

# Book: The Church of St Cecilia on the Island of Gozo

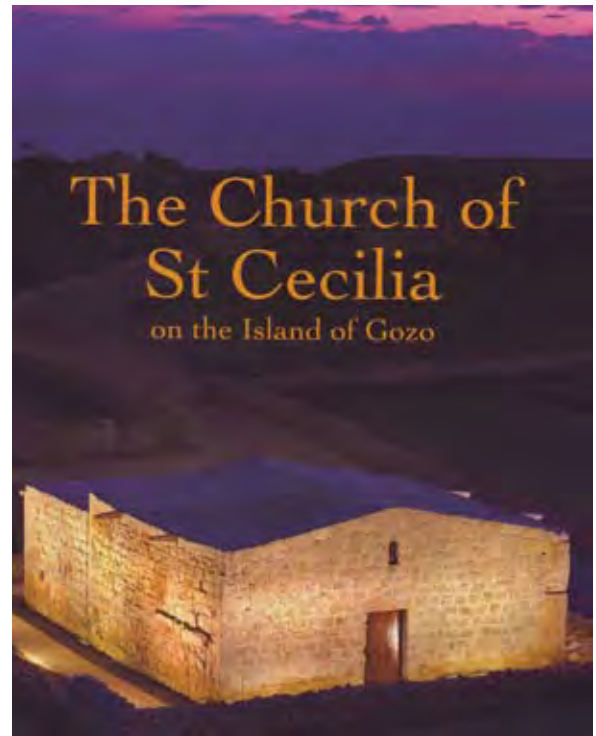
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

David Mallia,  
Photography & design by David Cilia,  
Malta, Wirt Għawdex Organization, 2012, pp. 56.

*The Church of St Cecilia on the Island of Gozo* is the name of a new publication issued by the Wirt Għawdex Organization regarding the medieval chapel dedicated to the patron saint of musicians in the vicinity of the Gozo heliport. The book has been written by Dr. David Mallia, a Maltese architect residing in Gozo. Photographs have in their majority been taken by renowned Gozitan photographer Mr. David Cilia.

The book has definitely filled a void which has long been felt. It builds on primary sources such as Agius de Soldanis' *Il Gozo Antico-moderno e Sacro-Profano* as well as secondary sources such as Gorg Aquilina's and Stanley Fiorini's edited work on Mgr. Peter Dusina's Apostolic visit of 1575 published by the University of Malta. This book is definitely a must-read for those who have Melitensia or rather Gaultitana close to their heart. Published in paper-back A4 size, the book is both attractive and well-presented. Mallia, being both an architect and civil engineer of experience, has managed to blend together medieval history and architecture thus creating an interesting work of literature which will definitely go down well with both beginners and scholars. The approach taken by the author is holistic, leaving little unsaid about this historical place and a true gem of Gozo's heritage.

The publication can be broadly divided into three sections although these overlap and therefore it is not always easy to say where one ends and the next begins. The book opens with a chronological account of Gozo's past, both civil and ecclesiastical. Geographical aspects feature quite strongly in this part of the publication and the historical background relating to the figure of St Cecilia is an interesting bit of hagiography. A



comparative look at St Cecilia's church and other churches to be found on mainland Malta ensues, with ample references to scholarly studies by both foreign and local scholars. Last but not least, the very detailed study of both the interior and the exterior of the edifice accompanied by sumptuous photos and other sketches gives the publication both colour and value. The endnotes will prove invaluable to researchers and students of history, archaeology, architecture and other related studies.

In addition to the notes regarding restored sites managed by Wirt Għawdex, I would have liked to see included a short paragraph containing information about the history of the organisation itself. There is no doubt that Wirt Għawdex is fast becoming Gozo's foremost socio-historical organization, an entity which was sorely needed in the island of Gozo. With a preface by Wirt Għawdex president, Mr. Francesco Masini, the book is another feather in the cap of this widely admired organization that is determined to restore and care for all that can be saved from Gozo's ancient and medieval heritage.