

HECATAEUS AND GOZO

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THE first reference to the island of Gozo occurs in a fragment of Hecataeus (560-480 B.C.) preserved in the epitome of the work of Stephanus of Byzantium.¹

Hecataeus, called a λογοποῖτος by Herodotus,² was an active figure in his native city Miletus. He was a historian and improved the first map of the then known world drawn up by Anixamander with detailed information collected on his own travels. Among other things he wrote a work entitled περίοδος Γῆς or a description of the world. He divided the inhabited world into two parts: Europe and Asia, the latter including Libya.³ The *Periodos*, which was written before 500 B.C., is in reality a 'periplus' or a description of the coasts of the Mediterranean and adjoining seas.⁴ The fragment of the *Periodos* which mentions Gozo is the following:

Γαῦλος νῆσος πρὸς τῇ καρχηδονί 'Ηκκαταῖος περιηγήσει ὁ νησιώτης Γαυλίτης.

Gozo: an island close to Carthage. (mentioned by) Hecataeus in the *periegesis*. Gaulites is (the name of) the inhabitant of the island.

Hecataeus, therefore, mentions Gozo and presumably Malta in the *Periodos*. The fact that he places the island in the proximity of Carthage indicates that he included it in the *περιηγήσεις τῆς Λιβύης* that is, that part of his work which deals with Libya and Carthage.

¹Cf Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, Graz, 1958; also J. Nenci, *Hecataei Milesii Fragmenta*, Florence, 1954, p. 98, No 358.

²Cf Herod. 11, 143; V, 36, 125; also W.W. Hyde, *Ancient Greek Mariners*, O.U.P., 1947, p. 9.

³Cf R.E. Vol. 14, 1912, p. 2703; also J.O. Thompson, *History of Ancient Geography*, 1948, p. 47.

⁴Cf R.E. op. cit. p. 2670; and E.H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography*, New York, 1959, Vol. 1, p. 134-135.

⁵Cf R.E. op. cit. p. 2728: So gehören an die Küste im Herrschaftsbericht der Karthager die *περὶ καρχήδονα* oder *πρὸς καρχηδόνι* legenden Städte, *καυθήλια* (fr 308), *ὕβελι* (fr 310) und die Inseln *Εὐδεῖπνη* (fr 313), *Γαῦλος* (fr 314) *φοινικοῦσσα* (fr 315).

Why should Hecataeus put it near Carthage? The answer is that the prepositions $\pi\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ (near) and $\pi\epsilon\rho\grave{\iota}$ (around) used with towns and islands are not employed by Hecataeus to denote strict topographical proximity but are used to indicate political possession or political control.⁵ In other words Hecataeus places Gozo near Carthage because that island was in the Carthaginian sphere of influence, as he does with many other islands and towns. This is of great historical interest. Gozo (and presumably Malta) was already in the Carthaginian sphere of influence in the sixth century B.C. Likewise Ps. Skylax, writing some two centuries after Hecataeus, groups Malta and Gozo in that section of the *Periplus* dealing with Libya and Carthage.⁶

Hecataeus calls the island Gaulos. The letters GWL. are found in the Phoenician inscriptions which refer to Gozo.⁷ Whether Hecataeus is here reproducing the grecised form of the Phoenician name of Gozo is not clear. The Phoenician inscriptions are of a much later date.⁸ The Romans adopted the Greek name of Gozo without bothering, with some few exceptions, to change the final -os into -us.⁹ On the other hand there was another Greek form of the word already employed by Callimachus in the third century B.C. — Gaudos — which has ultimately given rise to the words *Għaudex* and *Gozo*, the two present names of the island. An inhabitant of Gozo was called $\Gamma\alpha\upsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\tau\eta\varsigma$ by the Greeks since the sixth century before our era. Gozitan coins of the Roman period bear the Greek legend $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\Gamma\alpha\upsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\tau\omega\nu$ (Gaulitwn, of the Gozitans).

To sum up: Gozo was already known to the Greeks of the sixth Century by the name Gaulos, and a Gozitan by the name Gaulites. The fragment also shows that in the sixth century B.C. Gozo was in the Carthaginian sphere of influence.

⁶ Cf C. Muller, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Hildesheim, 1965, Skylax III.

⁷ Cf M.G.G. Amadasi, *Le Iscrizioni Fenicie e Puniche*, Roma 1968, passim.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁹ Cf Pliny, N.H., 111, 92; Silius Italicus, *Pun.*, XIV, 259.