

# THE OFFICE OF THE SECREZIA OF MALTA PREVIOUS TO THE COMING OF THE KNIGHTS HOSPITALLERS

by

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The *Regiae Melivetanae Secretiae* was the office in charge of the administration of the Crown Lands found in the Maltese Islands. As such it formed part of the Sicilian Secrezia which, according to Falcone Beneventano, originated in 1140 when the *Duana de Secretis* was founded. It was a financial office *sui generis* to which corresponded a territorial circumscription into which the officials of the same Secrezia exercised rights proper to the King, and, principally, in the administration of the *iura regalia*. In this territorial relationship, the Secrezia administered the immovable patrimonial goods, instrumental or not, and dealt with juridical problems concerned with this administration (1). The officers in charge of the Secrezia of Malta, as well as those of Palermo, Catania and Messina, were, by the end of the 14th century, responsible for the administration of their office to the Royal Court at Palermo. The Maltese office was established not later than 1399 (2).

The office of Malta was organized under the leadership of a Secreto who was assisted by a Secreto or vice-Secreto for Gozo. Their appointment was a reserved right of the Monarch (3). The Secreto for Malta who had a salary of 30 oz. per year, was assisted by various officials. These included the Credencerii who received 8 oz. per year, the Massarii who were given a salary of 4 oz. per year, the Missi Secretiae who had an annual salary of 1 oz. 8 tr. and the Falcuneri who received 6 oz. per year. The Secreto for Gozo received an annual salary of 6 oz. while his subordinates, that is the Massarii and the Missi received 3 oz. and 1 oz. respectively (4).

1. A. Baviera Albanese, *L'Istituzione dell'ufficio di Conservatore del Real Patrimonio e gli organi finanziari del Regno nel Sec. XV* (Palermo, 1958) pp.47-69. See C. Galea Scannura, "The office of the Secrezia in the Maltese Islands" (unpublished R.U.M. B.A.Hons. thesis, 1970) for an explanation of the function of the office.
2. Libr. Ms. 1226, p. 29.
3. E. Mazzaresse Fardella, ed., *J. Luca de Barberinis Liber de Secretiis*, Acta Italica II (Milan, 1966), p. xvi. (When reference is made directly to the Mss. within this publication, the letters LIB. SEC. are used together with the relevant folios).
4. LIB. SEC., f.82v-83. The money terms, oz. (onza), tr. (tari) and gr. (grani) are Sicilian: 1oz.=30tr., 1tr.=20gr., 1gr.=6 denari.

The persons involved in the administration are not always known, but incidents related with them are helpful in giving a picture of the local situation. They do not always seem to have been ideal persons neither in the opinion of the Maltese Jurats nor in that of the Royal Court. Thus, Vichucio Delujta who was Secreto and Master Procurator for Malta in 1416, was not pleased with the presence of a certain lady, Tarsia de Rizaro, who was favoured by the Court. Being the mother of the Noble D. Federico Conte di Luna, the Infante John had assigned her an annual pension of 30 oz. at the expense of the Secrezia of Malta. The Secreto was reluctant in paying, in fact he had to be reminded to pay the pension for the year 1416. He also received instructions to do so in 1417 (5). Another incident indicates the desire of certain people to obtain the office or at least to join its ranks. Thus Nicola Poeta who was vice-Secreto for Gozo found himself ousted during the time of Martin II.

During an official trip he was expected to make to Sicily on behalf of the Royal Court, he was captured and imprisoned by the Saracens. In the interval, a priest, Johanne De Spano, had ingratiated himself with the Lord Infante and managed to get an appointment of vice-Secreto for himself. He did not inform the Infante that he was a priest. Soon Poeta was freed and on the 27th November, 1416, he received a letter from the Viceroy of Sicily, Domenico Ram, Bishop of Lerida, and Antonio Cardona, whereby he was installed back in his office. The letter pointed out that according to the Law, De Spano could not occupy any secular office for he was a 'sacred person'. Moreover he had hid the truth from the Lord Infante (6).

The Secreto for Gozo must have had to spend quite a lot of time worrying about the Crown lands under his care. This ensured profit in spite of the difficulties the Islands had to face during a century when both Moorish and Christian pirates could find the place an easy prey for their incursions. In a petition to the Crown dated at Messina 31st October, 1432, the Università of Gozo referred to the problems created by Moorish invasions. Their raids had diminished the amount of beasts and created a difficulty for sowing. Hence the Gozitans asked to be freed from having victuals extracted as taxation. But more relevant to the Crown lands, was their request that grain harvested from the Crown lands should not be exported from Gozo, but stored on the island for emergency. It was granted that grain grown in Gozo was to be used for the Gozitans, but when the harvest was superabundant, export to Malta was to be

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5. F. Lioni, *Codice Diplomatico di Alfonso il Magnanimo* (Palermo, 1891), Vol. I, pp. 130-131.

6. F. Lioni, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

made over the surplus (7).

This was not the only problem the people had to face. The Islands were from time to time given as a fief to some noble magnate. Thus on 23rd January, 1420, King Alfonso instructed Filippo de Merlo, Secreto for Malta, Tommaso de Lucuzza, and Andrea de Ravello, judge of the Capitanìa, to pay homage to Don Antonio Cardona to whom the Islands had been granted (8). Matters greatly displeased the people when in 1427 the Islands were under the feudal lord Don Gonsalvo Monroy who made great extortions with the result that the Maltese revolted against him. The Maltese representatives sent their ambassadors, Don Cataldo Cusubrella and Don Gregorio Bonello to the Viceroys of Sicily with requests over the question that arose. On the 14th July, 1427, Jaymo Roure was appointed to settle the question. The jurats wanted to redeem the Islands, and among other demands some requests, that were made, affected the Office.

The ambassadors referred to the income and the profits of the Secrezia and asked that for a number of years the income of the Secrezia of Malta and Gozo was to be deducted after the provisions for the Castello di Mare and the salaries of the officials of the Secrezia had been paid. They then expected that the Viceroys would nominate a Secreto and other officials to collect the rents of the Court. This received the *Placet* from the Viceroys Nicolo Speciali and G. Montaynes on 13th March, 1427, from Palermo (9).

Later, on the 30th December, 1427, the ambassadors Antonio Inguanez and Antonio Bagnolu managed to obtain a convention confirmed by the Viceroys over the matter. Again further matters affected the Secrezia. The Viceroys agreed to grant to the Università of Malta all the income of the Secrezia for ten years. This was the advice of Roure. It was also agreed that during these ten years, the Capitano and the Secreto as well as all civil officials were to be Maltese and citizens of Malta. Their appointment was to be for a year with the exception of that of the Secreto. The jurats were even allowed to make new impositions and gabelle to enable them to satisfy payment, beside accruing income of the Office. Another agreement affected the Secreto's pocket. It was agreed that the Secreto was to be admonished not to have more than 18 oz. as salary, and that in the Office the number of Credencerii and Massarii was

7. E.R. Leopardi, "The Island of Gozo 1432-1453", M.H., Vol. III, no.3 (1962), p.79; S. Giambruna & L. Genuardi, *Capitoli Inediti delle città demaniali di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1918), Vol. I, p.323.
8. Libr. Ms 1141, Part (P) I [Documenti relativi ai diritti pubblici dei Maltesi dal tempo degli Aragonesi in poi], f.19v; Libr. Ms. 23, f.147; Libr. Ms. 454, f.16v.
9. A. Mifsud, "Franchigie costituzionali Alfonsiane e l'invasione dei mori del 1429", *Arch. Melit.* Vol III (1918-1919), pp. 332-340.

to be limited according to the wishes of the Università. Moreover, he was expected to hand money to the Università and to pay to creditors who had lent money for the collection of the 30,000 florins without making any favours. On 9th February, 1428, this was read to the Maltese jurats and other officia's by the royal commissioner Bartolomeo Gallina. Gallina had been appointed as Conservator of the Royal Patrimony and commissioner in Malta on the 6th January, 1428. The Università was expected to pay him 6 gold Sicilian tari per day during his sojourn (10).

Subsequently on 30th June, 1428 King Alfonso re-incorporated Malta to the Crown promising that the Islands would never again be granted as a fief (11). On the 29th March, 1429, he conceded to the Maltese request that all officers in Malta were to be Maltese and that no official commissioner was to be sent from Sicily and that the Secreto was to be independent (12).

The officials who took charge of the Office, had to deal with various problems concerning the distribution and control of Crown property and also with requests that affected it. Thus on the 5th November, 1443, the Gozitan jurats noted the absence of wood for fuel on the island. It had always been the tradition to allow the poor to collect fallen twigs and branches, and to glean the lands belonging to the Crown. It then appeared that the tenants of these lands had forbidden the continuance of this usage. The poor performed various duties, including those of coast-watching, and the repairing of the city walls, and therefore they felt that the usage should continue. This was in fact granted as well (13).

People who incurred the anger of the officers of the Secrezia did not go free from payment. It seems that the Secreto even had his own court of inquiry. Thus when a certain Jaymo Pignanu presented a series of false reports to the Infante and Viceroy of Sicily in 1437, Manfre Caxaru was asked to present a petition against him on behalf of the Università. On the 13th May, 1437, he pointed out that debtors over grain towards Johanni Abatellu and the heirs of Luca Murexinu were being asked to pay by Jaymu Pignanu, when according to witnesses they had already paid to Paulu Gallu. Opposition was aroused against him and the Università convened a meeting for the purpose. The jurats became defenders of those who opposed such enforced levies because of poverty. One day, they pointed out, a poor man was called in front of the Capitano, and the jurats who found out that he was accused of a debt of 5 carlini,

10. A. Mifsud, *op. cit.*, pp.354-356.

11. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, f.1.

12. W. Eton, *Authentic Material for a history of the Maltese people* (London, 1802), p.101.

13. E.R. Leopardi, "The Island of Gozo 1432-1453", M.H., Vol.IV, no.1 (1964), pp.69-70; S. Giambruno & L. Genuardi, *op.cit.*, p.334.

spoke on his behalf saying that he had paid and that they were willing to bring witnesses. So Jaymu appeared in front of the lieutenants of the Secreto and denounced two jurats as two private persons for a fine of 100 oz. each, saying that they had contravened the command of the Infante. Hearing this, the council of the Università met and after a debate concluded that jurats were not to desist defending the people and to write of the enormous misdeeds committed by Jaymu since the day he stepped on these Islands. This demand received the *Placet*, and it was agreed that Paulu Gallu was to present his account of the exactions, while officers were instructed not to impose fines on jurats.

Further than this, Manfre Caxaru informed the Viceroy and Infante that the pre-eminences of the jurats were prejudiced when the case of Micheli di Bernardu, and the case of Johanni Bayada and Cola di Surbi as gabelotti, were to be committed to the lieutenants of the Secreto. This was nothing more than an attempt to deny the jurats their rights, and therefore they asked for their privileges to be confirmed. They also demanded that the lieutenants of the Secreto's commission were to be checked and that justice was to be made to the jurats (14). On this occasion the jurats had their privileges confirmed, but as regards matters involving space the situation was to be different. Thus on the 18th April, 1501, the Royal Court of Palermo instructed the Secreto to carry an inquest over the lands between the fief of Dejr il-Bahar and Gnien il-Kbir near which there was another garden known as Il-Giardino Pikulo, which was situated in the area of Il-Menqa. This garden had some trees planted in it to the north towards the land known as Tal-Bajada. The inquest was to be held to satisfy the request of the Noble Francesco Grugno, a Royal Falconer, who wanted to know who in fact owned the land between the two gardens (15). This brings us to two other aspects of the Office: the interests of the Secreto over the concessions of land, and the hunt for falcons.

With regard to the concessions made over strips of land, cisterns, and sheds as leases or gabelle, the jurats had the power to participate, but it was the presence of the Secreto which made such concessions legal. The persons who occupied the Office did not always like this division of power. In fact on the 7th July, 1512, the Viceroy had to order the Secreto and his officials to intervene when such concessions as for the straightening of walls, or as has already been mentioned, were made by emphyteusis. This was necessary to protect the interests of the Royal Court. The Credencerii were expected to be present to levy the taxes, while

14. S. Giambruno & L. Genuardi, *op. cit.*, pp. 402-405.

15. A.C.M., U.T.I. Bk. 34, pp. 626-627.

the Secreto had to keep an account of the matter. The jurats could not give a concession without the presence of the Secreto, who, in 1512 had to be admonished and told that if he acted indifferently he could be fined 1,000 fl. by the Royal Treasurer (16).

Hawking also came under the supervision of the Secreto. Hunting sites were leased. Thus on the 28th January, 1493, Salvatore Calleja and his companions were permitted by the Viceroy to keep falcons and to keep the hunting sites. An earlier grant had been made to them on 8th May, 1492. Later on, on the 12th May, 1510, Francesco Grugno and his son Bartolomeo who was also a Royal Falconer, had their powers increased and this ensured the reserve of the garden Il-Bahar (17). The keeping of falcons was granted as an exclusive right to the nobility by King Ferdinand II, in 1495, while on 4th January, 1499, the King instructed his officials not to impede the nobles from keeping hawks or from going hawking. On 12th May, 1499, the Secreto was informed about this (18). In 1507 the Università asked Ferdinand not to allow the Secreto to act as judge over falcon hunters, thus usurping the right of ordinary judges (19).

But if the Secreto could be checked in the hunting of falcons, he could not be hindered in the collecting of rents and taxes from the various fiefs and gabelle. The jurats seem to have been satisfied as long as foreigners who held fiefs paid a 15% obligation towards the repair of the walls of Notabile. Thus on 19th July, 1511, Joanne Landolina, baron on Tabaria, was obliged to do so by King Ferdinand (20).

The Secreto collected various dues from the Maltese Islands. These included a tax known as *caxie* which used to yield 40 oz. per year and which by 1506 was yielding 93 oz. 20 tr (21). Other dues included the following the total annual income of which was registered by the Master Notary Giovanni Luca Barberi who about 1506 started to compile a report on the Royal Demesne: income from the wool of animals — 18 oz. 18 tr. 12 gr.; tax on plots of land providing corn — 9 oz. 20 tr. 12 gr.; barley

16. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 88-88v. Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 87v-88.

17. A. Mifsud, "Sulla Caccia in Malta nel passato", *Arch. Melit.*, Vol. III (1917), p. 118.

18. Libr. Ms. 494 f. 64-64v. Anon., *Memoirs of the Family Inguanez* (Malta, 1888), p.5.

19. W. Eton, *op. cit.*, p. 126; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 68v, 80v. Libr. 494, f. 75v.

20. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, f. 85v; Libr. Ms. 494, f. 80.

21. C. Du Gange, *Glossarum mediae et infimae latinitatis*, II (Graz, 1945), p. 245 indicates that it could be a state toll. It seems to have been a toll on imports and exports. In 1431 King Alfonso exempted from such taxation the merchandize that was imported or exported from the Kingdom by Maltese merchants. The merchants were to pay the toll once. Similar exemptions were repeated by other sovereigns. On 22nd January, 1515, Cristoforo de Panhormo of the Royal Secrezia of Sicily issued an "Esequitoriale" stating that Maltese merchants were to pay the "raxumi di la caxa" only once. See, Libr. Ms. 9, pp. 101, 124-129, 133-134.

fields — 5 oz. 11 tr.; linen — 5 oz. 10 tr; right over wool of beasts — 10 tr.; anchorage rights — 1 oz.; dues on exchange of Moors — 1 oz. 6 tr.; income from minor tributaries — 30 oz.; *thumini* (thyme) — 15 tr.; *coiraminis* (coriander) — 20 tr.; *biscocti* — 2 oz.

These rights were collected according to regulations made by the Royal Court. Special regulations were sometimes made. Thus on 4th July, 1513, the Viceroy wrote from Palermo ordering the Secreti and vice-Portulani of the Kingdom, and the Secreto of Malta, instructing them that they could not exact more than 5 gr. for every *responsale* as was the custom in Palermo. This was done following the request of the ambassador of the Università, Francesco Torres. Such levies were made on merchants for the transfer of money and merchandise. Those who dared disobey this order could be fined 1000 fl. Hence on 7th July, 1513, the notice was executed in Licata, while on 15th July, 1513, the notary Jacobo de Falsone read it to the Secreto of Malta, Antonio De Guevara, and his Credencero Manfredo Caxaro, at the instance of the Noble Rayneri Calavà (22).

Besides such exactions, there were also the rents of various gardens, farms and enclosures. In 1506, it was noted that the rent of Pietra Longa was 10 oz. per year. The fief of Benwerrad used to yield 38 oz. 10 tr., the fief of Fiddieni used to yield 22 oz. 20 tr., the garden of Hayncay yielded 10 oz., the garden of Scte Michaelae yielded 8 oz. 20 tr., and the garden of Talmulfar yielded 8 oz. 2 tr. The garden Tan-Nahal used to yield 6 oz., the garden of Talmichara used to yield 10 oz. 20 tr. and the garden Il-Gzira yielded 7 oz. 21 tr. 8 gr.

The garden and plots of land of Hiribacat yielded 10 oz. per year, while the greater garden of Hiribacat yielded 3 oz. The lands of lu Charicu used to yield 4 oz. 12 tr., and the district of Ta Burcza used to yield only 6 tr. In 1511 the Dominican Frairs of Our Lady of the Grotto, of Rabat, were given 6 salme of workable land from the demense of Fiddien and 3 salme from the garden of Binguerrat. These used to yield 27 tr. 10 gr (23).

Of particular importance were the Crown lands which were alienated or leased for long periods. These included the fief of Il-Qlejja which originally yielded 30 oz. but was rendering 80 oz. per year by 1500, and the fief of Ghajn Tuffieha, together with Gnien il-Firen, Qattara, Tabaria, Saqqa'ja and the Marsa.

22. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 90v-91; Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 85-86.

23. LIB. SEC., ff. 81v-82v; Libr. Ms. 635, ff. 215v-218 notes that the grant was made on 31st January, 1512, A Nativitate. On 14th July, 1512, it was presented to the Secreto, Giovanni De Guevara, in the presence of officials including Manfredo Rogerio Caxaro, Credencero, and Manfredo Nicolao Caxaro, Judge of the Secrezia.

The officials of the Secrezia used to receive their salary from the Royal Court and through the income of local rents. An important fief in this sense was that of Il-Qlejja (24). When it was alienated on the 15th January, 1472, King John made provisions for the payment of officials from the Royal Secrezia, but on the condition that if the Treasury run short of funds, the fief was to be wholly or partly taken back for the payment of the said salaries. This was confirmed on the 9th July, 1473, in Palermo and it was endorsed because the officers of the Island protested against the granting of Il-Qlejja (25).

Il-Qlejja had been given to the Royal Court by Pino Vaccaro who had received it on 20th February, 1397, for having Malta re-incorporated in the Royal Demesne (26). On his part King Martin I granted to Angelo Vaccaro and his heirs for ever, an annual grant of 12 oz. to be paid by the Secrezia. It was inherited by Angelo's son, Pino Vaccaro, and this was confirmed in Catania on the 21st August, 1408. It was later inherited by Antonio de Falzone who gave it as dowry to his son, Lorenzo, who was invested with this right on the 5th March, 1506. It was inherited by Antonellus, Lorenzo's son, on the 18th January, 1520 (27).

Another similar annual pension of 12 oz. was made against military service rendered, to Ugo Vaccaro and his heirs for ever by King Martin in 1400 in exchange for the part he owned of Il-Qlejja. This was inherited by Giovanni Vaccaro, his son, who passed it on to Lancea Vaccaro on the 11th May, 1459 (28). Lancea was confirmed in this right by the Viceroy Giovanni de Moncayo in Palermo on the 4th July, 1462. When he died, the pension was inherited by Chicca, Giovanni Vaccaro's sister, who was married to Nardus Bordino. She received the grant for her life in 1493. This was confirmed by Raymond de Sancta Pace and Giovanni Valguarnera who were then in charge of the administration of the Kingdom, in Catania on the 1st February, 1484. It then passed to Paolo Vaccaro, the tutor of Giovanni Bordino, Nardus's son, who received it in his turn and then left it for his daughter Imperia who died in her youth (29). There then appeared a cleric, Don Petro de Manbron, who claimed to be the lawful heir and so he was invested with this right by the Viceroy

24. G. Silvestri, *I Capibrevi di G. L. Barberi* (Palermo, 1888), Vol. III, p. 425; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 13v-15.

25. LIB. SEC., f. 84v.

26. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 109, 103.

27. LIB. SEC., f. 83

28. F. Lioni, *op. cit.*, p. 154, notes that on the 10th February, 1417, the Viceroy wrote from Catania ordering the Treasurer, Andrea Guardiola, to pay the pension to Giovanni Vaccaro for that year; on p. 176 a similar instruction dated 19th February, 1417 is noted. It adds that the pension had been granted by the King in exchange for the fief of Cobet.

29. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 119-125.

Ugo de Moncada on the 18th August, 1514. On the 11th January, 1517, he left it to his niece, Imperia, daughter of his sister and Antonio Xiberrasi, who was invested by Count de Monteleone on the 22nd January, 1519 (30).

In the meantime Il-Qlejja, near which was Bingemma, then held by Jacobo de Pellegrino, was alienated by King John to Bernard Impax on the 15th January, 1472. It was given to him for life. It was about this that the officers protested and even refused to give possession of the grant. But on 14th September, 1479, King Ferdinand while at Barchinone had the grant confirmed and Bernard Impax was allowed to extend the privilege to an heir of his choice also for life. He also had to promise that if the funds of the Secrezia run short, the salaries of the Castellano, the Captain of Arms, and other officials, were to be paid by the yield of the fief which was then 30 oz. per year. Nico'au Impax, Bernard's son, inherited it in 1489 (31). He paid homage for it on the 17th November, 1489, and by 1506 the fief was yielding over 80 oz. In 1513 the yield was still the same.

During this period the Maltese Islands were afraid of a Turkish invasion, and so the Royal Court sent Francesco Patella, the Chief Harbour Master, and Jacobo Tudisco, with barques, ships, and men-at-arms to protect the Islands. On the 13th June, 1513, the King asked the Viceroy Ugo de Moncada to order his Royal Treasurer to pay the noble Pietro de Texaro, a Portuguese Captain, who had also been sent to protect the Maltese Islands with his ships (32). Defence was quite a problem during the 15th century, but attempts to improve it were made, and these also concerned the Secreto. In 1416 King Alfonso gave permit to the Università to build a tower on Comino and allowed the Jurats to impose a tax of 1 fl. per barrel (*botte*) of imported wine. The boat of passage, the *mahadia*, that plied between Malta and Gozo was also to be taxed. On the 6th April, 1418, Moorish molestations made them repeat their petition and they requested that the Castellano, the sergeant and soldiers were to be Maltese, while the Gozitan Università was to pay a quarter part of the funds (33). On the 6th April, 1419, they requested that the

30. LIB. SEC., ff. 83v-84.

31. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 101, 127-139.

32. *ibid.*, pp. 110-111; Libr. Ms. 1141, Part (P.) II [Capibrevium Insule Meliveti et Gaudisii Iurium Regalium Insularum et Secretiae dicte civitatis Meliveti et Insule] ff. 12v-15.

33. S. Giambruno & L. Genuardi, *op. cit.*, p. 382; Libr. 438, f. 247; *id. ibid.*, f. 239 notes that there was a gabella over the extraction of animals from Gozo to Malta. It used to be paid to the Università of Gozo following a Brief of Pope Paul V. A boat, the *magħdia*, that used to transport the animals to l-Aħrax tal-Mellieha was held by the Università of Gozo. It is not known when this boat ceased to be used but between 1602 and 1750 the gabellotti of the Secrezia of Gozo were obliged to keep it.

Secreto was to contribute towards the repairs of the City walls every year. They expected him to pay 6 oz., then 3 oz. per year. This was agreed upon in Catania (34). Stefano di Pirera made a request on behalf of the Maltese jurats dated from Palermo 9th June, 1450, so that 60 oz. which were paid annually to the Royal Court would be transferred towards the repairs of the City walls and general defence expences. The King, however, informed them that he was then in great financial needs, but he promised to make provisions later. On 9th February, 1453, Alfonso granted his permission to the request of the jurats that an order would be issued instructing those who had property in Malta and were away from the Island that they were to keep a horse for its defence (35).

The jurats seem to have been much concerned with the defence of the Islands, but were badly in need of funds. Thus in 1494 they requested that they rebuild a tower to guard ships in the harbour of Benwarrad. They requested to have the tower built on the model of the Bruka tower and that it would be maintained by the Università. The answer they received was: *providebit* (36).

Early in the 16th century the jurats tried to do more than this. In fact on the 16th September, 1527, the Viceroy instructed the Secreto of Malta and informed him that since the upkeep of vessels was to be paid for by the Royal Court, he was expected to pay 18 oz. to the jurats and the Captain of Arms for having bought things to arm a galley that was to pass to the Islands. A similar instruction had been issued but not followed on 31st October, 1526, but when the Secreto received the letter on the 30th November, 1527, he was told that if he did not pay in time, the Captain of Arms was empowered to force him to pay. The funds of the Secrezia could not suffice to provide funds which were to be diverted towards defence. With reference to Il-Qlejja, Giovanni Luca Barberi had proposed that its income should be channelled towards such funds for this reason (37).

The Secreto may have been more interested in two particular gabelle which were concerned with the collection of taxes. These were the *cabelle baiulationis* and the *cabella barbarie seu barbe tonsorie*. The former seems to have been a tax paid by officials who could collect fiscal rights.

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34. Libr. Ms. 1141, P.I., ff. 9v, 12; Libr. Ms. 494, f.9v; A Mifsud, "Papi, fortificazioni e Tasse nel passato di Malta", *Arch. Melit.*, Vol. III (1919), p. 407.

35. S. Giambruno & L. Genuardi, *op.cit.*, pp. 412, 416.

36. Libr. Ms. 1141, P.I., f. 67; A. Mifsud, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

37. Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 117-118; Libr. Ms. 1141, ff. 127v-128v; LIB. SEC., ff. 84v-85.

The latter is known to have been paid during the Swabian period (38). Information about the *cabella baiulationis* can be gleaned from incidents related with the Baiulo of the city. Both gabelle were sold at 100 oz. by the Royal Commissioners Nicolo Specia'i and Giovanni Olzina to Antonio Inguanez and Simon de Mazzara through a contract drawn by Andrea Gazulli on 21st May, 1437. Then Pietro de Busco took over the half owned by Mazzara by contract made at Gaeta on 5th November, 1437, and was also granted the office of Secreto for life. When Antonio Inguanez died, his son Goffredus handed his share to his sister Clara and her husband Tristayno De Guevara. His gabella's rent was valued at 52 oz. The contract of this donation was drawn by a Maltese notary, namely Luca de Xillato, on the 9th April, 1473, and confirmed by the Viceroy Don Lop Ximen Durrea on 24th May, 1473, in Palermo.

When Tristayno died, the two gabelle fell into the hands of his nephew Giovanni De Guevara because Clara renounced it in his favour. While in former times they used to yield 20 oz., by the first decades of the 16th century, the yield was more than 200 oz. because of pressure imposed by the bailiffs. This was also noted in the account kept by Don Nicola'au de Gaudisio, Angello de Anello, a *magistrum phisicum*, and brother Paolo de Pellegrino, which were seen by the Sicilian Master Notary Giovanni Luca de Barberi (39).

The gabella of the Baiu'o may certainly have increased its income but it also irritated the people. On 5th February, 1430, the Viceroys Speciali and Montagnes had to suspend the exactions of the gabella because of the destructions that the Maltese gabellotti had suffered in terms of cattle, vines and plants, while on 17th April, 1431, King Alfonso had exempted the Maltese from paying Customs duty (40). On 31st October, 1432, the Università of Gozo pointed out to the poverty that they were suffering because of Moorish raids. The Moors used to take away their beasts and it was also very difficult to sow. So they asked to be exempted from the exaction of victuals, and to be freed from paying one carlino tax to the baiu'i. Gozo was suffering much hardships. So on the 20th July, 1349, the Gozitan jurats presented a request through Notary Angelo de Manuelli showing that Calabrian ships had also marauded the Island which was suffering such a dirth that not a grain

38. E. Mazzaresse Fardella, *op. cit.*, p. 79, fn. 77 notes that Winckelmann states that the *cabella barbarie* is not known to have existed anywhere else — at least under the same name — but it was already being paid in Malta during the Swabian epoch. Before 1296, Syracusan barbers used to pay a tax known as *cangemia*.

39. G. Cosentino, *Codice Diplomatico di Federico III di Aragona* (Palermo, 1885), Vol. I, p. 337; LIB. SEC., ff. 85v-86v.

40. A. Mifsud, "Le Franchigie costituzionale Alfonsiane e l'invasione dei mori del 1429", *Arch. Melit.* (1918-1919), pp. 331-332.

was left for the people — "*ki non si trovava in la insola unu cochu di fromenti ne unu cochu di orgiu*" — and the situation was only slightly improved by the generosity of Simone de Mazzara and Antone Mule who sent a quantity of wheat for the people (41).

On 4th March, 1458, Giovanni de Mazzara and the judge Antonio de Falsone appeared on behalf of the Maltese over a question raised against the Baiulo of the City. This received note from King A'fonso who was then in Benevento. The Sicilian ministers were ordered to reform the exercise of the Office. So by a letter dated 25th April, 1458, the Viceroy informed the judge that the office was in time sold on provision that it could be bought back — *cum carta gratie redimendi* — by the King, to a private person who was expected to farm the tax. This office had been exercised with justice when it was in the hands of the Secreti, especially Viutiu De Licata (Delu'ta?) and Paolo Pellegrino. Those who abused it could be fined 100 oz. In the meantime, however, the King died and the matter had to be raised once more.

Apparently the Baiulo was not afraid of reports and protests against him, for on the 14th January, 1466, Giovanni de Mazzara went to protest in front of the King over the exactions that were being made because of the gabella. He pointed out that the people were being continuously vexed by the baiu'i who went to exact money. Because of this, there was much suffering and property was being destroyed. The baiuli were just buying their office. King Alfonso had sold it to Antonio Inguanez and this Antonio and his companions were making large extortions to ensure greater profits. Antonio's son and his followers disturbed everybody's peace; they declared that they were judges of the gabellotti and to them was due the right to fulfil the office. They favoured their gabellotti to ensure their income. When the gabella was held under the Demense it used to render from 15 oz. to 20 oz. because it was then justly collected, but now owing to the enormous exactions, it had doubled and trebled (42).

Antonio Inguanez must have vexed the people for some time. He had been Captain of Arms and Captain of the City. In 1432, when he welcomed King Alfonso in his house when he was returning from Djerba, he had also received the Office of the Secrezia (43). Later he was accused of having ill-treated many officials and to avoid scandal, the Maltese who were represented by Simone de Mazzara, requested that he be removed from the Office of Captain of Arms. The King replied that when de Mazzara was back in Malta, he could share the office with him. Antonio

41. S. Giambruno & L. Genuardi, *op. cit.*, pp. 323, 329.

42. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 35-35v, 48. Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 34v-35, 46-46v.

43. Libr. Ms. 1142, Secolari Nro. 6.

and later his brother Angaro, had even dared to occupy the space of Mizieb ir-Rih, and the Università protested against such action in 1466. Later on, on the 16th April, 1481, the ambassadors Simone de Mazzara and Cola Caxaro were to obtain an allowance dated from Messina so that the Università could close certain public territories in Malta intended for the raising of funds for the repair of the City walls (44).

The Università wanted to solve the question over the gabella of the Baiulo by asking to be allowed to redeem the Office by buying it and thus be enabled to divert its income to the funds for the repair of the City walls. But when they made such request, they were told that the matter had to be discussed by the Royal Court. When eventually Don Lop Ximenes Durrea answered them on the 22nd March, 1475, he remarked that those accused of abuses could be fined or imprisoned.

On 6th July, 1475, another question was raised on the Baiulo's jurisdiction over animals that damaged the land of others. Then on 26th July, another appeal was made and reference to the Baiulo was made. It was noted that the officers were collecting greater fines from those accused before placing their animals in custody. They requested that the Baiulo would be instructed not to condemn or cause anyone to be imprisoned unless damage was proved to have been done. They also requested that the fine over those who grazed their animals in the property of others was not to be greater than 4 oz. of Malta, which were to be handed to the Capitania, and 1 oz. to the Baiulo. This was expected to affect places surrounded by walls and those fiefs nearer habitations, and hence then known as *burgensatichi*. This petition was conceded to (45).

The Università was not satisfied with this solution. In a letter dated from Naples 22nd May, 1507, following the request of the representative Manfredo Caxaro, the King granted licence to the Università to impose a tax to raise funds for the purpose of redeeming the office of the Baiulo from the son of the late Giovanni De Guevara, Secreto, and then hold it on condition that it could be bought back. The right of punishing those masters whose animals damaged the property of others, could thus be transferred to the Università. It was also agreed that when those who were accused did not commit any offence that was of a nature punishable by corporal punishment, they could be freed from prison on providing a surety. In their request, the jurats also asked that officials of the Baiulo were to be appointed according to the norm that had been set by Don Lop Ximenes Durrea in 1475 (46). In spite of all this appeal, however,

44. Libr. Ms. 494, f. 26v. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 28, 29v, 45v, 60-61.

45. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 53, 57v-59, 175v-176. Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 54v-55.

46. *ibid.*, ff. 81-81v, 129; W. Eton, *op. cit.*, p. 127. Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 76-76v.

the jurats were unable to redeem the gabe'la. Thus they did not succeed in relieving the people from their troub'le. So they made another petition which was confirmed on 14th February, 1528, by which they requested to redeem the gabella. They were informed that if the Università abused it, it could also be fined 1000 fl. (47).

The Crown lands that existed were to be found scattered across the Maltese Islands. They provided a good source of income, but they were also alienated to various officials who had proved to be loyal to the Crown. Those who wished to obtain them had to offer a price. Thus for Gariexem and Tabia which was a royal fief, prospective lords were offering 300 oz. to gain its holding and its benefice during the first decade of the 16th century. In 1347 King Frederick had given Tabia, 'a'ias Gariexen', to Henrico De Sosa and his heirs under the condition that 6 tumine of victuals would be presented every year. On the 12th November, 1372, the King confirmed this privilege. But in June 1416, following the death of De Sosa, Guglielmo Inguanez had already obtained the fief (48). King John later bartered it with Notary Stefano Blundo, first notary of Ferdinand I, for the fief of Limbaccari in Placia, Italy, following the death of Barbara, wife of Villardita. This was confirmed in Valencia on 6th March, 1415. Half of the fief had already been granted to Blundo by King Ferdinand I but he never took possession of it, for King John had in the meantime given it to Giovanni de Ca'athagirono in lieu of 100 oz. which the Court owed him. So the King made a provision that Gariexem would not be taken away from Blundo or his heirs unless he would be given an equal exchange or be paid 100 oz., this being the estimate for half of Limbaccari.

Blundo sold the fief to Antonio Inguanez for 100 oz. apparently without notifying the Secreto. Antonio was inherited by his son, the priest Lancea, who left it to his illegitimate offspring, Antonio Inguanez, who was reaping 10 oz. annually out of it when it originally yielded 12 oz. (49).

During the early half of the 15th century the history of the Crown lands is centred principally around a certain Pietro de Busco who was Secreto and Castellano of the Maltese Islands. He was nicknamed "Il Giustò" (50). He succeeded Joannes Arexula and his son as lord of the fief of Ghajn Tuffieha, and was also given the fiefs of Gnien il-Firen and Qattara, and the Marsa by King Alfonso for life (51). Ghajn Tuffieha was

47. Libr. Ms. 1141, P.I, f. 129, Libr. Ms. 494, ff. 118-118v.

48. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 145-151.

49. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 20v-33; LIB. SEC. ff. 85v-86v.

50. Libr. Ms. 1142, Secolari Nro. 40, where it is stated that de Busco died *ca.* 1455.

51. R.M.L., Univ. 206, f. 12; LIB. SEC. f. 89.

returned to the Royal Court after his death. Gnien il-Firen and Qattara which are situated near Notabile, were also returned to the Court after his death. They had been given to him after successful military service at Capua, in September 1439. They were yielding 5 oz. per year (52).

The Marsa, situated between the seashore and Casal Qormi, was considered to be one of the larger and more useful fiefs of the Secrezia. It was alienated by King Alfonso to Pietro de Busco and his heirs for ever. The instrument of the transaction was given at Caeta on 4th September, 1440 and witnessed by Fra Petro Cases, a Knight Hospitaller and Commander of Ma'orca, Alfonso de Cardines, the Camerario, Antonio Lia, a knight, and the secretary Arnaldo Fondanella. The Notary Barberi noted that Busco paid 1003 ducati de Camera 2 tr. and a ground rent of 62 oz. 19 tr. 7 gr. (53). Busco was expected to hand the documents within four months to James de Anguo who had been appointed to receive the money, otherwise if the time elapsed, the fief was to revert to the Court. It happened that Busco died intestate and no successor appeared, so a half of the fief was given to his wife, Paola, for her life and the other half was claimed by the Secrezia. When Busco died, his part of the fief of Marsa and the gabella of Baiulo were handed to Enrico (or Enneco) De Guevara by Don Lop Ximenes Durrea on the 4th April, 1446 (54). Following the death of Busco, Enrico De Guevara was also granted the office of Secreto for himself and his heirs by King Alfonso. He paid 1050 ducati de Camera and he also received the office of the Castellania. This had been agreed upon on 6th October, 1445, when the contract was drawn and witnessed by Fra Joanne Claver, a Knight Hospitaller, Commander of Xalmena, and Giovanni Boarras, and Arnaldo Fondanella. On the 4th April, 1446, Don Lop Ximenes Durrea informed him that the fief of Marsa and the gabella of Baiulo were also to be handed to him and his heirs.

On the 9th September, 1452, Paola's share of the Marsa was given to Didaco Grayera, who had served the King with an armed galley and was also King Alfonso's chamberlain, under feudal service. This grant was then extended to cover one of Grayera's children and his nominated heir, by the Archbishop of Palermo who was presiding over the Realm on the 15th May, 1454. Meanwhile a certain Petro Gonzalbem (Gonzales) de la Rua, from Castile, who had claimed to be Busco's heir and his procurator Pietro Valdera (Valdes) took possession of the other half of the fief. This happened because following Busco's death, he was succeeded

52. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 15v-16; LIB. SEC. ff. 87v-90; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.* p. 427.

53. Libr. Ms. 23, f. 349v, notes that de Busco paid 3164 gold ducati de Camera 2 tr. 11 tr.; Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 233-244 gives the same total adding 'de carlenis liliatis'.

54. Libr. Ms. 1226, p. 51.

by his mother Lanchea Gonzales de Omedo, to whom the property nominally passed from Paola. Lanchea nominated Petro Gonzalbem as her heir and Pietro Valdera was to act as his procurator. But King Alfonso deprived Gonzalbem of this possession because he was not his subject and he was infringing the constitution. Then on 21st November, 1456, Notary Federico Calavà paid homage on behalf of Francesco Gatto de Inguanez as heir of this part of Marsa, while on the 4th June 1459, Didaco Grayera who had preceded as heir also paid homage (55).

However more complications arose when Giovanni De Nava bought Paola's share from the Viceroy through a contract drawn in Palermo by King John's notary, Gabriele Vulgi. This was made in Barchinone on 1st August, 1465. De Nava had also received the other half, albeit illegally, from Valdera. When De Nava died, his son, Pietro De Nava, obtained the fief in 1488 and by 1506 it was yielding 230 oz. per year when previously it had yielded 60 oz. only (56). When Pietro died, his son Alvaro De Nava succeeded him and he received the investiture through his tutor Alvaro de Cassariis, from the Viceroy Raymond de Cardona, on 14th March, 1509. Later he was re-invested on 6th March, 1516. At this instance, his procurator, the cleric Michele Cassia, declared that the yield was in reality only 160 oz. (57).

Some areas in the Marsa were leased separately. Thus the three enclosures, Chabuc, Duemes and Chamine, situated on the eastern side of the fief towards the sea, were given to Salvo Imbroglia and his heirs in 1347. They were expected to pay 4 tumine victuals to the Office every year (58). Another small field, Cabel Salet, was held by Jacobo Peregrino in 1360.

The De Navas are known to have kept vines at the Marsa in order to produce wine. In fact on the 2nd October 1504, they lost a case against the Università in the Great Court of Palermo, over the exemption from duty for the sale of wine. It was however agreed that the wine bought and collected from the Marsa and then sold in the Castello a Mare for the service of the inhabitants, was not to be taxed by the Università. But when it was sold to persons not subject to the Caste'lano, or those living outside the Castello, the tax had to be paid (59).

Another fief was that of Tabaria which used to yield 20 oz. per year. It had been granted to Lord Artardo de Barba and his lawful heirs on condition that they provided the service of a knight. Two gardens from

55. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 35-39, 269-270, 247-265.

56. Libr. Ms. 23, f. 349v gives Grayera's name as Dedum Galgera; LIB. SEC. f. 88v.

57. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 231, 283-289; LIB. SEC. ff. 88v-90.

58. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 161-163; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, f. 20v.

59. Libr. Ms. 1141, P. I, ff. 76-77v.

this fief had been dismembered and granted to Arnaldo de Solinella, then Castellano, by a decree dated from Messina 28th January, 1315. Notary Barberi found it difficult to delineate how it was inherited between 1315 and 1442. King Martin had given it to Simon la Barba who had claimed right of descent. When William Raymond de Montecatano rebelled against Martin, Simon la Barba also rebelled, so the King took the fief back and then handed it to Arnaldo Gueraldi of Barchinone and his heirs under the service of a knight which was declared to be equivalent to the payment of 20 oz. per year. This grant was made under *iure francorum* in Catania on 15th February, 1397 (60). Apparently there were people eager to obtain the lands of la Barba: the sons of Giovanni Landolina requested the King to concede to them the fiefs found in Noto, Malta and Gozo, that belonged to the traitors Muchio, Paolo and Pietro de Barba of Noto. But certain property had already been assigned to their father, and therefore the King was expected to be advised on the matter by Artale de Aragona who had been proposed to govern the place (61). On the 3rd February 1404, Muchio Landolina who was living in Noto presented the charter of privilege with the seal appended to it, and after this had been inspected, he was confirmed to be the rightful heir to Tabaria (62).

In 1441, Tabaria was inherited by Imperia, the wife of Antonio Inguanez, and Giovanni Landolina presented complaints against her with the result that she lost the fief, which was then handed to this Giovanni. The sentence forcing this change of ownership was promulgated in Palermo on 28th June, 1441, and proclaimed in Malta on 27th July, 1441. It was later said that Giovanni Landolina, the son of Ruggiero, was confirmed and invested by the Viceroy Don Lop Ximenes Durrea on the 18th January, 1453. From Giovanni Landolina it passed to Ruggiero Landolina who was succeeded by his son Joannello who paid homage by proxy on 12th July, 1479 when Nicolao De[o]Dato, *artium et medicine doctor*, appeared on his behalf. It was then yielding 60 oz. per year. On the 24th November, 1516, Roggerio Landolina, who was baron of Frigentini and Granpo'i as well as of Tabaria, paid homage. Then on 23rd January 1526, his wife, Clara, ensured homage for their daughter Aleonora, while on 8th December, 1528, Joanne De(o)Dato, husband of Bartholomea Landolina, paid homage in Messina on behalf of his wife who had inherited her sister's rights. He paid homage in Messina to the Viceroy Hectore Pignatelli. Among the witnesses there was Andrea de

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60. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 197-198, 201-202.

61. G. Cosentino, *Codice Diplomatico di Federico di Aragona* (Palermo, 1885), Vol. I, p. 485.

62. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 207, 211.

Alifia, the Secreto for Messina (63).

The lands and holding of Saqqajja were once held by Francesco de Attard and his heirs were obliged to promise the service of one missile-thrower (*balestrius*) per year. It used to render 10 oz. per year. Together with this grant which was made on 18th June, 1360, two strips of land were added. These were Misulup and Gnien il-Firen (64). Many years later, the Secreto Pietro de Busco was informed by King Alfonso while he was at his Castle at Candula, that Saqqajja was donated to Antonio Inguanez and his heirs for ever, as from the 25th October, 1442. Such a donation of royal patrimony belonging to the Secrezia could not in reality be made, so the documents were presented to the Viceroy Don Lop Ximenes Durrea. The grant was then made on condition that it would be given *ad beneplacitum* until the King was consulted. This was pointed out on 2nd August, 1443, and on 22nd July, 1444 the King confirmed the grant while sojourning at Fons Populi. Its yield was then 6 oz. per year. By 1506 it was inherited by Clara de Stugnica and it was yielding 10 oz. per year (65).

Three other important royal domains were Ghajn Tuffieha, Gnien il-Firen and Qattara. Ghajn Tuffieha was held by Giovanni Arexula (de Reyula) and his heir at 15 oz. per year. However Arexula's son died without leaving any legitimate descendants, and so the fief was reverted to the Royal Court. Then King Alfonso gave it to Pietro de Busco who died intestate, with the result that the fief was once more returned to the Court (66). Gnien il-Firen and Qattara were also granted to de Busco and his heirs, *ad beneplacitum* in 1439, but when he died they also reverted to the Court. Gnien il-Firen was yielding 5 oz. per year.

It was during this period that a person who must have been the cause of much headaches to the Sicilian Court appeared. This was Giovanni De Guevara who was to become Secreto for life. He inherited Enrico, also known as Didaco, De Guevara who had become Secreto following the death of Pietro De Busco. Enrico De Guevara had obtained Ghajn Tuffieha, Gnien il-Firen and Qattara from King Alfonso for 33 oz. 10 tr. after Busco's death. The money equivalent to 1500 ducats was paid in Teanos to the General Treasurer, Matteo Pujades, on 6th October, 1446. When King Alfonso died, his brother, John, wanted to draw back to the Royal

63. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 212, 217, 219-227, 199-200; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 25v-26; LIB. SEC. f.90 notes that only the investiture for 1478 could be found.

64. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 385-391; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

65. LIB. SEC., f. 92.

66. LIB. SEC. ff. 90v-91v; F. Lioni, *op. cit.* adds that the concession was made on 21st November, 1407, by King Martin and that on 9th November, 1416, the Viceroy ordered the Treasurer, the Knight Andrea Guardiola, to provide the annual payment of 12 oz. for Ghajn Tuffieha to Arexula.

Court all alienated patrimony. Hence on 11th January, 1460, while confirming the privileges of the Islands, he ensured the office of the Secreto (67). So it was agreed that Enrico De Guevara was to hold the office of the Secrezia for two years starting from 1st September, 1460 and then to keep the Alcaydia, that is the Castellania for life. The three fiefs were then also to be returned after this period expired. This was agreed upon at Villa de Fraga on 15th November, 1460 and confirmed by the Viceroy in Palermo on 24th January, 1461 (68).

It could be said that Enrico De Guevara dominated the Secrezia during his time, and that he held its income at his mercy. Thus "it pleased God" that when he was expected to relinquish his office, in 1462, he died, and King John managed but for a short time to retrieve his lands and the yields of the offices and the fiefs. But then the office of Secreto was granted *ad beneplacitum* to Giovanni De Guevara who was instructed to take possession of the fiefs and gardens of Ghajn Tuffieha as well as others. He was expected to pay the Court the calculated dues and to collect other revenues. Giovanni diverted the income to his interest. He did not include the income of the said fiefs in his reports, but kept it as if it were his own. He held Ghajn Tuffieha for some time, and then had it transferred to Imperia Inguanez, the wife of Antonio De Naro, without asking the Court's permission to do so. It then yielded 50 oz. per year. Gnien il-Firen and Qattara were also held by this Secreto and then alienated without the necessary permits being asked for. Gnien il-Firen was then yielding 30 oz. per year (69).

Other lands belonging to the Crown were also handed or leased to other notables of the Islands. Of these the Secreto was also expected to take note. Benwarrad was one other important fief. It was bordered by Budak and the fief of Aynticharia. Frederick III had given it to Jacobo de Peregrino on 12th June, 1360 when Cabel Salet was also given to him under the feudal service of an armed horse and one provided with a saddle bag. Peregrino had also been given the Jardino de lo Re (Gnien is-Sultan), which was a big garden surrounded with a wall, and having two springs called Hajn Kajjet and Ghajn Hosna. A nearby land, the garden La Chafe also with its spring, was likewise given to Peregrino (70). King Martin I and Queen Mary then passed it to Inigo de Vaccaro and his heirs under military service equivalent to 20 oz. per year. The grant was made in Catania on 24th February, 1397 on the condition that if the income of the Secrezia was not sufficient, 14 oz. were to be paid

67. Libr. Ms. 670, f. 177.

68. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 82-86; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 4-6; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

69. LIB. SEC. f. 91, & ff. 91 bis - 91 bis v.

70. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 379-381; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

to the Office. In 1399 King Martin I reduced it to 24 oz. in exchange for Qlejja. On 2nd November, 1399, Martin I wrote to the Secreto of Malta and Gozo on the aggregation of alienated land, and noted that in spite of this, Benwarrad was alienated when it used to render 50 oz. per year (71). On 8th November, 1452, it was noted that a pension of 50 oz. over Benwarrad was then assigned to Istoro de Nava whose heir was Alvaro, the owner of two galleys, who received an income of 200 fl. in exchange of the income of the Secrezia on 19th May, 1466. Then on the 15th November, 1477, Benwarrad was again assigned, and Alvaro was followed in possession by Giovanni and then by Lucrezia (72).

The territory of Barberi was once held by Lorenzo Cusckeri, husband of Domenica, who was obliged to pay 1 salma of grain per year to the Royal Court on the feast of the Assumption. On 16th February, 1397, this area was handed to Tomaso de Bernardo, of Gozo, who was Domenica's second husband. Barberi was situated near the lands of the Church of St. Bartholomeo. Bernardo had asked to leave the territory to his heirs (73). Another place was situated in the area of Pwales and was known as Aynastasi. It was given to Bartuccio de Mileto and his heirs in 1347 against the payment of 6 tumine victuals per year (74). Ghabel Sulla and other nearby plots known as Mechalca (Mechalcadetrin), Sinana (Sintina), Ba'ada and La Uffira (Rifutu) which were situated along the Fiddien border, were given to Joanne de Sancta Sofia and his heirs in 1347 provided that they rendered the service of an armed horse (75). The fief of Briginuini, situated in Fiddien and covering a capacity of 4 salme, was given to Gaddo Cusckeri and his heirs in 1375 against the payment of one golden spur which was to be presented annually in August. In 1513, this area was held by the heirs of Clara de Stugnica and it was rendering 6 oz. per year (76).

In the area of San Martin there was a territory known as Buccelli which was given to the presbyter Nicolao de Pach for life in 1347, against the obligation of having to pay 2 tumine victuals (77). Another place given under similar obligations was situated near Notabile: this was the Galca, territory of de Anaulino, which on 12th November, 1347 was alienated in favour of Andrea de Sancte Fil'ippo and his heirs (78). The

71. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 79-81; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 2-3, 11-12v; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

72. G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

73. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 53-55.

74. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 141-143; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f.20v.

75. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 169-171; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f.23; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

76. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 185-187; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, ff. 24v-25.

77. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 173-175; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 23; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

78. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 177-179; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 23v.

contrada Zacchuni was given to Joanne Peregrino for life in 1347 against the payment of a quarter part of the output from this property per year (79).

In the area of Pietra Longa there was the territory of Musebi (Mulebi) bordered by the territory Belle Barbare and the property of a certain Berenger Muscat. In 1397 was noted that it had been given to Bonifacio Favato and his heirs for ever against the service of one missile-thrower to the Court (80). Pietra Longa was situated in the area of Lu Doisdruni (Diayduni, Gayduni) near a salty well and the well of Bullimuni (Bullumuni). In 1371 Frederick III gave it to Nicolao de Amodeo and his heirs who were expected to present 8 tumine victuals per year. When this family became extinct, the territory was taken back by the Royal Court. It was being held by Francesco Grugno in 1513 (81).

Il Scardo and Scayacach were two strips of land which were handed to Notary Lancea Gomez on 22nd November, 1374 against military service equivalent to the value of 20 oz. per year (82). The holding of Irchando, having a capacity of 13 salmate, was handed to Antonio Falsono and his heirs on 19th July, 1399. These tenants were expected to pay 6 oz. every Christmas, but it was noted that the rent was not regularly paid (83). The presbyter Pino de la Bagna had also served the King loyally enough to be conceded Chabel Billu with its nearby lands for life in 1347, while King Alfonso awarded Christoforo de Speteri and his heirs by granting him the lands of Sancta Maria Maddalena situated in the area of Casal Samud and bordered by the Church of Santa Maria and a public road. Speteri was obliged to pay only 2 carlini per year. Giorgio Catala considered this to be too small a rent (84).

Gnien il-Kbir in Tal-Bacar was given to Francesco Grugno for life with the right of nominating an heir against the obligation of 3 oz. per year. Ferdinand II, who made this grant on 12th May, 1510, later transferred it into a perpetual lease. Near this garden there were the properties of Giovanne De Nava and Antonio D'Armenia and the area was noted as a favourite hunting place for falcons. The King informed the Ma'tese officials that Grugno's property was to be reserved, and those who molested him could be fined 1000 fl. (85).

Twelve salmate of land were awarded to Didaco de Zavallos on the 11th July, 1509, because he had his property demolished when the fortifi-

79. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 181-183; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 23v.

80. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 189-191; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 24.

81. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 395, 399; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 38; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*; p. 449.

82. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 403-305; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 39.

83. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 413-415; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 39v; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

84. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 417, 419.

85. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 363-368; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 35; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

cations of Notabile were being repaired. So he was to be granted an equivalent area in the parts of Malecha del Zorico, and del Redume. He ended by being granted lands in Melecha e Zonchol (86).

The fields and garden of Gomerino, the territory of Bieb ir-Rua and Bul'eben (Poliben), Sanmartino and the fief of Bur Nuhala also pertained to the Secrezia for a long time. Gomerino had been given to Linio de Solinella and his heirs, but it passed back to King Frederick. His brother, James, had given it to Guglielmo Surdo and his heirs on the provision of military service in 1317. On the 17th June, 1320 a royal privilege confirmed the sale of the garden 'Gusmerin' made in 1318 by Guglielmo Surdo to Guglielmo di Ragusa, a Maltese. On 5th March, 1328, the garden passed to di Ragusa who was expected to pay 58 oz. This cession had been confirmed by Notary Rogerio de Alamanna on 8th May, 1328, while the King confirmed it at Messina on 17th June, 1320. When Guglielmo di Ragusa died, he was inherited by his wife l'agra, daughter of Tomaso de Sancta Sofia. His heir, Antonio de Sancta Sofia, was inherited by Guglielmo de Sancta Sofia and the grant of the area was confirmed for him and his heirs in Catania on 9th February, 1397. Among the witnesses appeared Arnaldo de Solinella who was Castellano and Procurator of the Islands (87).

On 3rd December, 1465, Bieb ir-Rua, Bulleben, Sanmartino and Bur Nuhala were forwarded to Andrea de Perollo who was succeeded by his mother, Catherine. On 14th January, 1480, Joannes de Perollo appeared to pay homage for Gomerino. Nine years later when Joannes Andrea de Perollo was invested with the fiefs Catherine had inherited, the fiefs were rendering 70 oz. per year. When Joannes Perollo died, he was succeeded by his son, Calogerus, and he paid homage to Joannes de la Huza on 25th May, 1504. In this investiture, Gomerino and Bulleben were not mentioned and a quarrel arose between Joannes Philippo de Perollo, son of Nicolao, and his tutor Calogerus. On 20th July, 1505, Joannes Philippo was given Bieb ir-Rua and Sanmartino (Lu Sannito) and he paid homage for it. By 1507 the total income rendered was 200 oz. and he had managed to obtain Gomerino and Bulleben back. On 17th September, 1527, Vincenzo de Perollo, the minor son of Joannes Philippo paid homage for Bieb ir-Rua and Sanmartino, through his tutor, another Vincenzo de Perollo (88).

Three other important fiefs were Dejr il-Bniet, Bukana and Tumisija (or Chumisija) which was situated near Gnien il-Firen. These were once

86. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 371-376.

87. Ibid, pp. 293-294, 299-305; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, pp. 440-441; G. La Mantia, "Su l'uso della registrazione nella cancellaria del Regno di Sicilia dai Normanni a Federico III d'Aragona (1130-1377)", *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, XXXI, p. 208.

88. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 291, 295, 296, 311-317.

given to Michael De Nava and his heirs. They then passed back to the Royal Court. Following the extinction of the Navas, King Ludwig gave Dejr il-Bniet to Chicco Gatto and his heirs. This was confirmed at Messina on 4th January, 1350 following the death of Michael de Nava (89). Chicco was an important personality because he was a knight councillor and the Castellano, and he had also been an *algozino* in the Court. Moreover when one of the feudal lords rebelled, Chicco had quelled his supporters in Gozo. Following the death of Chicco, King Ludwig presented Dejr il-Bniet to his son Lancea Gatto under the service of one saddled horse equivalent to 20 oz. per year. This was confirmed on the 12th November, 1372.

King Martin also gave Tumisija to Francesco Gatto on the 14th February, 1397 under *iure francorum*. As a dowry for his wife, Paola Castelletti, the latter received Bukana. This fief had been alienated by King Feredrick in favour of Guglielmo Murina de Mineo and his heirs on the provision of the military service of one horse. It had passed to Paola Castelletti through her mother, the daughter of Guglielmo Murina, Castellano of the Castello a Mare in 1372, who had married Manfredo Castelli. The alienation was made on 11th November, 1372.

Francesco Gatto was further favoured by the Court. On 16th October, 1403 he was granted an allowance of 18 gold oz. over the income of the Vice-Secrezia. On 15th April, 1404, it was conceded to him to nominate an heir to the property he held together with that of his wife. This was done because he only had a daughter, Imperia, to inherit him. He wished her to retain Dejr il-Bniet. In the will drawn by Notary Luca Sil'ato on 12th March, 1431, he required that the two families Gatto and Inguanez be united together in the person of Francesco Inguanez who was the son of Imperia and Antonio Inguanez. Gatto left him Tumisija under the condition that he betook to himself the surname and the heraldic ensign of the Gatto family — "*ad pactum quod accipiat meum cognomen et faciat mea arma. Itaque faciat se vocari Francesco Gattu . . .*"

Francesco Gatto was inherited by Antonio Gatto, alias Inguanez, following his death in 1478. Antonio then proceeded to pay homage on 15th May, 1488. During this period, Bukana was rendering 100 oz. per year. Following the death of Antonio Gatto Inguanez, Francesco Gatto Inguanez was invested with Tumisija on 25th July, 1504. Then his daughter, Perna, received the investiture from the Viceroy Ugo de Mondaca on 14th May, 1515 when it was stated that the fief was rendering

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89. Libr. Ms. 23, f. 340.

100 oz. Perna received another investiture in 1516, but then the income had diminished to 65 oz. (90).

Budak was another fief. It had a road on its east and Benwarrad on its west. It had also been held by Simon la Barba who had rebelled and sided with Montecateno nicknamed de Ic'afano. Therefore King Martin took it away from him and awarded it to Joannes de Aulata (Ulejsa) and his heirs against the provision of military service equivalent to 20 oz. per year. This was ensured on 16th February, 1397 (91).

Several areas in Gozo were also supervised by the Secrezia. These included the fiefs of Kanfudi, Mejmuni, Vitaliamitri, Nigreti, and the holding of Jaymucii Catalani. The fief of Kanfudi di San Marciano was awarded to Salvo Cadumi and his heirs by King Martin in recognition for his services rendered to the Crown. Kanfudi was situated along the east of a public road near La Rocca. On its west there were the lands of Manfredo de lu Vecchiu and a stream. The grant was made on the 16th February, 1397 under the obligation of providing military service valued at 20 oz. per year. It is interesting to note that the grant was made under the condition that if the funds of the Secrezia would not suffice for the payment of the defence of the Castle of Gozo, half of the income was to be paid. However, no note of investiture was made when it was supposed to be rendering 20 oz. per year (92).

In 1397, many persons who remained loyal to the Crown when Raymond de Montecateno rebelled, were rewarded by King Martin by having various lands alienated in their favour. The fief of Mejmuni, situated in the area of Raugisia (Bargisia) and near the regal property of La Madianta, was given to Pericomio de Berbarido under the obligation of military service valued at 6 oz. per year for the defence funds and 20 oz. being the equivalent of a horse (93). On 14th June, 1399, Vitaliamitri was granted for ever under military service to Antonio de la Barba and his heirs (94), while Fontana had been given to Lictorio de Barba and his heirs on 13th November, 1347, under the obligation of presenting 4 tumine victuals per year (95). Nigreti, alias Moydu, in the area of Rahal Cubur and near Sancte Bartholomeo had been leased by King Frederick to

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90. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 319-357; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-445; Anon, *Memoirs of the Family Inguanez*, pp. 18, 21, 25; A. Mifsud, "Le Franchigie Costituzionali Alfonsiane"; *Arch. Melit.*, III (1918-1919), p. 315 fn. 1; Cf. also Libr. Ms. 1226, f. 424.

91. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 407-409; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

92. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 59-61.

93. *Ibid.* pp. 65-68.

94. *Ibid.* pp. 71-75.

95. *Ibid.* pp. 165-167; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 22v.

Bartolomeo Berginac in 1347. The tenant was expected to pay 1 tumine victuals per year (96).

Grua, situated near the Munjuni stream, had been granted to Bochio de Bochio and his heirs in 1347. They were expected to pay 4 tumine victuals per year (97). The royal tradition of granting stretches of land ensured the name of a particular place: Jaymucio Catalano was given a plot of land bordered on the west by the area of Sancti Cosma. The place became known as the holding of Jaymucii Catalani, but as Jaymucio had no heirs to inherit him, the place was taken back by the Court. Later King Frederick handed the place to Enrico de Osa on the 21st March, 1364 against the provision of military service valued at 20 oz. per year (98). The tradition of granting land to notable persons who served the king well was maintained by Ferdinand II. On 31st August, 1501, he informed the Secreto Giovanni De Guevara that the area Ta Xikora, in Gozo, which had a capacity of 4 salme, had been awarded to Antonio Infantino. He was expected to pay 1 oz. per year to the Secrezia. This grant which was confirmed while the King was in Granada, was given in recognition of Infantino's assistance in the company of Alvaro De Nava (99).

The office of the Secrezia was also expected to pay certain pensions which the King had awarded to loyal families. Thus Salvatore de Malta who was later inherited by his brother, Domenico de Malta, 'alias Pullichino', was assigned an annual pension of 6 oz. King Alfonso had pledged this annual grant to Jacobo de Cardona as a price for the territory of La Guarda, and thereupon Jacobo sold it to Stefano Parera for 20 oz. by a contract dated 9th November, 1448. This sale was then confirmed by Jacobo de Moncayo, then Viceroy, by a privilege dated from Palermo 22nd May, 1461. The grant had also been assigned over the Secrezia in exchange for the two stretches of land, Gnien il-Firen and Qattara, for the Royal Court had to release a debt of 100 ducats as revealed by a provision made in Messina on 22nd March, 1464. When Stefano Parera died, it was decided that the Court should let Salvatore de Malta have the grant since he had bought it back from the heirs of Stefano for the price of 20 oz. On 15th January, 1480, the Secreto received instructions from Palermo to consign 18 oz. to Salvatore to get the assignment back, but this was never done. When Salvatore died without leaving any children,

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96. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 157-159; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

97. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 193-195; G. Silvestri, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

98. Libr. Ms. 1226, pp. 397, 401.

99. Libr. Ms. 23, f. 345, 349, where there is the remark — "porque nos servio mucho tiempo andando en riras galeras en Compania de Misser Alvaro de Nava, y en la guerra de Calavria y otras partes".

his brother, Domenico, inherited him (100). In 1417 such an annual pension was also being paid to Giovanni Biglera, 'detto Bontempo', by the Royal Treasurer (101).

It could thus be said that the Office of the Secrezia of Malta previous to the coming of the Knights Hospitallers, was fully functioning. Indeed it seems that the duties of the Secreto previous to the coming of the Order involved a great deal of work, for the officials were concerned with various functions which owing to the municipal status of the Islands, made the Secreto a very powerful person. As far as the administration of the Crown lands was concerned, he was the link between Malta and the Royal Court. He had to fulfil his duty to channel a source of revenue towards the Royal Coffers, but the situation of the Islands and the various problems that affected the Royal Court gave a chance to the local holders of the Office to wield great power. The Secreto during the last years before the coming of the Knights Hospitallers was Antonio De Guevara whose right to nominate an heir was granted on 21st June, 1518, and confirmed on 23rd June, 1530 when Nicola, 'sive Cola', Sagona was also appointed Vice-Secreto for Gozo for life (102). Antonio, however, died before the Knights Hospitallers had arrived in Malta, and hence it can be said that with his death ended the first era of the administration of the Crown lands by the Office of the Secrezia which was to be known as the Office of the Magistral Secrezia during the Order's stay in Malta.

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100. LIB. SEC., ff. 92v-93; Libr. Ms. 1141, P. II, f. 11. This grant astonished the Notary G. L. Barberi because it was sold at such a small price and was never redeemed, when one considered that the Islands were being continuously threatened by the Turks and other enemies, and the expences for the defence were increasing so much that the income from the revenues of the Islands were not enough to meet the expenditure.

101. F. Lioni, *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 180.

102. R.M.L. Univ. 206, ff. 13, 14.