

# **THE G OZO OBSERVER**

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## The Gozo Observer

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**Front Cover Picture:** Xlendi  
Courtesy of Joseph Calleja

# Editorial: Too Many Eggs in One Basket

Tourism is one of the economic pillars of the Maltese economy. It is estimated that it contributes about 12% to GDP directly and possibly the same amount indirectly, as a result of demand from other sectors including food and beverages suppliers, laundry services, banking, and transport services. The Maltese Islands are one of the most tourist-dense destinations in the world, in terms of visitors per resident, number of tourist beds per square kilometre and share of tourist expenditure in total final expenditure.

The debate on the pros and cons of tourism has often been conducted with regard to two broad concepts, namely tourism carrying capacity and sustainable tourism, where the economic benefits of tourism are set against environmental degradation and social discomfort. With improvements in income and decreases in the cost of travelling, tourism has exploded over the past decades, and in many destinations, the local communities have started to experience the negative side of high rates of tourist inflows, mostly arising from overcrowding, traffic congestion, misbehaviour by visitors and damage to the physical environment. In recent years there have been several reports in the media and papers in many academic journals describing the exasperation of the local residents with what became known as ‘overtourism’ – signifying that there are too many visitors to a particular destination at the same time.

In the case of Malta there is the added disadvantage that tourism is leading to an unbalanced economy, with excessive dependence on tourism expenditure, which as we have witnessed during the first half of 2020, is a very risky business and can decrease quickly, leading to a sudden loss of jobs and income. During the first half of 2020 it was a virus that downed the tourist industry. But a similar situation might happen if the civil war in Libya flares and spills over into the Mediterranean. We have seen how fragile the tourist industry is when terrorist activity in Tunisia and Egypt dramatically led to a rapid decrease of visitors to

those destinations. The argument that the industry is a fragile one applies to the Maltese Islands as a whole, but even more so to the Island of Gozo, which has a higher tourist density than Malta, in terms of visitors per resident. In 2018, I estimate that the ratio of tourists per person in Malta was 5.4 (which is very high when compared to many other island destinations) while in Gozo this was 11.3 (excluding day trippers). No wonder that many locations in Gozo are becoming highly congested and overcrowded, especially during the summer months.

All this would seem to suggest that Gozo has too many eggs in one basket. This is not an argument against tourism, but one against excessive dependence on this risky economic activity. Gozo could diversify its economy by encouraging investment in other forms of economic activity with suitable incentives coming from the central government. The Gozitan agricultural sector should be supported better for this purpose. Incentives should also be put in place to encourage activities that rely on electronic communications, including financial services. Such diversification may also encourage young Gozitans to seek work in Gozo rather than “emigrate” to Malta to earn a living. Tourism should obviously remain an important economic activity in Gozo, but reliance of this risky industry would be reduced with diversification.

*Lino Briguglio*

*This editorial was written before the onset of the Corona virus outbreak, which is negatively affecting the tourism sector in Gozo, and as a result the Gozitan economy, emphasizing the riskiness of having too many eggs in one basket is a risky economic approach.*

# Vestiges of Material Culture at Il-Lunzjata Valley and its Immediate Environs

GEORGE AZZOPARDI

## Introduction

Nowadays, people are attracted to the valley of Il-Lunzjata by its peaceful atmosphere and natural beauty. But in earlier times, it seems to have been rather its water sources and the resultant agricultural fertility that determined the anthropogenic activity that unfolded there over many centuries. Considering the importance attached by past societies to these two elements, namely water and fertility, one should not be surprised to find that, as a source of both elements, the valley's potential was wisely identified and exploited by the people living in its neighbourhood. The valley is still exploited to this day mainly for agricultural purposes.

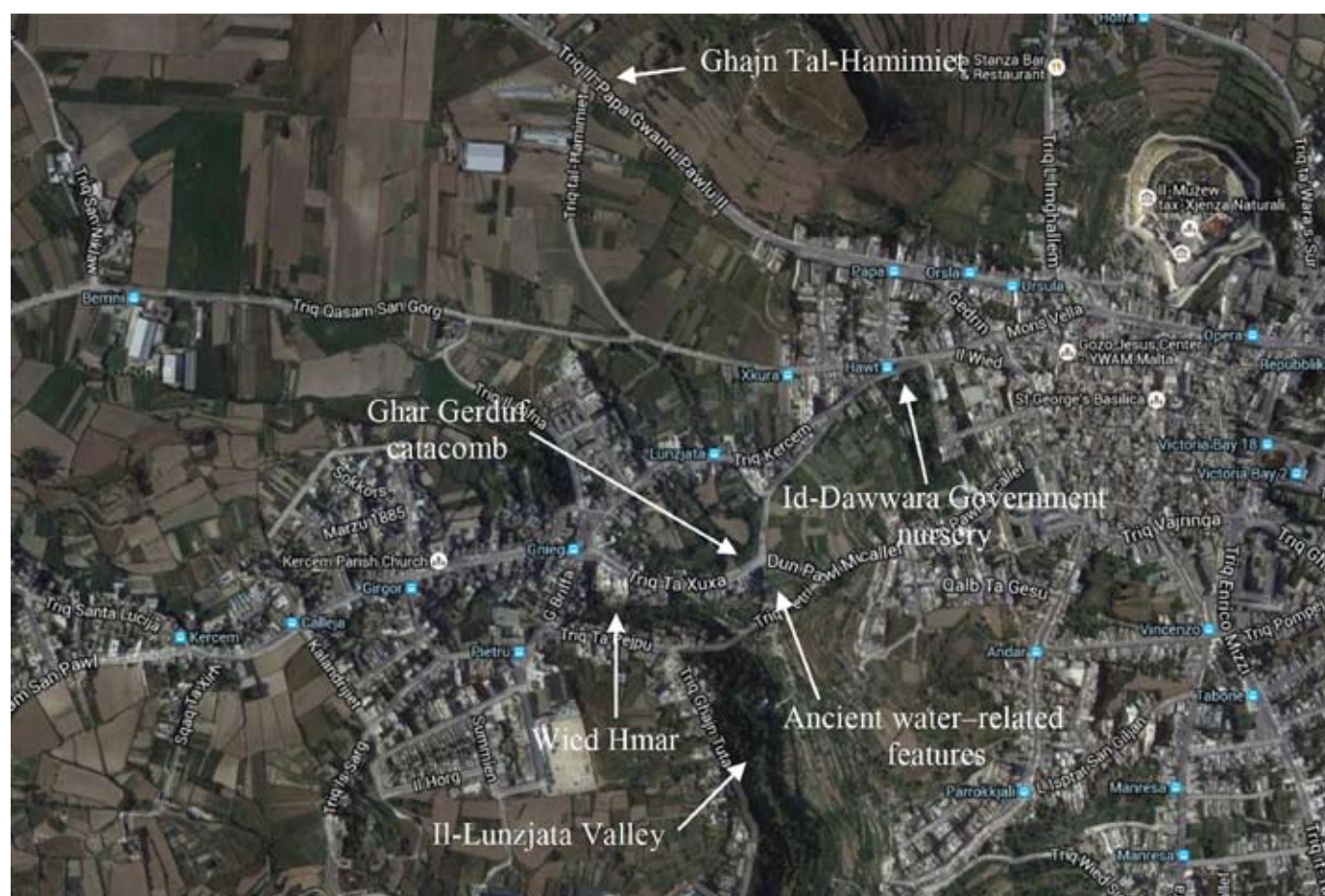
It is not uncommon that past human activities leave material traces behind them on the basis of which one could identify their nature, significance, and

temporal extent. In the case of Il-Lunzjata Valley, such material traces do not seem to abound. So inevitably, we shall be focusing on the very few surviving ones without extending too far beyond the immediate environs of the valley.

### Extent and Characteristics of the Valley

The valley's main course runs from the area of Id-Dawwara in Victoria and extends till it reaches the larger Xlendi Valley on its south. A shorter tributary known as 'Wied Hmar', running between Ta' Xuxa and Ta' Pejpu Streets at Ta' Kercem, joins Il-Lunzjata Valley from its western side.

The valley's immediate environs appear to have been a source of good building stone. If, as held by surviving tradition, it provided building stone for the 17<sup>th</sup> century enlargement and renewal of the



**Figure 1.** A north-oriented satellite image showing the main sites mentioned in the text. Image: Google Earth; Graphics: Max Xuereb.



Citadel's bastions, the above-mentioned tributary is largely an artificial one, having taken its present shape as a result of the extent of extracted stone.

More quarries do also make their appearance, particularly on the valley's eastern side. Many of these were later turned into agricultural fields and are still worked to this day. The site of Għar Gerduf catacomb (to be spoken of further below) was also itself heavily quarried leaving the catacomb extensively mutilated almost beyond recognition.

It cannot be excluded that, in a likewise manner, more archaeological remains in the area encountered the same fate as a result of this quarrying activity and were completely obliterated.

### **Stone for a Monumental Structure?**

A significant structural relic was brought to light at nearby Id-Dawwara. Whilst digging in preparation for the foundations of a wall between the government nursery and a private residence in September 1935, the workmen came across a huge monolithic globigerina stone lying horizontally or lengthwise under a thick layer of soil.

A trial trench dug to the rear of the stone revealed a rough paving on which the stone was evidently resting. This paving consisted of soft stone cobbles irregularly laid in clayey soil and forming a very rough surface. No other substantial stones or foundations were met with. A Roman date was assigned to the monolith and the paving on the basis of Roman amphorae fragments and a copper coin (semis) of Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161) that seem to have been found in broad association with them. A 17<sup>th</sup> century coin of Grand Master Adrien de Wignacourt (1690-7) was also found (MAR 1935-6: XXV-I). The latter might have been a later intrusion.

On one of its faces, the stone displays marks left by a narrow, pointed tool, probably a scabbling hammer (also called a spalling hammer). No similar marks can be seen on the other faces of the stone. Yet on another face, which is perpendicular to the face displaying the tool marks, the stone carries two holes quite distant from each other and easily visible.

The tool marks might have resulted from the cutting of a separation trench during the extraction process of the stone in the quarry. The holes, on the



**Figure 2.** The huge monolithic Globigerina stone in situ on its discovery in 1935 at Id-Dawwara. Courtesy: National Archives, Gozo Section.



**Figure 3.** The huge monolithic stone discovered at Id-Dawwara. Presently preserved in an upright position next to the government nursery's main entrance.

other hand, might have been meant for the insertion of lifting equipment and, thus, could facilitate the lifting of the stone (for a similar example, see Pearson, 2006: Colour Plate 23) as the so-called 'lewis holes' do. Along with the position in which the stone was found, these indicators would seem to suggest that we are dealing with a freshly quarried stone while its size may suggest a monumental

structure as its destination. We cannot tell, however, whether its findspot was its actual final destination or not. On the other hand, as quarrying was often a highly localised activity, carried out when and where stone was required (Pearson, 2006: 34), and good building stone is known to have been available in the area of Id-Dawwara as evidenced by quarrying activity in the vicinity (see above), one may perhaps speculate that the stone was quarried from a nearby source.

Following its discovery, the stone was preserved in an upright position in its present location next to the main entrance of Dawwara Nursery. A cemented joint is currently visible on the stone as a result of a breakage of the stone that was done either accidentally or deliberately to facilitate the lifting of the stone in its present upright position.

### Ancient Water-Related Features

A number of rock-cut features are encountered on approaching the valley towards the monumental archway that leads to the chapel of the Annunciation. These may have originated as natural solution pans (or pits) that later became evidently associated with water uses for some unclear purpose. This is suggested by the presence of rock-cut water channels directing water into these pools / ponds. They surely could not have been supplied with water from any springs around the underlying valley. If, on the other hand, we assume that



**Figure 4.** Rock-cut features near Il-Lunzjata Valley. These were evidently associated with water presumably fed from the relatively nearby Ghajn Tal-Hamimiet.





**Figure 5.** What survives today of Ghar Gerduf burial complex. Present entrance is to the right.

water was fed under gravitational flow from the relatively nearby spring, known as ‘Għajn Tal-Hamimiet’ situated on a higher level on the way to Ta’ Pinu, and reached the pools / ponds through the above-mentioned and other (possibly, buried) channels, this may give an indication of what sort of activity these rock features might have been associated with.

Interestingly ‘Għajn Hamiem’ is the location of a spring situated just beyond the walls of Mdina and overlooking the railway bridge below Mtarfa, in Malta. It means ‘the spring of the baths / bathing complex’ (Wettinger, 2000: 184 (sub ‘Għajn Hamiem’)) or ‘the spring that supplies water to the baths / bathing complex’. If not referring to the one on the way to Ta’ Pinu, ‘Il-Hamimiet’ or ‘Ta’ Hamimiet’ is the name of another district in Gozo, meaning ‘the baths’ or ‘at the baths’ (Wettinger, 2000: 294 (sub ‘Hamimiet, il-, ta’)). In addition, ‘Harit il-Hamiam’ meaning ‘baths’ street’ was the name of a street in the Gozo Citadel (Wettinger, 2000: 299 (sub ‘Harit il-Hamiam’)). Logically, the analogous toponym in the neighbourhood of Il-Lunzjata Valley in Gozo should have carried a similar meaning. Guided by this toponymic indication, one may perhaps speculate that if our rock features were fed by water from the spring known as ‘Għajn Tal-Hamimiet’, they may have thus formed part of a bathing complex of which they are the only surviving remains.

### **The Funerary Complex of Ghar Gerduf**

At a junction between three roads respectively leading to Ta’ Kerċem, Il-Lunzjata Valley, and Victoria, one can see an opening in a quarried rock face. This opening leads into the barely but solely surviving funerary complex or catacomb in Gozo that once accommodated multiple burials.

Commonly known as ‘Għar Gerduf’, this rock-cut complex appears to have accommodated a number of arcosolia (arched burial recesses) situated along corridors. Some of these arcosolia and remnants of corridors (particularly, their ceilings) still survive (Bonanno and Cilia, 2005: 348-9). Old photographic documentations even show raised burial troughs. Both arcosolia and troughs held corpses in a manner not dissimilar to that evidenced in late Roman or early Christian catacombs in Malta (Bonanno and Cilia, 2005: 324-37).

This does not mean, however, that these burial features can be securely dated to late Roman times as their typology – in particular, that of the raised burial troughs – is not unique to the late Roman or early Christian period. The social and religious identity of those once buried inside is even more problematic. There is no material evidence – by way of symbols, iconography, or epigraphy – to shed light on this or to support the alleged Christian



**Figure 6.** Ghar Gerduf catacomb with burial troughs that no longer survive. Picture possibly taken towards the beginning of the 20th century. Courtesy: National Archives, Gozo Section.

nature of this catacomb. Therefore, there is no way of telling whether this burial complex was used by Christians or non-Christians whilst, at the same time, one cannot exclude an indiscriminate use by individuals of different social and religious backgrounds (see Azzopardi, 2007: 22-3).

This state of affairs was brought about largely by the complex's extensive mutilation as a result of quarrying activity, transforming the site almost beyond recognition. By the time Cesare Vassallo was writing in 1876, on-site quarrying was still going on and much of the complex's features had already been lost (Vassallo, 1876: 40). We have already seen above that this whole area near Il-Lunzjata Valley was subjected to quarrying activity and Ghar Gerduf was not spared.

### Concluding Observations

The area of Il-Lunzjata Valley does not abound in archaeological remains while the few surviving ones do not excel in significance not least due to their bad state of preservation as in the case of Ghar Gerduf.

Some rock shelters overlooking the pathway leading to the chapel of the Annunciation may have also once held anthropogenic activities in unknown times. However, the subsequent use of most of them as animal pens or storage spaces for

agricultural produce in relatively recent times has obliterated many earlier traces, making detection of previous human activity there even more difficult.

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George Azzopardi started his studies in archaeology at the University of Malta where he graduated BA (Hons) and MA. Since then, he has nearly always been employed in the heritage sector. He graduated PhD from Durham University (UK) with research on religious landscapes and identities of the Maltese Islands in a Mediterranean island setting from the Phoenician to late Roman times. He also presented papers and posters at international conferences in the UK, Germany, and Spain and contributed articles to journals on themes related to local archaeology, mostly that of the Classical period. His latest monograph is entitled 'Elements of Continuity. Stone Cult in the Maltese Islands' and was published by Archaeopress (Oxford).



# The Vitality of Maltese Dialects in Gozo

ANTOINETTE CAMILLERI GRIMA

## Gozitan Dialects: a Challenge to Sociolinguistic Theory

The editorial of *The Gozo Observer* No 19 in December 2008 was entitled 'The demise of Gozitan dialects'. Ten years later, in 2018, I decided to examine the claim that Gozitan dialects were disappearing, from a linguistic point of view, as well as by examining the perceptions of the Gozitans about the vitality of their Maltese language varieties. In a questionnaire I conducted in 2018, a few Gozitans expressed a concern that immigration of foreigners to Gozo and of young Gozitans to Malta might be causing a reduction in opportunities for the use of Gozitan-Maltese varieties. However, several other respondents interpreted the use of their Gozitan dialect as an inalienable attribute of culture and identity.

The present-day Gozitan (and Maltese) linguistic landscape can best be described as a continuum ranging from the use of a variety of dialects of Maltese at one end, through to bilingual usage of Standard Maltese and Maltese-English at the other end (Borg, 2011; Camilleri Grima 2009).

There are no national statistics about the number of dialects and their use in Malta and Gozo, and none of the national censuses ever included any reference to the dialects, presumably because the dialects are not considered as a standard form of speech. However, several scientific linguistic and sociolinguistic studies have recorded, described and analysed the rich linguistic variation found on the Maltese Islands, and in Gozo in particular (Azzopardi-Alexander, 2011; Farrugia, 2016; Rapa, 1995; Said, 2007; Spiteri, 2016).

The knowledge and use of a number of linguistic varieties is known as plurilingualism, and it can be an individual as well as a societal phenomenon. Plurilingualism includes multidialectism, as in the case of several dialects in Gozo, and it can be considered as a stable phenomenon. Its resilience is explained through the concepts of 'bonding' and 'bridging' (Newman and Dale, 2005). Social 'bonding' refers to links of trust created by the use of a particular language, which strengthen a community's cohesion. 'Bridging' through the use of other languages by the same community links it to the rest of the world. It is through this



duality of bonding and bridging that the Gozitan population has sustained linguistic resilience and stability, rather than reorganisation (Roche, 2017), or homogenisation (Leonard, 2011), over time.

The theoretical interest of this discussion stems from the fact that Gozo is a micro-territory, with a 'double' island status (European Commission, 2003: 4). It covers an area of sixty-seven square kilometres, and has a high population density of six hundred persons per square kilometre. Sociolinguists argue that a high population density which results in dense social networks is generally considered to function as a norm-enforcement mechanism (Milroy, 1980). In a plurilingual and/or multidialectal context this would normally result in a reduction of language variation (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram, 1999; Perea, 2007; Côté, Knooihuizen and Narbonne, 2016). On the other hand, in a context of insularity, dialects have a stronger chance of survival (Maumoon, 2002; Schreier, 2003).

Gozo presents a challenging scenario on both fronts. First of all, in spite of a high population density and dense social networks, there is no evidence of a significant reduction of language variation. Secondly, the concept of insularity needs to be contested with reference to language and culture in Malta and Gozo. Although insularity refers to islandness, it generally denotes isolation, remoteness and a narrow-minded or provincial mentality, 'not willing to accept different or foreign ideas' (McIntosh, 2013: 810). Although Malta and Gozo are separate from other countries because they are surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, they cannot be ascribed cultural or linguistic seclusion. Scirihā/Vassallo (2015) argue that 'Malta has never been culturally insular' (p. 123), and that Malta's current multilingual linguistic landscape reveals that Malta is 'far from insular' (p. 134). The Mediterranean Sea cannot be interpreted only as a separating factor, because for many centuries it was also the carrier of many cultures to Malta and Gozo, and of the Maltese and Gozitans to other lands and back, including third generation returned migrants who speak Gozitan dialects (Xerri, 2002).

### **A Historical Perspective**

The existence of dialectal varieties of Maltese in Gozo and Malta is documented historically as

from the eighteenth century. The earliest linguistic descriptions are given by Vassalli (1796) who divided Malta into four dialectal areas and referred to Gozo as a fifth, distinct, dialectal region. Furthermore, Vassalli stated that the Gozitan dialect could be divided into smaller units or sub-dialects, though the differences were small (Fenech, 1981). One of the earliest written documents in a Gozitan dialect is a two-page letter written by someone from Għarb in 1838 in dialect (the Maltese language was standardised at the beginning of the 20th century), and published in a newspaper of the time (Galea, 2018). According to Galea (2018), the dialect used in this letter is similar to today's Għarb dialect. Following Vassalli's (1796) claim of phonological and morphological dialectal differences among the Gozitan varieties of Maltese, similar attestations followed by Stumme (1904), and later by Aquilina and Isserlin (1981), and by Agius (1992). Aquilina and Isserlin (1981) produced a detailed description of vowel realisation in the dialects of Gozo. Among other conclusions, they state that diphthongisation is well-represented in Gozo, and that 'Gozo tends to present a somewhat archaic picture, comparable in some degree to the Maltese represented in the few documents available for the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries' (Aquilina and Isserlin, 1981: 202). This is not surprising considering that Gozo was re-populated with many Maltese after 1551 (Curmi, 2014; Mifsud, 2012). As mentioned above, linguistic studies have attested the use of several varieties of Maltese in Gozo in the past. I will now deal in more detail with the current setting.

### **A Synchronic View**

Standard Maltese (SM) is the native variety of many speakers on the island of Malta, but it is also a superimposed variety for speakers of another variety of Maltese, in Malta and in Gozo. Speakers of the dialects use dialectal Maltese in their home and village or town environment, with family and friends from the same town, but switch to SM in formal occasions, and with other speakers of Maltese. Generally speaking, all varieties of Maltese are mutually intelligible, but there can also be significant phonological and lexical differences that make it difficult for persons from Malta to follow discourse in a Gozitan dialect, and for Gozitans to understand some Maltese dialects (Camilleri Grima, 2009). In this chapter, I use the term dialect to refer to varieties of Maltese because as Borg (2011) explains,





Figure 1: Map of Gozo (courtesy of Joel Grima)

Maltese and Maltese-Gozitan varieties ‘constitute different dialects since they differ systematically on all levels of linguistic analysis’ (p. 11). Scholars have written about Maltese dialectology (Vanhove, 1999), and Gozitan dialects have been investigated and identified as dialects on the basis of their phonetic and phonological (Aquilina and Isserlin, 1981; Azzopardi-Alexander, 2011; Farrugia, 2016), morphological (Agius, 1992; Borg, 2011), syntactic (Borg, 2011) and lexical properties (Rapa, 1995; Said, 2007; Spiteri, 2016).

### Dialectal Differences in Gozo

The distinctive characteristics of the Gozitan dialects are not only a perception held by the Gozitans and Maltese alike, but they are also evidenced in sociolinguistic studies carried out scientifically. One of the recent studies of Gozitan dialects was conducted by Farrugia (2016) who analysed the vocalic systems of the dialects of Nadur and Sannat, using acoustic tools. He found that there are acoustic characteristics that are idiosyncratic to these dialects. This means that the metalinguistic representations expressed by the respondents of my 2018 questionnaire (see below) have been verified by linguistic studies. The Gozitan community is conscious of its multidialectal repertoire and is able to express itself even about minute elements. This is one of the signs of this community’s language vitality, and its sense of bonding through discursive practices.

But apart from phonetic/phonological and morphological distinctions, scholars have also described lexical variation among the Gozitan dialects. For instance, Rapa (1995) studied the etymology of names given to eighty sweets and biscuits in six parts of Gozo (Victoria, Xewkija, Xagħra, Qala, Għarb, and Sannat). She collected data from seventy-seven informants representative of age groups, educational background, and towns. Table 1 presents some examples of major lexical variation among these towns (based on Rapa, 1995).

Rapa (1995) noted that there was a tendency for the younger generation to use some terms in English, such as ‘jam tart’ for what older people called ‘xirek’; ‘rock bun’ for ‘ħbejża ħelwa’ or ‘pasta tal-frott’; and ‘fingers’ or ‘sponge’ for ‘felli ta’ Spanja’ in Xagħra; and ‘peni ta’ Spanja’ in Sannat.

Spiteri (2016) conducted a lexical analysis related to clothing. She worked with forty Gozitan informants, equally distributed between San Lawrenz, Victoria, Xewkija and Nadur and across age groups. She presented her informants with 66 pictures of different clothes (summerwear, winterwear, swimwear, underwear, headwear etc.) and asked them to name each item. She obtained huge variation from her informants for almost all items. In Table 2, I present some of the geographically determined variation, which might not be absolute, but shows clear tendencies. In the case of clothes,

| SM  | Victoria  | Xewkija                | Xaghra         | Qala                      | Gharb                      | Sannat                 |
|---|---|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| qassatella                                      | qassatella/<br>kassatella<br>(by people<br>living behind<br>St Frances<br>church) | kasrija                |                |                           | ftira tal-ħaxu<br>kannella | barmil tal-<br>lewż    |
| biskuttini tal-<br>lewż<br>(almond<br>biscuits) | bankuncini  |                        |                |                           | bronkoncini                |                        |
| biskuttell<br>(rusk)                            |   | felli                  | baskuttin      | baskuttel                 | fettul/bezzun              | baskuttajn             |
| pasta tal-krema<br>(cream cake)                 | kassatella  |                        |                |                           | ftira tal-ġamm             | torta                  |
| pasta tal-<br>kowkonat<br>(coconut cake)        |   | balla tal-<br>kowkonat |                | plattini tal-<br>kowkonat | ftira tal-<br>kowkonat     | balla tal-<br>kowkonat |
| pudina tal-ħobż<br>(bread pudding)              |   | ħobża sewda            | baskuttin kbir |                           | ftira                      |                        |
| prinolata (a<br>carnival cake)                  | muntanja tas-<br>silġ   |                        |                | torri                     | fanal                      |                        |
| kannol (filled<br>horn)                         |   |                        |                |                           | lembut                     |                        |

Table 1: Lexical variation in the domain of sweets and biscuits (based on Rapa 1995).

| English  | San Lawrenz  | Victoria     | Xewkija   | Nadur             |
|----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|
| raincoat | raincoat     | windcheater  | (various) | ġakketta tax-xita |
| bathrobe | dressng gown | dressng gown | (various) | robe/bathrobe     |
| tank top | single       | body         | (various) | tank top          |
| beanie   | kappun       | beanie       | beritta   | (various)         |

Table 2: Lexical differences identified by Spiteri (2016).

many more words in English were used across the age groups than for food items as found by Rapa (1995). This could be as a result of the fact that twenty years passed since Rapa's study. The young generation of 1995 was the older group in Spiteri's study, and clothing habits now also included items imported along with their name in English (e.g. beanie, tank top).

### The 2018 Questionnaire

Teacher respondents of my 2018 questionnaire said that Gozitan children speak the dialect at home and at school, and they translanguage (shift) between the dialect, Maltese and English during lesson time. This shows that in 2018 the situation is more or less similar to that found by Buttigieg (1998), Casha

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>T:</b> <i>What does the word chat mean?</i></p> <p><b>P12:</b> <i>Jikliw</i></p> <p><b>T:</b> <i>Le, jieklu to eat. X'taghmlu fuq l-internet. Fuq l-internet taghmlu hekk.</i></p> <p><b>P9:</b> <i>Nixeliwh</i></p> <p><b>T:</b> <i>Le to chat meta titkellem ma' xi hadd.</i></p> <p><b>P 10:</b> <i>Iwa ahne anne ħabejp mill-Kanada u naqadow nitkellmiw mijew</i></p> |
|--|

Figure 2: A transcript from an English lesson.



(2006), Xerri (2009), and Farrugia and Xerri (2016). In 2016, Farrugia & Xerri observed, recorded and transcribed four lessons in an Early Childhood Education environment in Gozo. In all lessons, SM, English and dialectal varieties were used. During Maltese lessons, although SM was the main language of communication between the teacher and the learners, the dialect was substantially used more than English. However, in a mathematics lesson, English was more frequently used than dialectal Maltese, although SM played an important role and was used for about 50% of the lesson time. Thus, from the early years, Gozitan children translanguage between dialect, SM and English (read more on translanguage in Malta and Gozo in Camilleri Grima, 2013).

As already mentioned, in 2018 I decided to survey the perceptions of the Gozitans themselves about their language practices, particularly their understanding of their use of dialectal Maltese. It is important to consider ‘insiders’ perceptions’ (Belew, 2018: 235), and to find out how they position themselves in relation to patterns of language use. This is necessary as linguists’ descriptions ‘may not correspond to the categorizations made by the speech community’ itself (Evans, 2001: 260), and the actions of group members are more likely to be governed by their perception of the actual vitality of their group (Giles & Johnson, 1987).

In the summer of 2018 I distributed one hundred copies of a three-page questionnaire in Gozo through personal contacts, namely ex-students of mine and family friends. Ninety-seven respondents gave me their filled-in questionnaire when I personally collected it about a month later (a response rate of 97%). The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

the first section requested basic information such as the place of residence of the respondent, their gender, age bracket and level of education. In the second section the respondents were asked to tick a box to indicate with whom (e.g. parents, siblings, offspring, people from the same town), and where (in Gozo, in Malta, at work), they spoke the dialect (or did not). The third part consisted of nine open-ended questions seeking the respondents’ view of the survival and value of Gozitan dialects in the long term.

The respondents were mainly female (78%), but had various educational backgrounds and hailed from all of the Gozitan regions, encompassing small towns, villages and the surrounding rural areas known by the same name (see Tables 3, 4 and 5).

| Town in Gozo | Number of respondents |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Fontana      | 1                     |
| Għajnsielem  | 8                     |
| Għarb        | 6                     |
| Għasri       | 2                     |
| Munxar       | 10                    |
| Nadur        | 7                     |
| Qala         | 7                     |
| San Lawrenz  | 2                     |
| Ta’ Kercem   | 2                     |
| Ta’ Sannat   | 4                     |
| Victoria     | 29                    |
| Xagħra       | 8                     |
| Xewkija      | 8                     |
| Iż-Żebbuġ    | 3                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>97</b>             |

Table 3: Localities where the respondents resided.

| Level of education | Secondary school |    | Advanced level |    | Undergraduate |    | Postgraduate |    |
|--------------------|------------------|----|----------------|----|---------------|----|--------------|----|
|                    | M                | F  | M              | F  | M             | F  | M            | F  |
|                    | 5                | 10 | 4              | 14 | 4             | 21 | 8            | 31 |

Table 4: The number of male (M) and female (F) respondents and their level of education.

| Age range | 18-30 |    | 31-45 |    | 46-60 |    | 60+ |   |
|-----------|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-----|---|
|           | M     | F  | M     | F  | M     | F  | M   | F |
|           | 9     | 20 | 5     | 37 | 5     | 14 | 2   | 5 |

Table 5: The number of respondents by age range.

***Which language (variety) do Gozitans speak, where, with whom?***

The vast majority (80%) of respondents said that they speak in dialect with all family members (Table 6). Out of the 7% who said they did not, two persons specified that they switch between dialect, SM and English, and another one explained that she speaks SM because her husband and his mother are from Malta and they do not know the dialect. In answer to the question about the use of language with friends and colleagues from Gozo (Table 6), all respondents answered they spoke in dialect, irrespective of whether the friend or colleague spoke the same Gozitan variety or a different one. On the other hand, when talking with people from Malta, both in Gozo (73%) and in Malta (81%), most Gozitans would resort to SM, while with Gozitans in Malta and in Gozo 90% said they would retain the dialect for communication. My 2018 questionnaire results confirm the results obtained by Xuereb in 1996 who concluded that in formal situations Gozitans resort to SM when the degree of formality is high, but in informal situations when all participants are Gozitan they would speak in dialect.

| I speak in dialect.....               |      |     |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----|
|                                       | YES  | NO  |
| with family members                   | 80%  | 7%  |
| with friends and colleagues from Gozo | 100% | 0%  |
| with Maltese people in Gozo           | 24%  | 73% |
| with Maltese people in Malta          | 16%  | 81% |
| with Gozitan people in Malta          | 90%  | 2%  |

Table 6: Use of Gozitan and SM.

In the questionnaire respondents were asked to mention any identifying features of Gozitan dialects. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents said they could recognise one Gozitan dialect from another. They referred to their varieties as, for example, ‘Għasri’ (of Għasri), ‘Naduri’ (of Nadur) and ‘Xewkija’ (of Xewkija). Thus, the names of the dialects coincide with the names of the area where it is spoken. In order to explain how they identified one dialect from another, the respondents referred to phonetic differences, as follows:

- 64% of respondents mentioned that in Xewkija people speak with a ‘k’ (jitektellmu bil-k), meaning that speakers of Xewki pronounce the voiceless velar plosive /k/ where other speakers of Maltese would have a glottal stop. The examples given in the questionnaire were kalb for ‘qalb’ (heart), imkass for ‘imqass’ (scissors), and bakra for ‘baqra’ (cow);
- 18% of respondents mentioned that in Nadur the dialect speakers use the vowel ‘e’ instead of ‘a’, for example, beher for ‘bahar’ (sea), lehem for ‘laham’ (meat) and ieqef for ‘ieqaf’ (stop);
- 16% of respondents mentioned that in Xagħra the vowel ‘e’ is replaced by ‘a’, and gave these examples: bajt for ‘bejt’ (roof), xajn for ‘xejn’ (nothing), żajt for ‘žejt’ (oil). They also mentioned the pronunciation of najd for ‘nghid’ (I say), and intawh for ‘intuh’ (we give him);
- 13% of respondents mentioned that in Għarb the ‘r’ is very strongly pronounced, and another three mentioned that the gh (a remnant of Arabic pronunciation) is voiced, whereas in the other varieties of Maltese it is silent;
- 4% of respondents mentioned that in Munxar and Sannat they say plott for ‘platt’ (plate) and cott for ‘catt’ (flat);
- one person said that in Sannat the vowel ‘a’ is lengthened, and wrote the following words to

5. Tista’ tagħti xi eżempji kif tagħraf minn liema raħal ikun il-kelliem?

Xewkija - jitektellmu bil-k

Nadur - bahar → beher

Xagħra - bejt → bajt

Figure 3: An answer to question 5 of the 2018 questionnaire.



explain this: ‘taaaaadam’ for ‘tadam’ (tomatoes), ‘baaaaard’ for ‘bard’ (cold weather);

- other comments were: in Kerċem the words are ‘dragged along’ (ikaxkru l-kliem, i.e. they pronounce the words very slowly); in Żebbuġ they emphasise the ‘ie’; in Ghasri they emphasise the ‘r’; in Qala they use the ‘e’ as in rehi for ‘ruhi’ (my soul).

Furthermore, respondents clarified that there is a distinction in the dialect of Victoria depending on whether one lives behind the church of St Francis (wara San Frangisk) or in front of it. Eight respondents in my questionnaire mentioned that Gozitans who live behind the church of St Francis speak like people of Xewkija (bil-k), that is, they substitute q with k. The symbols q and k represent two phonemes that cannot be substituted without changing the meaning of a word in all varieties of Maltese (e.g. kari refers to ‘curry’, and qari refers to ‘reading’), and their substitution can easily lead to misunderstanding. Presumably, two different communities originally occupied the space in front and behind the church of St Francis, and developed an idiosyncratic pronunciation which has been retained to this day.

### ***What perceptions/attitudes do Gozitans have about the present and future vitality of their varieties?***

As shown in Table 7, 13% of respondents expressed a negative opinion when asked to compare the dialects’ vitality today with that of fifty years’ ago, but 50% said they did not know whether there had been any changes in dialect usage. Twenty-nine percent (29%) replied that they thought there were fewer speakers of Gozitan dialects. The respondents were also asked whether Gozitan parents nowadays

spoke the dialect at home with their children. Twenty percent (20%) said ‘yes’ and 17% said ‘they should’, while 11% said ‘no’ and almost half of the replies were in the ‘I don’t know’ category (Table 7). In answer to the question about what they thought the situation will be in fifty years’ time (Table 7), 8% thought that it will be the same, 29% said that there will be fewer speakers and 13% said that the dialects will no longer be used. Overall, about half of the respondents avoided answering these questions seemingly because they felt unsure, around 13% held negative opinions, but many others specified that while the number of speakers is becoming smaller this does not mean that there is dialect attrition.

Section 3 of the questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions probing the respondents to give reasons for their previous answers. Several respondents said that they feel shy or ashamed (nisthi) using the dialect when the interlocutor is a SM speaker, and they worry that the Maltese might make fun of them:

*Jekk nitkellem bid-djalett mal-Maltin jgħadduni biż-żmien.*

(If I speak in dialect with the Maltese they make fun of me.)

(Female, postgraduate, age bracket 18-30).

Some respondents explained that a few possibly give up speaking the dialect because it is denigrated:

*Sfortunatament id-djaletti huma meqjusa bħala xi haġa baxxa. Għaldaqstant issib min biex jidher ikkulturat iwarraġ dan il-wirt.*

(Unfortunately, dialects are considered to be lowly. For this reason, there are people who abandon them to appear acculturated.)

(Male undergraduate, age bracket 31-45).

| Do you think the Gozitan dialects are used today as much as they were 50 years ago? |     |                |              |
|---|-----|----------------|--------------|
| Yes   | No  | Fewer speakers | I don’t know |
| 8%  | 13% | 29%            | 50%          |
| Do parents nowadays speak the dialect at home to their children?                    |     |                |              |
| Yes   | No  | They should    | I don’t know |
| 20%   | 11% | 17%            | 48%          |
| Do you think the Gozitan dialects will be used as much as today in 50 years’ time?  |     |                |              |
| Yes   | No  | Fewer speakers | I don’t know |
| 8%  | 13% | 29%            | 50%          |

Table 7: Perceptions of dialectal vitality.

On the other hand, many respondents expressed clear and positive opinions about the importance of speaking in dialect:

*Jekk inżommu d-djalett tagħna aħna nżommu l-kultura tagħna haġġa.*

(If we retain our dialect we will be keeping our culture alive.)

(Female, Advanced level education, age bracket 46-60)

*Id-djaletti jagħmlu l-lingwa rikka.*

(The dialects enrich the Maltese language.)

(Female, undergraduate, age bracket 31-45).

*Id-djalett ma jtellifx l-edukazzjoni għax qiegħed biss għat-taħdit.*

(The dialects do not hinder one's educational advancement because they are used only in speaking.)

(Male, Advanced level education, age bracket 31-45).

As shown in Table 8, many more positive views were expressed about the values that Gozitans ascribe to their dialects, although it is not clear what the 39% who did not reply to this question think. Only 1% stated that they do not think the dialects are important.

Those respondents who expressed a negative opinion about the vitality of multidialectism in Gozo mentioned the threat posed by globalisation and the spread of English, the increased levels of education among the Gozitans, that young Gozitans were moving to Malta to set up home, and the immigration of foreigners to Gozo. Seven respondents felt very negative about the situation and stated that 'not even Maltese will still be alive because English is taking over'.

The last two questions in the questionnaire were about the importance Gozitans attributed to their dialects, and whether they wished to add any further comments. Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents specified that their dialects were important tokens of identity (Table 8). Eight percent (8%) stressed that they were unique languages, and 19% mentioned their historical and cultural value. There was only one respondent who said that the dialects were not important because 'our language is Maltese'.

In spite of the doubtful comments by a few respondents about the vitality of multidialectism, my prognosis for the retention of current sociolinguistic processes in the future in Gozo is overall positive. I base my conclusion on the evidence that indicates that the use of Gozitan dialects represents social bonding and a strong sense of identity, while a balance has been in place for decades with bridging to other cultures and communities through the use of other languages. This duality of bonding and bridging within a community living on a micro-territory presents an interesting scenario. In Gozo, there has been a relatively high degree of cultural and linguistic contact for a very long time, and dialects have been kept alive on a daily basis in co-existence with SM, English and other languages.

Milroy (2000) argues that dense social networks lead to strong social ties which lead to closer maintenance of community norms. This applies to Gozo not only because of dense social networks but also because the Gozitans have a strong sense of identity. They feel Gozitan first and foremost (Mamo, 2012), then Maltese, and then European

| Do you think the Gozitan dialects are important? Why? |                            |   |           |               |
|---|----------------------------|---|-----------|---------------|
| Yes,<br>for identity                                  | Yes,<br>they are<br>unique | Yes,<br>cultural &<br>historical<br>value | No answer | Not important |
| 33%   | 8%                         | 19%                                       | 39%       | 1%            |

Table 8: Importance ascribed to Gozitan dialects by questionnaire respondents



and citizens of the world (Spiteri, Mercieca & Camilleri, 2015). The nomenclature *Għawdx* for Gozitan dialects explicitly associates language with territory, and highlights the distinction of Gozitans from speakers of SM and Maltese varieties on the island of Malta. While in Malta two speakers of different dialects would resort to SM to interact, in Gozo interlocutors use their own variety of Gozitan irrespective of the dialect of their interlocutor/s. This is also a clear sign that the use of dialectal varieties is more strictly tied to their identity as Gozitan.

The Gozitans' sense of identity is backed by important institutions and facilities. Gozo has its own Ministry that oversees most of its affairs, and it has its own Catholic Bishop, being a diocese in its own right. Furthermore, there is a branch of the University of Malta called the Gozo Campus; the Gozo hospital; the Gozo law courts; the Gozo Tourism Authority; the Gozo Press Club; the Gozo Sports Complex and two beautiful opera theatres of international repute. These institutions render Gozo as little dependent on Malta as possible.

Perhaps globalisation, the social media and recent waves of immigration are not completely new phenomena and are merely substituting the previous forms of foreign presence experienced in Gozo and Malta for many centuries (Friggieri, 2008).

Gozo remains home for the Gozitans, and as one questionnaire respondent put it:

*Titkellem bid-djalett jew le xorta tasal fejn trid tasal. L-Għawdxin hafna drabi Għawdxin jibqgħu f'darhom.*

(Whether you speak in dialect or not you will still get to where you want to be in life. Gozitans will always remain Gozitan at home.)

(Female, Advanced-level education, age bracket 31-45).

For this respondent, having a Gozitan identity is a fixed, static, personal attribute, related to territory, and she believes that the dialect is never an impediment to progressing in life. This resonates a strong sense of Gozitan identity, represented in linguistic practices as outlined above.

According to Milroy (2000), due to the digital media and globalisation, many more individuals can nowadays be reached through 'weak ties' (p. 219). A person with weak ties, which operate through the use of digital media, occupies a position marginal to any cohesive group, unlike strong ties. Strong ties are represented in Gozo through multidialectism, which confirm and support a community's identity. It is not clear whether weak ties can overcome strong ties and change the sociolinguistic configuration in Gozo. Like Klieger (2013) I think that although globalism is inevitable, the homogenisation of difference is

9. Taħseb li sa 50 sena oħra d-djaletti Għawdxin ikunu għadhom haġġin? Iva ☐ Le ☐

B'liema mod, u għaliex?

*Min jaf!! Nispera li iwa*

10. Tixtieq tgħidli xi haġa oħra dwar id-djaletti Għawdxin u x'importanza għandhom?

*Panti mill-identità tagħne l-Għawdxin*

Figure 4: Replies to questions 9 and 10 of the 2018 questionnaire.

not, and small European states including Malta 'have successfully articulated a concept of nation or sovereignty for centuries and have no intention of doing away with it' (p. 196), and this includes discursive conventions.

## Conclusion

A number of my 2018 questionnaire respondents included some valuable suggestions with the aim of promoting respect for the dialects. For instance, one respondent recommended the broadcasting of radio and TV programmes about the dialects, and to include reading and personal narratives in dialect in such programmes. Another idea concerned the education of children in school, so that they could learn to appreciate and value linguistic diversity. Other suggestions were related to the promotion of research on Gozitan dialects and the publication of research in a way that can be easily accessed by the general public. A number of respondents mentioned the need to promote the Maltese language in its entirety, and to provide more opportunities for its use in school, for example, by expanding its implementation as a medium of instruction. One person called for sponsorships so that initiatives favouring language and dialect could be supported.

Overall, my Gozitan respondents transmitted their pride in the use of their dialects in the questionnaire. I conjecture that plurilingualism and multidialectism in Gozo will survive. A positive prognosis results from the Gozitans' strong sense of identity, and the fact that for the Gozitans, SM symbolises non-local values (Xuereb 1996). The relationship between territory and language is personified in a multi-layered identity: a Gozitan is first of all a member of the local area community (e.g. Xewki, Naduri), then Gozitan, then Maltese, and then a citizen of the world. Insularity is overcome by travelling and through the use of social media, by educational advancement namely through English, and by supporting one's own income and the national economy through the use of other languages. In keeping with Romaine's 2013 interpretation, 'the sense of perceived solidarity and interaction based on reference to a particular language' is crucial in understanding a speech community. In Gozo, national cohesion is expressed through multidialectal and plurilingual practices which serve as social bonding and bridging processes respectively.

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# Catching the 2035 Train – a Sustainable Metro Connection to Gozo

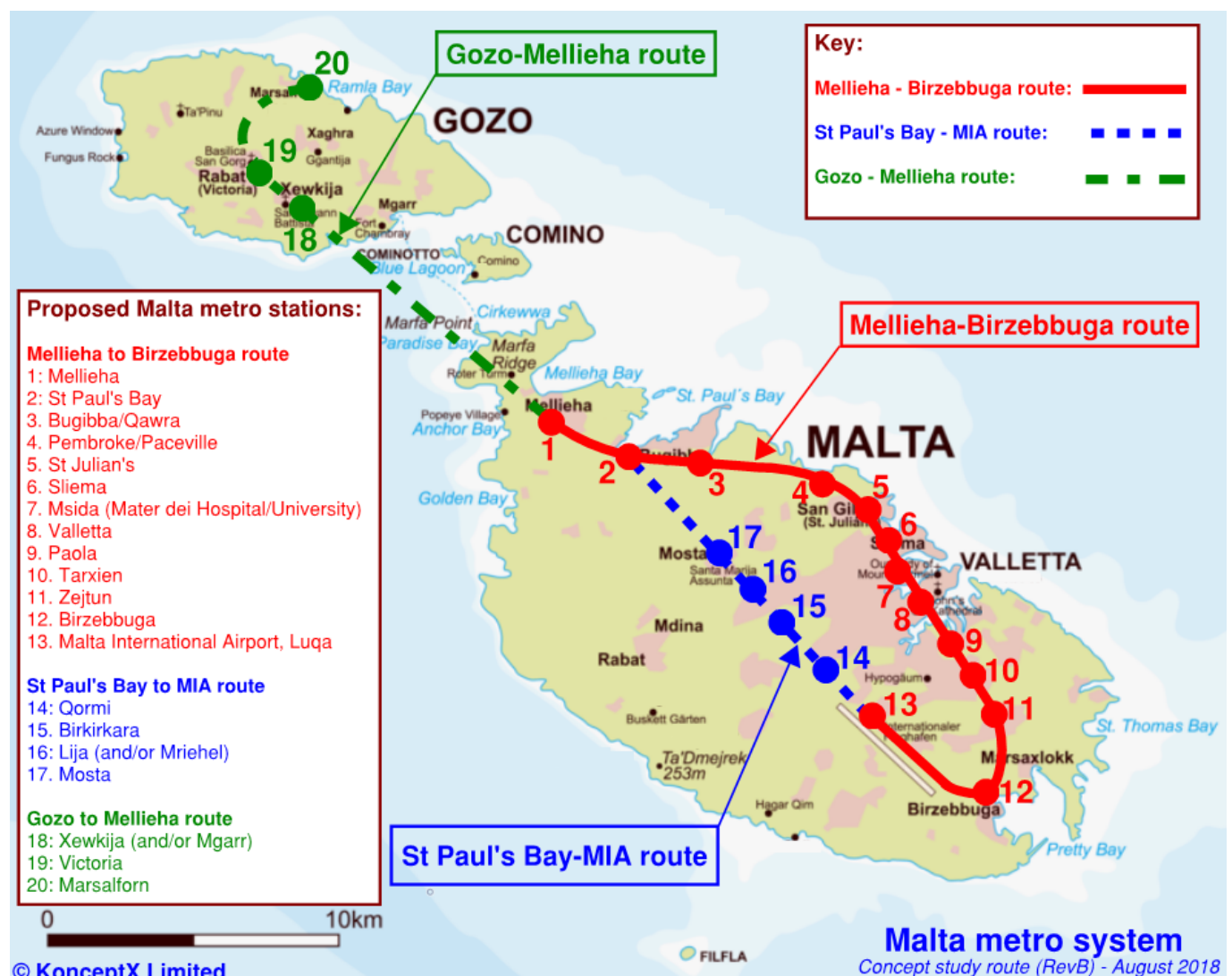
DR KONRAD XUEREB

Carefully planned mass transport projects are vital to safeguard economic progress and standard of living in countries experiencing rapid population growth. The economic benefits of such infrastructural projects are considerable, with a country typically doubling the amount of money it invests in strategic public mass transport assets, in addition to improved environment and quality of life.

If Malta is to become a regional player attracting expertise in key fields like medicine and artificial intelligence, then the national public transport system needs to be efficient, reliable and

impeccable, and consist of a multi-mode network. An underground metro system addresses these criteria.

In this context, Malta has reached a fork with two diverging paths ahead: one based on short-term road widening strategies with lasting environmental damage – a car tunnel between Malta and Gozo would form part of this dead-end vision; and another path based on a long-term mass transit system that addresses the key challenges facing Malta, namely population growth, sustainable transport and environmental protection – this



KonzeptX Malta metro system proposal - concept route.

would involve a metro tunnel linking Malta to Gozo as part of a national underground system.

Having been involved in major infrastructural projects in the UK, I have experienced the approach taken to infrastructure public transport projects overseas. Even though such projects are considered highly complex to implement, they are deemed achievable if based on detailed studies that clearly spell out the long term socio-economic and environmental benefits.

From a strategic perspective, it is evident that a physical connection between Malta and Gozo should not be seen in isolation but part of a nationwide public transport system.

### **Car Tunnel vs Metro Tunnel**

There are two main strategic options available to form a permanent link between Malta and Gozo - either a vehicular connection for private cars or a metro connection forming part of a nationwide mass-transit system.

A car tunnel between Malta and Gozo will necessitate very long ramps either end of the tunnel to allow cars to drive down to the tunnel level under the channel, practically doubling the amount of land required for the under-sea tunnel itself.

This inherently makes a vehicular crossing from Nadur to Manikata costlier pro-rata and of larger detriment to the environment. It creates vehicular bottlenecks at either end of the tunnel, further putting strain on the existing road transport system, whilst causing considerable further pollution to the already poor air quality.

In contrast, a metro system would be predominantly at the same depth, gently dipping under the channel and having vertical access via lifts and escalators at metro stations to allow passengers to reach the train platforms; thus taking up less space pro-rata when compared to the car tunnel.

A metro tunnel link to Gozo would be an extension of a national mass transit system, thus providing an efficient, seamless, connection between Gozo and strategic nodes in Malta – including Malta International Airport (MIA), Mater Dei Hospital, University of Malta, and Valletta.

It would capture the densest zones of population (urban centres, tourist hotspots and business centres) with the shortest possible length of metro, and would consist of a single metro line, without the need of changing trains to reach any destination. The proposed metro stations would be located in urban centres – for example close to the bus terminus at Victoria (Gozo).

### **Project Finances and Cost per Trip**

#### *Car tunnel*

By making comparative studies to other vehicular tunnels it is anticipated that the 13 km car tunnel currently proposed by the government between Malta and Gozo will cost approximately €700 Mn to build. There will also be additional costs likely amounting to approximately €30 Mn per year in inspections, operation and maintenance costs.

If an average of 6,500 vehicles will use the car tunnel every day (i.e. nearly 2.37 Mn vehicle trips per annum), the cost per vehicle to use the car tunnel on a 100-year return period is likely to be approximately €30 per return trip.

The cost per trip would be higher when one factors in the present value of decommissioning and other whole-life cycle costs. Unless funded by tolls, this will entail an ongoing capital cost to the government, paid by the taxpayer.

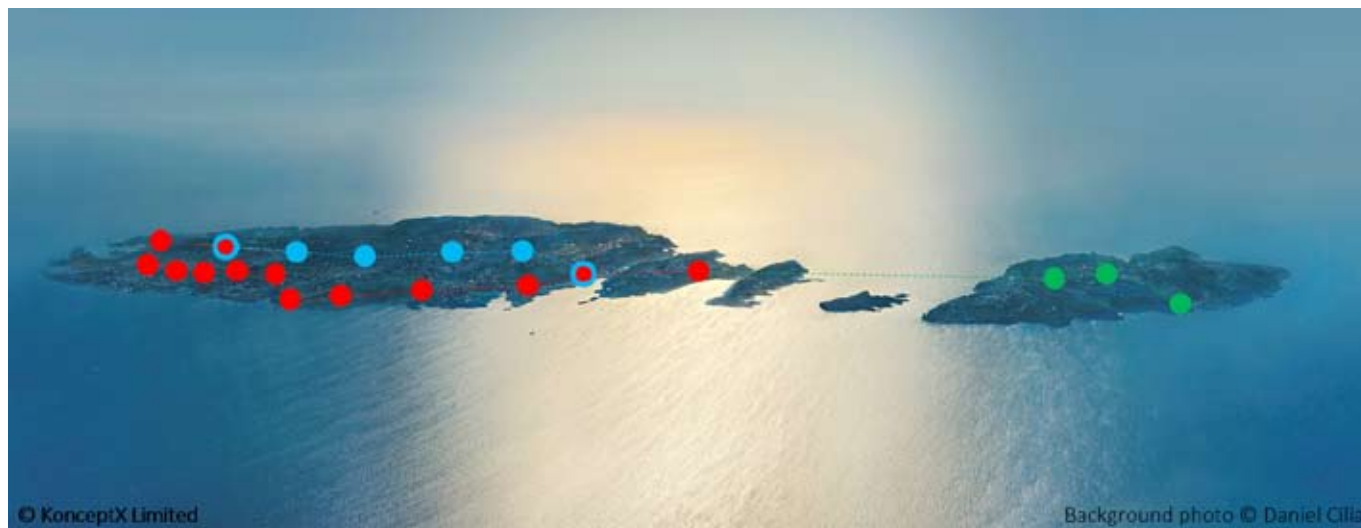
As a comparative study, the current toll to cross the 12.87 km long Fréjus vehicular tunnel between France and Italy is €58.80 one-way and €73.90 return (2020 figures). Similarly, the current levy to drive through the 11.61 km long Mont Blanc vehicular tunnel between France and Italy (used by ~ 5,000 vehicles per day) is €46.30 one-way and €57.80 return (2020 figures).

Both these tunnel projects were relatively easier to construct than the proposed undersea car tunnel proposed between Malta and Gozo.

#### *The Malta metro*

Even though the capital expenditure required for a national underground system would be more than a car tunnel between Malta and Gozo, the metro





KonceptX Malta metro system proposal – aerial photo.

would connect all Malta and Gozo, rather than just provide a localised link.

The entire metro project, including the anticipated 40 trains, would cost approximately €4 Bn.

Part of the capital costs of the metro link between Mellieha and Gozo (approximately €675 Mn) could be eligible for EU funds (e.g. Ten-T programme). €1.575 Bn would be financed by government bonds with maturity over 20 years. The remaining €1.75 Bn would be paid by the national coffers, amounting to €175 Mn per annum over 10 years, which is roughly the same amount the country has been spending per annum in road widening schemes in the past few years.

Assuming a local population of 500,000 and 2.5 Mn tourists per annum (i.e. same amount of tourists as 2019), and only one in four using the metro for a return trip every day, then this amounts to nearly 53 Mn people using the metro every year. This figure is deemed conservative when one considers that nearly 54 Mn people used public transport buses in Malta in 2018.

Based on this conservative estimate of annual ridership using the metro, the target revenue from ticketing would amount to €245 Mn per annum - based on a typical fare of €2 per metro trip (and capped at, say, €5 per day for unlimited daily use of the metro).

Revenue from advertisements on trains and stations, and from leasing space in stations for retail would generate a further €55 Mn per annum.

The total target revenue would therefore amount to €300 Mn per annum.

Considering maintenance costs on the whole metro system of €75 Mn per annum, energy costs of €15 Mn per annum, operating costs of €40 Mn per annum and a further contingency of €20 Mn per annum, the cost to run the metro would amount to €150 Mn per annum.

Given target revenue of €300 Mn per annum and costs of €150 Mn per annum, and considering €40 Mn per annum to service the government bonds, the payback period to cover the full capital cost would be only 30 years.

The payback period would be halved to 15 years if one considers other indirect cost savings, notably reduced loss of productivity (due to less time wasted by commuters in traffic) which would amount to nearly €75 Mn per annum, smaller health care costs due to drop in chronic respiratory illnesses (due to less pollution in environment because of reduced number of cars on the roads) and ameliorated well-being of population (due to reduced stress of commuters from being stuck in traffic).

In addition to the hundreds of workers involved in building the entire system, the metro would create direct employment for well over a thousand people, in addition to considerably more indirect employment to cater for complementary services.

## Duration to Build the Metro

The metro would consist of a single line and built in three phases, using two tunnel boring machines.

The first phase, linking Mellieha to MIA via St Paul's Bay, Bugibba/Qawra, Pembroke/Paceville, St Julian's, Sliema, Msida (Mater Dei Hospital and University of Malta), Valletta, Paola, Tarxien, Zejtun and Birzebbuga would be 25 km long with 13 stations, taking 5 years to construct.

The second phase, linking MIA to St Paul's Bay via Qormi, Mriehel, Birkirkara and Mosta would be 10 km long with 4 stations, taking a further 2 years to build.

The third phase, linking Mellieha to Gozo, would be 15 km long with 3 stations, taking another 3 years to construct.

Detailed studies (including geotechnical, environmental and archaeological studies)

would take 5 years prior to commencement of construction works. A total duration of 15 years from commencement of studies to completion of entire metro system.

Thus, if the studies were to start tomorrow, the bulk of the metro (i.e. Phase 1) would be ready in just 10 years' time.

## Speed and Efficiency

The proposed metro would address the key challenge facing Gozitans – that of being able to commute to key destinations in Malta quickly and reliably, and as importantly of being able to return to Gozo rapidly at the end of the day. Irrespective of weather conditions.

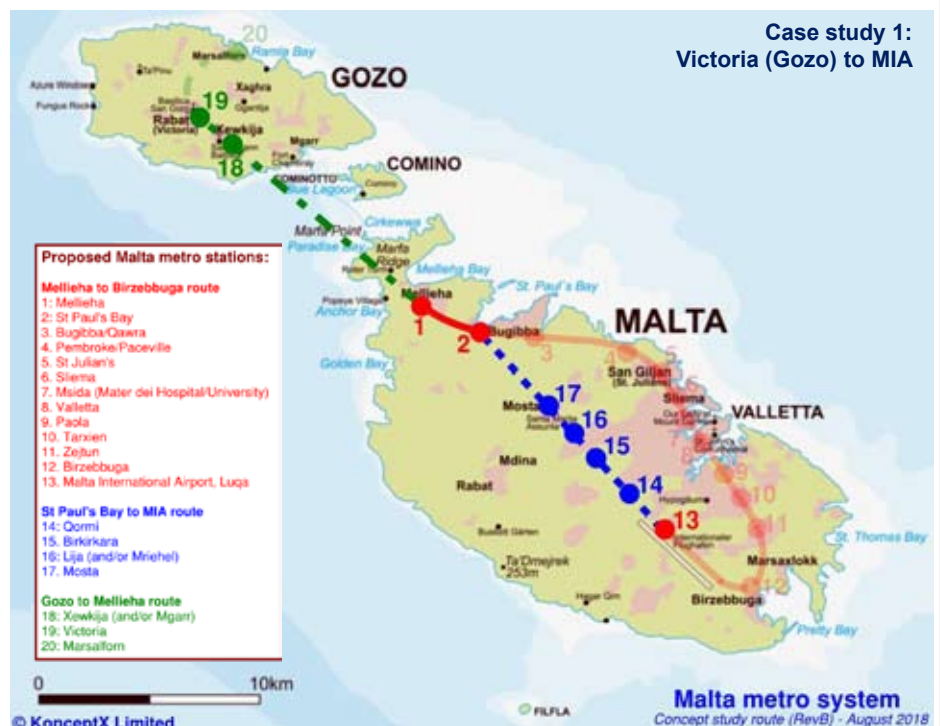
It would take merely 32 minutes by tube from Victoria Gozo to the airport (MIA), and just 36 minutes from Victoria Gozo to Mater dei Hospital/ University, with a train departing every 5-10 minutes.

### Case study 1:

#### Victoria (Gozo) to MIA:

**32 mins.**

- Victoria – Xewkija: (2km), 2.5min
- Xewkija – Mellieha: (12km), 9min
- Mellieha – St Paul's Bay: (5km), 4.5min
- St Paul's Bay – Mosta: (5km), 4.5min
- Mosta – Lija: (2.5km), 3min
- Lija – Birkirkara: (2km), 2.5min
- Birkirkara – Qormi: (2km), 2.5min
- Qormi – MIA: (3.5km), 3.5min



Duration by metro from Victoria (Gozo) to Malta International Airport.

## Case Study 2:

### Victoria (Gozo) - Valletta:

**36mins.**

- Victoria - Xewkija: (2km), 2.5min
- Xewkija - Mellieha: (12km), 9min
- Mellieha – St Paul's Bay: (5km), 4.5min
- St Paul's Bay - Bugibba: (2.75km), 3.5min
- Bugibba - Paceville: (6km), 5.5min
- Paceville – St Julian's: (1.5km), 2.5min
- St Julian's - Sliema: (1.5km), 2.5min
- Sliema - MDH/UoM : (1.5km), 2.5min
- MDH/UoM - Valletta: (3km), 3.5min



Duration by metro from Victoria (Gozo) to Valletta.

This would eliminate the need of Gozitans relocating to Malta to work or study there, thus encouraging Gozitans to remain in the sister island, helping revert the brain drain which has trickled steadily out of Gozo over the past decades.

A metro link to Gozo would also enhance the sister island's vision as an eco-island destination, allowing tourists to reach the island directly from the airport after landing and spending a quality holiday in Gozo.

Projects like the Bart's Hospital in Gozo would take a pivotal regional dimension once the metro is up and running. This key hospital would be linked physically to Mater dei Hospital in Malta, just over half an hour commute away. The same principle would apply to UoM Gozo campus. The metro link to Gozo would also encourage businesses to set up offices in Gozo, with possible target government tax incentives to encourage businesses to open there.

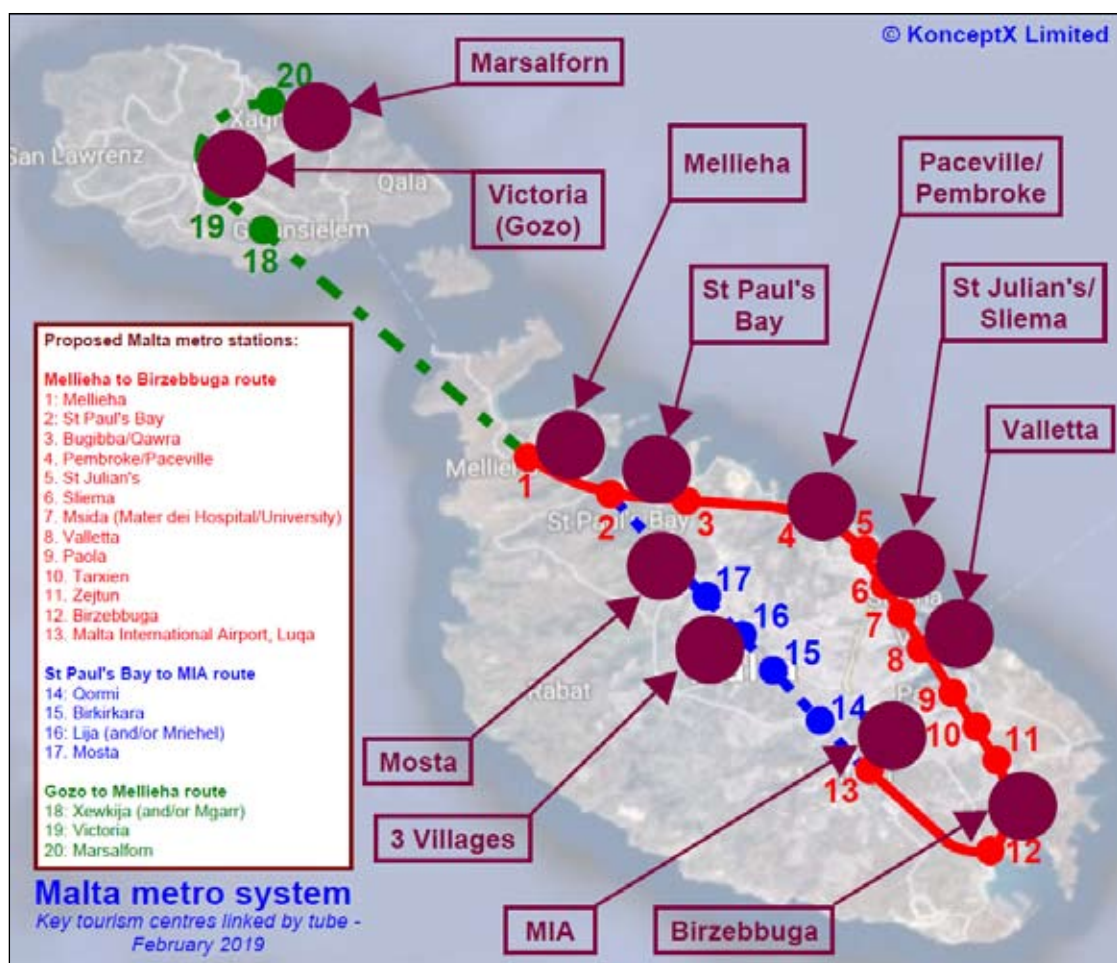
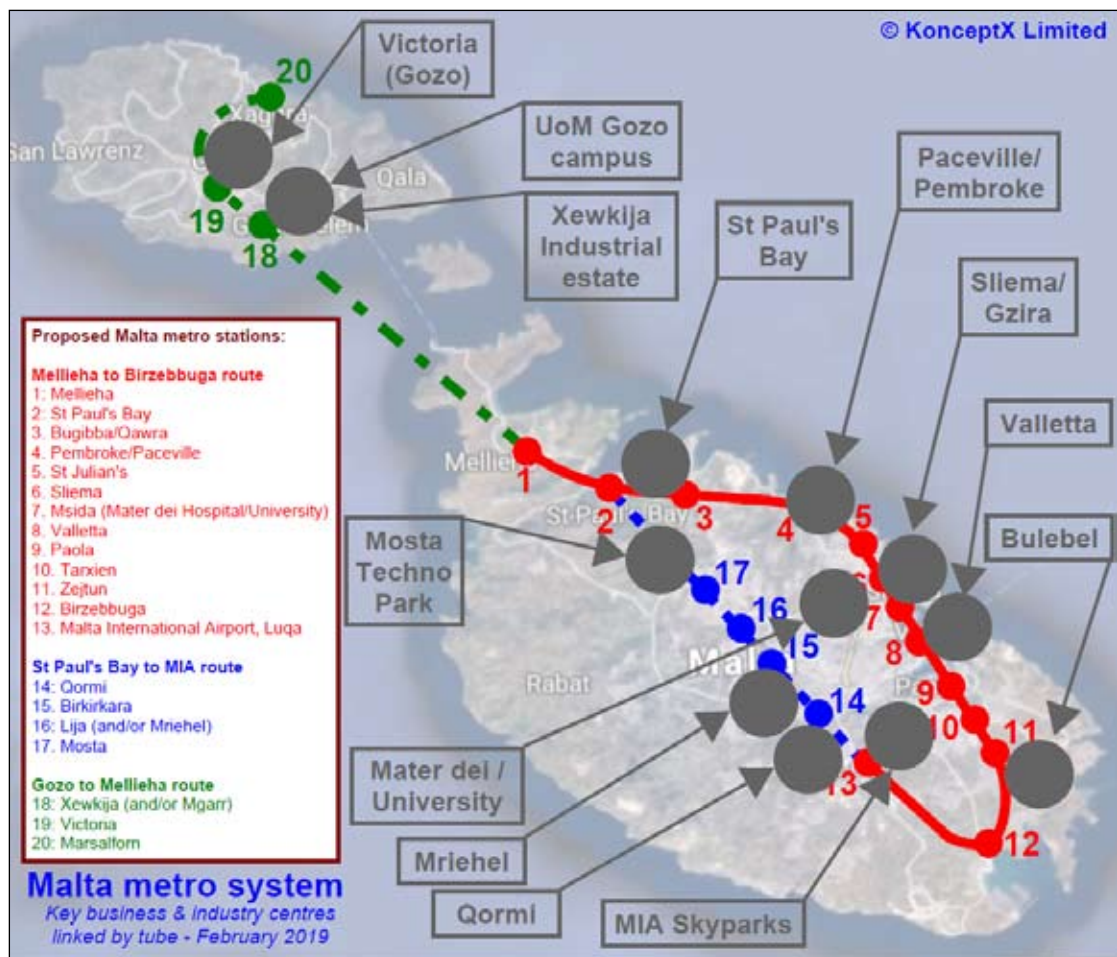
On the other hand, the car tunnel currently proposed by the government would likely limit the maximum speed to ~ 30 km per hour during the crossing, which would entail over 25 minutes to drive from Nadur to Manikata, to then join the slow-moving, polluting, traffic when one emerges from the car tunnel; thus making door-to-door commute during peak times easily over an hour and a half – which one can argue would hardly be any improvement time-wise from the current situation faced by Gozitans to cross to Malta, and considerably more expensive to do so than existing.

A 36-minute €2 trip by metro from Victoria Gozo to University of Malta, say, is thus much faster, cheaper, convenient and healthier to Gozitans than the car tunnel alternative.

### Multi-Mode Transport Systems

The proposed metro would supplement other modes of public transport, including ferries, buses and



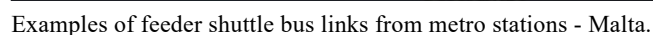


The national bus framework would be reconfigured as a system of shuttle non-stop buses on dedicated bus lanes from metro stations to other towns not on the tube line. For example, Three Cities to Paola, Rabat (Malta) to Mosta, Siggiewi to Qormi, Naxxar to Mosta.

In contrast, the proposed car tunnel will compete with the ferry service, with the latter possibly going

## Environment, Archaeology and Safety

The metro would be deep enough not to disturb yet undiscovered archaeological remains, and would be





subject to detailed archaeological surveys before the exact metro route and station locations are confirmed.

The depth of the metro, the predicted ground conditions and the construction methodology used would not affect the structural integrity of the overlying buildings, with only localised pockets of ground stabilisation required, if any. Furthermore, the construction methodology of the tunnels, which forms sealed tubes, would entail negligible impact on the water table.

The metro would be seismically designed, including the subsea tunnel between Malta and Gozo. Strategies for seismic fault crossing have been implemented in more onerous seismic zones along active faults (e.g. recent metro crossing under the Bosphorus Sea in Istanbul).

The risk of a safety hazard (e.g. fire) in the tunnel is proportionate to the number of vehicles crossing and is therefore considerably less with a metro tunnel – as only ten trains would cross the tunnel each way every hour, on average. Furthermore, the risk of a train derailing is significantly less than a car crashing, as the trains would travel on guided rails and be controlled from a central computerised system.

The car tunnel on the other hand will cause irreversible damage to the environment and fertile

agricultural land, with the long access ramps leading to the tunnel cutting into the superficial soils which may contain yet unfound archaeological remains. Furthermore, each car traversing the car tunnel poses a safety risk – i.e. 6,500 risk hazards every day. In the case of a fire, people will need to leave their car and walk considerable kilometres to reach the nearer end of the tunnel. This would be highly distressing especially if one is travelling with children or elderly people.

## Construction and Waste

The geology under most of Malta makes tunnelling for an underground metro line less complex, and there are feasible methods of using the inert waste from such projects in environmental friendly measures.

The total amount of inert waste generated would be ~4 Mn m<sup>3</sup>. Subject to detailed environmental studies, the inert waste could be used for land reclamation to form a nature reserve, similar say to the Mizieb woodland in North-West Malta.

This could be complemented by an offshore wind farm and/or an offshore solar farm with the renewable energy created connected to the grid, thus offsetting the energy demands of the metro system and complementing the sustainability credentials of the whole project.





An important case study is the new London Crossrail metro project where 3 Mn tonnes of inert material from excavations were used to create Wallasea Island nature reserve.

Another influential case study is the offshore Kagoshima Nanatsujima Mega Solar power plant in Japan which sits on a platform of reclaimed earth.

The above measures could help transform the Maltese islands into a carbon-neutral island, as a sustainable vision for Malta 2030.

### **Examples of Metro Systems in Small Cities**

Comparative studies were made to other metros servicing cities that are similar or smaller in size to Malta.

Lausanne (140,000 inhabitants) in Switzerland is the smallest city in the world to boast a metro. Its metro is 14 km long with 28 stations. Over 45 million people use the metro every year (2013 figures).

The metro in Rennes (220,000 inhabitants) in France is 10 km long with 15 stations, and having an annual ridership of over 33 million (2013 figures). A new 14 km stretch of new metro line (with 15 additional stations) is currently under construction. Rennes is the second smallest city in the world to have a metro, after Lausanne.

The metropolitan city of Catania (in Sicily, Italy) has 320,000 people. The metro stretches across the most populated parts of the city and is 9 km long with 11 stations. It has an annual ridership of ~ 5.7 million people (2018). The metro is currently being extended.

The metro in Brescia (Italy) is 14 km long with 17 stations, serving a population of 200,000 people. 18 million people used the metro in 2018.

### **A Promising Future for Gozo, if we Change Course Now**

The government recently issued pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) for interested tenderers in relation to the currently planned car tunnel

between Malta and Gozo. This PQQ may give the perception that the government's decision on this matter is done and dusted, with no way of altering its course.

However, there is still ample time to revert this decision so that a physical link to Gozo, if it is to be done, would only accommodate a metro tunnel as an extension of a national metro system.

This argument is enhanced by the fact that most of the studies carried out to date by the government for a car tunnel between Malta and Gozo would be of relevance if said tunnel would accommodate a metro instead of cars. The diameter of a metro tunnel would be nearly the same as that for a car tunnel, and the alignment of the undersea tunnel between Malta and Gozo would be nearly the same too.

The government has also publicly stated in the past months that it has commissioned studies for a metro but that this would serve the inner harbour regions in Malta only. It is high time that the government re-evaluates this position so that a proposed metro would connect the main residential, tourist and business zones in Malta, and extend to Gozo. This would then negate the need of a car tunnel between Malta and Gozo.

For the economy and quality of life to keep on thriving in decades to come, Malta urgently needs to invest in vital mass transit infrastructural projects to accommodate mass public transport systems. A Malta metro that extends to Gozo ticks all the right boxes. A car tunnel to Gozo does not fit the bill.

This is the most urgent decision to be taken for Malta's future. A combination of strong leadership and long-term vision is paramount to implement such vital infrastructural mass transit projects.

Dr Konrad Xuereb, is a Director at KonzeptX, an architectural and structural engineering firm with offices in Malta and London. He holds a doctorate in structural engineering/future-proofing buildings from University College London.

# The Heraldry of the Nobility and Gentry of Gozo

## - From Medieval Times until the Onset of British Rule

### Part 2

CHARLES A. GAUCI

In Part 1 of this article, I gave a general account of the nobility and gentry in and of Gozo from the time of the rule of the Maltese Islands by the Aragonese kings of Sicily up until the onset of British rule. In this Part, I am giving an account of some titles granted by the knights which are/were either based in Gozo or based in Malta, but granted to Gozitans. The one exception is the Maltese Barony of Djar-il-Bniet owing to its strong “Gozitan connection”.

#### Fiefs

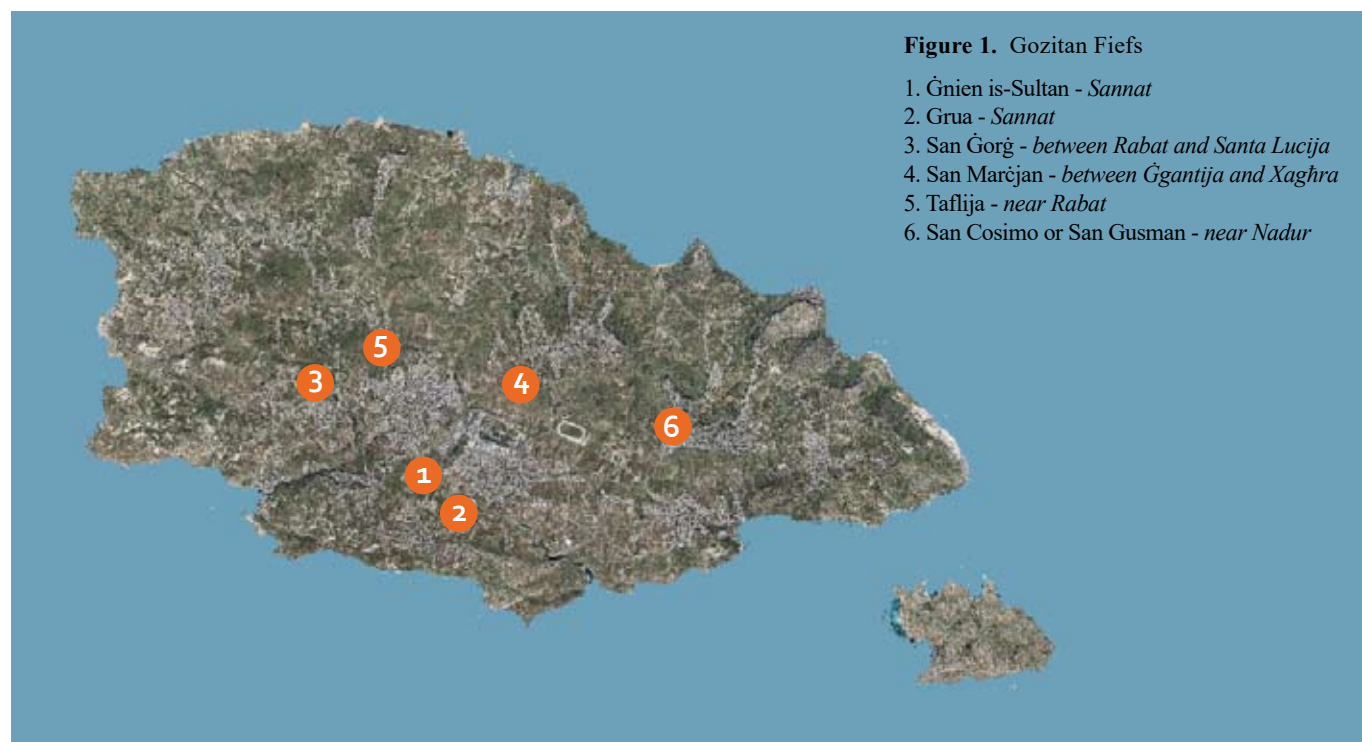
A fief (Latin: feudum) was the central element of feudalism. It consisted of heritable property granted by the Sovereign to a vassal who held it in fealty in return for allegiance and (often) military service. Fiefs were revenue-producing lands held in tenure at the pleasure of the Sovereign. The holder of a fief usually also held a title of nobility based on that fief. Under the rule of the Order,

most of the noble fiefs were only nominally held by individuals. The revenues from the lands in question were paid into the treasury.

Fiefs situated in the island of Gozo are shown in Fig. 1.

#### The Premier Title of the Maltese Islands

Special mention must be made of the title of Baron of Djar-il-Bniet. The Miles Cicco Gatto, crushed an uprising in Gozo against the House of Aragon and was granted the fief of Djar-il-Bniet near Dingli in Malta by King Ludovico on 4 January 1350. It is one of the two surviving titles created by the Kings of Sicily and Malta and is the premier extant Maltese title. Gatto's Arms together with an artist's impression of his foray into Gozo which earned him the title are shown in Figures 2 and 3. In Figure 3 note the Cittadella in the background. The picture is taken from Book 4 in the bibliography below.



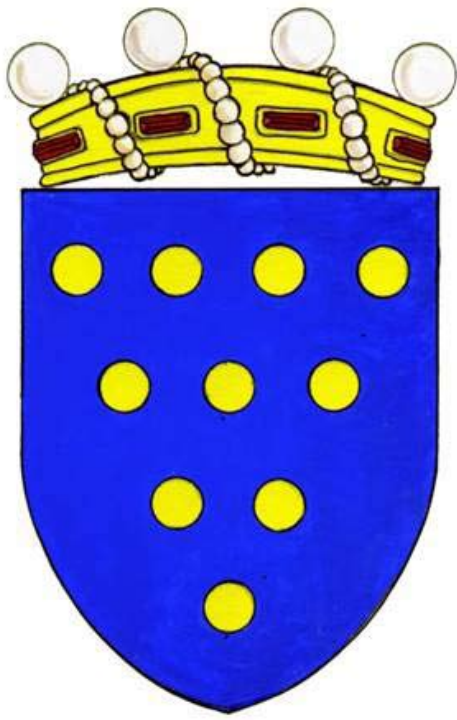


Figure 2. Gatto Baron of Djar-il-Bniet.



Figure 3. Cicco Gatto in Gozo.



Figure 4. Galea Feriol, Barons of San Marciano.

### **Titles Based in Gozo or Granted to Gozitans**

**Baron of San Marciano (San Marċjan):** Granted to Diego Antonio Galea Feriol by Grandmaster Manoel de Vilhena on 14 June 1726. Don Pietro Galie, a soldier from the Kingdom of Aragon, settled in Malta c. 1370 and married Imperia di Peralta. Their descendant Giacomo Galea, who married Marietta Viani in 1617, settled in Gozo establishing the line. The Milite Matteo Feriol of Spain married Donna Caterina Falca, in 1482. One of their descendant lines eventually settled in Gozo. Diego Feriol was a Jurat in Gozo, 1626. Michele Feriol was a Jurat in Gozo, 1664-66, and 1669. The Arms of the 1st Baron are shown in Figure 4.

**Marquis of St George (San Ġorġ):** Granted to Dr Carlo Antonio Barbaro JUD, by Grandmaster de Rohan on 6 September 1778. There were no Gozitan connections of the Barbaro family that I can work out, but his son married Aloisea Crispo (Crespi) to form the Crispo-Barbaro family. Her grandfather, Gio. Andrea Crispo (Crespi)



was a Jurat of Gozo in 1635. Aloisea's ancestor, Gio. Crisostomo Crispo was the natural son of Lorenza daughter of Michele Crispo who claimed descent from the Sovereign Dukes of Naxos. The escutcheon of the Barbaro family is shown in Figure 5.

**Baron Gauci:** Granted to: Francesco Gauci, a native Gozitan and Jurat in Gozo. It was granted, as a non-hereditary title, by Grandmaster de Rohan on 23 December 1781. Baron Gauci was later Capitano della Verga of Malta (1799-1800) – appointed by Sir Alexander Ball during the anti-French uprising. The Gauci family was very prominent in Gozo, and members of that family occupied the post of Jurat several times. The Gaucis intermarried with the Apaps, another prominent family in Gozo. The Arms of Baron Gauci are shown in Figure 6. This title is now extinct.

**Marquis of Taffia (Taflija)-1st Creation:** Granted to Giovanni Battista Mompalao a Jurat in Malta, as a non-hereditary title by Grandmaster de Rohan on 25 October 1783. Mompalao is an old Gozitan family. Calcerano Mompalao was a Jurat in Gozo, 1538, Capitano della verga and Tesoriere of Gozo, 1542. A relative, Alessandro Mompalao Cuzkeri, was created Baron of Frigenuini in Malta, 1737. Cuzkeri was another old Gozitan family. This title is now extinct. The escutcheon of the Mompalao family are shown in Figure 7.

**Marquis of Taffia (Taflija)-2nd Creation:** Granted to Saverio Alessi, Jurat for Valletta and Notabile and later Secreto to Grandmaster von Hompesch (1797-98), member of the Maltese Chamber of Commerce and Lieutenant of Militia. The title was granted by Grandmaster de Rohan on 13 November 1790. The Alessi family had no Gozitan connections. The Arms of Alessi, Marquises of Taffia are shown in Figure 8.

**Count of Ghajn Tuffieha:** Granted to Ferdinando Teuma Castelletti, Jurat of Notabile by Grandmaster de Rohan on 7 January 1792. Ferdinando was a Gozitan by descent. Both the Teuma and Castelletti families were long-established in Gozo. In 1576, Franco Teuma, married Marietta Meilak at the Matrice in Gozo and from him descended Dr Pietro Paolo Teuma JUD, married in 1640 to Giustina Castelletti. Ferdinando was their grandson. The



Figure 5. Barbaro family escutcheon.



Figure 6. Baron Gauci family Arms.

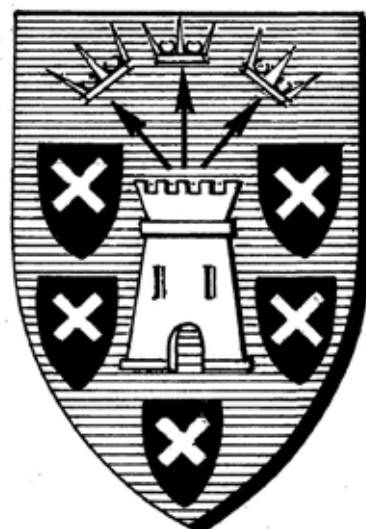


Figure 7. Mompalao family escutcheon.



Figure 8. Alessi family Arms.



Figure 9. Teuma Castelletti family Arms

Arms of Teuma Castelletti, Counts of Ghajn Tuffieħa are shown in Figure 9.

**Marquis of Gnien-is-Sultan:** Granted to Filippo Apap – a native Gozitan, Jurat and later a Deputy in Malta by Grandmaster de Rohan on 1 December 1792. Apap was an old landed Gozitan family. The Arms of the 1st Marquis Apap are shown in Figure 10.

**Baron of San Cosimo (San Guzman):** Granted to; Dr Ugolino Calleja JUD, Jurat of Notabile and Valletta by Grandmaster de Rohan on 27 November 1792. I could find no definite Gozitan connections for Baron Calleja. This title is now extinct. The Arms of Baron Calleja are shown in Figure 11.

**Count of Meimun:** Granted to Saverio Marchesi, a great philanthropist and benefactor of the arts, as a non-hereditary title, by Grandmaster de Rohan on 8 March 1794. Saverio's father, Giuseppe Marchesi was a Jurat in Gozo, 1745 – 1748. His wife, Serafina Marmieri of Rome, was a very wealthy heiress. Giuseppe's grandfather, also called Giuseppe, was married in Gozo (1667), to Cleria Metallo who was related to the Attard family, another very prominent Gozitan family. This title is now extinct. The Arms of Count Marchesi are shown in Figure 12.

**Baron of Grua (Gruwa):** Granted to Saverio Carbott Testaferrata Ghaxaq, Jurat in Malta, by Grandmaster de Rohan on 30 December 1794. Maestro Giovanni Carbott migrated to Malta from the Kingdom of Naples and married in 1559 Grazia Psinga, a descendant of the Bocchio family.



Figure 10. The Arms of the 1st Marquis Apap.



Figure 11. The Arms of Baron Calleja.



Figure 12. The Arms of Count Marchesi.



Ghaxaq (Asciaq, Axac) was another prominent Gozitan family. Salvatore and Tommaso Carabott were Jurats in Gozo during the XVIII century. The escutcheon of the Carbott family is shown in Figure 13.

**Lord (Signore) of La Recona:** Granted to Aloisio Montagnes, Capitano d'Armi of Gozo 1527 – 1531 by Grandmaster Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam, on 31st. March 1531, shortly after the Order took possession of the Maltese Islands. The escutcheon of the Montagnes family is shown in Figure 14. This title is now extinct.



Figure 13. Carbott family escutcheon.



Figure 14. Montagnes family escutcheon.

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Charles A. Gauci teaches human anatomy at the University of Malta. He retired to Gozo in 2013 after a long career in Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine in the UK, which included service in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He holds Pain Clinics at both Mater Dei Hospital and Gozo General Hospital. Charles lives in Sannat, where he is Vice-President of the St Margaret Band Club. He is also President of the Malta G.C. Branch of the Royal British Legion. In March last year, on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary, Heritage Malta appointed him Malta's first-ever Chief Herald of Arms.



# Gozo Features in the Annual Honours and Awards List

MAURICE CAUCHI

There are some things in life that although not usually available for sale, are nonetheless much sought after and appreciated by members of the public. Among these, one can include the annual unenviable exercise of choosing suitable members of the public who merit such distinction.

It is with considerable satisfaction that last year, Gozo appeared prominently in this list which previously had been obvious by the complete absence of the names of successful candidates. Two members have been selected to receive the Medal for Service to the Republic (Medalja għal Qadi tar-Repubblika, MQR).

## Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi MQR

Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi represents that breed of missionaries, heroes of our time, who for generations have given such sterling service in challenging places far from our shores. It is an unfortunate fact that they have been largely forgotten by the Malta Government for their longstanding work. It is really a case of out of sight, out of mind!

Mgr Cauchi was born in Għarb in 1952, and at the age of 21, when he was still a student at the Seminary in Gozo, he decided to move to Brazil, where, after concluding his studies in Theology, he was ordained priest by Archbishop José Maria Pires. For the next fifty years, he continued his pastoral care and mission in the diocese of Paraíba. He was ordained Bishop of Paraíba.

It is a characteristic of missionaries all over the world who practiced among some of the poorest and most deprived people anywhere, that the social welfare of their flock was very high on their agenda, and quite inseparable from their religious mission. For instance, he was active in helping farmers obtaining a plot of land to earn a living, organised through the Land Pastoral Commission, a branch of the Catholic Church in Brazil, sometimes facing real threats from rich landowners who considered his work to be a threat to themselves.



Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi MQR

At the age of 75 he retired to his native Gozo where he still gives service in various churches and the Pompeii Home for the Elderly.

A mild and quiet and unpretentious person, Fr Ġanmari represents some of the best characteristics that this island has produced over the years. We wish to pass to him our sincere congratulations.

*[Note: there is no close family relationship between the author and Mgr Ġanmari Cauchi.]*

## Loranne Vella Zahra MQR

Loranne Vella Zahra was born in Xewkija, Gozo in 1971, and studied at the University of Malta where she graduated with a first class degree in Pharmacy. She continued her postgraduate work in the Department of Pathology, focussing on the clinical diagnosis of microbiological, particularly fungal infections. Her work included providing support to patients with depressed immune response. In



Loranne Vella Zahra MQR

PHOTO : DOI - Jason Borg

1995, this resulted in the setting up of the first specialised laboratory for the study of diseases caused by fungi.

It was during the course of her work that she was successful in isolating a new genus of bacteria which was named ‘Salmonella Gozo’, from where the bacterium was first obtained.

She continued to be active in the scientific field, mentoring Bsc and Pharmacy students and publishing several peer-reviewed papers in international journals. She has designed a global quality project for British Airways and Iberia (IAG Group) for global airport networking for the safe international transportation of pharmaceuticals. The study of fungal diseases (mycology) has now become firmly established. Loranne Vella Zahra has been involved in establishing mycology laboratories both at the Mater Dei Hospital as well as in private organisations.

She currently lives in the UK and operates her own pharmaceutical quality consultancy.

While congratulating these two Gozitans, we hope that their example will be followed by others and those in authority will see to it that Gozitans are not forgotten in future annual honours and awards lists.

## Book Review:

### Maltese Lace. History & Mystery. Four Centuries of Bizzilla

Consiglia Azzopardi

Malta: Kite Group Publications (2019); 574 pages

#### REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

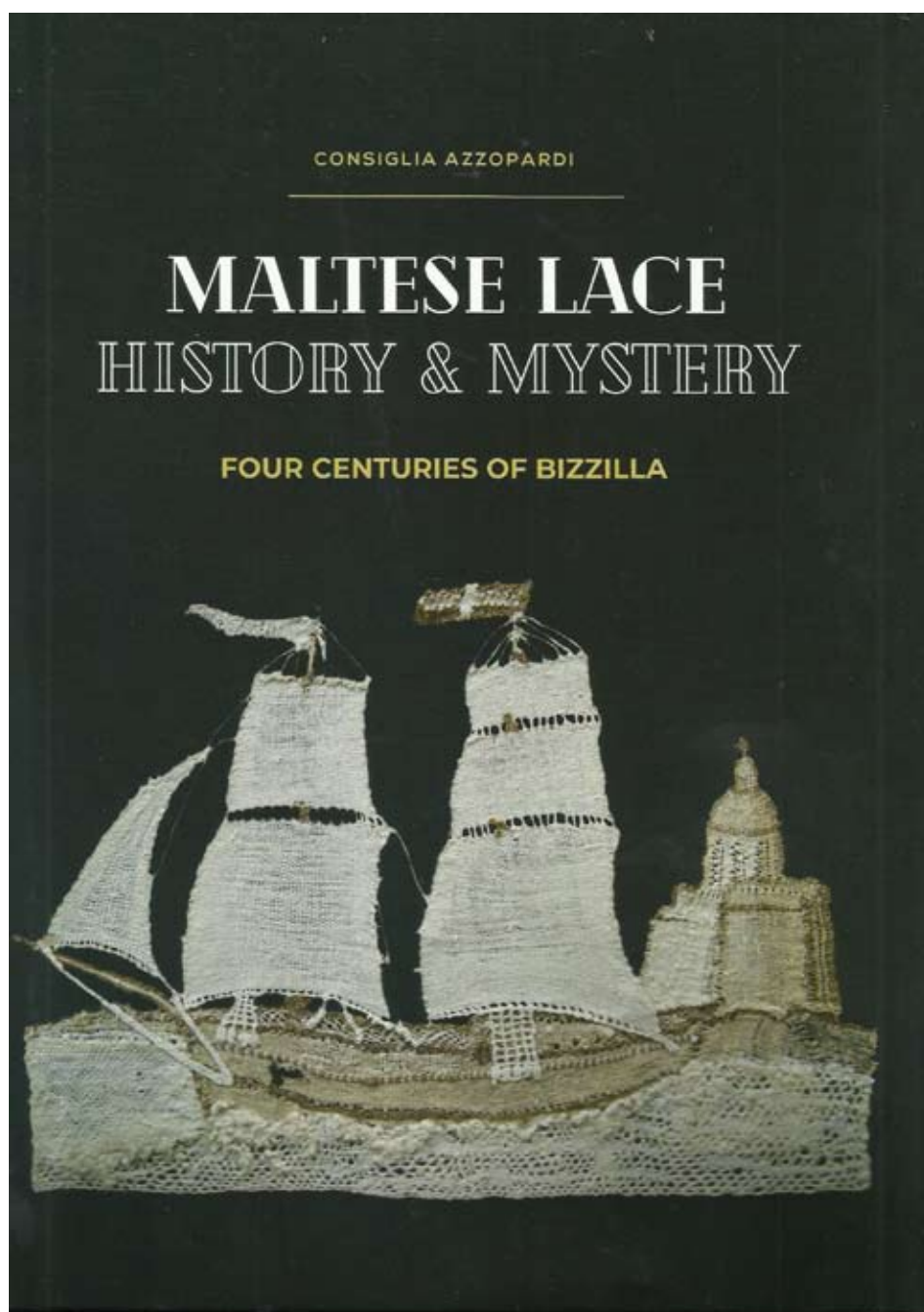
In a socially cosmopolitan and fast-changing society like the one we are experiencing in our islands in this contemporary age of ours, it is becoming quite difficult to say what stands out as quintessentially Maltese. Considering the phenomena of double-insularity affecting the smaller island of Gozo, the attempt may present itself as slightly less difficult. In fact, if I were to be asked to mention something which reminds me instantly of my native Gozo, I would most probably refer to Gozo’s lace. A visit to a couple of Maltese websites would reveal that during the 1830’s Queen Victoria ordered sixteen pairs of

long and short mittens, and a scarf from Malta. Later on, during the 1840’s she was given a piece of lace by priest Dun Ġwann Curmi, ‘tal-Grotta’ and the same happened on the occasion of her diamond jubilee when she bestowed her name on Gozo’s ancient town of Rabat.

The above, and hundreds, not to say thousands, of various other details related to the history and production of lace on our islands, with a special focus on the island of Gozo, are what make up the monumental publication that Consiglia Azzopardi, a

native of the ancient village of Gharb in the west of the island, has produced, the fruit of a life-time characterised by a unique love-story with lace and its production. In fact, Azzopardi's life has evolved around lace. Consiglia's love for the subject moved her on in her life to sit for an M.Phil. and eventually a Ph.D on the subject. Her efforts to promote the production of lace were strong enough to convince the administration at the University of Malta Gozo Centre to introduce an academic course that would promote this very tradition. She was fortunate enough to find the then Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Anton Tabone of Victoria, backing her in her attempts to present lace-production as both an artistic and a scientific travail. The technicalities involved in the making of lace which are well explained in the book, are a proof that lace-making gradually developed to become a discipline in itself, embracing a solid vocabulary which is proper to the subject. Azzopardi enhances this by referring to historians such as Abela and De Soldanis both of whom documented this traditional artistic endeavour in their writings.

Azzopardi's publication is attractive from various perspectives. First of all, the author, through her vivid style and presentation, attracts the reader by merging together the scientific as well as the artistic. It is difficult to say where one ends and the other begins and this is due to her originality of style. The colourful pictures together with the great amount of photographs that document the many works of lace that are to be found all over the island of Gozo, render Azzopardi's book a coffee table publication. However to limit oneself to such an aspect would be to belittle the sumptuous book that we now have in our hands. The book will be appreciated by both the amateur



and the professional; it will attract the attention of the historian and anthropologist alike. It is in many ways a history of Gozo from a socio-religious perspective since it presents the promotion of lace-making as an ecclesiastical project that helped to make better the life of the poor as well as decorating the house of the rich and the well-to-do.

*Maltese Lace. History & Mystery* is a book that will immortalise Consiglia Azzopardi's connection with lace for generations to come. It is a book that makes every Gozitan proud of his or her native island, a book that reminds the world of Gozo's standing when it comes to hard work, originality and purpose, the three of which have become both legendary and mythical.



## Book Review:

# The false domes of the Gozo Cathedral and other churches

Joe Zammit Ciantar

Malta: Self-published (2019); 48 pages

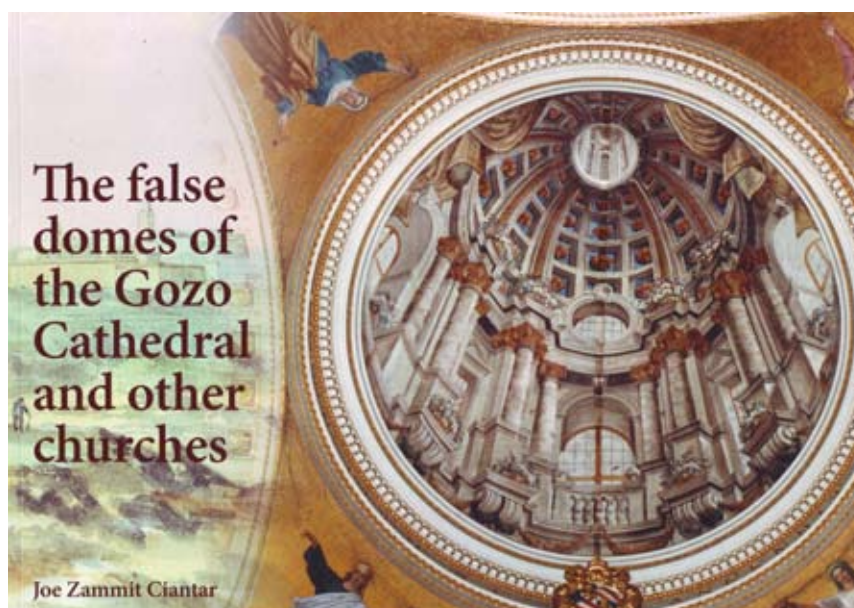
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

The 'false' dome of the Gozo Cathedral within the Citadel walls in Victoria is one of the main attractions, if not the main one, in the Cathedral Church dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Metaphorically speaking, one can say that one cannot go to Rome without seeing the Pope, in the same way, one cannot visit the Cathedral without stopping to admire the *trompe l'oeil* that dominates the sanctuary.

For at least a quarter of a century, Gozo-born author and researcher Dr Joe Zammit Ciantar has been researching and collecting information about the various 'trompe l'oeil' domes that are to be found in Europe. In the book's introduction, the author refers to what must have been the first writing about the subject which was published in August 2001 in *The Sunday Times of Malta*. Incidentally, Mr Laurence Grech, a friend of the author and editor of the Sunday newspaper for many years, wrote the foreword for the publication. In his introduction one may come across what may be considered the *raison d'être* of the publication; the author states that in his youth, 'a painting that has fascinated me and which I loved to look at with awe and admiration was that of the 'cupola' of Gozo's baroque cathedral, up in

the Citadel'. This sense of admiration must have developed into a fascination that moved him forward to delve deep into the subject. The author made it a point to visit the various churches where such domes are to be found; in some cases he corresponded with the persons in charge of these holy places before visiting them physically and taking photos in order to be able to study them better. From time to time, Zammit Ciantar wrote articles about these places which appeared in local newspapers or journals.

From the comparative research that he undertook, the author concludes that the 'false' dome at the Gozo Cathedral is in fact one of the best pieces of art within this particular genre. From what I deduced after having various conversations with the author about this recent publication of his, he is of the opinion that throughout the ages this particular artistic masterpiece has been given the importance that it is due. The author states this without leaving any space for doubt: 'A scrutinizing eye may well appreciate the beauty of this masterpiece; because the Gozo Cathedral's painted cupola is a masterpiece when compared with other similar ones in Rome, Arezzo, L'Aquila, Vienna and other places' (cfr. Page 21). This statement speaks for itself; every lover of all



things Gozitan should make it a point to obtain a copy of this publication, go once or twice through the text and then enjoy the sumptuous photos that feature in the book. The size and landscape form of the publication make it easy for the reader to enjoy it better and notice even the details, and if you happen to be in Gozo, don't hesitate to walk up to the Citadel and visit the old Cathedral of Lorenzo Gafà and look up at the dome. The Cathedral parishioners and Gozitans at large should be proud of the newly restored masterpiece that is part and parcel of our national heritage.

## Book Review:

### Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex – 1940-1943

Frank Bezzina - New edition expanded by Charles Bezzina  
Gozo: A&M Printing Press (2020); 602 pages

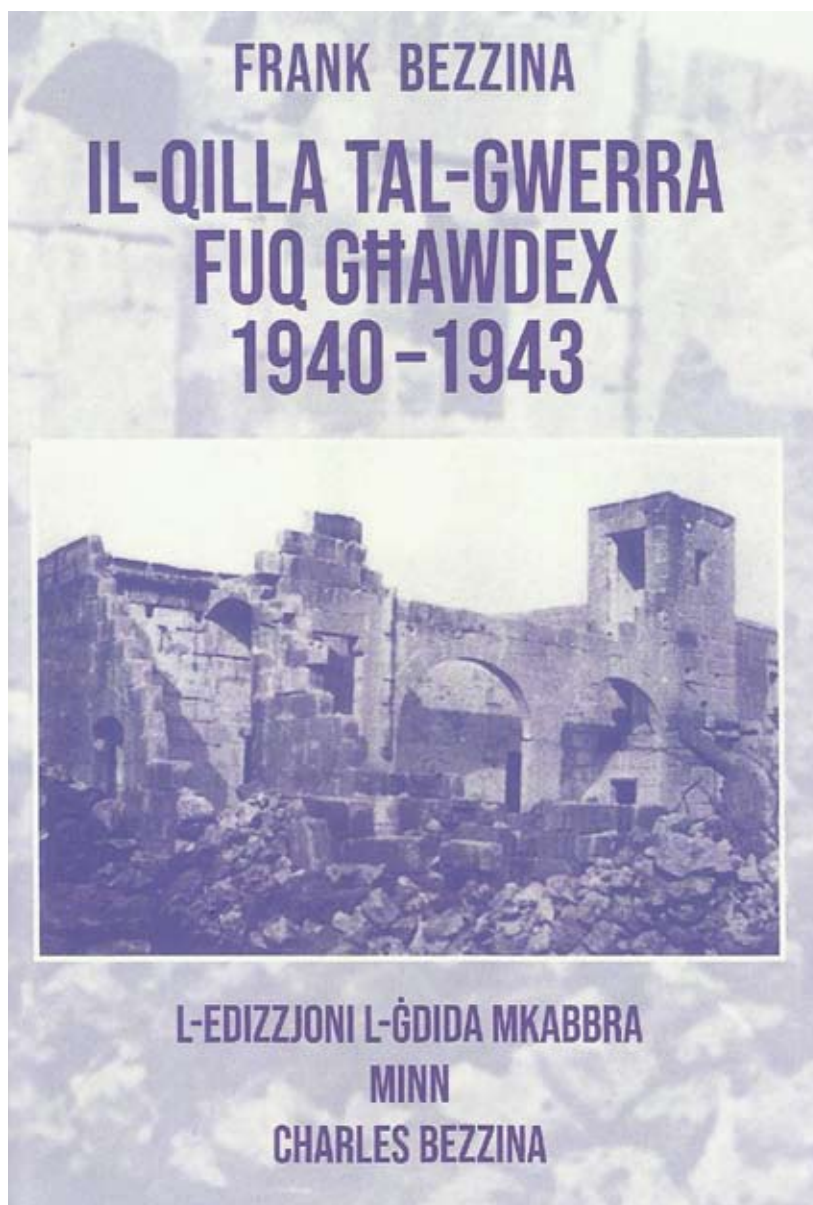
REVIEWED BY JUDGE JOSEPH GALEA DEBONO

The general impression is that Gozo was a backwater and completely isolated from the events that characterised the second siege of Malta in 1940-1943. That this view is far from the truth emerges from the father and son detailed account of the war years in Gozo authored by Frank Bezzina and his son Charles in a new publication that has recently reached the bookstalls *Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex – 1940-1943* (The ferocity of the war on Gozo).

This 602 page volume, copiously illustrated by photos taken by the teenager Frank Bezzina during the war and others collected by his son Charles, is a compendium of two previous books published by Frank Bezzina: *Il-Qilla tal-Għadu Fuq u Madwar Għawdex* (The ferocity of the enemy on and around Gozo) in 1997 and *F'Għawdex fi Żmien il-Gwerra* (In Gozo during the war) published four years later. These two books have been edited and annotated with footnotes of sources by Charles Bezzina who has further researched the subject and added new material discovered since the original publications. Charles Bezzina's considerable input in the second part of the book is based on further research he conducted over the last twenty years or so.

The first part of the book titled: *Djarju t' Għawdex fil-Gwerra* (A Gozo diary during wartime) is a day-by-day account of what happened on the Island gleaned mostly from police records and The Times of Malta and Il-Berqa. There are numerous instances of reports of loose mines floating in the Comino channel and close inshore, the finding of dead and mutilated bodies of enemy airmen or sailors washed ashore

on Gozo's bays, repeated sightings of suspicious submarines by the Coast Police, fishermen's reports of bits of floating parts of enemy aircraft out at sea and reports of stray bombs dropped in the countryside damaging crops and killing animals. As the siege tightened further during 1941, Gozo boats hitting mines with consequent loss of life and the occasional crash of an enemy aircraft start filling the daily occurrence reports of the Gozo Police.



The phenomenon of mass migration to Gozo in the early June 1940 days but, more so, after the Illustrious Blitz in January 1941 is also analysed and its inevitable positive and negative effects on the hitherto simple Gozitan way of life is also given prominence.

But the worst was still to come in 1942 when the Nazis and Fascists were hell-bent on neutralising Malta. The first five months of the year saw an unprecedented increase in the number of air raids with the climax being reached in April. The deliberate bombing of Nadur village on 3rd and 15th January 1942 and that of Ghajnsielem on the 29th heralded the collateral assault on the sister island. The diary features the repeated attacks on the Gozo ferries Royal Lady and Franco by low flying aircraft, the sinking of the Anna Dacoutros on its way to Gozo from Grand Harbour with supplies on 2nd April culminating in the bombing and sinking of the Royal Lady at Mgarr harbour on 6th May. This attack was followed by the deliberate strafing of buses and passengers in Racecourse Street and Ta' Savina Square in Victoria on the same day. If that was not enough, on the next day Messerschmitt 109s went for grazing sheep and goats, killing 35 heads. These gruesome events are brought to light by bystander and survivor first-hand accounts.

September 1942 saw the demonstration of the George Cross Medal, awarded to Malta by King George VI in April, to the Gozitan population with ceremonies in various places attended by all and sundry.

The sense of false security generated by the decline in the number of attacks during the summer of 1942 was shattered by the indiscriminate attack on the village of Sannat on 10th October, when two German Ju 88s dropped 2000 lb. bombs destroying or damaging seventy-six houses, killing eighteen and wounding over sixty-five, including a number of babies.

A new leaf was turned in 1943 with the Royal Air Force establishing air superiority and the decline of air raids. The festivities in Rabat and Gozo villages following the fall of Tripoli and Tunis in early 1943 get special mention. A somewhat comic incident is recorded from 6th

June, when rumours that Germans had landed near Qala made the inhabitants take to the streets brandishing butchers' knives, pitch forks, hoes and the like to repel the invaders. These turned out to be only three POWs who had escaped on a dinghy from detention in Pembroke and who were providentially apprehended by British soldiers and saved from potential lynching at bayonet point by the escort!

This first part concludes with the construction of an airfield at Xewkija by the Americans in preparation for the invasion of Sicily which took place on the night of 9th July and reports on how Gozitans flocked to Marsalforn and the ramparts of the Citadel to watch the hundreds of ships of the invasion fleet on the horizon heading for the South Sicilian beaches. Days later, a ferocious retaliatory night attack on the Gozo airfield, repelled by the anti-aircraft guns and searchlights manned by Americans brought enemy action against Gozo to a close.

The second part titled : *Għawdex fil-Gwerra 1940-1943* is a detailed and well researched study of the impact of the war on the administrative, social, religious, medical, commercial and supplies situation, expanded by the research conducted by Charles Bezzina and, though somewhat repetitive at times, provides a valuable historical documentation of life in Gozo during this troubled period. It is a wealth of information for any history buff conveyed in a flowing and very readable style. Charles Bezzina has a number of literary and poetic works to his name but, like his father, the war theme is his passion. Among his works are: *When the Siren Wailed* (2012), *The Gozo Airfield* (2004), *Vittmi Għawdxin tat-Tieni Gwerra* (2006) (Gozitan victims during the second world war) and *Wartime Gozo 1940-1943* (2015). He also co-authored with his father Frank: *Ir-Refugjati Maltin f' Għawdex fi Żmien il-Gwerra* (2017) (Maltese refugees in Gozo during the war).

The book, which was sponsored by Bank of Valletta, is a welcome addition to the vast collection of Melitensia that has been built up in the past seventy-five years since the end of World War II, but which was almost all concentrated on events on Malta to the complete exclusion of the sister island.



# Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

## Courses at the Gozo Campus

In October 2019, three new courses opened at the University Gozo Campus. The Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy opened two courses, one leading to a Diploma in Commerce and the other to the Bachelor of Commerce. The Diploma in Commerce is a two-year course and is aimed at introducing students to Economics, Management and Accountancy, Tourism Studies and IT and to prepare them for further studies leading to the B.Com degree.

The Bachelor of Commerce programme is spread over a period of three years. The overall objectives of this programme is to provide participants with a high-quality and a career-oriented education for a diverse student population. This programme covers a range of topics in Economics and Management and aims to provide participants with a broad understanding of the complexity and dynamics present in contemporary business and public organisations. It trains the participants to gain the conceptual skills and an analytical approach necessary to tackle the problems facing organisations in today's environment.

The same faculty also opened the course leading to the Executive Master of Business Administration. This programme aims to develop mid-to-upper level managers for organisations of all sizes and types both in the private and public sector of the economy. The lectures of this course are being held at the Msida Campus, but are being transmitted live to the Gozo Campus via video-conferencing facilities.

In February 2020, the course leading to the Certificate in Proof Reading: Maltese was opened at the Gozo Campus for the sixth time. This course, which is spread over two semesters from February 2020 to January 2021, is offered by the Department of Maltese of the Faculty of Arts in collaboration with the National Council for the Maltese Language.

Other courses running at the Gozo Campus during this academic year are those leading to the Diploma in

Lace Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Facilitating Inclusive Education, Bachelor of Psychology (Hons), and the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Criminology. The lectures of these courses are being held every week on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

Two other courses are being offered during week days through the video-conferencing system. These are the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Maltese as a Foreign Language and the Certificate in Community Access for Disabled People.

## University of the Third Age

In October, the University of the Third Age opened its academic year at the Gozo Campus. The opening ceremony was held on 11<sup>th</sup> October, during which the Hon. Justyne Caruana, then Minister for Gozo, delivered a short speech. A Holy mass was also celebrated for this occasion. This year's programme includes a series of lectures by Dr Olvin Vella on 'Kif kienu jitkellmu Ghawdex fl-antik', and other lectures by Rev. Dr Marcello Ghirlando on 'Christianity, Cults and Religions'.



Participants during one of the U3A lectures.

## Graduations

During the graduation ceremonies held at the University of Malta in November and December, a number of students were awarded their degree after having successfully completed courses at the University Gozo Campus. Two students obtained the Diploma in Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, while six others were awarded the Bachelor of



The six proofreaders, together with lecturers and course coordinators, after the certificate award ceremony.



The six students, who successfully completed the Bachelor of Commerce, after the graduation ceremony.



The five students, who successfully completed the Executive Master of Business Administration, after the graduation ceremony.

Commerce. The Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education was awarded to two students, while five students were awarded the Executive Master of Business Administration. The latter two groups have successfully completed the course at the Gozo Campus through the video-conferencing system.

The University's Certificate of Proofreading in Maltese (MQF 5) and the Proofreading Warrant, was awarded to a group of six students, after completing the one-year course in proofreading Maltese at the University Gozo Campus. The Awards were presented by the National Council for the Maltese Language. The six Gozitan proofreaders had attended the fifth course held in Gozo between February 2018 and January 2019.

### Examinations

Once more the Gozo Campus was instrumental in the organisation of the end-of-semester examinations for Gozitan students. During the January/February 2020 session of examinations around 650 exams were held, partly at the University Gozo Campus in Xewkija and partly at the Examination Centre in Victoria. This allowed Gozitan University students to sit for their exams directly in Gozo without the need to commute to the Msida campus.

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





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

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