school in Gozo at that time. This is confirmed later on in the letter when Saverio, in reference to a not



The Sacred Heart Seminary in Victoria, Gozo
- Photo taken early 1880s.

(Source: <http://www.sacredheartseminary.org.mt> - October 2013)

better described “orologio”, promises his father that he will get the “Rettore’s” permission to be able to wear it. Saverio must have therefore been attending a school in Gozo, that was run by a Rector, aided by one or more “Padre Ministro”.

30.3.1890

Carissimo Papà,

Vengo con la presente a rispondere alla tua del 28 marzo, dalla quale appresi che successivamente all'altra volta, cioè che ricevesti due lettere di da lui differenti in una medesima busta, la ragione è questa. Il primo giovedì, giovedì 22 marzo, una lettera, e poiché non potevo pagare per posta, il P. Ministro la ha spedita per quella che lui mi si è dove già sapevo che cioè giovedì 22 mi aveva mandato che per il medesimo motivo era che dove l'altra lettera.

Godetevi tanto dell'ottima salute della salute sua e di famiglia tutta, le

There is no talk about the nature of his studies in this letter. What we do get to know is something about Saverio's state of health. Actually, it was not at its best since he had a swollen left cheek, which resulted in a “pallottolina di carne [nella gengiva] che toccandola scende”. Nothing to really worry about, though, since it was being taken care of by a doctor.

In this letter Saverio informs his father that the parcel that his father had sent him had not yet arrived, and then he also exhorts his father to honour his promise and to come and visit him in Gozo. Within such context, one can therefore presume that Saverio's stay in this Gozitan school was to be quite a longish one.

Sixteen days later, on 6th April 1890, Saverio writes again to his father, this time in answer to a letter sent by his parent on 28th March. The declaration of his satisfaction at seeing that all was well in the family is a result of some sickness which had previously hit his brother in law, “cognato Zudo”, from which he had now totally recovered. Who was this brother in law?

Evidently he had married one of Saverio's five sisters: Clementina, Concetta, Marietta, Giuseppina and Annetta. Now, Zudo/Zuddo is a diminutive in Sicilian of the name Vincenzo. And of Saverio's five sisters it was Clementina who had married Vincenzo Blandino! So this Blandino is probably the “cognato Zudo” to whom Saverio was referring, even though one could not totally exclude the possibility that it might have been Carlo Rocciola fu Vincenzo, who had married Marietta Colombo Pluchinotta in 1889.

6.4.1890

Carissimo Papà,

Ho avuto la tua del 28 marzo, dalla quale appresi che successivamente all'altra volta, cioè che ricevesti due lettere di da lui differenti in una medesima busta, la ragione è questa. Il primo giovedì, giovedì 22 marzo, una lettera, e poiché non potevo pagare per posta, il P. Ministro la ha spedita per quella che lui mi si è dove già sapevo che cioè giovedì 22 mi aveva mandato che per il medesimo motivo era che dove l'altra lettera.

Godetevi tanto dell'ottima salute della salute sua e di famiglia tutta, le

Saverio's first letter to his father written on 30th March 1890.

In this second letter, Saverio then lobbies his father to intervene with Don Zuddo and to explain that Saverio was promising to write soon and break his silence, which was only due to negligence. All in all, this letter is quite a dry one and ends with the usual formalities as well as with the

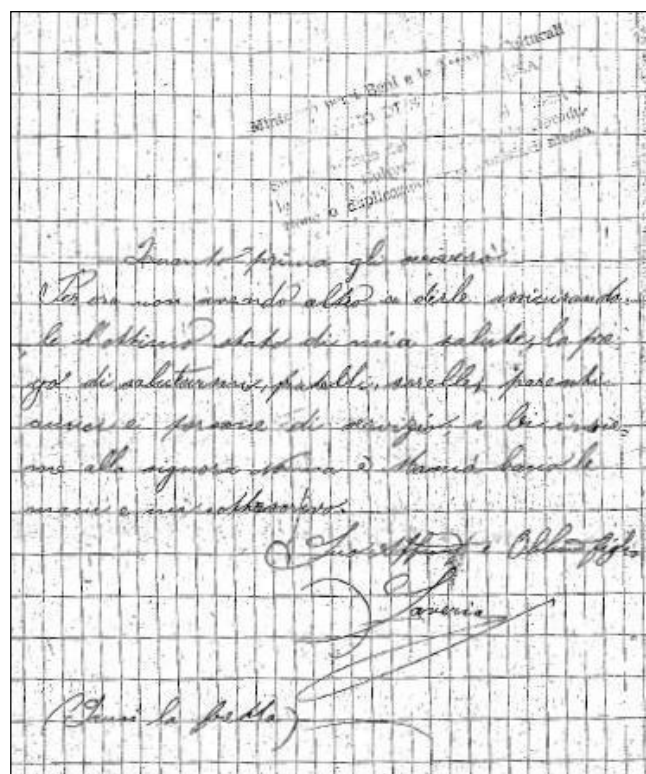
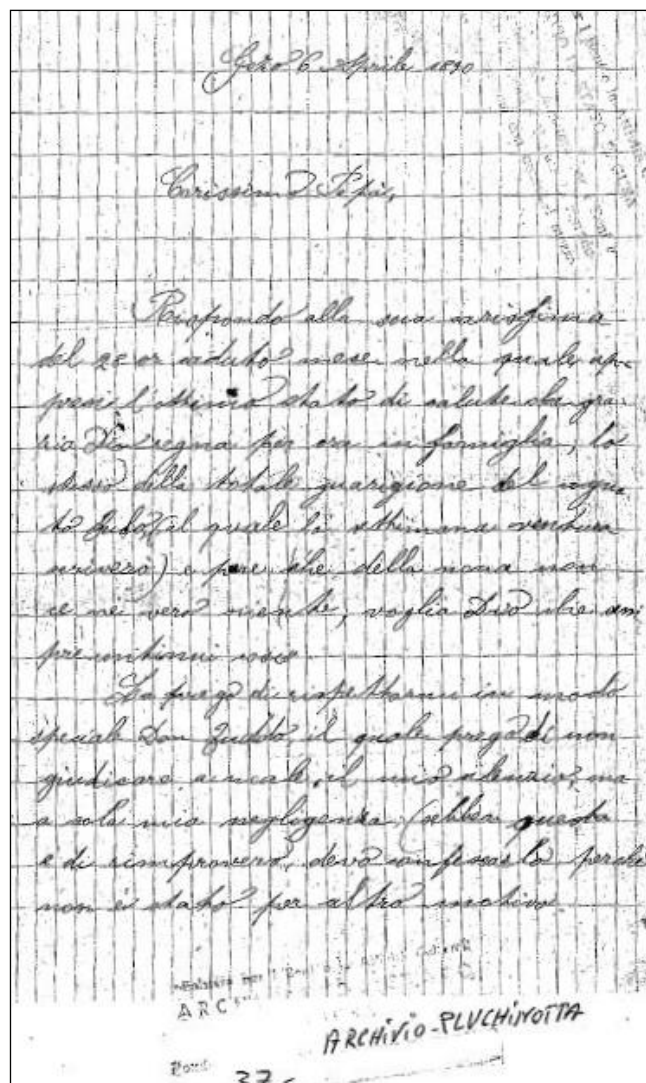
declaration that Saverio was in the best of health. On the contrary, the third letter, dated 13th April 1890, provides the reader with some juicy news regarding Saverio's vices and tastes, apart from news on his progress at school. First of all, we get to know that on 8th April, Saverio had been promoted to the senior school ("Oggi giorno 8 fui passato dai grandi") and was therefore transferred to a new dormitory. His new "prefetto" was a certain Padre Gennaro.

Saverio's major worry in this letter seems to be his smoking habit. In his new "camerata" smoking was allowed. But it would seem that his prefect, Padre Gennaro, would not allow him to do so without the written consent of his father. So Saverio implores his father "La prego a non dirmi di no, e di rispondermi appena avrà la presente". He is so concerned about being able to smoke that, after having signed off his letter, he adds a *post scriptum* exhorting his father not to deprive him of such possibility: "Mi auguro che non mi faccia la negativa; per il permesso basta solamente scrivermi due parole nella stessa risposta". His insistence on the topic is a clear admission of urgency and anxiety.

His other worry concerned the "orologio" already mentioned in the 20th March letter. The context now becomes much clearer. Basically, Saverio's father was about to embark on a trip to Rome and therefore his son had asked him to buy him a watch with a golden chain from the eternal city. Saverio, therefore, did not disdain certain luxuries of this material world!

From this letter we also get to know that he had healed from his "gonfiore della gensiva". He therefore asks his father to stop worrying since "si fece dura di nuovo". Saverio seems to be quite disappointed that his father could not find the time to visit him in Gozo (or was it because of the watch!). But still he does not give up on this and reminds his father of the promise that he had made to him: "ma giachè mi promise al ritorno, aspetto ancora, augurandomi che presto termini gli affari". The letter ends with his apology for not having wished his father a Happy Easter in previous letters, and with the usual best wishes to family and friends.

What Gozitan school did Saverio Colombo attend in 1890? The clues in these three letters concerning the school, i.e. the presence of a Rector, a Minister and a



Saverio's second letter to his father dated 6th April 1890.

The Seminary in Gozo was inaugurated on the 4th November 1866. The running of the seminary was entrusted to the Sicilian Jesuits. In fact,

As a result, “the first Sicilian Jesuits arrived in Gozo on 11th September 1866 and on the 13th they moved to the Seminary to supervise the finishing touches to the place. They were Antonio Tommasi, eventually appointed first Rector and Procurator; Salvatore Dipietro, first Minister or Administrator of the house and the community as well as master of mathematics, physics, and natural history; and Brother Antonio Ardagna, the chef” (Bezzina, 1991: 15).

Saverio must have certainly attended at least two of the four sections of the seminary since on the 8th April “fui passata dai grandi”. This would mean that he had been promoted from the section of the *Mezzani* to that of the *Grandi*. Presumably, therefore, he

Indeed, there is, and I am indebted to Dr Joseph Bezzina from the Gozo Library for having indicated to me the ASG - *Archivum Seminarium Gaudisiense - Catalgo degli Alunni (1888-89) + (1889-90)*, which gives the following details:

Oggi 13 Aprile 1870
 Ministero dei Beni e le Attività Culturali
 ARCHIVO DI STATO AL VENEZIANO
 Su concessione del Ministero delle Attività Culturali
 Direzione o dipartimento per questo oggetto

Carissimo Papà,

Oggi giorno è fuor passato dai grandi (ed ho per perfetto a P. Genaro) le poche in questa camera si ha permesso di fermare, pur nondimeno al S. Viminio vuole che lei lo sappia. La prego a non dirmi di no, di rispondermi appena sarà la presente.

Intanto rinveretti ha sua carissima del 5 corrente, dalla quale appresi con somma piacere l'ottimo stato di sua salute; ^{non dispiacere} per il gonfiore della gamba; la prego a non darsene cura, perché si fece dura divenne

Ma dispiacque che ora non potesse
 se a vedermi, ma giacché mi promise d'
 ritorno, aspetto ancora augurandomi
 che presto terminerà gli affari, ~~ed allora~~
 Possono si presenta opportuna l'oca-
 sione che sarà buona, la prego a com-
 parirmi le orologio e catena d'oro.
 Come ultimamente le ho scritto due
 parole in fretta e in furia, per troppa
 sollecitazione non le risponderò le tue
 mie feste parentali, per la qual cosa adesso
 la prego a padronare la mia incolen-
 taria baccaranta, facendole ora
 alcuni dei migliori vini, che si usa

Saverio's third letter to his father dated 13th April 1890.

SAVERIO COLOMBO
Ingresso - 12 Sep 1889
Figlio di - Emmanuele
Nativo - Modica
Nato - 7 Feb 1874
Entrato - 12 Sep 1889
Convitto - Mezzani
Classe - Seconda Ginnasio
Direzione - Strada Teatro 19, Valletta

This consists of only a few words, but indeed they are very enriching. First of all, from this entry, we are provided with Saverio's exact date of birth, 7th February 1874. Which means that he was sixteen years old when he was writing his Gozitan letters to his father Emanuele in March-April 1890. Then we get to know that he was accepted at the Gozitan school on 12th September 1889, when registrations for that particular scholastic year had not yet started to be accepted. That is why his registration was first inserted in the 1888-1889 catalogue. Only later was he inserted in the 1889-1890 catalogue.

Anyway, he was certainly in time for the beginning of the 1889-1890 scholastic year, and was admitted to the "Seconda Ginnasio" class, which formed part of the *mezzani* section. Finally, as previously gathered, on reaching his sixteenth year of age the following year, on 8th March 1890, he was admitted to the "grandi" section. Another interesting point of information is the address given under "Direzione". Normally, this would be the parents' or guardians' address. What is sure, therefore, is that whoever paid for Saverio's school fees lived in Strada Teatro 19, Valletta. Did he have any relatives or close family acquaintances in Malta?

Did Saverio complete his studies in Gozo? As things stand, with the information gleaned from these two catalogues, it would seem that he certainly did not. What is sure is that he must have spent at least one scholastic year there, between September 1889 and September 1890. His name is no longer included in the 1890-1891 list, which probably means that he must have left the Gozo seminary after September 1890. Possibly, then, he must have continued his studies at the Palermo *Convitto Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele*, until his premature -and possibly, tragic- death in 1894, when he was laid to rest at the age of 19, therefore, presumably, in January or February of that year, before celebrating his 20th birthday.

One final consideration: Saverio's paternal grandfather, Michele Colombo, had been one of the most active patriots in Modica during the *Risorgimento* period. It was also thanks to his efforts that the Jesuits' College was closed down in 1860 and the Jesuits were expelled from Modica, because of the nationalisation of Church property, following the advent of Garibaldi and his "Mille".

It is quite an ironic twist of events that not more than thirty years later Michele's sixteen year old grandson, Saverio, was to travel from Modica to Gozo to get his schooling from those same Jesuits who had been expelled from Modica by his grandfather, who must have been totally oblivious of the future effects of his actions on his own family members.

The Letters

Gozo 30 marzo 1890

Carissimo Papà,

Vengo con la presente a rispondere alla sua del 20 corrente, dalla quale appresi che successe l'equivoco dell'altra volta, cioè che ricevette due lettere di data differente in una medesima busta; la cagione è questa. Siccome giovedì giorno 20 le scrissi una lettera, e poichè non partì vapore per costi, il P. Ministro le la spedì con quella che le scrissi la domenica susseguente, cioè giorno 23; m'immagino che per il medesimo motivo successe lo stesso l'altra volta.

Godo intanto dell'ottimo stato della salute sua e di famiglia tutta; lo stesso potrei assicurarle di me, se non fosse che ho un poco la guancia sinistra gonfia, effetto che nella gensiva ha come una pallottolina di carne che toccandola scende, lei però non se ne dia cura perchè l'ho fatta vedere al medico.

Ora che si sta approssimando l'està non si dimentichi la promessa che mi fece cioè di venirmi a vedere. Mi parlava di un pacco, ancora non mi è arrivato niente, quando lo riceverò l'avveriterò.

Per l'orologio giachè lei vuole che prenda il permesso al Rettore, farò come desidera. Pregandola di salutarmi tutti di famiglia, parenti e amici, le bacio le mani e insieme alla Signora Nonna, e Mamà, e mi dichiaro.

Suo Aff.mo e Obb.mo figlio
Saverio Colombo
(Scusi la fretta)

Gozo, 30th March, 1890

Dearest father,

With the present I reply to your letter of the 20th instant, from which I found out about the misunderstanding of last time, namely your receiving two letters of different dates in the same envelope; the reason being this. Given that I wrote you a letter on Thursday 20th, and since no mail steamer came that way, the Minister mailed this letter with the one I wrote the following Sunday, that is on the 23rd; I assume that this is also what happened the other time.

In the meantime I enjoy hearing about the state of your good health and that of the rest of the family; I would be able to assure you of the same in my regard were it not for a minor swelling of my left cheek, that comes from a small lump of flesh in my gum, that moves down when touched. However you must not worry because I have already shown it to the doctor.

Now that Summer is approaching don't forget the promise you had made me, that of visiting me. Did you mention a parcel? Up to now I have not received anything; when I receive it I will advise you.

With regards to the watch, since you would like me to ask the Rector's permission, I will do as you wish. I kindly beg you to extend my best regards to all the family, relatives and friends; I kiss your hands together with those of my esteemed grandmother and mother, and remain,

*Your affectionate and obedient son
Saverio Colombo
(Please pardon my haste)*

Gozo 6 Aprile 1890

Carissimo Papà,

Rispondo alla sua carissima del 28 or caduto mese nella quale appresi l'ottimo stato di salute che grazia Dio regna per ora in famiglia; lo stesso della totale guarigione del cognato Zudo, (al quale la settimana ventura scriverò) e pare che della nova non ce nè vero niente; voglia Dio che sempre continui così.

La prego di rispettarli in modo speciale Don Zuddo, il quale prego di non giudicare a male il mio silenzio, ma a sola mia negligenza; (sebben questa è

di rimprovero, devo confessarlo, perchè non è stato per altro motivo.

Quanto prima gli scriverò. Per ora non avendo altro a dirle assicurandole l'ottimo stato di mia salute, la prego di salutarmi, fratelli, sorelle, parenti amici e persone di servizio; a lei insieme alla signora Nonna e Mamà bacio le mani e mi sottoscrivo

Suo Aff.mo e Obb.mo figlio
Saverio
(Scusi la fretta)

Gozo, 6th April, 1890

Dearest Father,

I reply to your kind letter of the 28th of the past month, in which I learned about the state of excellent health that, praise be to God, reigns up to now within the family; the same goes for the total recovery of my brother in law Zudo, (to whom I will be writing next week) and it seems that there's no truth about grandmother, so let's hope that God willing all keeps going as it is.

I beg you to send my regards especially to Don Zuddo, whom I also beg not to negatively judge my silence, because it is only due to negligence; (although I must admit that this is reproachable, because there was no other motive).

I will write to him very soon. Not having other to add, for now I assure you of my best health, and beg you to send my regards to my brothers, sisters, relatives, friends and the servitude; to you together with my lady grandmother and mother I kiss your hands and remain

*Your most affectionate and obedient son
Saverio
(Please pardon my haste)*

Gozo 13 Aprile 1890

Carissimo Papà,

Oggi giorno 8 fui passata dai grandi (ed ho per prefetto a P. Gennaro) e benchè in questa camerata si ha permesso di fumare, purnondimeno il P. Ministro vuole che lei lo sappia.

La prego a non dirmi di no, e di rispondermi appena

avrà la presente.

Intanto ricevetti la sua carissima del 5 corrente, dalla quale appresi con sommo piacere l'ottimo stato di sua salute; e con dispiacere che si dispiacque per il gonfiore della gensiva; la prego a non darsene cura perchè si fece dura di nuovo. Mi dispiacque che per ora non può venire a vedermi, ma giacchè mi promise al ritorno, aspetto ancora, augurandomi che presto termini gli affari.

Siccome si presenta opportuna l'occasione che vada Roma, la prego a comperarmi l'orologio e catena d'oro.

Siccome ultimamente le scrissi due parole in fretta e in furia, per troppa illienazione non le augurai le buone feste pasquali, per la qualcosa adesso la prego a perdonare la mia involontaria trascuranza, facendolele ora colmi dei migliori beni, che il mio sincero cuore da figlio affezionato possa desiderarle, come anche a Mama, Nonna e famiglia tutta.

Non avendo altro a dirle saluto tutti di famiglia, a lei insieme alla Signora Nonna e Mamà bacio le mani e mi dichiaro

Suo Aff.mo e Obb.mo figlio
Saverio

P.S. (Scusi la fretta) Mi auguro che non mi faccia la negativa; per il permesso basta solamente scrivermi due parole nella stessa risposta.

Colombo

Gozo, 13th April, 1890

Dearest Father,

Today, the 8th day of the month, I have been transferred to the senior school (and my master of studies is now Father Gennaro) and notwithstanding the fact that in this dormitory smoking is allowed, the Minister still needs your approval.

I beg you not to refuse your permission, and to reply as soon as you receive this letter.

In the meantime I am in receipt of your kind letter of the 5th instant, through which I note with utmost pleasure the excellent state of your health; and regret that you are distressed about the swelling in my gum; I beg you not to worry yourself about the fact that it has again congealed. I regret that for the time being you cannot come to visit me, but since you had promised me to return, I still

hopefully await that you may soon finish your commitments.

Given that the opportunity of your going to Rome presents itself, I kindly solicit you to buy the gold chained watch for me.

Seeing as lately I have only written a few hurried words, I absentmindedly omitted to augur you my best wishes for Easter, for which I now kindly beseech you to pardon my unintended negligence, thus sending them to you now filled with all the good things that my sincere heart as a devoted son would wish you, as well as my mother, my grandmother and all the family.

Not having anything to add I send my best wishes to all the family; I kiss the hands of your goodself as well as those of my lady Grandmother and Mother and declare myself

*Your most affectionate and obedient son
Saverio*

P.S. (Please pardon my haste) I hope that you won't decline; it suffices to only write a few words in the same reply to give your permission.

Colombo

*(English translation of transcripts by
Ms Miriam Muscat)*

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Professor Arnold Cassola teaches Maltese and Comparative Literature at the University of Malta. He is the author/editor of around thirty books on the history, literature, language and culture of Malta, and the Malta-Italy relationship.

The Woman in Gozitan Folklore

ANTON F. ATTARD

The first part of this article appeared in the 28th edition of the Gozo Observer

Birth and Infancy

Our next item is to examine the beliefs and the traditions of the Gozitans regarding women when giving birth and during the infancy of their children. For the majority of Gozitans a baby boy was more welcome than a baby girl. It has to be admitted there were exceptions, for example in a family where all the children were males, the birth of a baby girl was a joyful occasion since it was considered as the fulfilment of a great wish. However, it goes without saying that in a family of girls, the wish for male children was very strong indeed. At least this was the position until a few years ago considering what this proverb has to say: *Hafna subjien bsaten u tmien, hafna bniet ilahhqu l-biċċiet* - if you have many boys, prepare walking-sticks and top hats, many girls prepare pieces of cloth. So girls were good for the traditional craft of weaving which was so common in Gozitan homes. Many girls in the same family did not bring luck. In fact, there is a belief which still currently exists that out of every six girls in the same family, two of them must be infertile or remain childless. In Gozo there is also the belief that if a pregnant woman craves for some food, she should be given two bites just in case she was to give birth to twins, and if it happens that while she is craving she touches any part of her body, it was thought that the baby will be born bearing a mark resembling the object she was craving. For example, if she craves for a fruit and while craving she touches her belly, the baby will be born with the mark of that fruit on her belly. Moreover, whoever fails to give a craving woman a bite or two of the desired food, will be punished with a sty in his eye.

In Gozo pregnant women who are about to give birth show full trust in Heaven: *Il-Bambin jagħtihielha tajba* - may Baby Jesus give her a successful delivery, or, *'K Alla jrid kollox ikun sew* - if it is the will of God, everything will be all right. As soon

as the midwife goes into a house of a woman who is about to give birth, she says: *Gesù Nazzarenu* - Jesus the Nazarene, and she repeats the same words as soon as she enters the room where labour was to take place.

In Gozo we also come across strange customs which may have their roots in antiquity. For instance, in the past there existed in Xaghra a strange custom. Pregnant women would squat on a huge block of stone – maybe a Neolithic megalith – so as to ascertain themselves of a successful delivery. According to the Gozitan writer Gian Pietro Francesco Agius de Soldanis there was a traditional beverage which helped mothers during their labour. This was called *ċumnata* and was made from wine, spices, cinnamon, and cloves boiled together. During pregnancy it is the mother who suffers from the pangs of childbirth, while the midwife goes on with her work with the same strong voice as before, so much so that a saying from the village of Munxar goes like this: *Il-muluda mikduda, u l-qabla tgħajjat* - the woman in labour is worn out,



Gian Pietro Francesco Agius de Soldanis.
(Source: www.stgeorge.org.mt - October 2013)

while the midwife makes a lot of fuss. Some women who seem to take too long to give birth will make use of a passion flower to expedite parturition. They throw a withered passion flower in a bowl of water and as soon as it starts opening they feel their first labour pangs. In Gozo the belief was so strong that even women who were not expecting a child, who happened to see a withered passion flower opening they said they felt the beginning of pain as if of labour.

Women used to make pious vows to have a good delivery. Objects associated with these pious promises used to be left as ex-votos in some churches, especially at the Sanctuary of Our Lady in Qala or at the Franciscan Conventual Church in Victoria.

As already pointed out, Gozitans were not that happy with the birth of a baby girl. When a girl was born, they used to say: *Meta titwieled tifla l-ixkupa tiehu qatgha* - when a girl is born the besom gets a fright, or: *Id-dota marret* - the dowry is gone, or else: *Ommha tilfet il-gradenza* - her mother has lost her clothes chest. All this means that with the birth of a girl the family will have someone to clean the house, but the mother will now have to give dowry to her daughter.

Whenever a new baby is born in any family, the mother invites all her relatives, neighbours and friends to come and stay – *jigü joqoghdu*. For this purpose it is enough for her to send her grown up son or a grown up boy of her neighbours. In the past they

used to treat these guests with traditional sweets, cookies and drinks. Nowadays a more elaborate party is held. Guests will try to guess after whom the new baby has taken.

Naturally, the birth of a new baby is risky both for the mother and for the child itself. If a mother decided to present her baby in church, she was not expected to go out for work before she had presented it. In Gozo, babies are often presented to Our Lady of Ta' Pinu. Nowadays, the small church of St. Anne at Dwejra also receives many mothers who opt to present their babies to St. Anne.

It is thought that the risk brought about by the birth of a child will last for forty days. During this period it is said that the mother is in her puerperium - *mniefsa* or *bl-infasa*. De Soldanis also says that when a woman who is in her puerperium mentions another woman who is also in her puerperium during the said period of forty days, one of them will die. This superstition may have reflected the high mortality rate among the mothers of bygone years.

The first water in which a mother washed her baby was said to have healing properties. Therefore, when a baby fell sick it used to be washed again in the first water in which a healthy baby had been washed. The people of Munxar used to believe that in this way a sick baby could be healed. This type of cure may also be reminiscent of the miraculous healing of babies according to Apocryphal Gospels which used to occur whenever a sick baby was dipped in the water where Baby Jesus had been washed.



St. Anne Chapel, Dwejra.
(Source: www.gozodiocese.org - October 2013)

Gozitan mothers, like their Maltese counterparts, greatly dreaded the evil eye which could somehow harm their children. So they used to use all sorts of amulets such as horns, shells, and other similar objects to ward off the evil eye. If a child fell sick, they used to believe that the child was not theirs. In Gozo they used to take sick children to the tomb of Saint Corrado at the Qala Sanctuary dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. After a child had been lowered down into the tomb, the mother used to pray: Change him/her and bring me mine! Another place where Gozitan

mothers took their sick babies was at St. Elias on a small hillock between Xewkija and Ghajnsielem when in olden times there stood a small chapel dedicated to this prophet of the Old Testament. At this place, mothers used to recite the same prayer. In both cases mothers used to believe that the sick children used to be replaced by their real healthy ones. In remembrance they used to leave the clothes on the spot as an ex-voto. In the case of St. Elias, Gozitan priests used to discourage this custom.

Gozitan mothers had such a fixation about the well-being of their sons and daughters that even while having them washed they used to recite certain rhyming lines wishing them to grow normally as every child should. To this effect, in Xewkija and in other villages, while washing their babies, Gozitan mothers used to make the sign of the cross on their babies' bellies while reciting the following lines:

*Tikber kull jum u kull lejla
bhall-faqquq tal-bhajra.*

You grow up every day and every night,
like small water melons.

*Tikber kull jum u kull nhar
bhall-faqquq tal-hjar.*

You grow up by day and by night
like small cucumbers.

*Tikber kull jum u kull ljieli
bhall-ghanqud tad-dwieli.*

You grow up all days and all nights
like bunches of grapes.

It is said that the greatest wish of every woman is that of becoming a mother having her own children. For them she is prepared to do everything, as the proverb says: *L-omm għal uliedha, halliela u giddieba* - for her children the mother was prepared to be a thief and a liar, meaning she was ready to work, to toil, to strive to earn something for the family, especially when the husband's income was not enough. In a family of farmers, the woman helps her farming husband in all his work.

The Woman in Traditional Work and Crafts

When a baby is born, the woman most sought after is the midwife (Maltese *qabla*, now known as *majjistra*). *Majjistra*, a Maltese Romance loan-

word, literally means a female expert. Not every woman is a midwife. The midwife should be well taught and trained in her delicate work because many times the destiny of the new born baby is in her hands. The midwife should know how to give a helping hand during labour, how to wash, clean and swaddle the baby. She should even know how to christen the baby in case of an emergency when a child is too weak and there is very little chance of survival. In Xagħra there was the custom of keeping a glass of water at hand after the birth of a child until it was christened, just in case the need arose to baptise him or her urgently.

When the baby is healthy enough and survives, he/she is taken to church to be baptised. In the past the child used to be christened on that very same day when he/she was born, or at most the day after. The baptism ceremony was a very simple one and used to take place near the baptismal font near the main door of the church. The mother usually was not present for the ceremony. So they used to hire a woman to carry the baby. She was called *ir-reffiegħa* (the carrier). She used to carry the baby to church and back home.

Sometimes misfortune befell the baby's mother and if she died for some reason or other she could not suckle her baby. In bygone times people were more conscious of the nourishing value of the mother's milk and the fact that babies who were fed on their mothers' milk seldom fell sick. For this reason they did everything possible to give their babies the natural milk of another woman, who was known as *l-imreddgħa* (wet-nurse), when the natural mother could not do this. This woman was either a mother whose baby had died, or who used to suckle her baby for a longer time than was normal. Well-to-do families even prepared a special room in their houses for the wet-nurse to sleep in and used to give her good food. Those children who were brought up by the milk of the wet-nurse used to be taught to respect that woman who nourished them with her milk when they were babies.

A new baby will create considerable extra work for the family. In the past there were no disposable nappies. The baby's swaddling clothes had to be washed very often in order to be used over and over again. One can imagine what were the washing needs of a very large family whose members used

to come back in dirty clothes from their work in the fields or from other places where one could not be expected to keep clean. Moreover, in those times, clothes used to be thicker than modern ones as they were locally woven by means of traditional looms. Therefore it was a very hard task to have all the family's clothes washed. This was also women's work. The washing as such was done by means of a wooden pounder called *marżebba*, an instrument shaped like the sole of the foot. Washer women used to beat dirt out of the clothes by the pounder on the washing place consisting of a large block of hard limestone called *mahsel* near a cistern or a natural spring. Some women used to take soiled clothes to the washing place called *il-Għajn tal-Hasselin*, the washers' spring, consisting of an arched roofing covering a natural spring with stone troughs where the washing could be carried out. There were several places like this in Gozo especially in Victoria in Fountain Street, now known as Fontana, in Lunzjata Valley, Għajn Tuta in Kerċem, in Għajnsielem, Nadur and Xagħra. There were also washer women who used to go round washing people's clothes to earn some money especially where there was a large family and it was impossible for the mother to cope with her family's washing needs.

Sewing is also a traditional craft, and a large number of Gozitan women could sew. In every locality of the Gozitan isle you could find the village tailor who could sew all kinds of dresses and outfits, mostly for special occasions or *festa* days, the celebrations held in honour of the patron saint. There was also the specialised tailor who sewed wedding dresses and who was known to all and sundry. When a couple was about to get married, the bride used to go to that tailor who she considered the best to sew clothes, to order the wedding dress. On the wedding day guests would praise (or unobtrusively find faults with) the bride's wedding dress.

In the past there were specialised tailors, including the faldetta tailors - *ta' l-egħnienel*. *L-ghonnella*, the faldetta, required a special skill to be sewn beautifully according to the customers' wishes. It is regretted to note that this old and traditional craft has now completely died out.

Apart from the tailoring craft one can also mention embroidery, a craft well practised by a considerable number of Gozitan families. Sometimes this



L-Ghonnella.

(Source: <http://www.treklens.com/gallery/Europe/Malta/photo511619.htm> - Thomas Schembri (copyright) October 2013)

traditional craft attains a very high standard as can be attested by work carried out by village girls and women who create real works of art, more often than not free of charge, for churches, clubs and other special occasions.

In the past, even more than today, many Gozitan women were wives of farmers. The work of the farmer never ceases. It is an unending and varied work, and the wife used to accompany her husband for work in the fields. What was the woman's role in the fields and at the farm? Although we know of women who used to dig in the fields, the digging was usually done by men. The wife usually helped with the sowing, the planting and the harvesting of crops. The woman, with the sickle in her hand used to harvest wheat and *sulla*, (Gozitan clover), and with the mini-scythe she used to cut grass for her animals. Woman collected ripe fruit, grapes, tomatoes, picked potatoes and collected cotton pods and cumin plants. The conveying of these

products from one place to another was, of course, her husband's job.

The woman used to take out the sheep and the goats to graze in the fields. At the farm she used to milk the cows, the sheep and the goats. With their milk she knew how to make cheeses, dry them, wash them in salted water and preserve them in pepper. She used to sell cheeses both fresh, in their traditional container, or dried preserved in pepper. So the making of cheeses and their preservation was all done by women.

In the past, the woman used to dry fruit in the sun, such as figs and tomatoes, and preserve them for the winter months. She used to wash in the sea the wool taken from her sheep on St. Anne's day, and then weave it herself at home or take it to the female weaver to make *fradi* (sing. *farda*), types of local mats, blankets, and other draperies woven by the traditional looms. She used to spread out hard lumps of wool in old mattresses to make them soft and comfortable to rest on.

Wives used to help their husbands on the threshing floor. The work on the threshing ground was men's work, but women used to help in tying up sheaves of long hay, filling up of big bundles of hay in large sheets and special nets, in sifting wheat in different kinds of sieves, and washing it clean, ready to be taken to the windmill to be ground into flour. When brought back from the windmill the women used to sift it once more to separate the bran, semolina and flour. They used to cook fine semolina for their children, a traditional meal called *ghasida* (porridge). They used to take the flour to the bakery to make bread for the whole week, where in most instances they used to knead their own dough in the traditional baker's trough.

Many Gozitan women who were not housewives were engaged in various traditional crafts of the island. One of the foremost and most ancient of crafts was that of weaving. As a matter of fact in most Gozitan houses scattered throughout the villages of Gozo, there were ancient looms whereby Gozitan women and girls used to weave traditional fabrics made of cotton and wool. Cotton was cultivated here in Gozo and was of the best quality, so much so that nobody was permitted to export seeds out of these islands. There was the white cotton and the brown

cotton. Draperies woven on local looms could be dyed in various colours according to the needs by the dyer, another old craft which has completely disappeared from this island. But this was a craft practised by men.

Weaving had also attached to it other traditional works and crafts. Female workers used to separate cotton from its pod (*idommu*). Afterwards, other female workers used to remove the seeds from the cotton with the traditional cotton carding machine. Carded cotton, that is cotton with the seeds removed, was then beaten and thrashed by a man specialised in this work known as *id-daqqaq*, to render it soft and workable. At this stage women once again took over from men and they used to spin the soft cotton on the spinning wheel to change it into fine threads. The traditional tool for this work was called *magħżel* or spinning wheel. Threads were then wound on a traditional reel known as *imkebbba*. The threads on the reel were then turned into a warp by another woman known as *is-seffieħa* to be folded up by yet another woman known as *it-tewwejjja* ready for weaving.

In bygone years, Gozitan farmers used to spend more time in the fields than farmers do nowadays



Cotton cultivated here in Gozo was of the best quality, so much so that nobody was permitted to export seeds out of these Islands.

in order to plough their fields with the traditional plough drawn by animals, to thresh the wheat on the threshing floor by means of his mule or donkey, to dig the fields with his traditional hoe or to harvest his wheat or *sulla* with the traditional scythe or sickle. These tasks always meant that the farmer spent long hours exposed to the mercy of the sun's rays. To protect himself from the strong rays of the sun, he used to wear the traditional Gozitan hat. Such hats used to be handmade in the village of Qala. This work was called rattan or palm-work. Some women from Qala used to go round collecting pliable palm fronds from all over Gozo. Usually they used to get it for free, but women would in turn give one hat free of charge to her supplier. Life in Gozo was so simple up to a few decades ago! A woman and her children used to prepare plaits, and then the rattan woman used to sew the plait in such way to give the shape of a hat. First she rounded up the cap, then the middle part and finally the brim. She also used to make all sorts of fans, both for men and women, baskets, panniers and other containers of great utility in the house.

A traditional craft which has tied its name with Gozo and has become synonymous with this island is that of lace-making. Since this craft became well established in Gozo around the middle of the nineteenth century, Gozitan women have become famous for this work. The lace industry in our island



Lace making - the traditional craft tied to Gozo.
(Source: <http://www.flickrriver.com> - October 2013)

became the livelihood of many Gozitan women who worked hard and raised the level of lace making in our island to an international level. Famous foreign personalities, kings and queens and members of the British royal family, tourists and visitors, and others were astonished by the fine workmanship produced by our Gozitan women on their lace pillows. To speak about Gozitan women and at the same time fail to mention Gozo lace, would be missing a most important aspect of the folkloristic way of life in Gozo.

There are other crafts in which Gozitan women have been successful. When the tourist industry became more lucrative during the sixties, there evolved as if out of nothing the new crafts of crochet and knitting. Gozitan women started handmaking all sorts of jerseys, pullovers, sweaters and other similar close-fitting garments to be sold to tourists. This work was easier than that of lace making, could be completed in a shorter time, and fetched better prices. One could then see women knitting wherever they happened to be and whenever they had a chance. Either when they were not so busy with other work, or while they were waiting for the bus, or their children coming out of school, and on every other suitable occasion, our women knitted garments with those two long needles.

However, Gozitans are not only adapted to just perform delicate crafts. Up to some fifty years ago when our roofs were sealed with *deffun*, which is ground pottery used as cement, Gozitan women used to beat the roofs with a kind of crushing and smoothing tool for roof surfacing. One could see them with this special tool, known as *marzebba* in Gozitan, beating the rough surface of the roof to render it smooth and slightly slanting to carry rain water to the side dictated by the roof-maker. This was not very lucrative work, but it could be done without having the need of pursuing a course of training. Therefore, many Gozitan women used to earn a small amount of extra money from this kind of work.

Betrothal and Marriage

We shall now consider ancient customs and superstitions associated with betrothal and marriage, some of which have died out long ago,

others persist to this day. When a girl had grown up to marriageable age, there was the custom to put a flower pot on the balcony or on a stone jutting out of the wall - *ħarriegħa*. During this time women were not allowed to go about alone in the streets except very early in the morning when they were also expected to wear a kind of cloak and cover their faces. Married and unmarried women used to wear different cloches, but this custom died out long ago. In large churches, e.g. the Cathedral, men and women attended the Church service in a segregated manner: women stood in the main aisle or in the middle of the church, while men stood in the naves or in the side chapels. This custom has been retained even to this day in certain village churches in Malta, but in Gozo it no longer exists. It is said that, at the end of the 19th century, young men attending the Christmas night service at the Cathedral used to pelt attractive young girls sitting in the main aisle with hazel nuts!

Even in bygone years marriage was preceded by betrothal, *l-egħrusija*, referred to in legal circles as *l-isponsali*. After all the arrangements were made, the bridegroom would give the bride a ring known as *iċ-ċurkett tar-rabta*, engagement ring, which was a golden ring in the shape of two clasped hands to signify the bond of love between the couple. At the times of the Order of St. John this ring was presented in the mouth of a prime fish. On the other hand the bride reciprocated this gift by another gift consisting of a decorated silk handkerchief. The exchange of these gifts meant that the couple now had given their word to each other that they would definitely get married. Should anything go wrong, the case would end up in court.

The betrothal ceremony, so to speak, was followed by the marriage contract, *kitba taż-żwieġ*, before a notary. When the marriage contract was drawn up, the bridegroom promised to take the bride to some popular folk celebrations, such as St. Gregory's Day and *Mnarja*, both of which are local folk festivals of the first order. This custom was introduced in Gozo from Malta.

The wedding then followed. Before the couple promised, (in Maltese - *jagħtu l-kelma*), to love and be faithful to each other, a mixture of aniseed, aromatic herbs, salt and honey was prepared and

rubbed on the bride's lips so that her mouth uttered only sweet words. After the wedding the bride did not go straight away to her house but spent another week in her father's house. After this she was received with much pomp in her husband's house whose relations gave a great feast which was called *il-Ħarġa*. Thereafter, the bride took abode in her husband's house.

Death

Nobody can avoid death. We often get this warning by a Maltese proverb which says: *Hadd wara Hadd, fl-aħħar tasal ta' kulhadd* - Sunday after Sunday, at last everyone of us will have his day.

In olden times when death occurred in any Gozitan family, the relatives of the dead person would hire a group of female beggars to watch the dead person all night long and pray for the repose of his soul. After this charitable act, the family would recompense these beggars by giving them some money for their services. In the times of the Order of St. John there were female mourners, *newwieħa*, who bewailed the dead persons by their loud cries and lamentations during funerals. They used to wear a long veil or trail of a gown known as *kurkar*. As soon as they entered the dead person's house, they used to lop off the vine in the yard and throw away all the flower pots from the windows and balconies right into the street. They used to look for the best piece of china and break it to pieces against the door jamb. Then the fragments were mixed up with black soot and ashes and boiled. The mixture was smeared on the door jamb of the main door. After this 'ceremony' they sang rhymes with much wailing and sighing until they knelt down near the corpse and thereafter kept on mentioning the good deeds and virtues of the dead person and all the members of the family would then join in.

Funerals

When a relative died, women in Gozo used to stay indoors for whole weeks and went out only early in the morning to hear mass. This went on for no less than forty days. Nowadays, they stay in only for the short period of three days. An ancient custom required that women should not cook food for three days. Therefore, food used to be provided by friends or relations, even distant relatives.



The finger gesture used to ward off the evil eye.

As regards clothing, both married and unmarried women used to wear black attire from head to foot, and also used to cover their heads and faces with a black crepe. During their first week of mourning, they could not wear either a hat or a hood, and used to go out with the *faldetta* on their heads with which they also went to church. Until very recently, following the death of parents, the daughters would wear black for three whole years, for a sibling two years, for other relatives one year, and for friends several months.

In the past, and even nowadays, several women are notoriously known to cast evil eye spells on whoever and whatever they happen to look at. To avoid being affected by the evil eye of these people one has to point out fingers in the form of two horns. Some women used to make this gesture under their pinafores, or else wear amulets or a horseshoe. On Easter Saturday they used to fumigate their houses with burnt dried blessed olive leaves from Palm Sunday of the year before.

Gozitan Women and Folk-Medicine

To cure their little children who had had a fright, mothers used to wash them in water in which flowers from the Holy Sepulchre had been strewn. In the case of toddlers who were about to start walking, mothers used to let them go just when the bells of Easter Saturday would start ringing at about 10 o'clock in the morning.

Some Gozitan women were very much sought after because they had the know-how of putting dislocated bones in place. People who twisted their ankles or wrenched their arms used to call on a certain woman in Żebbuġ, to have their disjointed bones put back in place.

We have also many other folk medicinal remedies to cure disease and other ailments which affect mostly women. When a woman did not menstruate normally they used to prepare a liquid medicine concocted from *sarsaparilla* (*Smilax sarsaparilla*) which in Gozo is somewhat rare. If menstruation was more copious than normal, Gozitan women used to drink lemon juice. With regard to abdominal pain due to menstruation they used to take camomile, lemon and orange-blossom water, or even a piece of warm wool. For excessive menstruation they used to consume considerable quantities of fresh fruit.

To minimise the effect of hot flushes during menopause, Gozitan women used to wet their foreheads with a piece of cloth dipped in vinegar, or drink a concoction made from the boiled roots of Bermuda grass or dried reed leaves. They used to drink a glass of this folk medicine a day. For headaches and migraine they used to put a potato cut into two slices on their foreheads or wash their feet in warm water.

When a married couple remained childless the fault for infertility was generally attributed to the woman. However, when it turned out that it was the man to blame after all, he was made to eat blood pudding made from bull's blood because this way it was thought that his fertility increased. It was also thought that a holy picture of St. Elizabeth over the bed increased fertility as this holy person became pregnant when she was well advanced in age. It was also thought that a woman who walked at night when it was full moon had her fertility increased, according to the old saying: *Jekk fil-qamar thuf, issaħħan il-ġuf* - if you wander about when it is full moon, you make the womb get warm.

In the past unexpected pregnancy, especially out of wedlock, took a much longer time than it does today to become evident. Clothes were loose and baggy, not to mention the *faldetta* (or *ghonnella*) which also concealed the shape of a

woman's figure from the public eye. In fact, a Maltese proverb says: *Mara bil-ghonnella la taf x'ghamlet u lanqas x'kellha* - you cannot know what a woman wearing a *faldetta* has done, or what she has had. There were also in the old days certain plants which could cause an abortion in the case of an unwanted pregnancy. So nothing is new under the sun!

Unmarried women, including nuns, were prone to be stricken with several diseases like cancer and tumours of the womb. They used to try to cure them by putting poultices on their bellies. They also got liquid herbal folk medicine to cure jaundice (*isewwu l-fliexken għas-suffejra*). For venereal diseases they used to wash the affected part by warm water in which the plant of *vervain* (*Verbena officinalis* L) had been boiled.

A female breast is obviously different from that of a male and it is more liable to get infected or become cancerous. To cure an abscess in this part of the body they used to put poultices made from bran or even pigeons' droppings! To cure boils they used to put tomato slices on them, or poultices made from *ħobbejża*, (common mallows - *Milva silvestris ambigua*), or warm water fomentations. For lumps in the chest, very often indicative of cancer, they used to put a clump of warm wool to mitigate pain. They also put the holy picture of the saint to whom they showed devotion. In the case of a malignant cancer, the result would often be of disastrous proportions. Whenever, due to lack of hygiene, a woman's breast got infected when suckling her baby, it was thought that all this displeasing effect was caused by the evil eye. To avoid being affected by the evil eye they used to warm some oil in a spoon on a kerosene lamp and smeared their breasts therewith before bringing their babies closer to their breasts. To wean and stop suckling her baby, mothers used to wrap their breasts with bandages or wash them with warm vervain water (*ilma tal-buqexrem*).

Conclusion

My final message here is that our people should take interest in all their heritage, whether it be natural, historical, or folklore so that our past will not be forgotten. As a people we should be proud of our folklore.

We should always keep before our eyes the importance of our entire folk heritage whether it be traditions, customs, legends, anecdotes, folk-games, crafts and so on. Our own learned kinsmen were among the first people in these Islands to take interest in folklore, collect and study folk material from both islands, without which our island's heritage would surely be much poorer.

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The Village of Żebbuġ, Gozo - Its Parish and Titular Statue

GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Introduction

One of Gozo's most picturesque villages situated on the highest inhabited plateau of the island is undoubtedly the old village of Żebbuġ, the northernmost village of the island of the three hills and geographically the nearest village to the island of Sicily south of the Italian peninsula. During 2013, the parish belonging to this locality will be celebrating three important anniversaries, the first two of which are certainly significant for the history and culture of the area. The motto of the village is in Latin *Terra Sublimis* which liberally translated into English would be rendered as 'A high region' and in Maltese as *Art fil-ġholi*. The most popular rendering of the coat-of-arms of the locality is made up of two trees with three stars upon them.

A Name for a Place

The Maltese word *żebbuġ* refers to the popular olive tree which could have been introduced into our islands by the Arabs during their rule which spanned from c.870 to 1090 A.D. This village in the north of Gozo is not the only one to carry a name related to olives. The village to the west of Żebbuġ itself is known as Għasri, a Maltese word which most probably refers to the production of olive-oil. If one were to look into Maltese toponymy one would come across the village of Haż-Żebbuġ in the central area of the island and the village of Żejtun to the south; both names are related to the same theme. In the past Żebbuġ must have abounded with these kind of trees which are still to be found in big numbers in other areas of Gozo.

Żebbuġ in Old Documents

Żebbuġ is mentioned in Agius De Soldanis' second volume of his *Il Gozo Antico E Moderno, Sacro E Profano* compiled in 1746. Writing about the chapels abounding on the island, the father of Gozitan historiography refers to a chapel dedicated to the Baptist to be found in the region of Żebbuġ that was visited by the local bishop during a pastoral visit and which ended in 1630. De Soldanis refers again to the name when he writes about the newly-erected parish of Xagħra the territory of which overlapped with that of Żebbuġ. Later on in the book he dedicates a couple of pages to the parish of Żebbuġ and refers to it as the 'sixth parish in Gozo and the fourth to be created by Bishop Cocco Palmieri in 1688 with the small church dedicated to Mary's Assumption into Heaven'.



The Żebbuġ parish church from the south-east

However it is not only ecclesiastical documents which refer to the locality. In another publication of the late eighteenth century, Mario Bonello's *Descrizione Geografica dell'Isola di Sicilia e delle altre sue adjacenti* mentions the area in Gozo. The book starts with a brief overview of Gozo's ancient and medieval history since its agenda is in fact to include Gozo within the classical world of antiquity. As he mentions the various villages of Gozo, he refers to 'Zebbugh' and the bays of 'Marsa Ferno'. Dr. Thomas Freller in his *Gozo The Island of Joy*, states that Bonello dedicated a brief description to each site. In his *The Placenames of the Coast of Gozo*, researcher of toponymy Joe Zammit-Ciantar does not mention the village of Żebbuġ by name since the village itself is away from the sea but refers to the various geographical points that abound into the sea on Gozo's northern coast and which are popularly considered to form part of the territory of the village. 'Il-Qolla l-Bajda' with the nearby 'Għar ta' Santa Marija' and 'Wied il-Qlejgha' feature in Zammit-Ciantar's scholarly work. Żebbuġ is also mentioned in G. Calleja's *The Work of Art in the Churches of Malta and the Governor's Palace, Valletta*. The publication

refers to the 'Ġgantija taż-Żebbuġ' consisting of megalithic ruins in an enclosure behind the Żebbuġ, Gozo church (cfr. Bugeja, 2008: 35).

The Parish Church Dedicated to the Virgin

The main parish church of the village of Żebbuġ is to be found half way between the northern half and its southern equivalent; the former being referred to by the locals unto this day as 'ix-Xagħra l-Kbira' while the latter as 'Il-Ponta'. Żebbuġ is rich in its toponymy. The furthest point to the south of the parish church is the area known as 'Il-Kanun'. Not being able to prove the presence of any canon in the area, the word might be a corruption of 'kenun' which is an old version for the word 'kenur'. One should not forget that there is in Nadur an area known even today as 'Ta' Kenuna' characterized by its tower and which is also on a promontory – this is only a suggestion. In the north of the village are also to be found the areas known as 'Is-Sagħtrija' and Għajn Mhelhel, the word 'Mhelhel' probably referring to an Arab lord. The church dedicated to the Virgin was known as Santa Marija tal-Virtu but today is simply referred



The interior of the Żebbuġ parish church.

to as the Parish Church of the Assumption of the Virgin. One of the oldest pieces of art within the church is the picture of the Virgin standing with the palms of her hands over her breast; although this is known by the locals as 'Il-Kuncizzjoni', historical documents testify that it was made to depict the Virgin Assumed into heaven. The painting is quite similar to the titular painting at the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary.

In 2013 the parish community in Żebbuġ commemorated the 325th anniversary of the parish; it was on the 28th of April 1688 that the then Bishop of Malta and Gozo, Davide Cocco Palmieri, established four new parishes in Gozo, and Żebbuġ was one of them. Until then the people depended on the two parishes of Rabat for their spiritual needs. It was therefore joyous news for the locals to have their church erected to parish status. The first parish priest was the saintly Dun Frangisk Vella; his remains are revered in one of the side-chapels in the church. On the 28th of April 2013, the parish priest Can. Reuben Micallef unveiled a portrait of Bishop Cocco Palmieri painted by local painter Manuel Farrugia. In order to celebrate the anniversary, special festivities took place during the week preceding the titular feast which were celebrated on the 25th of August. During the fifteen days leading to the feast, all the parish-priests of Gozo – fourteen in all – were invited to say Mass and deliver a short commemorative homily.

The Titular Statue – 150 Years Old

The mid-nineteenth century was the period in which Gozo's ecclesiastical and cultural patrimony experienced a boost. In 1838 a statue of Saint George was commissioned as an external sign of thanksgiving; it was later adopted as the first titular statue on the island. Followed by St John the Baptist for the parish of Xewkija in 1845, and the statue of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin for the parish of Għarb in June 1853, the number of parishes commissioning titular statues on Gozo began to rise. The people of Żebbuġ were fortunate in having as their parish priest, Dun Ġwann Camilleri of Nadur, who having heard from emigrants in Marseille about the firm Gallard et Fils renowned for making statues, commissioned a statue of the Virgin being assumed into heaven for the parish in which he was in charge.



The Żebbuġ titular statue - The Assumption.

Dun Ġwann Camilleri was born in the parish of St Peter and St Paul in Nadur on the 9th of December 1830. He studied at the Seminary in Imdina and was ordained a priest by Bishop Publius Sant on the 20th of December 1856. It was on the 8th of March 1863 that Bishop Publius Sant of Malta installed Dun Ġwann as the parish priest of the Żebbuġ parish. He was the eighth parish priest of Żebbuġ. From the documents that have survived, one can conclude that Dun Ġwann was a priest with a strong will. It was only after a couple of months that he had been installed as spiritual leader of the parish, that Dun Ġwann decided to acquire a titular statue for his parish. During his short tenure as parish priest of Żebbuġ – a period of less than two years – Dun Ġwann managed to bring over from Marseille in France the statue of the Assumption. Until this very day, the statue of the Assumption venerated in Żebbuġ is considered one of the finest

among the titular statues of Gozo. In one of her poems about the village of Żebbuġ, Gozitan poet Mary Mejlak referred to the statue of St Mary in Żebbuġ as a statue of ‘rare’ beauty. She couldn’t have applied a better adjective since the statue does have a heavenly look about her. It was to be the first titular statue of the Assumption for Gozo, having arrived on the island just a year before the very establishment of the new diocese of Gozo by Pope Pius IX the following year – 1864. This year in order to commemorate the 150 years of the statue; the parish will be organising a procession aux flambeaux from the southern limits in the area just next to the parish cemetery to the main parish church.

2013 is also a special year for the history of the parish since it was back in 1963 that the parish priest Dun Franġisk Mercieca was honoured with the title of ‘archpriest’ thus ranking the parish church as ‘archpresbyteral’ and giving him the faculty of wearing the pectoral cross characteristic of archpriests.

Żebbuġ in Modern Times

Enjoying singular dominant views and picturesque areas, Żebbuġ has caught the eyes of entrepreneurs and land negotiators alike. The area known as ‘Is-Saghtrija’ on the north-eastern side of the village is now being developed into a modern sort of village. The commanding views peculiar to the area are perhaps the main source of attraction for the ‘village of Santa Marija’. The local onyx found in the locality which endows the parish church is a must for all who visit Żebbuġ. Żebbuġ can easily be referred to as the airiest village of Gozo, a perfect haven for lovers of peace and idyllic tranquillity.

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Surnames as an Indication of Demographic Changes in Gozo

MAURICE CAUCHI

In Summary

A study of distribution of surnames within a community can give an indication of the homogeneity of the population. In Gozo, a few surnames account for the majority of surnames in any locality. In this study, the distribution of surnames according to the recent (2011) census were compared with those in 1990. There results can be summarised as follows:

- There were marked difference in the proportion of population with the same surname. For instance, in Żebbuġ and San Lawrence the top five surnames accounted for about 50 per cent of the population in 1990, but in 2011 this has been reduced to 29 and 43 per cent respectively.
- Similar changes have been consistent but less marked in all other localities (except Għasri), with least changes occurring in Għajnsielem, Rabat and Nadur.
- The biggest variation in the distribution of the top five surnames (as measured by 'rank difference') has occurred in Fontana and Għasri.
- This indicates that there has been considerable dilution of surnames within most of the localities in Gozo.
- It may be concluded that the population of Gozo has become less homogeneous over the past couple of decades. A number of reasons why this has happened are postulated.

Changes in the demographic distribution within a community may be gleaned from a study of how surnames have changed over a period of time. The recent census (2011), gives data relating to the relative frequency of surnames in various localities of Malta and Gozo. A comparison between the latest census and that of previous years has never, to my knowledge been attempted. However, in the case of Gozo, such a study was made in relation to Gozo surnames (Cauchi, 1998: 19-47). A comparison between the two studies would give an indication of change surname variation over the past couple of decades.

For the purpose of this analysis, the five most common names in each locality in Gozo in 2011 (as

found in the recent census) are compared with data obtained from the Electoral Register in 1990, and differences that have occurred in this 21-year period are analysed. Surnames are ranked according to frequency and a rank is allotted. The 'rank difference' refers to alterations in frequency: a rank difference of '0' indicate that there has been no change, while a rank of '1' indicate that that particular surname has increased in frequency so that now it has stepped up one rank. A negative mark indicates that it has gone down by one or several steps (maximum 5 steps).

The sum of rank differences for the five surnames in each locality (ignoring the plus/minus sign), reflects the degree of variation of the five most common surnames in a particular locality. In the tables below, the frequencies of surnames for the various localities in Gozo are given.

Fontana				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Galea	7.2	Attard	5.6	-5
Borg	6.8	Camilleri	4.6	-2
Farrugia	4.6	Mizzi	4.6	-3
Attard	4.6	Borg	3.7	3
Cassar	4.1	Grech	4.0	-1

Comment: There is a marked shift in the proportion of surnames with 'Attard' coming up top (moved up three positions), and 'Galea' disappearing completely from the first five positions (rank difference = -5).

Għajnsielem				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Xuereb	7.7	Xuereb	6.5	0
Azzopardi	4.8	Grech	5.3	1
Grech	4.8	Vella	5.1	1
Buttigieg	4.7	Azzopardi	5.0	-2
Zerafa	4.6	Grima	4.6	-1

Comment: There seems to be only minimal change, 'Buttigieg' and 'Zerafa' disappearing and 'Grima' becoming more prominent.

Gharb				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Vella	6.6	Cassar	6.5	-2
Cassar	6.6	Cauchi	4.9	1
Cauchi	6.5	Vella	4.4	1
Micallef	5.3	Caruana	4.2	-1
Portelli	5.0	Micallef	3.9	-1

Comment: The most marked changes relate to a reduction in the incidence of the surname 'Vella' (from 6.6 to 4.4 %), and 'Portelli' disappearing from the top five surnames, and 'Caruana' upgraded to fourth position.

Ghasri				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Vella	6.1	Mintoff	9.6	-5
Attard	5.4	Zammit	3.8	-3
Saliba	4.7	Farrugia	5.9	-1
Caruana	4.4	Saliba	5.9	-2
Grech	4.1	Attard	5.2	-1

Comment: Marked changes seem to have taken place here, with 'Vella' disappearing from the top five surnames, being replaced by 'Mintoff'. The overall percentage of the other surnames remain relatively stable although changed in priority.

Kerċem				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Grech	13.7	Grech	12.9	0
Spiteri	7.9	Vella	8.0	1
Vella	7.8	Spiteri	6.1	-1
Formosa	5.4	Formosa	5.1	0
Borg	4.6	Mercieca	4.3	-1

Comment: Only slight differences noticed, with a reduction in 'Borg' and increase in 'Mercieca'.

Munxar				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Debrincat	8.1	Debrincat	5.4	0
Bajada	6.1	Vella	4.9	-1
Curmi	5.7	Bajada	4.7	-3
Vella	4.4	Attard	3.4	2
Parnis	3.8	Grech	3.3	-1

Comment: While the overall relative positions are largely unchanged (with the disappearance of 'Parnis' and an increase in 'Grech'), there is a considerable reduction in the proportion of 'Debrincat' and 'Bajada' with an increase in 'Vella'.

Nadur				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Camilleri	10.3	Camilleri	10.0	0
Muscat	9.2	Portelli	8.8	-1
Portelli	9.1	Muscat	8.3	1
Said	5.2	Said	5.1	0
Buttigieg	5.0	Buttigieg	4.6	0

Comment: Hardly any change in rank, or in proportions of surname overall.

Qala				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Buttigieg	14.1	Buttigieg	10.9	0
Portelli	6.8	Camilleri	5.6	-1
Xerri	6.4	Portelli	5.5	-1
Vella	6.4	Xerri	4.8	-2
Mizzi	5.1	Mizzi	4.1	0

Comment: There is minimal change in rank but considerable reduction in proportion of 'Buttigieg'.

Rabat (Victoria)				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Grech	6.1	Grech	6.1	0

Vella	5.6	Vella	5.5	0
Farrugia	4.9	Attard	5.2	-1
Attard	4.6	Farrugia	4.6	1
Zammit	4.3	Camilleri	3.5	-1

Comment: There is minimal change in rank order.

San Lawrenz				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Grima	17.0	Grima	15.1	0
Cauchi	11.1	Cauchi	8.4	0
Formosa	9.3	Formosa	8.3	0
Cassar	8.8	Cassar	7.3	0
Piscopo	4.5	Attard	4.3	-1

Comment: A remarkably stable ranking. Note the very high incidence of the surname 'Grima'.

Sannat				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Muscat	6.9	Vella	6.3	-1
Spiteri	5.7	Muscat	5.7	-2
Vella	5.2	Buttigieg	4.3	2
Curmi	5.0	Spiteri	4.2	-1
Grima	4.8	Curmi	4.1	-1

Comment: There is reduction in the ranking of 'Grima' and 'Spiteri'.

Xaghra				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Sultana	12.8	Sultana	11.5	0
Attard	7.3	Attard	6.7	0
Bajada	4.3	Galea	3.6	-2
Galea	4.2	Mercieca	3.5	1
Refalo	3.8	Bajada	3.2	-1

Comment: There is some reduction of ranking of 'Bajada' and 'Refalo', with an increase in 'Mercieca'.

Xewkija				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Attard	7.4	Vella	7.1	1
Vella	7.2	Azzopardi	6.3	1
Xuereb	6.4	Attard	6.2	-2
Azzopardi	6.2	Spiteri	4.5	2
Spiteri	4.5	Xuereb	3.9	-1

Comment: Minimal changes.

Żebbuġ				
1990		2011		
Surname	%	Surname	%	Rank Difference
Cini	16.9	Cini	10.1	0
Vella	9.7	Saliba	6.1	-1
Saliba	8.6	Vella	5.5	1
Zammit	7.0	Zammit	4.4	0
Camilleri	6.2	Camilleri	3.7	0

Comment: While there is hardly any change in ranking, there is a relative reduction in ranking of the distinctive surname 'Cini' as well as in 'Vella', 'Saliba' and 'Zammit'.

Rank Difference

The 'Rank Difference' is obtained by adding all the differences in rank for all five surnames. This reflects the changes in surnames over the period under study in that particular locality.

The most marked change in surnames (as measured by 'rank difference') occurs in Fontana and Ghasri, two of the smallest localities. The least marked change in surname differences occurs in Nadur, Żebbuġ and St Lawrenz.

The proportion of the population within a community that is accounted for by the five top surnames varies considerably. In 1990, five surnames accounted for 25 per cent or more of the population. In the case of Żebbuġ and San Lawrenz, they covered 48 and 51 per cent of the population respectively. In many other localities, (Xewkija, Gharb, Xaghra, Kerċem, Qala and Nadur), the top five surnames accounted for more than 30 percent of the population.

In comparison with the 1990 census data, the recent census data shows that the proportion of persons having the five most common surnames has become considerably less in all localities (with the exception of Għasri), indicating that there has been a considerable dilution of surnames and consequent reduced homogeneity of the population. This is most marked for Żebbuġ, where now the five top surnames account for only 29 per cent of the population (compared to 48 percent in 1990), and least marked for Għajnsielem and Victoria.

The table below summarises changes in the incidence of surnames in the various localities

Changes in surname prevalence 1990-2001 by rank difference					
	Pop.	Rank Diff	Proportion of Population with five top surnames		
	2011		1990	2011	Diff
Fontana	873	14	27.3	22.5	5.1
Għasri	427	12	24.7	30.4	-5.7
Munxar	1073	7	28.1	21.4	6.7
Sannat	1801	7	27.6	24.6	3.0
Xewkija	3112	7	31.7	28.0	3.1
Għarb	1183	6	30.0	23.4	6.6
Għajnsielem	2621	5	26.6	26.5	0.1
Qala	1795	4	38.8	30.9	7.9
Xagħra	3968	4	32.4	28.5	3.9
Kerċem	1698	3	39.4	36.4	3.0
Rabat	6203	3	25.5	24.9	0.6
Nadur	3961	2	38.8	36.8	2.0
Żebbuġ	1824	2	48.4	29.1	19.3
San Lawrenz	604	1	50.7	43.4	7.3

Comments: This data indicates that the populations of most of the localities in Gozo have become considerably less homogenous compared to two decades ago. The most popular surnames are still largely unchanged (as indicated by a low 'rank difference'), but the proportions of persons included by the five most common surnames is considerably reduced.

Conclusion

There have been several factors which could explain the reduced homogeneity in the majority of localities in Gozo. Firstly there has been a considerable influx of persons from the mainland – a phenomenon which has reached considerable proportions in recent years. Secondly, the provision of government subsidised housing encourages families to leave their own village and find a home wherever it is made available. It is also possible that there has been an increased rate of internal migration, with younger persons preferring to make their domicile on the larger island for economic or other reasons.

It would be of interest to see comparable data for localities in Malta (as opposed to Gozo), but as far as I know, such comparisons have not yet been made. This would confirm the degree of mobility within the Maltese community as a whole.

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Prof. Maurice Cauchi was the head of the Pathology Department at the University of Malta. He is currently retired in Australia, where he is also President of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria.

The Creation and Management of Artificial Wrecks

MARIO SALIBA

Introduction

Artificial wrecks, which are simply man-made reefs, are nothing new. There are Japanese records dating back to 1700 of artificial reef construction to increase fish productivity. In modern times artificial wrecks or reefs are created intentionally by dumping structures – which range from abandoned boats, planes, trains, oil rigs, and steel bars to obsolete military craft – to the bottom of the sea and then allow the dumped structure to become part of the sea ecosystem. Marine life has been quick to adapt to artificial reefs. In fact, barracuda have been known to stake out their territory on an artificial reef moments after a vessel has been scuttled.

Environmental Impact

Many scientists view these new ecosystems with ambivalence. Based on the natural shipwrecks on the ocean floor which have become nuclei of marine life, artificial reefs in tropical sites are placed either directly on a damaged reef, in the hopes of helping it to regain its biomass, or on a seabed in proximity to a natural reef. The wreck's structural material (usually metal) becomes a substrate for coral larvae to settle on, and the

wreck eventually replicates a natural habitat, providing shelter, a source of food, and an area for mating and reproduction for a variety of creatures. Scientists fear that some of the materials used to create artificial reefs, such as discarded tyres and municipal solid waste ash from incinerators, may in fact decompose and contaminate the very reef community they are intended to support. More research is needed before these concerns can be supported or refuted (Viders, 1995: 150).

The dumping of objects into the sea is regulated by the Convention on the Protection of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter of which Malta, unfortunately, is not a contracting party among the forty-two states who signed the convention and protocol up to 28th May 2012 status, (International Marine Organisation, 1972). Through these conventions bans on the dumping of radioactive waste and industrial waste at sea have been implemented. So once the vessels to be scuttled are thoroughly cleaned from the remaining oil and made safe for divers by closing small portholes etc., they can be let down onto the seabed to serve as an artificial wreck.

The Benefits of Artificial Wrecks

The use of sunken vessels as artificial reefs has increased in popularity, especially with scuba divers. These types of artificial reefs are also called artificial wrecks. Any non-diver may be forgiven for wondering what all the fuss is all about. Indeed, the very idea of purchasing a vessel just to sink it for this purpose is always met with initial reaction of derision – and why not! The aim of an artificial reef programme is to attract thousands of divers to these sites, thus relieving human pressures on the natural reef ecosystem. This means that, many thousands of euro worth of scrap metal are purchased just to be sunk. Naturally many don't understand the reason for



The MV Cominoland at ix-Xatt l-Ahmar in Gozo.
(Photo: Courtesy of Pete Bullen)



Wreck diving off the MV Xlendi.
(Photo by Peter Lemon. Source: <http://www.adi-associates.com> - accessed October 2013).

this and find it hard to justify such behaviour. But some governments of course have taken advice and have recognised the economical value and benefits of such projects.

Briefly these are twofold. As far as the underwater environment is concerned, coral cannot grow on sand because it needs something solid on which it can grip and then grow. Rock, dead coral, a ship or even an old car will provide such a base. Furthermore, it must be remembered that a given area of water can only support so many marine creatures and no creature can live in mid-water where there is neither shelter nor food. An artificial wreck, due to the number of large cavities and crevices, provides shelter and protection for a large variety of biota, including several fish and vertebrate species (Grech, 1996). There is also the all-important human interest. Today, throughout the world, the sale of underwater cameras far exceeds the sale of spear guns and these photographers want something to photograph. An accessible wreck is far better than chasing the ever-diminishing tail of some distant whale or dolphin. Even without a camera there is always the added excitement of exploring a man-made object in the way that one cannot explore a reef - and, unlike any other attraction, the

longer the wreck has been underwater the more interesting it becomes. Past, present and future study of these reefs may help to make the sea a more sustainable resource for marine animals and the ever-increasing demands of mankind.

Management of Present Wrecks

It has been a good fifteen years (November 1999) since the first artificial wreck was created by the scuttling, at ix-Xatt l-Ahmar in Gozo, of the ex-MV Xlendi of the Gozo Channel Company. Another eight years have passed since the scuttling of the ex-MV Karwela and ex-MV Cominoland also of the Gozo Channel at the same site in August 2006.



The scuttling of the MV Cominoland at ix-Xatt l-Ahmar, Gozo in August 2006.
(Photo: Courtesy of Mario Saliba)



Wreck diving off the MV Karwela.
(Photo: Courtesy of Pete Bullen)

These artificial wrecks are proving to be an added attraction to divers in Gozo which is considered to be one of the prime diving locations in Europe. Apart from being popular with divers these wrecks attract an exiting number of fish and other marine creatures. Therefore these artificial reefs can also be used for scientific research.

Nearly all scientific studies documented indicate an increase in marine life populations at these sites, although little is known about the actual change in composition of ecosystems, and how the balance of the communities within the ecosystems shifts. Also it is still uncertain whether artificial reefs increase the overall population of marine species or merely provide the refuge for marine life in the area to increase.

Unfortunately so far the scientific potential of these artificial reefs has not been sufficiently exploited. When these wrecks were created it was assumed that a certain management plan for these reefs was to be implemented at a later stage. Are these reefs being scientifically monitored? They are now quite established and one would assume that if they were studied they could contribute to more conclusive studies and also to the convening of international meetings on this topic.

Since these reefs were co-financed by EU funds to boost dive tourism in Gozo, one hopes that whoever initiated the master plan for the diving industry has included a scientific study about these reefs and a general plan for their management. Sometimes there are conflicting interests relating to recreational diving, other underwater activities and marine conservation. Something needs to be done to reconcile these interests.



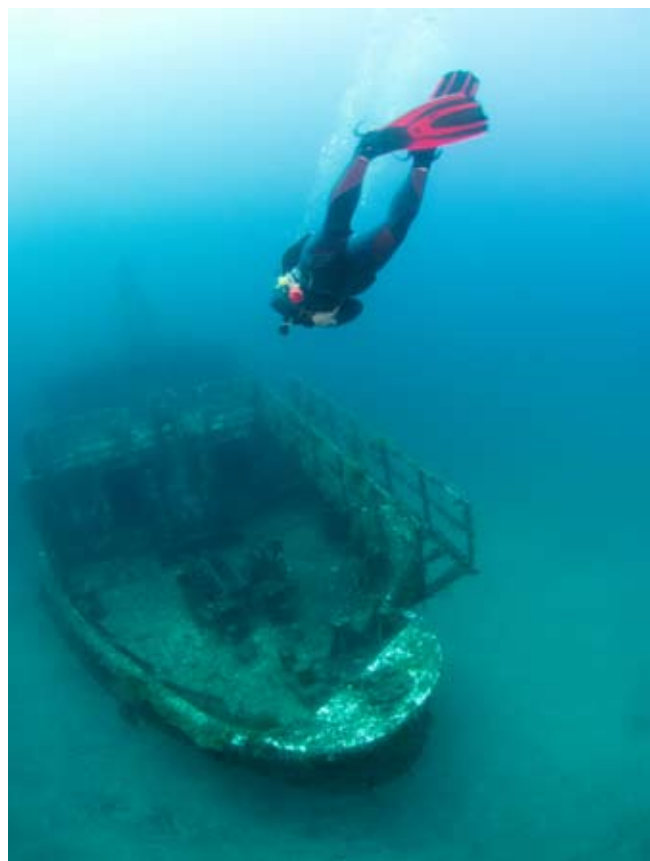
Sinking the MV Karwela at ix-Xatt l-Ahmar, Gozo in August 2006.
(Photo: Courtesy of Mario Saliba)

These special diving sites should be monitored scientifically to observe and record any change in marine communities and ecosystems at the sites, as well as sea water quality. The effect of these artificial reefs on the local flora and fauna can be effectively measured as a result of such continuous monitoring.

Monitoring can also provide information or can form part of the master plan for the coastal zone of Gozo which is also in the pipeline. The study can then form the basis for decisions to manage the coastal zone.

Conclusion

Since the diving industry started to build up about twenty-five years ago, the infrastructure has improved as a result of better roads, ladders and handrails on dive sites. Moreover, Gozo now has its own decompression chamber at the Gozo General Hospital – this adds to divers' safety. The scuttling of the artificial wrecks at ix-Xatt l-Ahmar gave a boost to this industry but we need to look after and study these wrecks for their ecological value. Also this jewel in the



Wreck diving.
(Photo: Courtesy of Pete Bullen)



Wreck diving near the scuttled MV Xlendi.

Mediterranean, our island, needs to be protected and this can be done by turning more areas of the Gozo coast into marine protected areas. Certain species like grouper and dentex, which used to thrive at Dwejra, have become scarcer due to over-fishing in this area. The need to protect this area is long overdue. Dwejra and other sites should be declared marine protected areas by law. The recent opening of an EU funded interpretation centre for marine protected areas as part of a European programme called Pancea is a small step in the right direction but proper legislation and enforcement is still lacking.

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Enhancing Emotional Literacy Through PSD

MARCELLE VELLA

Introduction

In a world which is continually changing, different forms of literacy are necessary to give us the proper skills to deal with a wide range of issues. While oracy, literacy, numeracy, computer and digital literacy together with other kinds of literacies are essential, Emotional Literacy is crucial. Emotional Literacy is the ability to recognise, understand and express our emotions. Nowadays, the need for Emotional Literacy is ever increasing and helping children to become emotionally literate, is one of the best investments that we can make.

Emotional Literacy helps to lay the foundation for a better society. Various studies underline the importance of Emotional Literacy in students. It is considered the key to help students reach self-actualisation and live a better life. The way children mature emotionally and the skills they learn to manage those feelings will influence their abilities to fulfil their potential in their life, be able to learn, solve difficulties, face challenges and acquire knowledge about how they feel about themselves (Killich, 2006). Emotional Literacy is fostered in Personal and Social Development (PSD), a subject facilitated in primary and secondary schools in Malta and Gozo. PSD promotes Emotional Literacy through both its content and methodology, thus contributing greatly to help children become emotionally literate.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy are terms being increasingly used in education and other spheres of life like management and organisations. A short course entitled 'Emotional Intelligence: Listening to Children and Young People's Needs' was held at the Gozo Campus of the University of Malta in 2011. The course covered basic concepts in Emotional Intelligence along with the basic techniques in developing Emotional Intelligence skills in those working with children and young

people. There was an emphasis on the importance of empathy, emotional awareness and resilience. The course was coordinated by Dr Erika Ferrario, a lecturer within the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Milan-Bicocca (Italy) and a visiting researcher at the European Centre for Education Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta.

Emotional Intelligence is a relatively new concept. Salovey and Mayer coined the term Emotional Intelligence, defining it as:

“a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey and Mayer, 1990: 189).

Goleman (1995) then popularised the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Later, Salovey and Mayer (1997) defined Emotional Intelligence as being made up of four distinct branches which have to do with perceiving emotions, facilitating thought, understanding emotions and managing emotions. Afterwards, Steiner (1997) coined the term Emotional Literacy. Both terms were sometimes used interchangeably as if they refer to the same thing. But Steiner and Perry outline a number of differences and regard Emotional Literacy as:

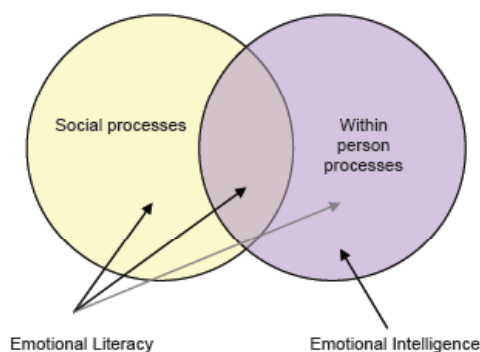
“the ability to understand one's own emotions, to listen to and empathise with others and to express emotions effectively” (Camilleri et al., 2012: 21).

According to Steiner and Perry, Emotional Literacy helps to improve relationships, builds loving possibilities among persons, encourages a community feeling and leads to co-operation which can be beneficial to all (Camilleri et al., 2012). So Emotional Literacy has a lot of potential for the well-being of individuals and to improve the quality of relationships with others.

Gillum (2010) insists that while Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's emotional abilities, Emotional Literacy defines a process of interaction which builds understanding. Matthews also maintains that definitions of Emotional Intelligence are "basically individualistic in nature" (Camilleri et al., 2012: 21). The focal point of Emotional Intelligence is on the individual aspect of humans' emotional development, while Emotional Literacy integrates both the individual and social aspects of human beings. Emotional Literacy retains communication and social interaction with others at its heart and considers them very crucial. According to Steiner and Perry when viewing all Emotional Literacy definitions, what is common between them is the point that though "emotions are experienced individually, they arise out of interactions with others" (Camilleri et al., 2012: 21).

Gillum (2010) concludes that according to different researchers and professionals, definitions of Emotional Intelligence put an emphasis on the individual's qualities while Emotional Literacy definitions make reference to internal processes, social processes and the interaction between the two.

Moreover, Gillum states that although Mayer and Salovey maintain that Emotional Intelligence is partly the ability to recognise and manage other people's emotions, they do not differentiate between the pro and anti-social applications of this ability. For instance, someone who employs Mayer and Salovey's ability to manage other people's emotions in order to persuade a person to buy something which he does not truly require is



Differences between definitions of Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy (Gillum, 2010: 16).

regarded as equivalent, in Emotional Intelligence, to someone who uses the same ability to support a person who is facing a difficult situation. In contrast according to Gillum, Steiner connects emotional literacy with a person's capability to love and appreciate oneself and others and to accept love and respect; so it is clearly value laden.

Why is Emotional Literacy Important?

The development of Emotional Literacy is like a journey. To become emotionally literate, there is a continuous process: the child must learn to recognise basic emotions, progress to understand those emotions, handle and express emotions and finally, develop empathy.

Matthews (2006) also emphasises that it is fundamental to develop the ability to identify your emotions and the feelings in others, as well as to control these emotions 'to assimilate them in thought.' Children gain significantly when they learn the vocabulary which describes their feelings. In fact, Fox and Harper Lentini (2006: 1) insist that

"children who have a large vocabulary of 'feeling words' can better express their emotions using language rather than through problem behaviour" (Fox and Lentini, 2006: 1).

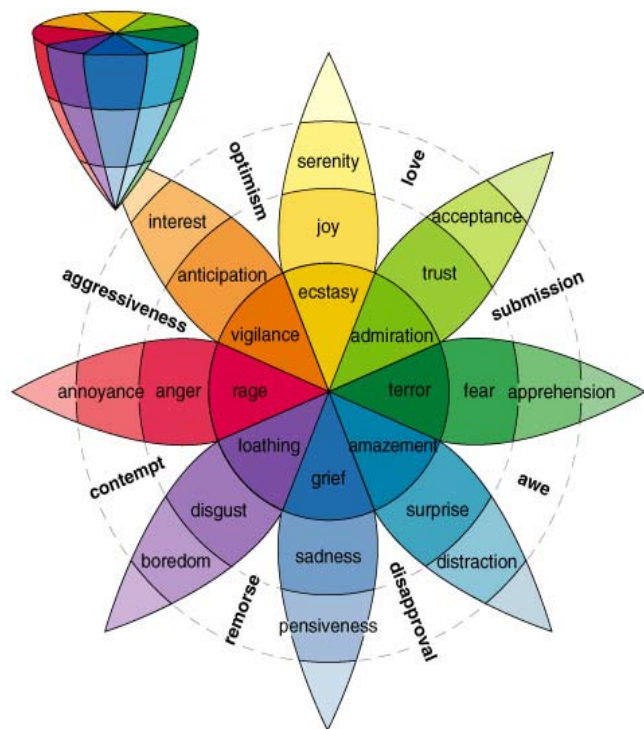
According to Steiner (2003), Emotional Literacy is Emotional Intelligence with a heart. He insists that training to be emotionally literate is centred in the heart and consists of five main skills:

1) *Know your feelings*

It is very important to identify your feelings, the cause of these emotions and their strength. If you identify these three important things, then you can say how your feelings are affecting you and other people around you.

2) *Have a heartfelt sense of empathy*

This is the ability to "feel for" other people in recognising what other people are feeling and why they are feeling that way. When we show empathy with others, their emotions resonate within us. This skill is fundamental for good human relationships.



Feelings.

(Source: <http://www.socialliteracytoday.com> - accessed October 2013).

3) *Manage and control emotions*

To become emotionally literate, it is not enough to know your feelings and the feelings of other people around you. You must know the impact of emotional expression or the lack of it, on other persons. It is also essential to learn how to state with reassurance our positive feelings and how to express and control our negative feelings in a way which does not harm other people. You have to learn effective ways to deal with strong feelings like anger or fear.

4) *Repair emotional damage*

As we are human beings, there may be occasions where we make emotional mistakes and hurt other people's feelings. So, we must learn how to identify our mistakes, shoulder responsibility, take action by making corrections and apologising. These tasks are significant because if we do not take heed of them, our mistakes can hinder our relationships with other people.

5) *Putting it together – emotional interactivity*

Finally, if we learn these necessary skills, we develop 'emotional interactivity'. This means that we will be able to sense the emotions of others and interact with them effectively.

Emotions influence how healthy we are, the way we learn, the manner we behave and also the relationships we build with others. Sherwood (2008) claims that Emotional Literacy is vital in education for the students' academic and life success. She insists that emotional literacy may well help raise attainment but, more significantly, it is envisaged to provide the foundation stone for a healthier and better society in the future.



Emotional Literacy is emotional intelligence with a heart - (Steiner, 2003).

One of the significant skills required for Emotional Literacy is empathy. When one is capable of showing empathy to others and is supportive, one can communicate better with others around him and consequently, one can build and maintain good relationships (Killick, 2006).

Bruce (2010) insists that two important elements in the development of emotional literacy are self-awareness and self-esteem. She maintains that students with sound self-esteem are more resilient to handle challenges, risks and difficulties they may face in their life. All this shows the importance of Emotional Literacy. Weare (2004) states that children can be helped to build a positive self-image by aiding them to focus on themselves, their talents and strengths. In fact, this is done through

Personal and Social Development. In PSD, self-worth is seen as crucial for the development of the children's healthy lifestyle. PSD aims to empower children to feel positive about themselves, feel valued, recognise their achievements and celebrate them as well.

The main benefits of Emotional Literacy include the following:

1. It helps children to get the best out of themselves and out of others and to co-operate more with others;
2. It increases the children's self-confidence;
3. It enhances the children's personal well-being: children are helped to tolerate frustration better and get in fewer litigations, children become happier, calmer, more successful; improve their relationships to get on better with others (Weare, 2004);
4. It enables students to manage and control their own behaviour; this has an impact on their behaviour at school and hence on their learning. In fact, research evidence shows that there is a great link between Emotional Literacy and improved behaviour. Weare (2004) insists that Emotional Literacy helps children with difficulties to improve their behaviour and thus feel more inclusive at school;
5. It enables children to be more focused and helps them obtain better academic achievements;
6. It helps children to become resilient and to face challenges and solve difficulties more effectively;
7. It increases workplace effectiveness. In the workplace there is an increasing emphasis on co-operation and communication skills, management skills and successful relationships. As there is rapid continuous change, work can be more stressful. By being emotionally literate, people enjoy many advantages because they can deal better with these changes and challenges by being more resilient, adaptable and flexible;
8. It helps children to become good citizens, more socially minded and with a great sense of belonging to the community;
9. It transforms society into a better place where people understand others, show tolerance and practise a sense of empathy and care.

Characteristics of emotionally literate persons

According to Rudd (2008), people who develop Emotional Literacy have the following characteristics. They tend to:

1. be more happy
2. show more confidence
3. manage and control their emotions
4. recognise the emotions of other people and show empathy
5. communicate better
6. be able to understand others' opinions
7. be capable of saying 'No' in inappropriate circumstances
8. be more resilient
9. be more capable to handle stress
10. be skilled to resolve conflicts
11. be more successful in relationships with others
12. have leadership qualities
13. be more successful in their career

Personal and Social Development

Emotional Literacy is promoted through PSD in the primary and secondary schools. Personal and Social Development is a subject facilitated in schools in Malta and Gozo. The mission statement of the PSD syllabus states that PSD,

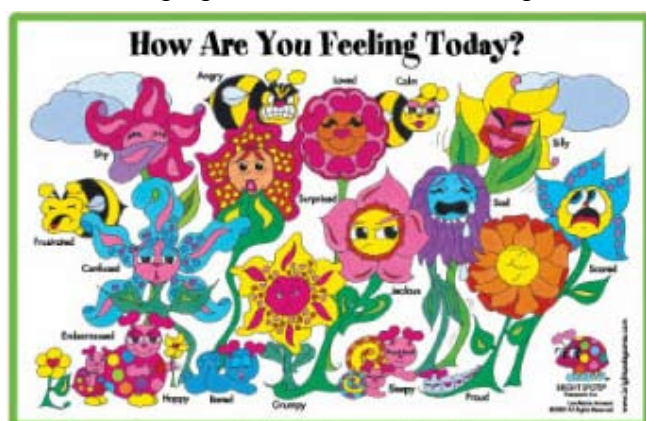
“aims at empowering students to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes which will enable them to live and participate fruitfully and effectively in their environment”

(Abela, 2002: 3)

Personal and Social Development is student orientated. Children at primary level embark on a journey whereby they begin to learn about themselves as developing individuals. The topics in the PSD syllabus address the students' needs. The main topics are: group building, myself, relationships, citizenship, growing up and health and safety. Consequently, PSD helps children to develop attitudes and skills like self-awareness, building confidence, Emotional Literacy, good communication, building good relationships, co-operating with others, respect, celebrating diversity, resolving conflicts, responsibility, decision-making skills and safety. Other social skills are also

imparted through the PSD methodology. Some of these include turn-taking, listening, helping others, appreciating each other and resolving simple moral dilemmas.

From my experience as a PSD teacher, students show great interest in PSD sessions. They regard Personal and Social Development as an interesting and interactive subject. In my opinion, PSD is very relevant to the children's lives since they are constantly being encouraged to participate in discussions and activities, share their ideas and opinions, be creative and learn skills which eventually equip them to become happy and fulfilled individuals, prepared for concrete life experiences.



During PSD sessions, students are seated in the form of a circle. According to Roffey this format is very important because it represents connection and inclusion where no one is left out and encourages unity and respect for others (Camilleri et al., 2012). Muscat's (2006) National Evaluation of the PSD programme points out that when sitting in a small group circle set-up, students feel more appreciated. Moreover, this kind of arrangement fosters communication, interaction and empathy. Empathy provides the ability to recognise what other people are feeling and is the foundation to care for others. The roots of generosity, kindness, sympathy, caring and compassion are all found in empathy (Killick, 2006). Through PSD, children learn the skill of empathy, an ability which lies at the heart of Emotional Literacy. Indeed, empathy is a significant skill in developing Emotional Literacy.

In PSD, there is an emphasis on learning by doing through experiential learning. Students are learning from experience through role-play, case

scenarios and other activities. Matthews (2006) insists that there are many benefits when students have opportunities to learn through experiences. Since during PSD sessions students are actively interacting, this means that great work is done on Emotional Literacy because students are continually involved in the learning process (Camilleri et al., 2012). Moreover, learning experiences must be processed and processing is very important in PSD sessions.

Processing in PSD and Emotional Literacy

As PSD focuses on eliciting, facilitating and processing rather than teaching, it differentiates itself from other subjects (Camilleri et al., 2012). Emotional Literacy is developed through processing during PSD sessions. During processing, students use communication skills to express themselves and their emotions, use listening skills, understand others and learn negotiation strategies. Ideas, together with attitudes, are challenged. Since processing enables students to 'integrate and internalise' the experiences they get during the different activities, they are empowered "to transfer the learned skills to real-life situations" (Camilleri et al., 2012: 28).

Processing in PSD helps to foster an emotionally engaging setting where effective communication takes place as children are left free to express their emotions, thoughts and opinions. Processing helps children to develop intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness which is crucial in primary and secondary years, in order to become emotionally literate individuals. Through processing, children learn to understand themselves better and to listen to other people, thus recognising that others can have different opinions and therefore they obtain a better understanding of themselves and of other people (Camilleri et al., 2012). Being aware and able to understand themselves and other's feelings enable more effective interaction. Through processing, students also acquire an essential skill which is listening. Bocchino insists that listening is an important skill which students need in order to develop Emotional Literacy (Camilleri et al., 2012). Indeed, processing promotes learning from experience, encourages practical learning, ensures empowerment and enhances quality of life.

Conclusion

Studies show clear evidence of the numerous benefits of Emotional Literacy. By being emotionally literate, people are able to make their emotions work for them and other people, instead of against them. So, they are skilled at managing challenging emotional situations that sometimes lead to arguing and hurting others and they learn to enjoy caring, optimistic and joyful emotions instead. Emotional Literacy improves relationships with other people and builds caring possibilities among people, thus facilitating the feeling of community.



In PSD sessions, students are seated in the form of a circle.

Personal and Social Development promotes Emotional Literacy through both its contents and delivery. As a PSD teacher, I am very enthusiastic to facilitate PSD sessions which empower children to enhance their holistic well-being, help them to become emotionally literate, develop their talents and potential, improve their self-esteem and develop other skills which will be beneficial for their life experiences. Consequently, children look forward to PSD sessions with great enthusiasm.

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Marcelle Vella is a PSD teacher and she facilitates PSD sessions in Primary Schools in Gozo.

Book: De Soldanis: an eighteenth century intellectual

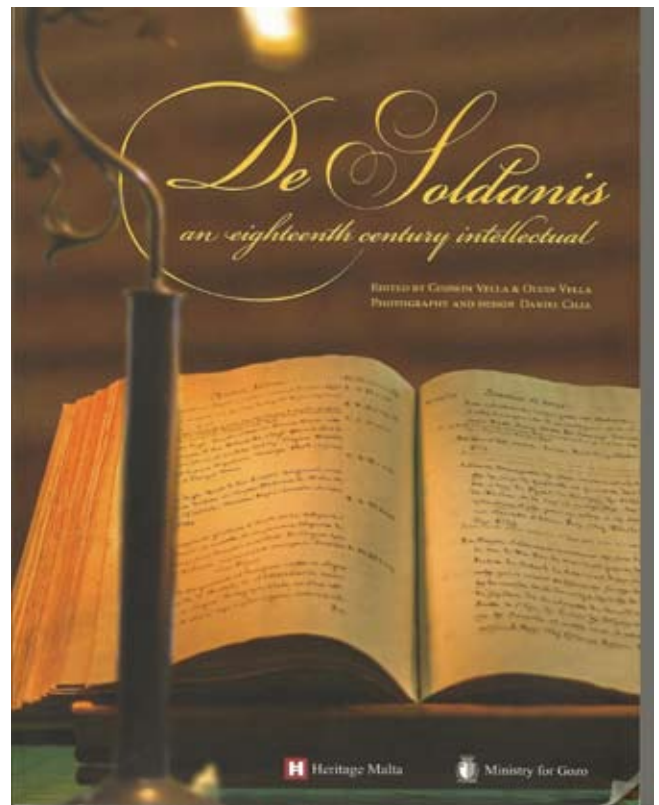
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Edited by Godwin Vella and Olvin Vella,
Photography by Daniel Cilia,
Malta, Heritage Malta/Ministry for Gozo, 2012,
pp. 144.

A book that did not attract the amount of attention that it truly deserves is the publication entitled *De Soldanis – an eighteenth century intellectual*, joint-publication issued by Heritage Malta and the Ministry for Gozo, edited by Godwin Vella and Olvin Vella with photographs by Daniel Cilia.

The year 2012, saw the celebrations of the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of this great Gozitan scholar whose reputation could not be limited to the shores of the Maltese islands but went beyond into the adjacent European continent. Before the present publication, De Soldanis had already been the subject of various scholarly writings; in 2010 the Department of Maltese within the University of Malta had dedicated its annual issue of the *Journal of Maltese Studies* (no 27) to Agius de Soldanis and the presentable publication was edited by Mr. Olvin Vella. Before that, way back in 1999, the newly-established Fondazzjoni Belt Victoria commemorated its very beginning with the publication of De Soldanis' *Gozo Antico E Profano, Sacro e Moderno*, translated into Maltese by Mons. Ġużeppi Farrugia; the publication was presented in both a one-volume paperback and in two volumes enclosed in a box. Therefore it is certainly not the case of a local patriot forgotten in the mists in a well-planned rehabilitation of the Gozitan polymath.

De Soldanis – An eighteenth century intellectual is the work of various authors or rather of different researchers, all experts in their own respective fields of study. Rosabelle Carabott's 'Timeline' is definitely to be lauded since it provides the reader who may be only slightly interested in the life of De Soldanis with the main activities of his life. Godwin Vella, who like De Soldanis, hails from Gozo, writes about De Soldanis' 'humble roots'. Dr. Arnold Cassola's contribution focuses on the Gozitan identity of the



Gozitan cleric while Dr William Zammit writes about the not-so-positive involvement of De Soldanes with the Order. Other studies included in the volume are by Gozitan archaeologist George Azzopardi, John J. Borg, Liam Gauci, Janica Magro and Biagio Vella. At the end of the book one finds a catalogue of the exhibition which was held on the occasion of the third centenary since his birth.

I believe the Vella, Vella & Cilia publication is to be cherished by both professional and amateur historians and readers of Melitensia, or rather Gaultana. Running into 144 pages, it is a very attractive publication with hundreds of photographs some of which cover entire pages. It is certainly the main source of literature and information about Ġan Piet Agius De Soldanis. There is no doubt that the book contains first-hand knowledge most of which is original and never published before. Although the book is almost one year old, its contents are ever new, ready to captivate the reader and instil in him the need to know more and more about such an interesting seventeenth-century Gozitan personality who has been rightly called the 'Father of Gozitan historiography'.

Book Series: Maltese for Foreigners

REVIEWED BY ESTHER GALEA

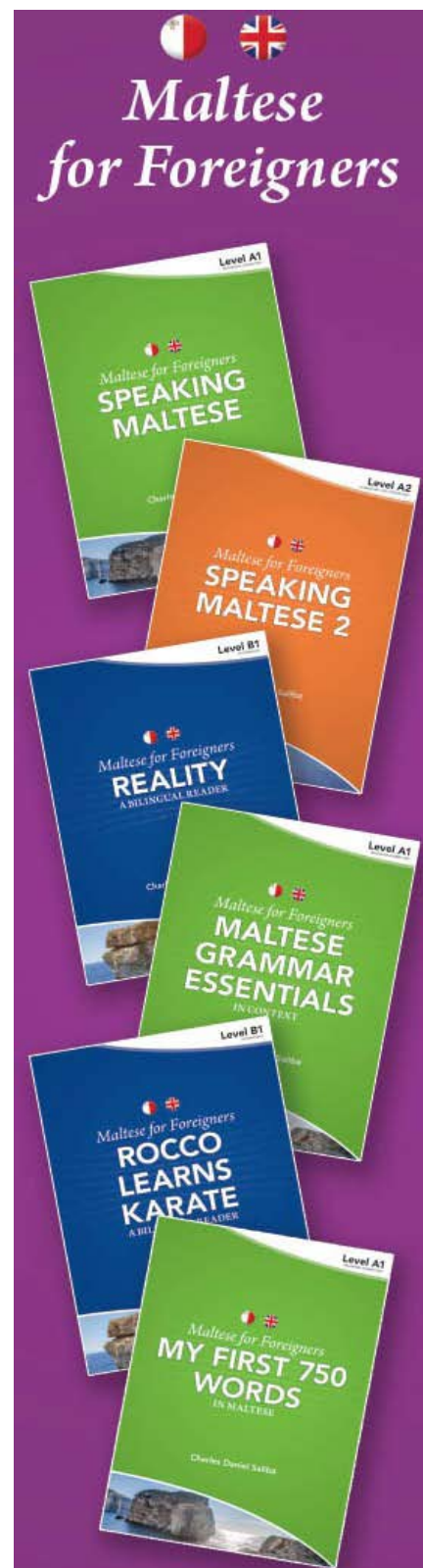
Charles Daniel Saliba,
6 Books plus CD and Syllabi
Malta, BDL Publishing, 2013.

Charles Daniel Saliba has published a Maltese/English book series entitled *Maltese for Foreigners*. This series, which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), consists of three levels.

- Level A1 (Beginners–Elementary) includes three books: *My First 750 Words in Maltese*, *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context* and *Speaking Maltese*. These three books are perfect for beginners and are suitable for use by individuals, by groups or in a school setting.
- Level A2 (Elementary–Pre-Intermediate) includes the book *Speaking Maltese 2*. Saliba has plans to publish *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 2* to further the lessons taught at this level.
- Level B1 (Intermediate) includes two bilingual readers: *Reality* and *Rocco Learns Karate*. In the future, Saliba will publish *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 3* to complete this level.

Saliba has also produced a CD containing the audio files linked to the books so learners can listen to native Maltese speakers reading the text and acting out the dialogues. In addition, Saliba has also devised a syllabus for each level based on the CEFR, which can be downloaded for free from his website: www.charlesdanielsaliba.com.

The bilingual series is aimed at beginners who want to learn Maltese and advance to the intermediate level. This series is based on a needs analysis Saliba conducted with foreigners learning Maltese and instructors teaching Maltese to foreigners. *Maltese for Foreigners* is a by-product of Saliba's PhD research, undertaken at the University of Sheffield, focusing on teaching Maltese as a foreign language and sponsored by a Malta Government Scholarship Scheme Grant.



Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Courses Offered at the University Gozo Campus

In October, the University of Malta, once again, launched a number of new courses at the Gozo Campus. Three new courses commenced this academic year, namely, a course leading to the Diploma in Commerce, a course leading to the Bachelor of Commerce, and a course leading to the Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education. The latter is being part-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) under Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013.

Four other courses, which also commenced this year, are being offered via video-conferencing. These are a Master in Business Administration - Executive; a Higher Diploma in Public Accounting and Finance; a Certificate in Clinical Nursing Practice - Critical Care; and a Certificate in Clinical Nursing Practice - Theatre Nursing. The video-conferencing system enables Gozitan students to participate and follow the lectures from Gozo without the need to cross over to Malta.

The Lace Making Programme of the Gozo Campus, offered a certificate course in Lace Making. This course, which is spread over one academic year, enables the participants to learn the techniques of Maltese lace on a professional basis as well as the history of Maltese lace and the technical drawing of patterns required in the craft.

Public Lecture by Artist Graham Gurr

On 21st September, Artist Graham Gurr delivered an interesting lecture on sketchbooks. The lecture focused on the use, contents and types of sketchbooks used by artists, architects and designers. During the lecture, a number of examples were shown and presented using a powerpoint presentation. The examples included numerous sketchbooks of Graham Gurr and of his students, of artists Maxine Attard and Austin Camilleri, as well as example sketches of architect Professor

Richard England. Guests were invited to inspect and peruse the sketchbooks and also participate in an open discussion on the use and contents of these sketchbooks. The lecture was the second on this theme, given firstly in Malta and now in Gozo.

Public Lecture by Professor Stephen Harrison

On 8th August 2013, the Malta Classics Association organised a public lecture by Professor Stephen Harrison entitled 'Seamus Heaney and the Classics'. Stephen Harrison is a professor of Latin Literature at Oxford University and a leading classical scholar in the international field. The lecture was extremely well-received by those who attended.

Seamus Heaney and the Classics
A talk by Professor Stephen Harrison of Oxford University on Seamus Heaney, Greek Tragedy and Vergil with performed excerpts

8th August 2013
19:00 - 20:00
Venue: University Campus, Gozo
Entrances Free
Refreshments will be served after the lecture

Malta Classics Association

Graduation of University Gozo Campus Students

One hundred and eleven students who completed courses at the University Gozo Campus received their certificates during the recent graduation ceremonies held at the University of Malta. The courses in which students graduated were the Bachelor of Commerce (21 graduants), Higher Diploma in Public Accounting and Finance (8 graduants), the Diploma in Commerce (8 graduants) and the Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education (74 graduants).

The graduants in Bachelor of Commerce were John Attard, Marlene Azzopardi, Geoffrey Bajada, John Bajada, Miriam Bajada, Michael Buttigieg, Marvic Cini, Stephen Cini, Annabel Cordina, Pauline Cutajar, Rachel Elizabeth Dingli, Jeanette Fava, Yosef Magro, Josephine Jesse Mercieca, Carmela Saliba, Philip Dominic Sammut, Angele Scicluna, Christopher James Sciortino, Nicole Sultana, Raymond Tabone and Claudio Terribile.

Those who graduated in the Diploma in Commerce were Claire Azzopardi, Stefan Azzopardi, Andrew Gerard Brooke, Jason Buhagiar, Kevin Galea, Anthony Emanuel Grech, Louise Saliba Grech and Noel Zammit.



The graduants in Bachelor of Commerce, with Professor Lino Briguglio.

The graduants in Higher Diploma in Public Accounting and Finance were John Attard, Kurt Azzopardi, Lorne Joseph Cremona, Duncan Genuis, Maria Dolores Grech Calafato, Alessandra Haber, Frank Micallef and Michael Vella.

Those who graduated in the Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education were Manuela Abela, Graziella Agius, Sandi Apap, Lucienne Attard, Janet Azzopardi, Janice Azzopardi, John Paul Azzopardi, Sara Azzopardi, Mary Louise Bajada, Graziella Borg, Joseph Borg, Maria Dolores Borg, Mary Grace Borg, Ann Marie Cassar, Melanie Cassar, Loretta Cauchi, Antoine Cini, David Cini, Antonella Cutajar, Charlon Cutajar, Janelle Victoria Cutajar, Loretta Cutajar, Marvic Debono, Charmaine Fava Zerafa, Louise Annabel Fenech, Elaine Galea, Romina Galea, Susan Galea, Marit Gatt, Alicia Catherine Grech, Daren Grech, Kylie Grech, Georgine Hili, Micheline Magrin, Antonella J. Mercieca, Monica Mercieca, Therese Mercieca, Irene Mizzi, Sina Mizzi, Michelle Pace, Stephanie Pisani, Chantelle Portelli, Larissa Portelli, Audrey-Ann Rapa, Joanne Rapa, Marlene Rapa, Christian Sacco, Janette Said, Anna Saliba, Catherine Saliba, Christine Schembri, Antoine Spiteri, Chantelle Sultana, Clare Carmen Sultana, Josette Sultana, Samuel Sultana, Stephanie Sultana, Tania Sultana, Tiziana Sultana, Pamela Sultana Said, Jennifer Ann Theuma, Diane Marie Thewma, Annabelle

Vella, Joette Vella, Josianne Vella, Maria Vella, Jennifer-Lynn Vella Grima, Jacqueline Xuereb, Rose Ann Xuereb, Francelle Zammit, Vincienne Zammit, Elaine Zammit Haber, Antoinette Zerafa and Monica Zerafa.

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



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