
ORNITHOLOGICAL TOPONYMS IN GOZO – Some observations

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Gozitan toponymy includes several ornithological terms. These comprise hillocks, vallyes, caves, springs, headlands, as well as some rocks and other spots on the coast.

Besides other social, cultural, historical, geographical and general information these place-names provide material for some interesting linguistic observations. Sometimes the study and analysis of these is not possible or is incomplete from an observation of their present established form as a living lexical term only. Map and document can help to back up otherwise doubtful conjectures.

The general pattern of the place-names is definite article + noun + possessive preposition + definite article + noun as in *Il-Ponta Ta' l-Aghsafari* literally 'the headland of the birds'. (The complete assimilation of the definite article *l-* 'the' with the sounds *ċ, d, n, r, s, t, x, z* or *ż* when the following noun starts with any one of the letters, a phonetic phenomenon of the Maltese language and grammar, takes place also in the place-names; cfr. *Taċ-Ċawla* for *ta' + l-ċawla* in *Il-Wied Taċ-Ċawla* 'the valley frequented by the jackdaw'.)

Several place-names lack the initial definite article and the preposition *ta'* 'of' in the middle. The name pattern becomes noun + definite article + noun. This renders the meaning of the construct state; the definite article helps to build the genitival relation between the two nouns; cfr. *Wied Il-Merill*, literally 'valley the blue rock thrush'. Still, the general idea expressed by the term is similar to that of the former pattern, 'the valley of the blue rock thrush'. In both cases the actual name-word for the place precedes that of the bird. In many cases the actual place descriptive has dropped out of the phrasal place-name combination. The bird's name, preceded by the agglomeration of the preposition and the definite article, by itself has acquired the value of a place-name, cfr. *Taċ-Ċawla* and *Tal-Gruwa* for 'the place frequented by' or 'the nesting place of' the 'jackdaw' and the 'common crane' respectively.

The vocabulary of the Maltese language is made up of an admixture of Semitic (S) and Romance (R) stock. This is also reflected in the place-names. The harmonious combination of both elements may also be encountered in ornithological toponyms, as in *Il-Ponta* (R) *Ta' L-Aghsafari* (S) and in *Il-Wied* (S) *Taċ-Ċawla* (R). No Teutonic vocable is however present in either of the place name-words or those of the bird species, evidence,

perhaps, that the onomastic terms were all established or at least had taken shape before the British rule.

The geographical situation and climatic conditions of the Maltese islands offer favourable half-way resting places for many migratory birds. Some even stay on to nest with the twenty or so resident species. This explains the gradual association between places and species and the resulting coinage of the ornithological toponyms such as *Ta' Hida* in Nadur, Gozo.

Hida is archaic Maltese for 'red kite', today more popularly known as *astun* (although the Romance word was originally *astur*¹). *Hida* is Semitic, a fossilized part of our past. We may further infer that the place-name was coined during the Arab rule over the islands (870 — 1223 A.D., when all remaining Arabs were expelled by Fredrick II).

Like any other common name, *hida* could have been the nickname of the landowner who eventually gave his name to the land he owned. *Gardill* 'goldfinch' (Xewkija), *čevett* (a dialectal variant of *čuvett*) 'poolsnipe' or 'redshank' (Rabat) and *merill* 'blue rock thrush' (Sannat) are existent Gozitan nicknames. However, documented information suggests that *hida* in the place-name did not originate from a nickname.

The names of some species have stuck to places or spots where the birds may still be seen frequenting or perching; cfr. *Il-Blata Tal-Gawwi* 'the rock frequented by the seagulls'. *Il-Ponta Ta' l-Agħsafar* literally 'the headland of the birds', beneath Fort Chambray in Mgarr, is an area that still serves as the dwelling place of many home sparrows. However, *Il-Ġebbla Tač-Čawl* 'the jackdaws' rock' off Hondoq Ir-Rummien beneath Qala, no longer serves as a resting place for the jackdaws since the species became locally extinct.

Ta' Hida

Ta' Hida must have been one of the places frequented or inhabited by the red kite. Most probably it served as a nesting place for the species.

De Soldanis (1712 — 1770) records the names *Il-Ġnien Ta' Ġhoxx Il-Hida*² and *L-Ġhajn Ta' Ġhoxx Il-Hida*³ both in Nadur, Gozo. *Ġnien*⁴ is the Maltese word for 'garden' and *ġhajn* for 'spring' (although it also means

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1. E. Serracino Inglott, *Il-Miklem Malti* (Malta, 1975 —), Vol. I under *astur*. In the more popular *astun* the finla 'n' is a phonetic mix-up with 'r', another of the liquid consonants.
 2. "...giardino *ta Hosc el Hida*, parola araba che significa milvo, uccello di rapina..." N(ational) L(ibrary of) M(alta), Libr(ary) MS 145a, p. 357.
 3. "...*ta Hosc el Hida*, che significa nido del milvo..." *Ibid.*, p. 13. The word *ġhajn* is not included in the phrasal place-name because De Soldanis had already given it at the top of the list of springs found in Nadur.
 4. "This word presumably indicated an area, often closed and irrigated, devoted to fruit and vegetables, much like the Valencian *huerta*..." H. Bresc, "The Secretia

'eye'). Besides *hida*, the other word common in both phrasal place-names is *ghoxx* which today means 'female pudenda'.

This word is of Arabic origin, where it still means 'nest'. *Ghoxx Il-Hida* in both place-names recorded by De Soldanis actually meant 'the nest of the red kite'. The fact that this was not the only nesting place of the species is evidenced by the documentation of two other similar but extinct place-names, one in Siggiewi,⁵ the other in St. Paul's Bay,⁶ both in Malta, proving that the word *ghoxx* used to mean 'nest' also in Maltese. This is further witnessed by the presence of the word with similar sense in several other documented but extinct place-names such as *Ghoxx Il-Aghrab*⁷ 'the raven's nest' in Gozo, *Ghoxx Il-Hamiema*⁸ 'the pigeon's nest' in Malta and *Ghoxx In-Nahla*⁹ 'the bees' nest' (today simply known as *Tan-Nahla*) in the limits of Marsalforn, Gozo. Naturally, once *ghoxx* acquired its vulgar connotation, it was eventually replaced by the word *bejta* in the spoken language and lost its place in the toponymic terms.

Aghrab

Aghrab mentioned above, and its variant *ghorab*,¹⁰ is of Semitic origin. The bird it used to define is today known by the Romance names *korvu*, *čawlun* or *čawla imperjali*,¹¹ *Corvus frugilegus*.

In both *aghrab* and *ghorab* the natural stress or tonic accent falls on the second vowel "a". In each case the first vowel happens to be the euphonic or prosthetic vowel. The only difference between the pronunciation of *aghrab* for 'raven' and *Gharab* for 'Arabs' lies in the placing of the stress, which is laid on the first vowel in the latter word. There is however

and the Royal Patrimony" in *Medieval Malta* ed. A. T. Luttrell, (London, 1975), p.129.

5. "Id-Dukkiena ta' Bonan, Bonan's stone bench, 1467, name of a strip of land in the district of *Ghux il-Hida*, near Siggiewi." G. Wettinger, "Some Maltese Medieval Place-Names of Archaeological Interest" in *Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Archeologia Medievale* (Palermo, 1976), p. 25.
6. "*Vyed Oosc el Hida*, Valle, nido del milvo." G. F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta, Isola del Mare Siciliano e Adriatico con le sue Antichità ed altre Notizie* (Malta, 1647), p. 72.
7. E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.*, under *aghrab*. The lexicographer does not cite the source and yet locates the name as pertaining to a cave found between *Ras In-New-wiela* and *Mgarr Ix-Xini*, Gozo. There are no caves in the area and De Soldanis himself gives just *ghosc el hrap*, cfr. NLM, Lib. MS 145a, p.25.
8. "*Guardia Oosc el Hamiema*, cioè nido della colomba," G. F. Abela, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
9. "...*ta mersuch alias hosc e nachal* in contrata *marsa el furni*..." NLM, Archives of the Order of Malta, MS 1991, p. 83.
10. G. Aquilina, *Papers in Maltese Linguistics* (Malta, 1961), p. 220. Cfr. *ghoroba* in n. 13. *infra*.
11. E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.*, under *aghrab*.

another important difference. If the former word was ever in use in the Maltese language, as it most probably was, it is extinct today, save for its possible incidental survival in the following toponyms; — *Ta* (sic) *Gharab* (limits of Munxar),¹² *Wied Il-Gharab* (limits of Munxar) and *Tal-Ghoroba* (limits of Xlendi).¹³ The last term is surely the dialectal phonetic transcription of the plural form of *ghorab*. The other two may have a trace of *aghrab* for 'raven'.

Gharab in *Ta Gharab* as printed on the Survey Sheets of Gozo¹⁴ and in *Wied Il-Gharab* as pronounced for me by a villager from Munxar, seems to be the plural form of *Gharbi/Gharbija* 'an Arab man/woman' hence 'Arabs'. The Gozitans give a folk interpretation to the origin of the latter place-name, namely that of North African corsairs (more generally called *Torok* 'Turks', rather than *Gharab* 'Arabs') having once attacked and tried to carry into slavery a Gozitan female baker who had her bakery in the vicinity. *Il-Wied Ta' L-Ghawdxija* 'the valley of the Gozitan (woman)' is still the name of a valley in the vicinity.

I believe that in these last two cases, *Gharab* was confused with *aghrab* for 'raven', once the latter word went out of use. The place-names should read *Ta' L-Aghrab* 'the place frequented by the raven', and *Wied Il-Aghrab* 'the valley frequented by the raven'. Both places might have had some connection with *Għoxx Il-Aghrab* mentioned earlier and might have served as nesting-places of the species. Both might have had *ghoxx* included, in which case cp. *Wadi Għoxx El Ghurab* 'the valley of the raven's nest' in Western Palestine.¹⁵

G. F. Abela (1582 — 1655) records the place-name "*Vued el Aarab*" (in Gozo) and explains it as "valle de gli arabi"¹⁶ 'valley of the Arabs'. The exact locality is not given.

In his history of Gozo,¹⁷ De Soldanis cites *Għoxx Il-Hrab* (in the limits of *Ta' Ċenċ* cliffs, again in the limits of Sannat) and explains it as "nido

12. P(ublic) W(orks) D(epartment), Survey Sheets of Gozo, (Malta, 1968), Ref(erence) 3087.

13. *Ibid.*, Ref. 2888.

14. v. n. 12 *supra*.

15. G. Aquilina, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

16. G. F. Abela, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

17. *Il Gozo Antico — Moderno, Sacro — Profano*, NLM, MSS 145 and 145a. The first is a neat copy of the second. This is an unpublished XVIII century history of Gozo, written in Italian. It was translated into Maltese by Dun (later Monsignor) Gużep Farrugia, a Gozitan, and published and printed by the Government Printing Press as *Għawdex bil-Graġja Tiegħu* (Malta, Vol. I 1938, Vol. II 1953). Some place-names are given inaccurately in the translation which was made on a perfect copy of De Soldanis' work, made by Michaelangelo Garroni, the first librarian of the Gozo Public Library; cfr. *Rdum Fiddien* in the translation, Vol. I, p. 26, for *Rdum Firdien* in NLM, MS 145a, p. 18.

dei corvi" 18 'ravens' nest'. *Hrab* is in fact the euphonic transcription of *Ghrab* which, in turn, is *aghrah* or *ghorab* without the euphonic vowel. Because the *gh* is being sounded (something like an "h" in the case of De Soldanis) it would need no such "help".

De Soldanis never writes *aghrah* or *ghorab* in either of his history of Gozo or his dictionary.¹⁹ In Vol. II he explains "corvo" as "l. corvus: *Ghrap* (sic)" and in Vol. I explains *Ghrap* as "... corvo, uccello di rapina l. corvus".²⁰ This indicates either that De Soldanis copied from Abela who writes "*Aayn Ghrab*, Fontana del corvo"²¹ or that he himself heard the name-word pronounced as such.

The inhabitants of Gharb, Ghasri, Sannat and Munxar, all in Gozo, still distinguish between the pronunciation of the pharyngeal fricative "gh" and the velar fricative "gh" in many cases. In these villages one may still hear *baghal* 'mule', *ghalqa* 'field' and *mgharfa* 'spoon' with the "gh" radical sounded "... like the French 'r' *grasséyé* with a little more of the g in it."²² In Maltese it is a remnant of Classical Arabic once possibly spoken on our islands and remains of which seem to be still existing in the spoken language of the people of the villages mentioned. In that case *ghrab* would be sounded something like *hrab* with a harsh h and would need no euphonic vowel.

The fate of *hida* and *ghrah* (or *aghrah*) in the Maltese language must have befallen many other words. The process of new lexical terms replacing older ones is in fact still going on and although we still know what *qorq* (S) and *moxt* (S) are, *sandli* (R) and *pettne* (R) are rapidly replacing them as words for 'sandals' and 'comb' respectively. This is in fact one of the signs of a healthy living language.

Nigret

The word *nigret* must have once been more diffused in Maltese. *In-Nigret* (singular form) and *L-Ingieret* (plural) (both sometimes spelled with an "m" instead of an "n") are two well known toponyms in Malta.

In their dictionaries both A. E. Caruana²³ and D.G. Barbera²⁴ reproduce *nigret* with a final "d". None of them contested this consonant reproduced

18. v. n. 7 *supra*. De Soldanis translates "corvi" ('ravens') *ghrap* (for *ghrah*) which is in the singular. The plural form would have been *ghraba*.

19. *Damma tal Kliem Kartaginis Mscerred fel Fom tal Maltin u Ghaucin*, NLM, Libr. MS 143, four Vols. Although De Soldanis mentions that there existed other Maltese dictionaries before his (which remained unpublished), none seem to have survived. *Damma...* is held to be the first Maltese dictionary.

20. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, under *Ghrab*.

21. G. F. Abela, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

22. J. A. Haywood and H. M. Nahmed, *A New Arabic Grammar* (London, 1970), p. 7.

23. A.E. Caruana, *Vocabolario della Lingua Maltese* (Malta, 1903).

24. D.G. Barbera, *Dizionario Maltese, Arabo, Italiano* (Beyruth, 1940), four Vols.

as such by M.A. Vassalli in 1796.²⁵ This is perhaps because the “t” is the unvoiced complement of the voiced dental plosive “d” which is unvoiced when it forms part of a consonantal junction with an unvoiced consonant (cp. *ħadt* ‘I took’ which is sounded *ħatt*) or when at the end of a word (cp. *raqad* ‘he slept’ and *qabad* ‘he caught’ which are sounded *raqat* and *qabat* respectively).

G. B. Falzon repeats Vassalli’s information and just defines “... the name of an ancient village in Malta,”²⁶ and omits the word in his second edition of 1882.²⁷ Caruana explains “voce di significato ignoto, ...”²⁸ ‘word of unknown meaning’. Barbera, on the other hand, concludes that the nearest etymology of the word is traceable to Arabic roots *n-gh-r* agglomerated to the *t marbuta* still used in the construct state in Maltese. He derives this from Dozy-Supplement²⁹ and explains the word as “... cornacchia (corvus Pica di Linneo), ...”³⁰

Now “cornacchia” is defined as “... uccello della specie del corvo imperiale, un po’ piu’ piccolo e con penne azzurrognole (nap. cola, ciaula).”³¹ This is corroborated by the same Barbera when explaining the word *cawl* (for *ċawl*) as “... cornacchia, ... Corvus Corone o Pica — L. ...”³²

The word *ċawla* ‘jackdaw’ must have come into Maltese from Neapolitan, most probably through Sicilian. Since the new word established itself in the spoken language it also started to replace *nigret*, which gradually became obsolete and eventually lost currency also in the place-names. Many, if not all, of the contemporary place-names including *ċawla* or *ċawl* as a composite part thereof, may have once had *nigret* or *ingieret* instead.

Cawla and *ċawl* are tied to several place-names in both Malta and Gozo. Places associated with the bird’s name in Gozo are found in the limits of Rabat — *Taċ-Ċawla*; Ras Ir-Reqqa — *Taċ-Ċawla*, *Il-Wied Taċ-Ċawla* (a valley) and Mgarr (harbour) — *Il-Gebli* or *Il-Blata Taċ-Ċawl* (printed *Taċ-Ċawl Rock* on the latest contour map of Gozo).³³

L-Ingieret is the name of a stretch of land in the same area called *Taċ-Ċawla* in the limits of Ras Ir-Reqqa, on the outskirts of Għarb.

Documented information associates *Taċ-Ċawla* in Rabat with *nigret* at an earlier date. A stretch of land in the same area and established as a

25. M.A. Vassalli, *Lexicon Melitense-Latino-Italum* (Romae, 1796), under *nigred*.

26. G.B. Falzon, *Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese* (Malta, 1845), under *nigred*.

27. G.B. Falzon, *Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese* (Vol. I, Malta, 1882).

28. A.E. Caruana, *op. cit.*, under *nigred*.

29. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* (Leide, 1927).

30. D.G. Barbera, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, under *nigred*.

31. N. Zingarelli, *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana* (2nd ed.; Greco-Milanese, 1922), under *cornacchia*.

32. D. G. Barbera, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, under *caul*.

33. MALTA, Map Series M898, Sheet 1, Edition 1 D.O.S. published by D. Survey, War Office and Air Ministry, 1962.

benefice in 1579 was described thus: "... *ta nigret* in qta. di S. Francesco alias *ta ciaula*, seu *ta Hain Cathet* ..." ³⁴ Another benefice in the district of Gharb was called *Habel Tan-Nigret*. ³⁵ This may have been found in the same area today still called *L-Ingieret* mentioned above. Some other place-names featuring *nigret* and *ingieret* and tied up to benefices in Gozo are "... San Cataldo or *Habel In-Nigret* ...", ³⁶ "*In-Nigret Ta' Salvuzzu*" ³⁷ and "... *ta ciaula* seu *ta nigret* ..." ³⁸ This last name confirms that there was a time when the stretch of land was called by either of the names *ċawla* or *nigret*.

In the meantime the jackdaw disappeared completely from our islands and its name's occurrence in place-names is the only living proof that it once actually dwelt among us.

Il-Kanġu ta' Filfla

Another bird with a fate almost similar to that of the jackdaw is the storm petrel, in Maltese called *kanġu ta' Filfla*, where *kanġu* is the actual name of the bird and *Filfla* that of the "... crumbling rock of ... (an island which) ... provides the ideal habitat during the breeding season for our sea-birds — namely, the yellow-legged Herring gull, the Cory's and Manx shearwaters and the Storm petrel," ³⁹ and which lies about three kilometres out at sea south-west of Wied Iż-Żurrieq (Malta). The bird is so called because it is not seen anywhere else on the islands. Once, however, it lived and nested in other areas too, and must have been simply called *kanġu*.

About two and a half centuries ago this foul-smelling bird nested and lived in great numbers in a cave in Ta' Ċenċ cliffs in Gozo.

34. NLM, Libr. MS Ad. 73, p. 997. This benefice was founded by Don Lorenzo de Apapis as may be seen in the notarial deeds of Not. Tomaso Gauci and recorded on 9 May 1579.

35. "Giuspadronato denominato *chabel ta nigret* in contrada del Garbo." NLM, Libr., MS Ad. 73, p. 436.

36. V. Borg, *The Seminary of Malta and the Ecclesiastical Benefices of the Maltese Islands* (Malta, 1964), p. 51. This benefice was founded by Simon Caxaro on the 18 June 1588. Most probably the district called *Habel In-Nigret* here and that called *Habel tan-Nigret* in the previous n.35 are the same.

37. "Giuspto. *ta iccinus* seu *il nigret ta salvuzzu* in qta. *ta hain xeiba*" (Xaghra), NLM, Libr. MS Ad. 73, p. 911.

38. "...appta. *ta ciaula* seu *ta nigret*..." This is a benefice founded on 22 February 1580 and shows that at least by this date *ċawla* had already entered into Maltese and started establishing itself in the place-names. NLM, Libr. MS Ad. 73, p. 254.

39. S. Borg, "The Storm Petrel — A Small but Brave Sea-Bird" in the *Times of Malta*, 2 October 1978, p. 5.

... *Għar Ilma*. In this cave one may see small sea animals that fly. These live in crevices in the walls of the cave during the day. At night they go out in search of sea-food. Wherever they go they leave a very stinking smell. Some fishermen have assured me that these birds are found in no other cave in either Gozo or Malta. I gave all this information to a certain French knight who, in 1746, came to Gozo to collect some plants and birds from the island for study. He obtained eight specimens of this bird. I saw them both in the nest and when outside. Their size is similar to that of the song thrush, with a black beak resembling that of a pigeon. It has a brownish coloured area near the eyes. Its feet are like those of a duck. For a fortnight the knight fed them fish and eggs. Yet he could not say what species they pertained to. Then he sent some of them for study to a certain renowned scholar, a certain Lomien, in Paris.⁴⁰

The bird described in this paragraph by De Soldanis is today's *kangu ta' Filfla*. Whether the bird nested on Filfla in the author's days as well is not known. Nor is it known whether it lived only in the cave mentioned as reported by De Soldanis. However, it may be assumed that the species lived and nested somewhere in Ta' Ċenċ cliffs, off Sannat village, most probably in the cave today still known as *Għar Ilma* 'water cave'. Two factors, one toponymic the other linguistic, corroborate this hypothesis.

In Ta' Ċenċ, west of the place called Il-Bardan, near Is-Sanap, close to Ir-Ras 'the headland', there is an area known as *Ta' Kangu*. This spot is found above the cliffs, beside the fields in Ta' Ċenċ. On the other hand, *Għar Ilma* is found at the foot of the cliffs somewhere beneath the same area. It may be reached only by boat.

Naturally, little do bird lovers, trappers or hunters who frequent the surroundings associate the place-name with that of the bird or imagine the name to be a living remnant of a past when the storm petrel was simply called *kangu* and used to nest somewhere in the vicinity.

A. E. Caruana defines *kangu tagħ (sic) Filfla* as "... detto pure per il suo cattivo odore, *bunittien*, "Talisdroma Melitensis", uccello acquatico, che ama di fare il suo nido sull'isoletto di Filfla, donde il suo nome."⁴¹ The same name however appeared for the first time as such in Falzon's Maltese dictionary of 1845.⁴²

40. NLM, Libr. MS 145a, p. 22. The extract reproduced is a liberal translation of the Italian original, cfr. n.17 *supra*.

41. A.E. Caruana, *op. cit.*, under *kangu tagħ Filfla*.

42. G.B. Falzon, *op. cit.*, under *Kangu tagħ Filfla*. Still no one, not even E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, ever mentions that the word *kangu* by itself could have ever stood as the name for the bird.

Kangu then is another name for bunnittien. The former is a word of Romance origin,⁴³ the latter of Semitic, therefore more archaic. It may also be said that, like other archaic covabulary, *bunnittien* is a more precise and colourful descriptive of the bird.

The word is made up of two morphological stems, *bu* from Arabic sense 'father' and *nittien* from Arabic radicals *n-t-n* "to stink, emit a strong offensive smell."⁴⁴ In Maltese *bu* lost the stem value and acquired that of a prefix. It is found as such in quite a number of Maltese words; cp. *bugharwien* (made up of *bu*+*gharwien* literally 'father of the naked') 'slug', *bumunqar* 'weevil' and *buwahhâl* 'suck-fish' or 'lamprey'. The prefix conveys the meaning of 'father of' or 'paragon'. *Bunnittien* is coined on the same pattern of *buwahhâl*, namely *bu*+*kvkkv:k*.

Nittien is the name of the doer, and is derived from the verb *niten* 'to stink, to putrefy', hence *nittien* stands for 'stinker, putrefier' and the bird described by De Soldanis stunk, because wherever "they go they leave a stinking smell."

The storm petrel must have lived in greater numbers in the Maltese archipelago, and, among other places, it lived and nested in Ta' Ċenċ.

A place-name is "... une forme de langue, un mot formé, comme tous les autres, de voyelles et de consonnes, de phonemes articulés par les organes de la parole et transmis per l'oreille au cerveau."⁴⁵ This approach was not however adopted before the XIX century. Still man was always tempted to interpret the meaning and at times the origin of place-names he encountered in his daily striving for a living, cfr. "And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull)." (Mk 15. 22).

With regards to a folk interpretation of a Gozitan place-name, I have already mentioned Wied Il-Gharab and Il-Wied Ta' l-Ghawdxija. Another example is perhaps more interesting. It is associated with a deep well-like hole in the sea bed off the coast of Dwejra bay on the north west side of Gozo. The hole is close to the picturesque natural window-like fault in the promontory rocks described and called *It-Tieqa* 'the window'

'Hole' in Maltese is *ħofra* and almost every inhabitant from the neighbouring village of San Lawrenz, and many other Gozitans believe that this is the legendary *Il-Hofra Tal-Bidwin* 'the hole of the farmers (*bidwi* is Maltese

43. D.G. Barbera, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, under *Kangu tagħ Filfla*, derives *kangu* from Italian "cangio, cambio". E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.* Vol. V, under *kangu* shows doubt about this and the real etymology. Yet he suggests a possible trace of old Italian "gangio" for 'hook' perhaps because of the hook-like beak of the bird.

44. Alias A. Elias & Ed. E. Elias, *Elias Modern Dictionary — Arabic — English*, (9th ed.; Cairo, 1972), under *n-t-n*.

45. M. Ernest Muret, *Les Noms de Lieux dans Les Langues Romanes* (Vulaines s/Seine, 1930), as quoted by C. Rostaing, *Les Noms de Lieux* (Paris, 1969), p. 9.

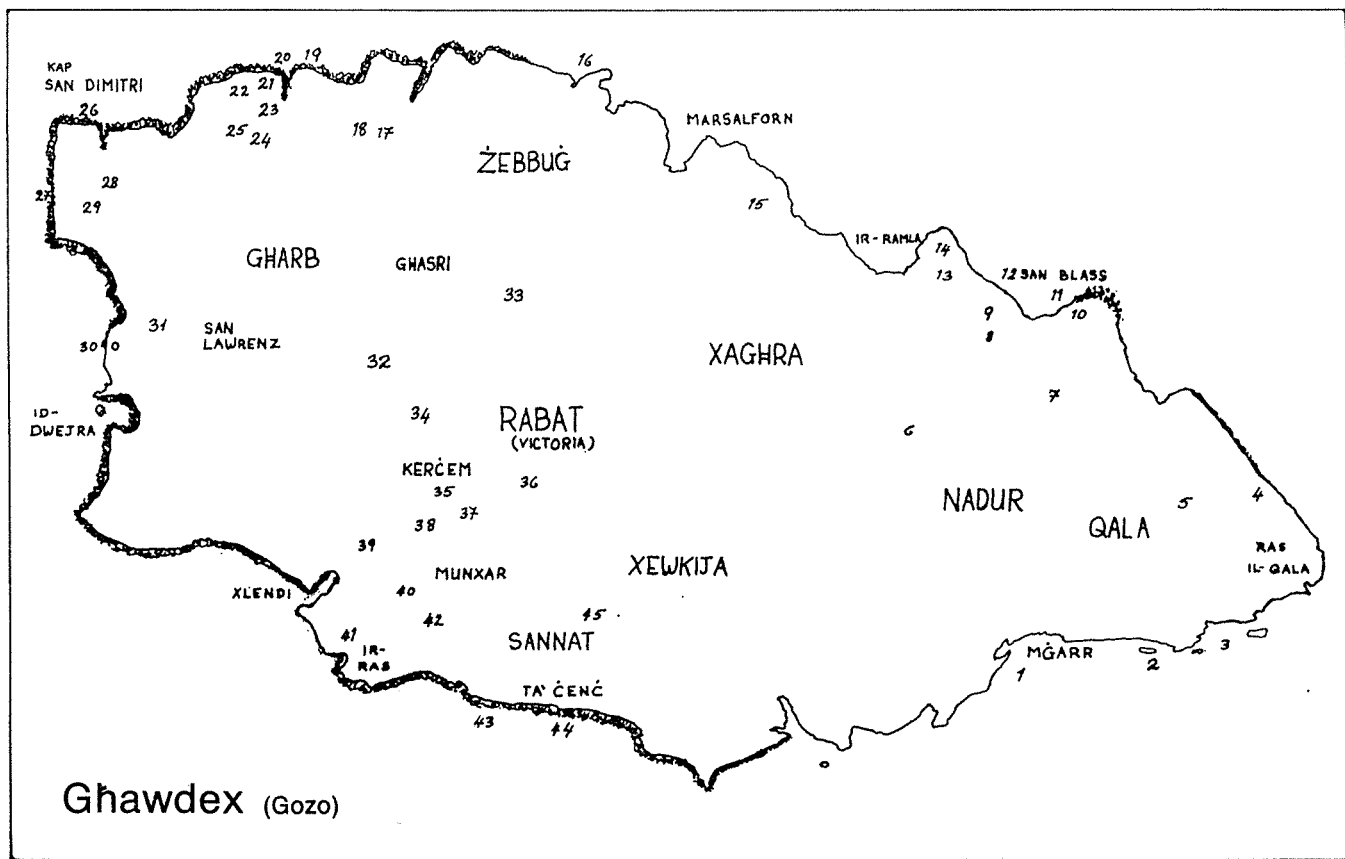
for 'farmer'). Many people hold that at the bottom of this hole there is a narrow opening through which a diver may pass into the open sea. The legend says that a number of farmers (some say two, others three and others seven), made a bet to see who could swim out of the "well" to the open sea beyond. They all got wedged in the "tunnel" and drowned.

How old and true the legend is may be left to one's imagination, once we find that in the popular call-name there is an unreasonable confusion of an "r" with the "d" in *bidwin*. The proper place-name is therefore *Il-Hofra Tal-Berwin* as actually reproduced on the Survey Sheets of Gozo ⁴⁶ and in which case it would be translated as 'the hole of the dotterel', another ornithological toponym.

"Place-names arise from, are influenced by and throw light upon the language and speech habits of people." ⁴⁷ These few notes on some of the ornithological terms in Gozo reflect this.

46. PWD, Survey Sheets of Gozo, Ref. 2689.

47. J.S. Ryan, "The Rationale of Proper Name Study — an extension of the extra-lexical common stock and Toponym Horizon", a paper delivered to the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the American Name Society on the 29 December 1965, Chicago, Illinois, (mimeograph), p. 16.



LIST OF BIRDS AND PLACE-NAMES

This is an alphabetical list of the bird names encountered in the toponymy of Gozo. After each name the relative linguistic information and the English and scientific names taken from D. A. Bannerman and J. A. Vella-Gaffiero, *Birds of the Maltese Archipelago* (Malta, 1976), are given. The respective toponyms associated with each of these are included. In this case only the actual place name-word is translated, e.g. *Wied* ('valley') *Il-Merill* since the translation of the bird-name has been given before. The bracketed numbers after each place-name refer to the accompanying map, giving the approximate location in relation to the town and villages and other landmarks in Gozo.

Only the Gozitan ornithological terms are given in the list.

The list, however, includes all the present bird toponyms. Extinct place-names referred to in the article, are marked with an asterisk.

Abbreviations used:

arch.	=	archaic,
col.	=	collective,
f.	=	feminine,
m.	=	masculine,
n.	=	noun,
pl.	=	plural,
R.	=	Romance,
S.	=	Semitic and
s.	=	singular.

AGHRAB (variants of which are *għorab* and *għrab*), S, arch., (today *korvu* and *ċawlun* or *ċawla imperjali* are used instead); n.s.m., pl + a; 'raven', *Corvus frugilegus*;

* *Għoxx* ('nest') *Il-Għrab* (once in Ta' Ċenċ cliffs),

Ta' L-Agħrab (42),

Wied ('valley') *Il-Agħrab* (40) and

Ta' L-Għoroba (39).

ARPA (sometimes written also *alpa*), R; n.f.s., pl. —i; 'osprey', *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*;

L-Għar ('cave') *Ta' L-Arpa* (43).

BARBAĠANNI (very often accepted as being the pl. form of *barbaġann*), R; n.s.m. pl. + *jiet*; 'barn owl', *Tito alba*;

Il-Ġebli ('stone' or 'rock') *Tal-Barbaġanni* (3).

BIEŻ (sometimes spelled also *bies*), S; n.s.m., pl. *bizien*; 'mediterranean peregrine', *Falco peregrinus brookie*;

Il-Hotba ('hillock') *Tal-Bież* (29),

L-Għar ('cave') Tal-Biež (27) and
Tal-Biež (28).

BIRWIN (dialectal form of which is *berwin* and sometimes written also *burwin* and *birwiena* — cfr. E. Serracino Inglott, *Il-Miklem...*, Vol. I, under *birwin*), S; n.s.m., f. +a, pl. +t; 'dotterel', *Eudromias morinellus*; *Il-Hofra* ('hole') Tal-Berwin (30).

BORKA (dialectal form of which is *birka*), S; n.s.f., pl. *borok* (or *birek*); 'wild duck', *Anas* species;
Tal-Birka (5).

ĊAWL (a word which replaced arch. and S *nigret q.v. infra*), R; col. n.m., n.s.f. +a, pl. *ċawliet*; 'jackdaw', *Corvus monedula spermologus*; *Il-Ġebli* ('stone' or 'rock') Taċ-Ċawl sometimes known also as *Il-Blata* ('rock') Taċ-Ċawl (2),
Wied ('valley') Iċ-Ċawl (15),
Il-Wied ('valley') Taċ-Ċawla (22),
L-Għar ('cave') Taċ-Ċawla (21) and
Taċ-Ċawla (23) and (36).

ĊUVETT (De Soldanis gives *civet* and others *ċovet*, cfr. E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.* Vol. I, under *ċuvett*), R; col. n.m., n.s.f. +a, pl. *ċuvettiet*; 'spotted' or 'dusky redshank', *Tringa erihropus*;
Il-Hotba ('hillock') Taċ-Ċivett (13).

GALLINA R; n.f.s., pl. —i and *galliniet*; 'woodcock', *Scolopax rusticola rusticola*;
Il-Wied ('valley') Tal-Gallina (18) and
Tal-Gallina (17).

GANGA (sometimes written also *ganga*, cfr. E. Serracino Inglott, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, under *ganga*), R; n.f.s., pl. *gangiet*; 'pintailed sandgrouse', *Pterocles alchate caudacuta*;
Il-Qortin (originally "... dating back to the XVI th century is a military word meaning *opera avanzata di fortificazione*, Fr. 'courtine' " — G. Aquilina, "The Hills of Malta and Gozo" in *Proceedings of the X th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences* (Vienna, 1969), p. 74, but probably from Italian "cortina" 'natural fortification', today more 'descriptive' of "... campi di poca terra ed esposti al vento e pertanto di scarso prodotto." — A. E. Caruana, *Vocabolario...*, under *qortin*) Tal-Ganga (8),
Il-Wied ('valley') Tal-Ganga (9) and
Is-Sofor ('the yellow' rocks) Tal-Ganga (12).

GARDILL R; n.s.m., pl. *griedel*; 'goldfinch', *Carduelis carduelis carduelis*;
Il-Hotba ('hillock') Tal-Gardill (33).

GAWWI (probably brought into Maltese by Arabs from *Ifryqiyah* from Latin "gavia" — Pliny, cfr. G. Aquilina, *Papers...*, p. 48), S; col. n.m., n.f.s. +ja, pl. *gawwijiet*; 'seagull', *Laridae* species;

Il-Blata ('rock') *Tal-Gawwi* (11).

GRUWA (in Gozo it is also pronounced *grewwa*, others just *gru* and *gawwa* cfr. E. Serracino Inglott, *Il-Miklem* ..., Vol. III, under *gawwa*; from old Italian "grua"), R; n.f.s., pl. +*t* and *grew*; 'common crane', *Megalornis grus grus*;

Tal-Gruwa (45).

HAMIEM S; col. n.m., n.f.s. +*a*, pl. *hamimiet*; 'pigeon', *Columbidae* species;

L-Għar ('cave') *Tal-Hamim* (26) (once most probably known as *Harq* ('crevice') *Ta' L-Għar* ('cave') *Il-Hamim* — NLM, Libr. MS 145a, p. 20), also *L-Għar Tal-Hamim* (44),

Wied ('valley') *Il-Hamim* (14) and

L-Għajn ('spring' or 'water source') *Tal-Hamimiet* (34).

HIDA S, arch., (today replaced by *astur* or *astun* R); n.f.s., pl. —*t*; 'red kite', *Milvus milvus milvus*;

* *Il-Gnien* ('garden') *Ta' Ghoxx* ('nest') *Il-Hida*,

* *L-Għajn* ('spring') *Ta' Ghoxx* ('nest') *Il-Hida* and

Ta' Hida (6).

KALANDRA R; n.f.s., pl. —*i* and *kalandriet*; 'calandra lark', *Melanocorypha calandra calandra*;

Ta' Kalandriet (37) (givin to me also as *kalandrijiet*).

KANGU R, (a word which replaced S arch. *bunittien*, today actually known as *kanġu ta' Filfla*); n.m.s. pl. +*ijiet*; 'storm petrel', *Hydrobates pelagigus*;

Ta' Kanġu (41).

KOKKA R; n.f.s., pl. *kokkiet* and *kokok*; 'scops owl', *Otus scops scops*; *Tal-Kokka* (7).

KWAKK R; n.m.s. and col., n.f.s. +*a*, pl. +*i*; 'night heron', *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*;

Il-Gebla ('stone' or 'rock') *Tal-Kwakki* (16).

MALVIZZ R; n.m.s., pl. *mlievez*; 'song thrush', *Turdus ericetorum philomelus*;

Ta' L-Imlievez (35).

MARGUN R; n.m.s. and col.; 'asiatic cormorant', *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*;

Il-Fonda ('deep' hole) *Tal-Margun* (20) and

L-Għar ('cave') *Tal-Margun* (19).

MERILL R; n.m.s. and col; 'blue rock thrush', *Monticola solitaria*;

Wied ('valley') *Il-Merill* (31).

MILON R, (encountered only in the following place-name); n.m.s.; (traceable to French "milan" for arch. *hida* q.v. *supra* and associated as such by Dozy-Suppl., cfr. E. Serracino Inglott, op. cit., Vol. IV, under *hida*);

Il-Borġ (once originally 'tower' but today more descriptive of a 'heap')
Tal-Milon (10). The place so called is in the limits called *Ta' Hida*
q.v. supra) in Nadur.

MINKELLA R; n.f.s.; 'little ringed plover', *Charadrius dubius coronicus*;
Ta' Minkella (38).

NIGRET S, arch. (today replaced by *ċawl q.v. supra*); n.m.s., pl. *ingieret*;
 * *Habel* (a land measurement) *In-Nigret*, sometimes referred to also as
Habel tan-Nigret or simply as *Tan-Nigret* (once in the limits of Gharb),
 * *In-Nigret Ta' Salvuzzu* (owner's name) (once in the limits of Ghajn
Xejba still existing in Xaghra),
 * *Tan-Nigret* (once in Rabat, today known as *Taċ-Ċawla*),
Il-Hotba ('hillock') *Ta' L-Ingieret* (25) and
L-Ingieret (24).

SEQR S; n.m.s., pl. *isqra*; 'hobby', *Falco subbuteo subbuteo*;
Tas-Seqr (32).

VENEW (from Latin *vanellus* ? R); col. n.m.s., n.f.s. + *wa*, pl. also *venew-*
wiet; 'lapwing', *Vanellus vanellus vanellus*;
L-Għajn ('sprin') *Tal-Venew* (4).

GHASFUR S; n.m.s. n.f.s. + *a*, pl. *agh̃safar*; 'bird';
Il-Ponta ('headland') *Ta' L-Agh̃safar* (1).