

Godfrey Wettinger

1 - Maimuna's tombstone.



Chapter two

The history of Gozo from the early middle ages to modern time

2 - Statue of St. Peter on the parvis of Sannat Parish Church.

Though hardly twenty six square miles in area, the little island of Gozo, some four miles to the north-west of Malta, has its own particular history to boast of, parallel to that of Malta and that of Sicily but not so identical that it has not had its own individual story to tell.¹ In general outline, one might certainly think that there was little to differentiate the history of the two main Maltese islands. They normally changed foreign domination in the same way and pretty much at the same time, Arabs following Byzantines, Normans that of the former, then the Suabians, the Angevins, the Aragonese, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem or Rhodes, the French, the British and finally independence.² The main geographical factors influencing one have influenced the other, whether climatological, telluric or geopolitical. In broad outline the main cultural currents influencing both islands have been the same. For most practical purposes, consequently, there is little to distinguish culturally a Gozitan person from a Maltese one. In religion there has always been little to choose between the inhabitants of the two islands ever since prehistoric times in large terms, so far as one can see. But economically they have diverged considerably during the last four hundred and fifty years, with the development of towns around Malta's magnificent harbours and the continued reliance in Gozo largely on an agricultural way of life. In fact, however, the historical experience of the two sister islands has been sufficiently different for their inhabitants to feel slightly different, aided as this has been by such non-historical factors as the greater smallness of Gozo, the greater insecurity of life there in former times and the greater difficulty of finding and retaining employment for its inhabitants during most times including the present.

THE MUSLIMS

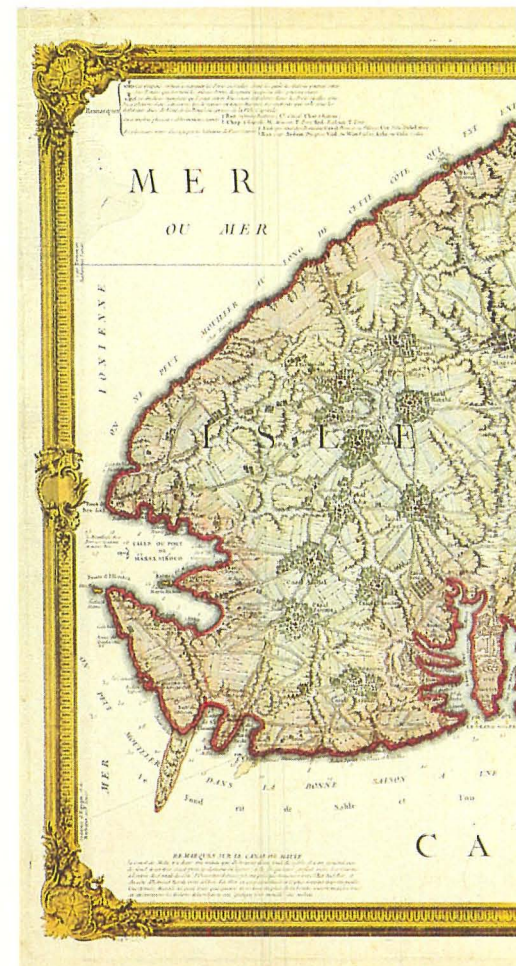
Though Malta is mentioned in some twenty Arabic literary sources, and a rough outline of what happened in that island when it was taken and held by the Muslims can be worked out, at least provisionally, Gozo is not mentioned once until the couple of references in Edrisi in full Norman times.³ That it passed from Byzantine Christian rule to that of the Muslims, remaining under the hegemony of the latter for the best part of two hundred and fifty years is not really in question. No one denies that Gozo underwent the same linguistic developments that occurred on its larger sister island - that, in other words, a dialectal form of Arabic hardly distinguishable in important respects from Maltese, had established itself there during the High Middle Ages. Nor can it be denied that Islam must have been the dominant religion, probably the only religion except for some Jews, on that island — the first for some three centuries, the latter for a substantial part of that time. Not only must it be realized by everyone that there are no reliable archaeological Christian remains in Gozo for the whole of that period, but it is com-

¹ The first real history of Gozo is that by G. P. F. Agius de Soldanes (1712-1770), entitled *Il Gozo antico e moderno, sacro e profano*, some time ago translated into Maltese and published by Dun Guzepp Farrugia under the name *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tieghu*, 2 vols., (Malta, 1936, 1953).

² For an evocative study, see Kininmoth, *The Brass Dolphins* (1957). For a detailed geographical study, see the relevant parts of H. Bowen-Jones, J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher, *Malta* (Durham, c. 1960). See also, B. Blouet, *Gozo* (Malta, 1965).

³ Edrisi merely says that Gozo had a good harbour. For the 'Arabs' in Malta and Gozo, see G. Wettinger, 'The Arabs in Malta', in *Malta: Studies of its Heritage and History* (Malta, 1986), pp. 87-104, where there are full bibliographical references to earlier work. For a later study, see A. T. Luttrell, 'Ibn Hauqal and Tenth-Century Malta', *Hyphen*, V 4 (1987), pp. 157-160. See also, G. Wettinger, 'Did Christianity survive in Muslim Malta? — further thoughts', *The Sunday Times [of Malta]*, 19 November 1989.

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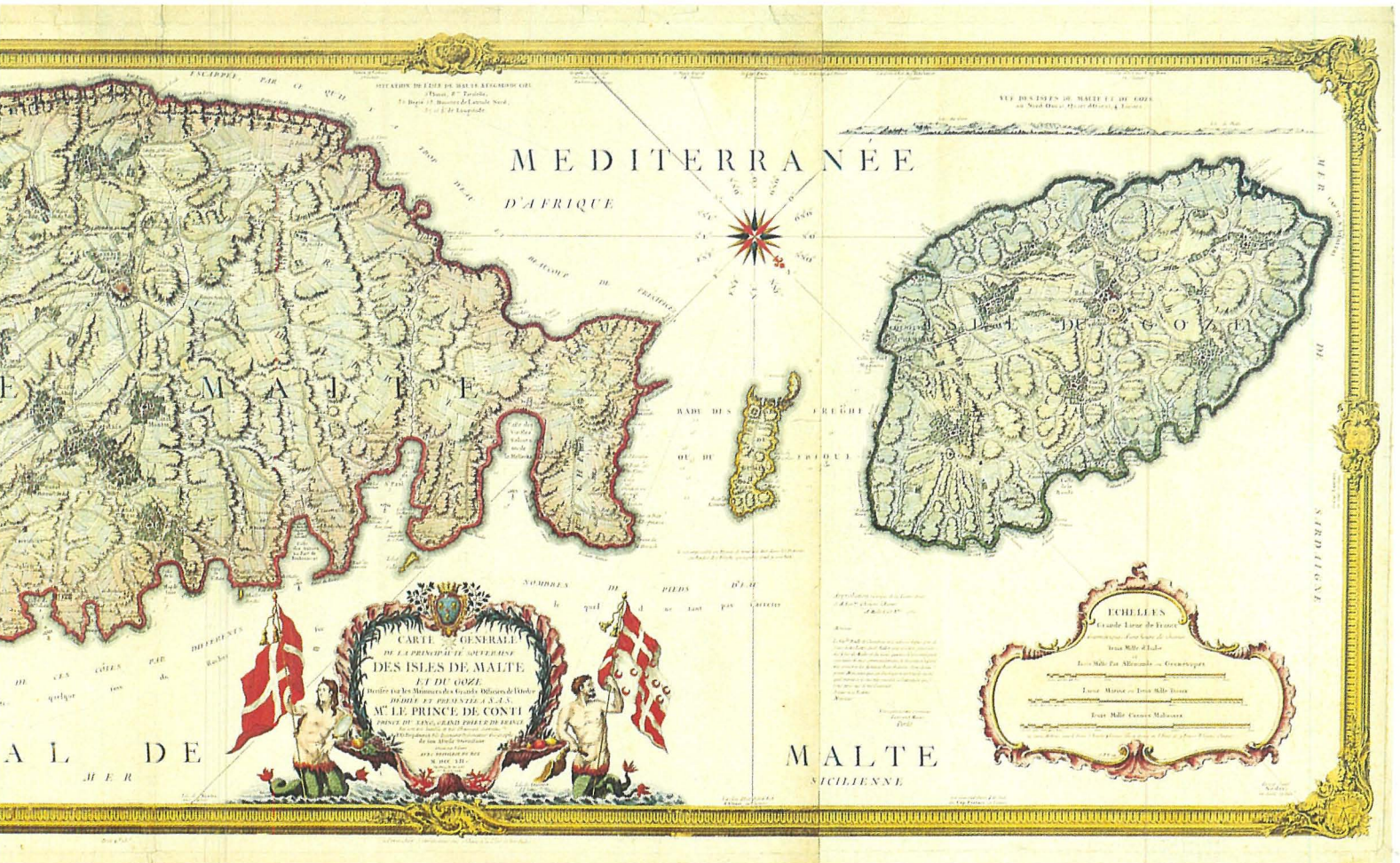
mon knowledge that Islam made great strides forward one way or another in the larger island of Malta as well as in Sicily, not to speak of its success in the winning over to Islam of millions of Christian inhabitants in North Africa and Spain or Andalusia. In any case, Geoffrey Malaterra tells us that when Count Roger arrived in Gozo on his return to Sicily from the capture of Malta from its Muslim inhabitants, he did precisely the same there as he had done in Malta — he must, therefore, have subjected the local inhabitants to his sovereignty, subjecting them also to the payment of an annual tribute and the surrender of their warlike implements, and forcing them to free their Christian captives.⁴

THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

In 1127 Malta and Gozo had to be reconquered by King Roger, Count Roger's son. It would seem that it was from this year that Gozo, like Malta, acquired a permanent Christian government again and a permanent Christian establishment, at first partly of Normans and their camp-followers and hangers-on of the Latin rite as well as of Sicilian Christians mostly of the Greek rite, later on supplemented — if the concurrent developments in Sicily also occurred in the Maltese islands — by converts from Islam who preferred for

3 - A. F. Gervais Depalmeus. Carte Générale de la principauté Souveraine des Isles de Malte et du Goze. 590 x 1355 mm. Paris, 1752.

⁴ G. Malaterra, 'De rebus gestis Roberti Guiscardi, Ducis Calabriae et Rogerii, Comitis Siciliae', *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (Bologna, 1927), pp. 94-96.

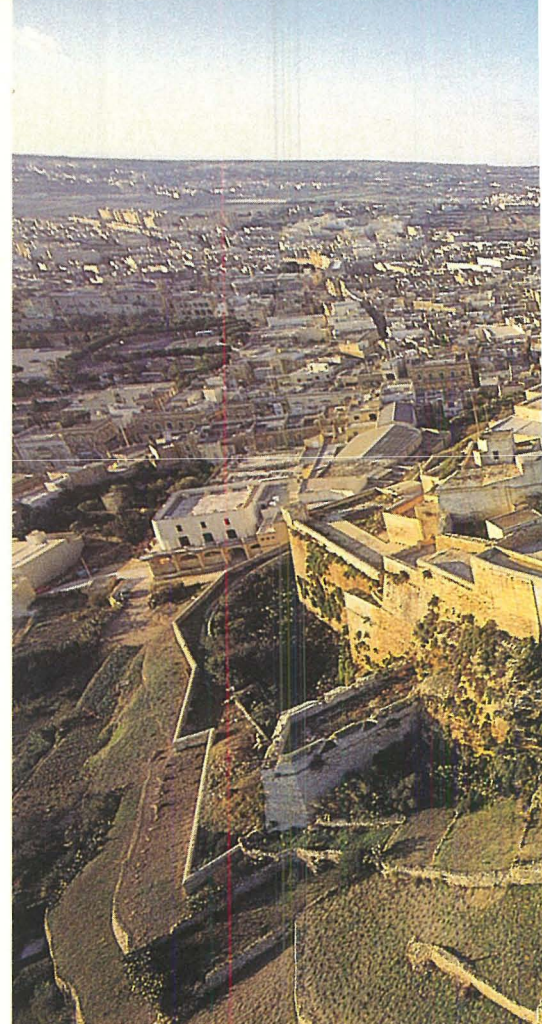


a long time the Greek rite to the Latin one, which was closely associated with the hated Norman conqueror.⁵ Later on continual official preferment and support enabled the Latin rite to gain the upper hand, and gradually suffocate the Greek rite.⁶ It is perhaps worthwhile here to recall that as late as 1299 a witness to a will drawn up in Gozo preferred to sign in the Greek alphabet rather than the Latin one.⁷

In the meantime, Islam survived openly down to 1249 when it was proscribed, the surviving adherents being exiled to Lucera in Central Italy.⁸ Two Muslims from Gozo are found among the serfs on a Sicilian estate in 1183⁹ The Muslim tombstone in splendid Kufic Arabic lettering reportedly found back in the eighteenth century between Xewkija and Sannat, Gozo, dates back to 1174 and originally covered the tomb of Maimuna, the daughter of Hassan ibn 'Ali of the tribe of Hudhail known as Ibn as-Susi.¹⁰ There is no documentary evidence that the tomb was actually found in Gozo, but the locality has been known as *Mejmunni* on *Mejmunna* ever since 1398 at least. Possibly there was a Torbit Mejmunna there originally, since *torba* or *torbit* placenames in Malta would seem to indicate, in most cases, similar Muslim tombs.¹¹ The tomb would seem to indicate that as late as 1174 Gozo still retained her well-off Muslim elite.

In 1241 an imperial commissioner, Giliberto Abate, reported that the population of Malta and Gozo then consisted of the following families:¹²

	Malta	Gozo
Saracens	681	155
Christians	47	203
Jews	25	8
Totals	753	366



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4 - The Citadel.

5 - Pointed arches in the Citadel.

⁵ For Sicily, see H. Bress, 'Mudejares des pays de la couronne d'Aragon et Sarrasins de la Sicile Normande: le probleme de l'acculturation', *X Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragon* (Saragossa, 1979), pp. 51-60, and idem. 'La formazione del popolo Siciliano', *Tre millenni di storia linguistica della Sicilia* (Pisa, 1983?), pp. 243-65.

⁶ M. Scaduto, S.J., *Il monachismo Basiliano nella Sicilia medievale: rinascita e decadenza, sec. XI-XIV* (Rome, 1947).

⁷ H. Bress, 'Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano', *Melita Historica*, VI 3 (1974), pp. 313-24, especially p. 320. For a slightly earlier Greek signature in Malta, see V. Laurenza, 'Malta nei documenti Angioini del Regio Archivio di Napoli', *Archivio Storico di Malta* [Roma], V 1-4 (1934), p. 136.

⁸ P. Egidio, 'La colonia Saracena di Lucera e la sua distruzione', *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, vols. 36, 38 and 39; idem, *Codice diplomatico dei Saraceni di Lucera* (Naples, 1917).

⁹ S. Cusa, *I diplomi Greci ed Arabi di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1868), p. 276

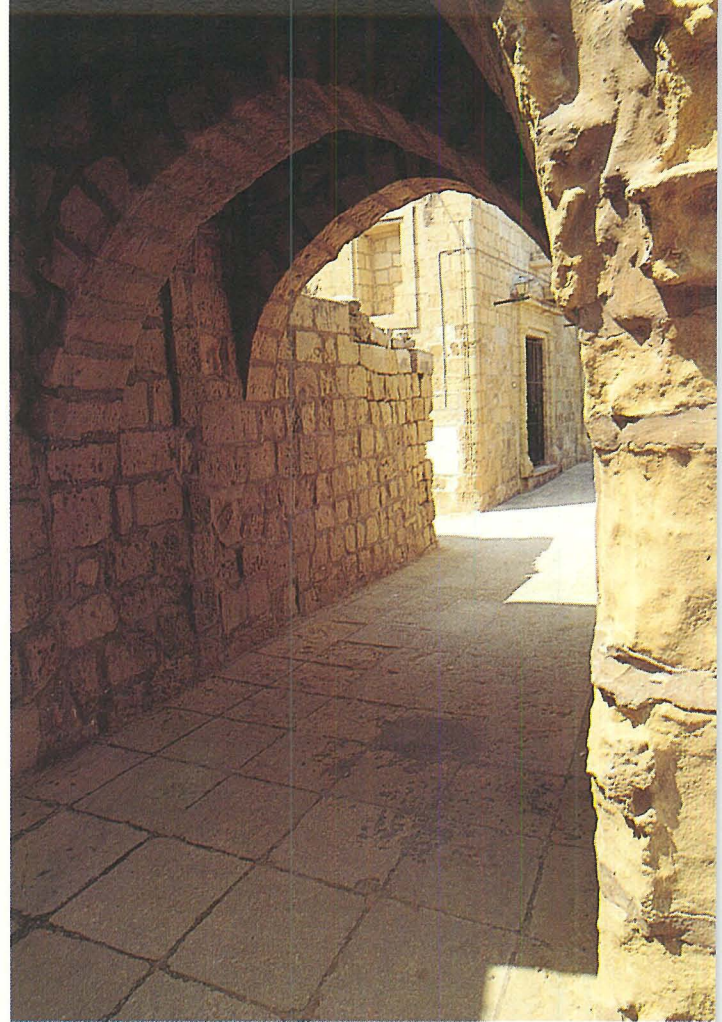
¹⁰ M. Amari, *Le epigrafi Arabe di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1971), pp. 218-230, and E. Rossi, 'Le lapidi sepolcrali Arabo-Musulmane di Malta', *Rivista degli Studi orientali* XII, pp. 428-44, esp. pp. 432-34.

¹¹ G. Wettinger, 'Some Maltese medieval place-names of Archaeological Interest', *Atti del Colloquio internazionale di archeologia medievale* (Palermo, 1976), for a study of *torba* place-names.

¹² E. Winkelmann, *Acta Imperii Inedita seculi XIII* (Innsbruck, 1880), pp. 713-15.



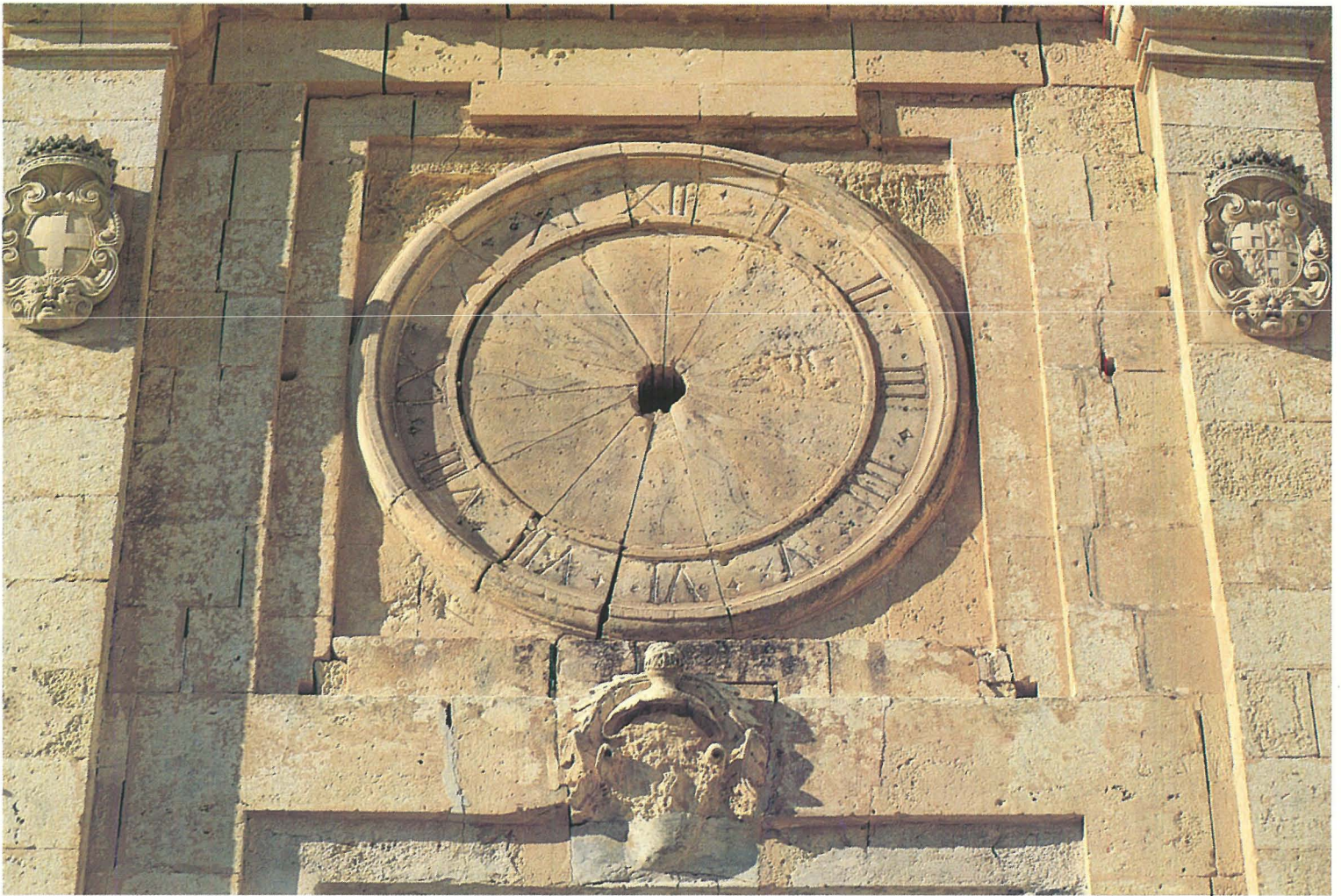
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As given this table would indicate that Gozo had a larger proportion of Christians to total population in 1240 than Malta. However, most historians believe that something is wrong with the figures; most would prefer to add an “M” for a thousand to that for Christians on Malta.¹³ That would largely even out the differences between the two islands. In any case, it should be remembered that it is a very late document, and cannot be used to investigate the religious allegiances of the proper Muslim period several generations before. On the whole, and going by historical probability based on what is known about the period, it would seem likely that a sizable proportion of the Islamic population of Gozo, like that of Malta, accepted Christianity if with some reluctance, mainly in order to avoid exile or worse. Since the final decision did not have to be taken until 1249, perhaps the majority of them had already steeled themselves to that line of policy by then. This explains the survival in Gozo as in Malta of the Maltese language, basically an offshoot of colloquial Arabic, a development which did not happen in Sicily where Islam felt strong enough to resort to rebellion repeatedly and was then suppressed with great brutality, mainly by Frederick II around 1223.¹⁴ Even there large numbers of Muslims are known to have switched over reluctantly to Christianity, but their relative strength was too weak to ensure a survival of colloquial Arabic.

¹³ A. T. Luttrell, ‘Approaches to Medieval Malta’ *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights* (London, 1975), pp. 38-40. See also I. Peri, *Il villanaggio in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1965), pp. 101, 137, and idem, *Uomini, città e campagne in Sicilia dall’undicesimo al XIII secolo* (Roma-Bari, 1978), pp. 154-55, 223-24.

¹⁴ M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, vol. 3, pp. 611-33.



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FOREIGN RULING REGIMES DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

Gozo, like Malta, depended on Sicily politically throughout the later Middle Ages, and therefore came under the same regimes which ruled over that island: the Normans, the Suabians, the Angevins and the Aragonese. Together with Malta, Gozo frequently formed part of a county, being thus separated from the royal domain and from direct rule from Palermo. This had started well within the twelfth century, and in 1198 Empress Costanza revoked the grant of the two Maltese islands to Guglielmo Grasso and made the first of some five royal or imperial promises never to separate them again from the royal domain.¹⁵ The islanders always insisted on this, probably because they felt too much at the personal mercy and whim of the counts and less so when they depended directly on the cumbrous and distant royal administration of Palermo. However, Guglielmo Grasso was eventually followed by Henry Piscatore, a Genoese, by Piscatore's son Nicoloso, and others right down to the very last years of the fourteenth century, with apparently only the briefest intervals of direct royal control. One of the less obvious results of this situation is that the archives at Palermo have hardly any documentation on the Maltese islands for the whole of this period.

¹⁵ C. Schrote-Köhler, T. Kölzer, H. Zielinski, 'Zwei staufische Diplome für Malta aus den Jahren 1198 und 1212', *Deutsches Archiv*, 33 (1977), pp. 519-20.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP

In 1299 one hears of Gullielmus de Malta, the representative of his uncle, the Count of Malta, and who lay dying in the Citadel of Gozo, appointing two captains for Malta to administer the island (perhaps really one for each island) until the arrival of the Count himself, that of two procurators to administer the Count's personal property, and of three judges, one of whom could not write, and several public notaries.¹⁶

During the fifteenth century and an indefinite period before, Gozo had its own municipal administration, which presumably continued normally to function even when the island formed part of a county. It functioned for most things completely separately from that of Malta, having its own town council, its own town mayor, known in Italian as *Capitano della Verga*, in Maltese as *Hakem*, its own set of four aldermen or *jurati*, a trained lawyer or notary as a town judge, and a couple of judges who were «ignorant of the law» and were therefore dubbed *judices idiotae*, as well as a couple of officials responsible for enforcing the use of correct weights and measures and the prices of objects as established by the town officials every September. Names of proposed officials were sent to Palermo, and the official list of officials as decreed by the viceroy at Palermo was eventually sent over in time for the new officials to take office on 1 September of each year. This documentation has not survived on Gozo itself, but the information was registered and can be consulted, at least from ca. 1398 onwards, by the interested historian in the State Archives of Palermo. Occasionally, a particular office or other, like that of town mayor, may be pawned by the Palermo government, no doubt to the consternation of local feeling, as in Malta. In 1421 the two islands were in fact pawned in this way to Consalvo Monroy for 30.000 gold florins,¹⁷ but in 1426 both islands rebelled against him, and reacquired their municipal privileges and the right to resist by force of arms any other infeudation or pawning of the islands.¹⁸

Although, the municipal records of Gozo have not survived, Palermo has official registrations of several of the petitions of grievances which the Gozitan authorities despatched directly to the authorities there. In 1432, Johanni Vigiles, their representative, pleaded successfully for the removal of the export tax on goods Gozitans obtained from Sicily, owing to the extreme poverty of the island, especially that caused by an invasion of the Moors.¹⁸ They asked for an assurance, which was given, that civil cases should be tried by the local court and not by a special official sent over from Palermo. Seeing that there were local men capable of becoming town mayors, the king should not appoint foreigners to that job, and that such appointments should be for the term of one year. They asked, unsuccessfully, for the grant of a quantity of wheat because they feared a Moorish raid would take place just before the local crop was harvested. In 1439 they complained, notary Angelo de Manuelli being their representative, of the harm that was being done in the island by the corsairs of Calabria, who captured Gozitan boats and seized the local farm

6 - Sun dial in the Citadel Square.

7 - The armorial bearings of Gozo Tower.



¹⁶ H. Bresc, 'Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano'.

¹⁷ G. Wettinger, 'The Pawning of Malta to Monroy', *Melita Historica*, VII 3 (1978), 265-83.

¹⁸ R. Valentini, 'Ribellione di Malta e spedizione alla Gerba come conseguenze della inefficienza della flotta Aragonesese nel Mediterraneo', *Archivio Storico di Malta*, VIII 3 (1937), pp. 253-316.

¹⁹ S. Giambruno and L. Genuardi, *Capitoli inediti delle città demaniali di Sicilia*, I (Palermo, 1918), pp. 323-26.

animals.²⁰ They complained that the resulting scarcity of wheat would have led to an actual famine had misser Simuni di Mazzara and Antoni Mule — that is, the Lord, in other words, Antoni Desguanes — not sent some wheat themselves, presumably from the island of Malta. Antoni Brunu had recently arrived to exact the collecta or royal tax, at which they were greatly astonished since it seemed to them “more than enough to have to fight against the king’s enemies and poverty and great penury on this arid rock... if the inhabitants could leave this island, it would already have become uninhabited”. They also insisted that notary Andria Bongeminu should remain judge of the lay court year in year out without having to go to Palermo personally for confirmation, because, among other things, he was an inhabitant of the island, who knew its language and every person great or small, as well as its customs, habits and usages.

In 1467 they asked that town mayors be chosen from among capable persons and that the post should not be pawned off.²¹ They had been forced to pay the huge sum of seventy *uncie* in order to redeem the post, and they could not pay the new *collecta*, especially as the cotton crop had failed for the past four seasons, and the current corn harvest was a very poor one. They were consequently forgiven the tax. In 1479 they asked for the island’s offices to be given only to citizens of the island; the President of the administration on Sicily agreed, directing that offices in Gozo be given only to those who had inhabited the place for at least five years.²² In 1521 complaints were numerous.²³ They wanted to limit the harassment of the town officials by the sindicaturi sent from Palermo, to provide for them interpreters who knew the Maltese language who would be able to understand perfectly the complaints against the officials of the local people, to draw up a list of men eligible for public office, to provide a couple of falconets for the defence of the citadel, the treasurer to take an oath before acceding to office that he would exercise his office faithfully and without fraud, that one of the artillerymen who was absenting himself without permission from his post be replaced, and that the financial burden which existed on the income of the judge be removed since the income itself was very low and no lawyer wanted the job.

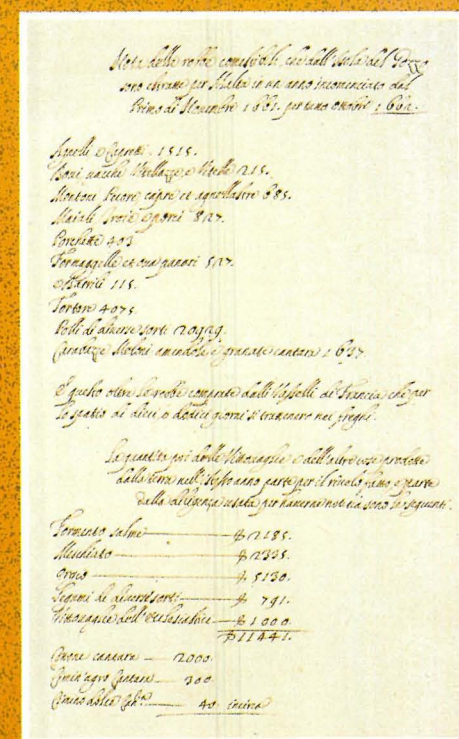
MEDIEVAL SOCIETY IN GOZO

The first documentation of medieval society in Gozo is the will which Guillelmus de Malta caused to be drawn up in 1299 in the Citadel of Gozo.²⁴ Guillelmus himself was the nephew of the Count of Malta, married to donna Clara de Rocka and he had one daughter named Lukina. Among his companions there was Guillelmus Tinardo to whom he left his horse and the *tenimentum* of Ghajn Tuffieħa in Malta. Gozo had three judges, one of whom could not write. Several other companions were foreigners and, being educated, were described as notaries. One witness, as was said above, signed in Greek. The whole group must have constituted the top rank of society at the time. The only surnames which occur in later times on Gozo or Malta were Attardi, la Barba and Puntetremulo.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 329-31.
²¹ Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 119, fols. 240-241.
²² Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 141, fol. 605.
²³ Archivio Storico di Malta, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 260-70, fols. 365-369.
²⁴ H. Bresc, ‘Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano’ (see footnote above).



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8 - Title page of the earliest history of Gozo, written by G.-P. F. Agius de Soldanis, copy in the National Library of Malta, Libr. MS. 145.

9 - Pro Nicholao Poeta, vicesecreto Gaudisii, 14 August 1443: Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Lettere Viceregie, vol. 22, fol. 42.

10 - Capitoli of Gozo, 1531 in the National Library of Malta, Libr. MS. 670, fol. 39.

11 - The town council of Malta discusses on 8 June 1470 whether Gozo should have its own consular official at Licata, Sicily: National Library of Malta, Univ. II, fols. 594, 595.

12 - Registration of the officials of the town and island of Gozo for the year 1475-75; Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Real Cancelleria, vol. 132, f. 18. Petrus Mintuff (sic) was to be one of the three judges.

13 - Exports of agricultural products from Gozo to Malta, 1661-62: National Library of Malta, Libr. MS 670, fol. 18.

In the fifteenth century, Gozo had its own group of local notables or members of the class of the gentry who took leading roles in public affairs together with the local notary or two and the more substantial landholders. They cannot be examined in the records of the town council, as can their Maltese contemporaries because those records in Gozo have not survived. But the collection of religious bequests compiled in 1545 and covering the whole 1434-1545 period as well as the records of the town officials in the Palermo records are sufficiently eloquent on this point. As in Malta, they were called *nobiles*, though they did not have the rights and privileges usually associated with the institution of the nobility in Western Europe, such as private jurisdiction or trial by their peers. Their main distinction was that they did not work for a living except by managing their estates. Though they were normally referred to in documents as *nobilis*, *nobiles*, this was usually taken to mean *gentilihomines*, gentlemen. Most of the families were of foreign origin but had been well established on Gozo for more than a century. They included the Puntetremulo (ie. Pontremoli) and La Barba families, the former right down to the catastrophe of 1551, the latter until the early years of the fifteenth century when their estates were confiscated by the Crown on the plea of treason. Other old 'noble' families were those of the Navarro, Platamone, de Naso, de Federico, Rapa, de Manuele, de Sahona. A newer family was that of Montpalao, arriving towards the end of the fifteenth century. That of Castelletti was founded definitely at about the same time by a person exiled from Sicily.²⁵ Occasional visitors or inhabitants were the Alagona of Xacca in Sicily because they had some land on Gozo.

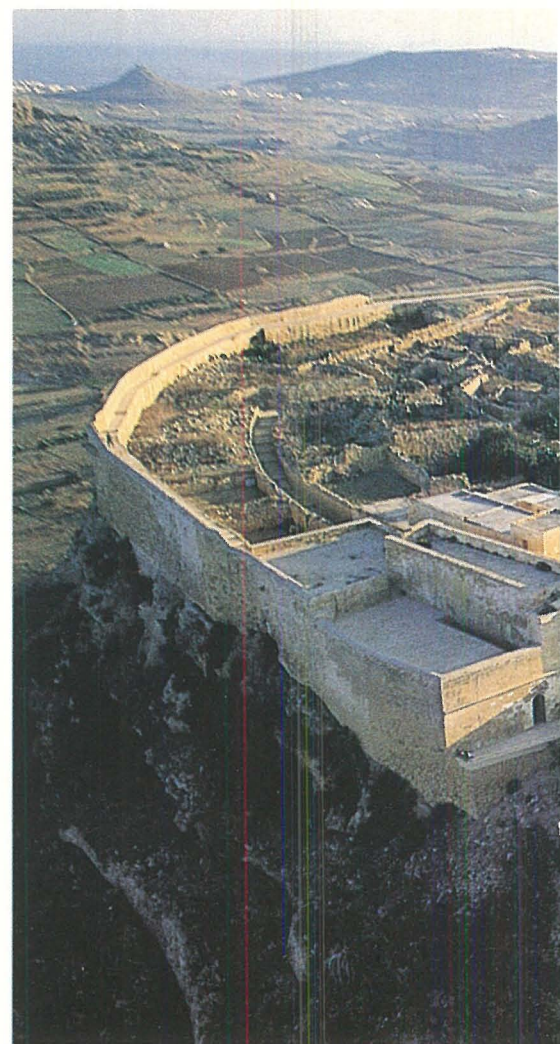
Beneath these came a large group of local landowners with surnames which were mostly largely identified with Gozo. Thus among the landowners who endowed the Church with land during the period 1434-1545 one finds not only members of the 'noble' families indicated but others like Ballistrera, Apap, Chini, Beniamino, Gaduara, Debbus, Bonnichi, Xeiba, Calimera, Raspullo, Chaber, Canchur, de Theobaldo, Kinzi, Maira, de Anastasio, de Amfasino, Vetero, Caxaro, Brunecta, Gamichi, de Bisconis, de Girardo, Saliba, Episcopo, Cadumi, Theuma, Urdub, Mannara, Chappisa, Sansone, Dallo, Santoro, Ghorab, and Fantino.²⁶ Inevitably, some of these, like de Bisconis, were occasionally referred to as 'nobilis' so that one may think that the two classes merged imperceptibly into each other.

Other landowning families can be easily identified. Thus the Mintuf family is known to have owned land at Għammar and Żebbuġ, within a mile of Għasiri where they can still be found well entrenched.²⁷ Similar families frequently have decidedly Semitic (i.e. Arabic) surnames like Machanuc and Xeibe.

Among the foremost families in fifteenth century Gozitan society must have been that of notary Andreas de Benjamino (or Benjabino). Other notaries who worked in Gozo include Jacobus Zabbara, Pinus de Saliba, Guglielmus de Sansone, Petrus Mannara, Johannes Antonii de Sansone, Leonardus de Agatiis. Less is known of the doctors and surgeons who worked in Gozo. It is quite

14 - Another view of the Citadel.

15 - Il-Mandraġġ, an old quarter of Rabat with very narrow streets.



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²⁵ Johannes Castillicta of Palermo was forgiven on 14 November 1507 for having injured a number of persons, a crime for which he had been deported to the island of Gozo on 12 November 1491: ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 224, fols. 283-284. However, he had married Imperia Navarra, the daughter of Andreotta Navarra and of Paola Pontremoli, and he therefore remained on the island: National Library of Malta, Libr. MS. 636, fol. 283. His descendants continued for long to inhabit the Maltese islands.

²⁶ Archiepiscopal Curia, Floriana, Archiepiscopal Archives of Malta, MS entitled *Registrum Fundationum Beneficiorum Insulae Gaudisii*, *passim*.

²⁷ Cathedral Museum, Mdina, Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, Acta Originalia, vol. 2, fol. 31v.

probable that Nucius de Episcopo was one of them. On 11 May 1451 the surgeon Nicolao Achme of Gozo, otherwise unknown, was appointed to the post of surgeon of Gozo which had been vacated by the death of the surgeon Magister Franciscus de Dato, with the same rights and privileges that were enjoyed by his predecessors. It was the custom, in fact, to endow current surgeons with a lifetime grant of various portions of land in Gozo. The municipal officials were directed to put Achme into possession, removing anyone else.²⁸ The latter was an obvious reference to the grant made 29 January 1451 to Johannes de Dato, the son of the late Franciscus, of land known as *de barbaria barbitonsori* in return for his exercise of the profession of surgeon.²⁹



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On 24 April 1473 the authorities at Palermo confirmed the transfer of the job of town surgeon from Magister Nicolaus Charugna, who had left Gozo with his whole family, to Magister Johannes Martinus who was taking a wife locally and promised to serve faithfully. The land de lu Barberi was also consequently passed on to him.³⁰

²⁸ ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 84, fols. 299-300.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, fols. 206-207.

³⁰ ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 128, fol. 190 [olim 173].

16 - St. George's Street, and Providence Street, Rabat.

17 - Triq Mons. Farrugia, another typical very narrow town street.



16

THE MEDIEVAL NOMENCLATURE OF GOZO

The surnames of Gozo were surprisingly different from those in Malta.³¹ Vella hardly existed at all there, while it formed a full 3% of the surnames of Malta in 1419.³² Bezzina, Zammit, Borg, Micallef, Zammit, Zarb, Psaila, Ellul, Canzuhuc, Mizangar, Muhammed, Camilleri, Caruana, Chilia, hardly occur once, if that, on Gozo throughout the Middle Ages, while Refalo, Mintuf, Manuele, Rapa, Vigiles, Pontremoli, and so many others occur in Malta only when members of those families moved over to that island.

What might surprise some people is that most of the medieval surnames of Gozo have died out. This is largely the effect of the catastrophe of 1551, although it has now been shown that it showed through in a rather delayed fashion.³³ A comparison of the surnames common in Gozo before 1551 with those in a list of Gozitan protesters of 1644 shows that there is only a 20%

³¹ G. Wettinger, 'The Place-names and the Personal Nomenclature of Gozo, 1372-1600', *Oriental Studies presented to Benedikt S.J. Isserlin*, R.Y Ebied and M.J.L. Young (edd.) (Leiden, 1980, pp. 173-98.

³² G. Wettinger, 'The Militia List of 1419-20: a New Starting Point for the Study of Malta's Population', *Melita Historica*, V 2 (1969), pp. 80-106.

³³ G. Wettinger, 'The Gozitan Captives of 1551', *The Malta Year Book*, 1977, pp. 427-30;



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overlap. Some families died out, others moved overseas³⁴ even if only to Malta, some never returned from captivity in Constantinople.

On the other hand, most of the known medieval place-names in Gozo have survived to later times. This no doubt was partly due to the precaution taken in 1545 by the Church to have a copy made of the land endowments of the Church with, of course, precise indications of place-names.³⁵ Since the administration of land property rights was not seriously interrupted, the place-names could not be forgotten.

It is curious that the place-names of medieval Gozo also reveal some important differences from those of Malta. There never was any *rahal* place-name in Gozo while Malta had at least a hundred. Nor were there any *bir* place-names, while Malta had close to two hundred, if one included *bjar* and other formations.

see especially, S. Fiorini, 'The Resettlement of Gozo after 1551', *Melita Historica*, IX 3 (1986), pp. 203-44.

³⁴ Thus, the Gozitan parish priest of Santa Marija ta' Savina, Don Andreas de Federico, was still staying away in Sicily in 1575 when Duzzina visited the church: NLM, Libr. MS. 643, p. 235.

³⁵ Archbishopal Curia, Floriana, MS. Registrum Foundationum Beneficiorum Insulae Gaudisii.



18 - The basilica of St. George's and neighbouring quarter, Rabat.

19 - A street niche at Saint George's Square, one of a large number in the island.



18

THE ECONOMY OF GOZO UNTIL 1551

The whole medieval economy depended on a couple of cash crops, cotton and cumin. These were exported to Sicily and through Sicily farther afield, and fetched enough money to enable the islanders to purchase wheat and other necessities from abroad from the proceeds. Essentially, this was a precise copy of what was happening on Malta.³⁶ On 5 January 1351 Gozo was given a complete exemption from the payment of customs duties on its imports and exports, a privilege that was confirmed on 24 March 1372.³⁷ In fact, there are serious grounds for thinking that the standard of living in the two islands was then pretty much the same and the difference in population between the two islands was in the same proportion as that of their relative sizes. Other-

³⁶ G. Wettinger, 'Agriculture in Malta in the Late Middle Ages', *Proceedings of History Week*, 1981 (Malta, 1982), pp. 1-48.

³⁷ Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 5, fol. 224 v.



wise, of course, there were serious differences. Thus Malta's population was widely spread over the whole island, while that of Gozo, about one third the size, was concentrated in and around the Citadel.³⁸ The reason was that no place in Gozo was more than a couple of miles or so from some point or other of the coast. The government of the island itself insisted that every-one had to pass the night in the Citadel or at Rabat rather than in the countryside. The Latin or Sicilian documents themselves never refer to any *casale* on Gozo, while the Church had no parish churches before 1551 out in the countryside. In addition to the cash crops, Gozo also produced wheat, barley, legumes, fruit and wine; and animal husbandry was widespread. This inevitably meant that farmers at least occasionally disobeyed the Gozo regulations, and slept outside for convenience' sake and to protect their property. There were, therefore, several farm buildings dotting the countryside round about. There were also orchards and vineyards in several parts of the island.

Spinning was a widespread cottage occupation, and much weaving seems also to have occurred, including that of sailcloth, which was sometimes traded directly in Syracuse. On 4 December 1481 Petrus de Lucia and Matheus Bacbac, inhabitants of Gozo, agreed at Syracuse to sell to Johannes de Finara of Syracuse sixty canne of cotton cloth suitable for the making of sails.³⁹ There is some evidence that it was more convenient in pre-1530 days to travel from the Maltese islands to Sicily through Gozo if they were going to Palermo, the seat of government, so that Maltese travellers themselves first went over to Gozo to take passage to Sicily from there. Seasonal migration is also known to have occurred from Gozo to Sicily of agricultural workers.

THE CHURCH DURING THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

Nothing is really known about the Church in Gozo before 1400 except that Donna Sibilla de Aragona founded the benefice of Santa Marija tas-Saqqajja during the fourteenth century.⁴⁰ The names of a couple of fourteenth century clergymen in Gozo have survived: thus on 12 November 1372 the Maltese priest Bartholomeo Aschac was given the collation of the benefice of Saqqajja in Gozo, vacated through the death of its previous holder, the priest Petrus la Barba.⁴¹ It is also clear that the Augustinian Order of friars had also reached Gozo by the 1370s.⁴² It is only in the fifteenth century that one really has a definite idea of what had developed in post-Muslim times on the island. One then finds a *matrice* church in the Citadel dedicated to Our Lady, itself a parish church, and three other parish churches at Rabat: San Ġakbu, San Gorg, and Santa Marija ta' Savina (in alphabetical order).⁴³ By then there

³⁸ For the distribution pattern of Malta see G. Wettinger, 'The Lost Villages and Hamlets of Malta', *Medieval Malta: Malta before the Knights*, pp. 181-216.

³⁹ Archivio di Stato di Siracusa, *Notai Defunti*, Not. Nicolai Vallona, 1481-82, doc. 418, deed dated 4 December 1481.

⁴⁰ The benefice already existed in 1372 because on 12 November of that year it was conferred on the Maltese priest Thomeus Axac: ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 12, fol. 184 [olim 144].

⁴¹ H. Bresc, 'Documents on Frederick IV of Sicily's Intervention in Malta: 1372', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, XLI (1973), p. 192.

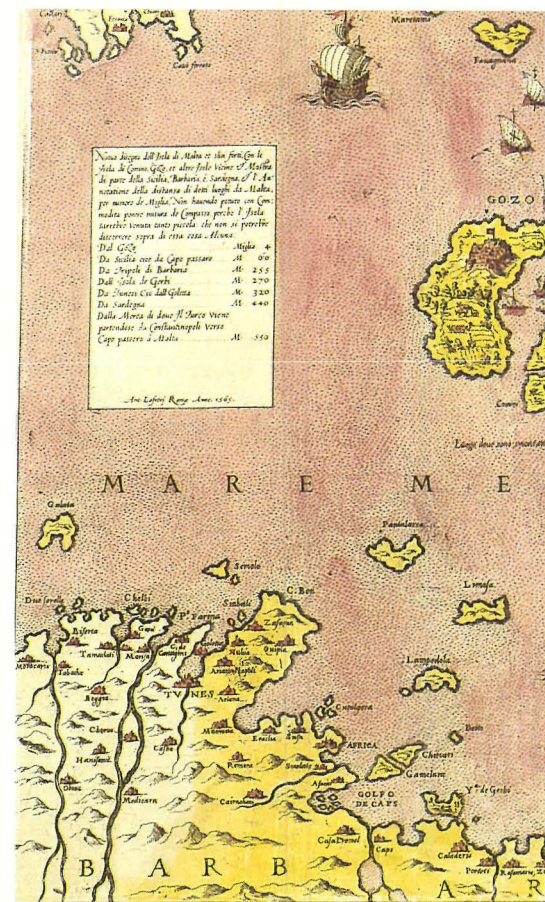
⁴² Frater Guillelmus de Marino of the Augustinians was given an annual pension of twenty five uncie of Gozitan money on the royal revenues of Gozo in 1375-76: ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 13, fol. 146v. That Frater Guillelmus was not merely a royal pensioner but actually had a direct connection with the Maltese Islands is clear from the reference to him in a transaction involving the provision of wheat to Malta during a local scarcity: ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 13, fols. 150-151.

⁴³ G. Wettinger, 'Il-Ġrajja Bikrija tal-Knisja Matrici t'Ġhawdex, 1435-1551' (Malta, 1975).

were two friaries, that of the Franciscans as well as the one of the Augustinians. Gozo had its *vicar foraneus*, who held his ecclesiastical court with right of appeal to the vicar general's court (or the bishop's court, when the bishop happened to be on the island) in Malta. ⁴⁴ In Gozo as in Malta, there were several scores of little chapels dotted about everywhere, and sometimes grouped together as around the *matrice*. ⁴⁵ Church endowments multiplied during the course of the fifteenth century. Hardly anything is known about older endowments. Nothing is known about the incidence of tithal taxation for the Church. Royal taxation of the Church in Gozo was exacted in the proportion of 2:9 compared to that on the Church in Malta. ⁴⁶ There was, of course, no Seminary, the clergy being trained largely by an apprenticeship-like system. This was no different from the situation on Malta and in so many other places abroad. Problems of eradicating superstition and ignorance and enforcing celibacy of the clergy were also as serious in Gozo as anywhere else at the time. ⁴⁷

GOZO AND MALTA

Gozo and Malta were sister municipalities of the Sicilian kingdom. Citizenship of one did not confer citizenship of the other. In fact, there are strong indications that there were frequent occasions on which they collaborated and just as frequently other occasions when they showed a surprising amount of petty jealousy and alienation towards each other. The supreme example of the former is when they both collaborated in the rising which drove the Monroy regime out of the islands in 1426 after they had borne with it ever since its commencement in 1421. ⁴⁸ In 1418 the Maltese *sindics* or representatives were foremost in their demand from the central government for permission to levy a wine tax in Malta in order to build a castle on Comino island to protect the passage between the two islands, asking that the municipality of Gozo should contribute one fourth of the expenses. ⁴⁹ In 1462 some Gozitans warned the Maltese municipality that they had heard that a discussion had occurred in the *diwan* of the King of Tunis concerning a design to invade Malta: the town mayor of Malta suggested that the Gozitans concerned should come forward and attend a meeting of the whole general town council — that is, of the council both of the town and the villages of Malta. ⁵⁰ In 1470 suggestions were made in the town council of Malta that Gozo should have its own



20 - Antonio Lafreri, Nuovo disegno dell'Isola di Malta et suoi forti, 375 x 450 mm. Rome, 1565.

21 - The chapel of San Dimitri averlooking the Gozitan countryside.

⁴⁴ The medieval papers of this court have not survived except when appeal to the higher court in Malta led to their transfer to Malta.

⁴⁵ Some of these have been recorded by Agius de Soldanis.

⁴⁶ *Archives of the Cathedral of Malta: Misc. 32A: 1313-1529*, ed. J. Azzopardi (Malta, 1977), p. 74. 19.VII.1484: Ordine del Vescovo che il clero Gozzitano pagasse due porzioni dell'undici di tasse regie, donativi Catedralici et altro.

⁴⁷ G. Wettinger, 'Concubinage among the Clergy of Malta and Gozo ca. 1420-1550', *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, VI 4 (1977), pp. 165-88.

⁴⁸ A. Mifsud, 'Le franchigie costituzionali alfonisiane e l'invasione dei Mori del 1429 nella compilazione della storia di Malta', *Archivum Melitense*, III 8-12 (1918-19), pp. 303-69; R. Valentini, 'Ribellione di Malta e spedizioni alla Gerba come conseguenze dell'inefficienza della flotta Aragonese nel Mediterraneo', *Archivio Storico di Malta*, n.s. VIII 3 (1937), pp. 253-316; G. Wettinger, 'The Pawning of Malta to Monroy'.

⁴⁹ S. Giambruno and L. Genuardi, *Capitoli inediti delle città demaniali di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1918), pp. 382-85.

⁵⁰ National Library of Malta, Univ. 11, fols. 167v; *Acta Juratorum et Consilii civitatis et insulae Maltae*, ed. G. Wettinger (in the press at Palermo), doc. 217.



consul at Licata in Sicily.⁵¹ In 1447 Gozo was allowed to import wheat from Malta provided the same amount was obtained for Malta from Sicily.⁵²

It is curious, however, to find restrictions on the export of horses and oxen from Malta to Gozo, such as in 1469, 1471 and 1447.⁵³ The matter was debated at length on Monday, 26 October 1478 in the Maltese town council.⁵⁴ Some Gozitans had asked for permission to obtain working oxen and other beasts from Malta. The town mayor in Malta said that they should be allowed to get the former only, and on condition that Maltese inhabitants with land in Gozo should be allowed by the Gozitans to transfer their grain to Malta from Gozo. The nobleman Jorgius la Habica agreed on condition that Malta was left with enough oxen for her own needs. The lawyer Nicolaus Caxaru recommended that the Gozitans should be allowed to obtain any sort of animals from Malta except horses and beasts of burthen, and several other council members agreed with him. The nobleman Paulus Vaccaru said that the Gozitans should not obtain any animals at all under whatever conditions, but the lawyer Petrus Caxaru (the poet) agreed with his kinsman, that the Gozitans' wishes should be satisfied except for horses and beasts of burthen.

⁵¹ NLM. Univ. 11, fol. 594; *Acta Juratorum et Consilii civitatis et insulae Maltae*, doc. 384.

⁵² NLM. Univ. 11, fol. 358; *Acta Juratorum et Consilii civitatis et insulae Maltae*, doc. 662.

⁵³ NLM. Univ. 11, fols.

⁵⁴ NLM. Univ. 11, fol. 390; *Acta Juratorum et consilii civitatis et insulae Maltae*, doc. 724.

20

21



THE COMING OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM

The news reached Malta in 1524 that the Order of St. John was trying to obtain the Maltese islands from the Emperor Charles V, having lost Rhodes in 1522 to the Turks, but immediately strenuous protests were made by the Maltese municipality. When eventually, the Knights arrived in 1530, the Gozitan municipality, like that of Malta, presumably first asked for confirmation of their rights and privileges. They then accepted the new rulers. On 18 July 1530, the Grand Master accepted the first list of municipal officials.⁵⁵ In the following year, the Gozitans asked, by means of their four jurats or aldermen of that year, Vito Vagnolo, Jacobo Inguanes, Vallurio de Algaria and Andriotta Mannara, the approval having been previously obtained of the Gozitan town council, that (a) they be put under the special care of the Grand Master, (b) any Gozitan who wanted to enter the Order would be treated in the same way as members of the Italian Langue, (c) he freed them from the *corvee* work on the citadel walls, as well as that of militia duty called *mahares*: they had been performing the former without exemption for the past forty eight years and at their own expense and had provided the citadel with new walls, ravelins and ditches while the latter could be replaced by another system; (d) the governors of Gozo were not to interfere in the administration of justice except where a public official abused of his office, letting justice take its normal course following the imperial laws according to the custom and practice of the kingdom and municipal rights as in the past; (e) there should be a general pardon for crimes committed in the past except for the rights to justice of private individuals; (f) the Gozitans should have their liability to the payment of tithes (or *primizie*) remitted; (g) the Grand Master should prevent the town mayor and his judge from imprisoning persons simply in order to obtain payment of the fee for allowing them to sleep outside of the prison; (h) court should be held regularly three times a week —on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays as in former times; (i) all who wanted to leave the island and go to Sicily or elsewhere should be free to do so without having to obtain a licence from anyone; (j) the review of the work of the town mayor and his assessor or judge, which had once been done by the aldermen themselves and lately by the *sindicaturi* sent over from Palermo, need not be continued since the island's governor could now constantly supervise their activity. There is no indication that the Grand Master paid any heed to these demands or the contemporary ones of the Maltese municipality.⁵⁶

THE CATASTROPHE OF 1551

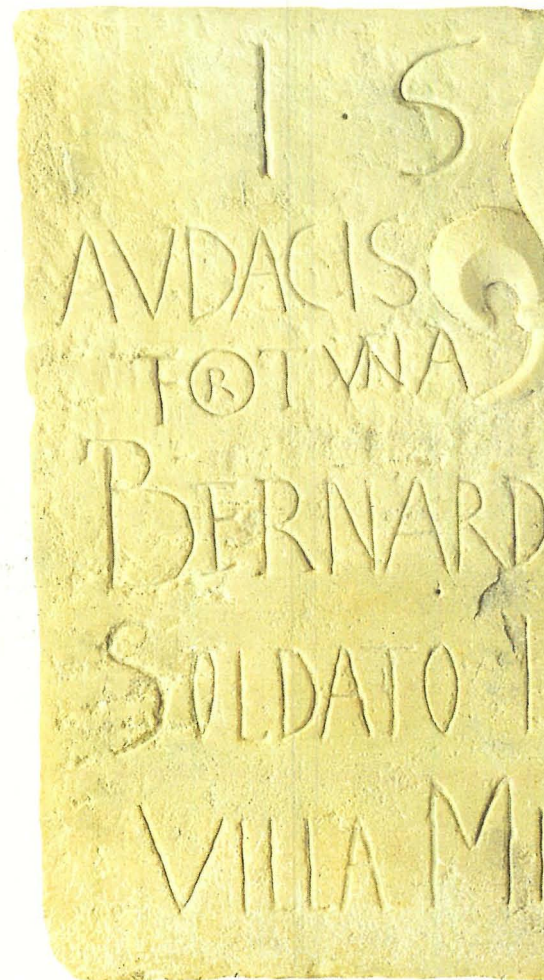
The history of the population living on the island of Gozo took a catastrophic turn for the worse in 1551. This was the fateful year which saw the dispersal and destruction of most of the community on the island. The Turks under the leadership of Sinan Pasha crossed over to Gozo on 22 July 1551, after harrying the Maltese countryside and making a feint attack on Mdina. The Gozitans withdrew into the Citadel, apparently all 6000 of them. But resistance was hopeless in front of the overwhelming strength of their opponents. Within days, the terrible Turkish bombardment convinced them that they had

⁵⁵ NLM. AOM 414, fol. 270, entry dated 18 July 1530; published in R. Valentini, 'I cavalieri di S. Giovanni da Rodi a Malta: trattative diplomatiche', *Archivum Melitense*, IX 4 (1936), p. 227.

⁵⁶ NLM. Libr. MS 670, fols. 39-42.

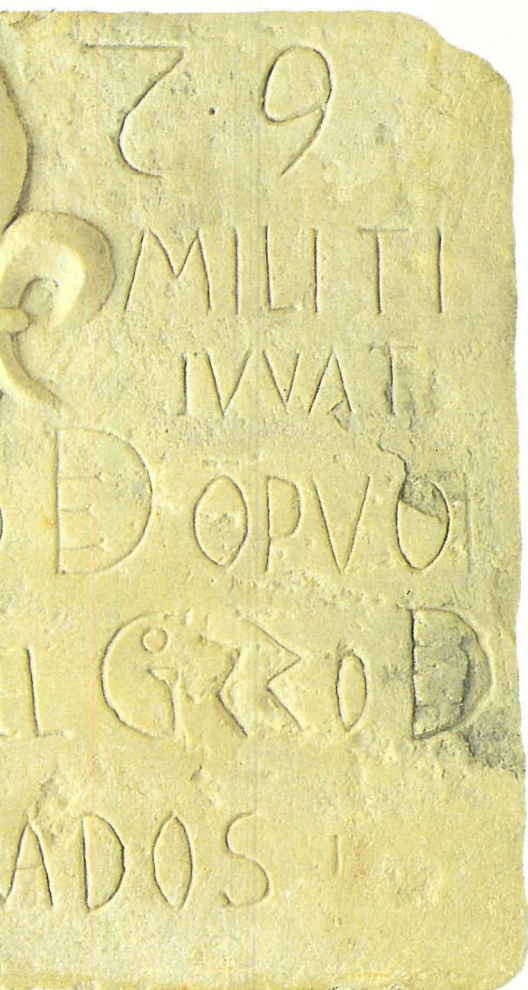


22 - Gozitans being taken into captivity in 1551: a modern historical painting by P. Camilleri Cauchi.





23 - Inscription of 1579 commemorating Bernardo Dupuo, a Spanish soldier who died fighting the Turks in 1551 after first killing his wife and daughters to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy.



23

to submit to the inevitable, especially after the death of the English gunner, the only one in the Citadel. A few hundred are reputed to have escaped over the walls during night-time, and the Turks also seem to have spared a couple of score of useless person. An untold number had hidden elsewhere in the countryside through it all and were not all rounded up by the Turks. All the rest were taken on board of the Turkish vessels, at first to the next stopping place, the neighbourhood of Tripoli, and after the fall of that town, to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople itself, where they are found in subsequent years interminably negotiating their release or reporting each other's deaths to enable their next of kin to dispose of their property and husbands or wives to remarry. In later years a legend grew up in Tripolitania that they had finally been allowed to settle at Tarhuna in the mountains south of Tripoli, as was proved, it was said, by their distinctive customs, which had survived though they had, in the course of the subsequent centuries, switched over to Islam.⁵⁷

This terrible event in Gozitan history was related in detail in two almost contemporary accounts, one Spanish and one French. As one would expect, each account blames the other of the two nationalities for the disaster that had overtaken Gozo and Tripoli.

22

GRADUAL RECOVERY

After this traumatic event, it took time for things to settle down again, and for life to resume its normal tenor. Within months a few of the unfortunate captives were able to return, and others continued to trickle back for years afterwards. Recent study reveals that there was little apparent change in surnames in the first few years after 1551.⁵⁸ This was probably partly due to the fact that a respectable number of Gozitan migrants living in Malta or elsewhere snatched at the opportunity to return to their island home to fill in the economic void left by the departure of practically the whole of the population. On 4 August 1557 the Sicilian Matheus de Naso, with a typical medieval Gozitan surname, bound himself to work for a year on the island of Gozo.⁵⁹ Others like him flocked to the island. On 17 August 1556 Stephanus Mihallef of Gargur entered the service of Antonius Bartholo of Malta to carry out farming work — ploughing, hoeing, and animal husbandry — on the island of Gozo on his behalf.⁶⁰ A fortnight later Antonius Bartolo is discovered receiving money from the wife of one of the Gozitan captives.⁶¹

On 4 April 1554 the Grand Master Claude de la Sengle decreed that all those who went to live on Gozo with their wife and family should not have to pay their debts for four years except for those who owed money for the rent of feudal property, vineyards, and horticultural land.⁶² Six weeks later he decreed that all those Gozitans and Maltese relatives of the Gozitans who were still in captivity should be allowed to take care of their relatives' property until their return from abroad and also have a moratorium on their debts for four

⁵⁷ G. Wettinger, 'The Gozitan Captives of 1551', *Malta Year Book*, 1977.

⁵⁸ S. Fiorini, 'The Resettlement of Gozo after 1551', *Melita Historica*, IX 3 (1986), pp. 203-44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, R 175/54, f. 1068.

⁶⁰ Notarial Archives, Valletta, Deeds of not. Brandano de Caxario, R 175/51. f. 2425 v.

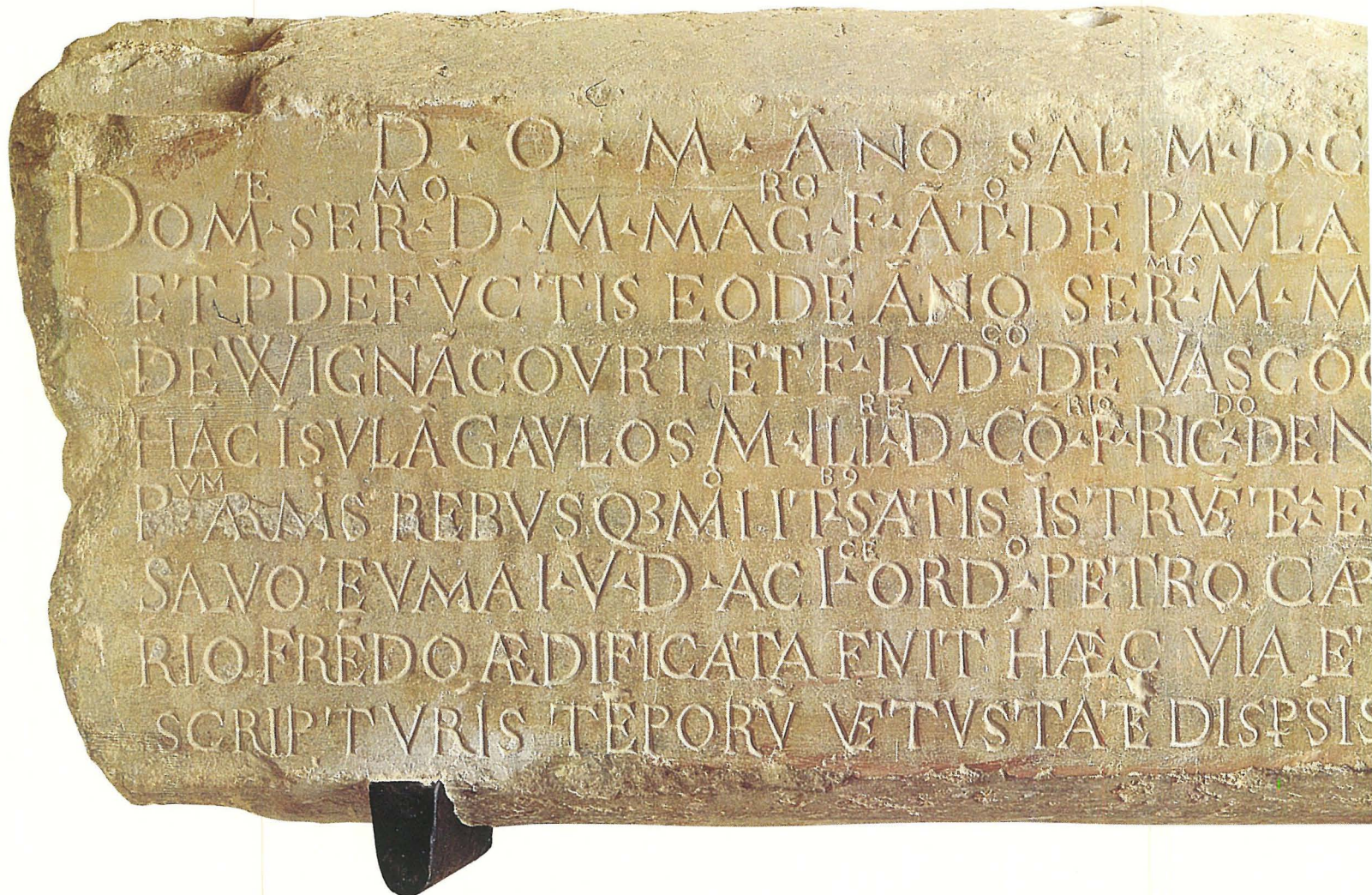
⁶¹ *Ibid.*, R 175/52, fols. 1-2.

⁶² NLM, Libr. MS 149, fol. 149.

24 - Latin inscription commemorating works carried out by Fra Richardus de Nini Claret in Gozo Citadel in 1623, Gozo Museum.

25 - Inscription formerly in Gourgion tower which was demolished during World War II.

years so long as they stayed on the island of Gozo with their wives and families, except for the Grand Master's own debtors and those who owed money to the Common treasury of the Order. All those who kept animals on Gozo but lived in Malta had to withdraw them forthwith on pain of confiscation. Those who wanted to rent land on Gozo belonging to the government had merely to enquire of the town mayors where they lived: they would have them at an honest and convenient rent and would also be well treated.⁶³ No doubt in these and other ways, Gozo painfully recovered from the catastrophe of 1551.



A NEW GOZO

It was a new Gozo that grew up in the second half of the sixteenth century and later years. Although for long the main settlement remained the Citadel and its suburb of Rabat, in the course of the seventeenth century clear signs soon appeared that the constraints which had brought this about no longer operated so powerfully. Population statistics reveal that other settlements were clearly establishing themselves at places like Qala, Nadur, Xagħra and Sanat. In 1680 the four parishes which then existed in Gozo had the following population:⁶⁴

⁶³ *Ibid.*, fols. 148-149.

⁶⁴ NLM. Univ. 2, item 99.

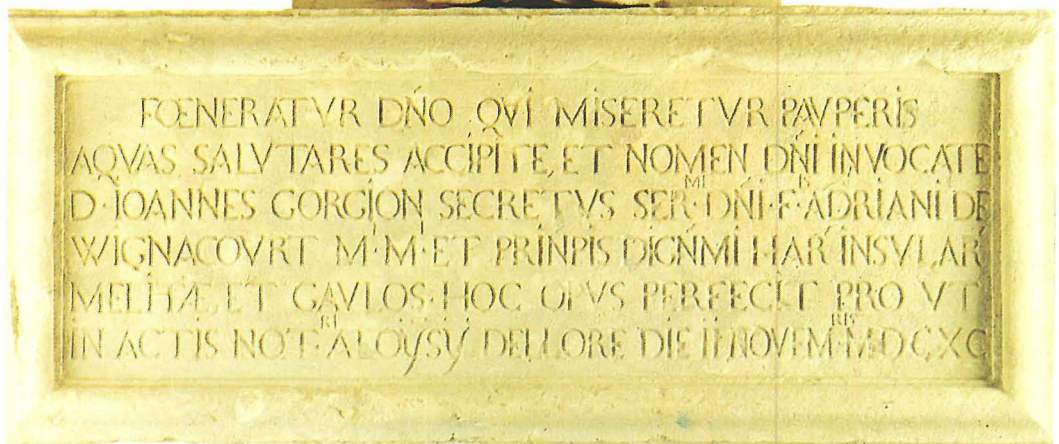
	families	communicants	total
St. George's	250	600	1400
Għarb	100	300	500
Xewkija	200	300	550
Matrice (and rest of Gozo)	350	2000	3257
Total persons for all Gozo			5.700

A different breakdown is available for 1705:^{64a}

The Citadel and its suburb of Rabat	2.942
Għarb	514
Xewkija	640
Sannat	385
Nadur	532
Xagħra	698
Żebbuġ	385
Total	6.096



24



25

^{64a} National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of St. John of Malta, Ms. 6421.

This phenomenon was noted, now some time back, by the well known historical geographer Brian Blouet, an academic author of one of the most perceptive guides to Gozo.⁶⁵ He is no doubt fully justified in attributing this change in the land-settlement pattern in Gozo to the gradual mastering by the government of the constant threat from sea-corsairs which had troubled Gozitan affairs for so many centuries. This was due to a lessening of the threat from the Moorish corsairs which occurred during the seventeenth century, as well as to the defensive measures taken by the administration of the Order, mainly by the building of watch towers along the coast of Gozo, somewhat similar to what was also being done on Malta.

The first stage in the defence of Gozo — the Citadel itself having existed throughout the later Middle Ages — was the construction of the Garzes tower at Mġarr in 1605, and the tower on Comino island to obstruct the use of that island by Saracenic invaders. Envisaged as early as 1418, as seen above, it was not to be erected before 1618. These were followed in the course of the seventeenth century by forts or towers at Marsalforn, Xlendi, Dwejra, Mġarr ix-Xini and to the east of San Blas Bay. The eighteenth century saw the construction of several redoubts, coastal batteries, trenches and underwater obstructions.⁶⁶

There was much discussion on the ability of the Citadel to resist a determined attack, and whether it could provide refuge for the whole population after the latter had recovered from the disaster of 1551. Extensive but inadequate extensions were made to the fortifications of the Citadel in ca. 1599-1601. Suggestions were also made that a new town be built at Marsalforn, but they did not come to anything when the Gozitans themselves refused to pay the extra taxation involved.⁶⁷ Eventually Fort Chambray was built as a fortified town in the eighteenth century, but it never actually functioned as such.

Although it is doubtful whether Gozo would ever have been able to defend herself against an enemy attack on the scale of the one of 1551, the coastal defences made life in the Gozitan countryside more secure. Permanent settlements therefore established themselves in several places which were eventually to develop into villages, and nowadays into small country towns.

Gozo thus recovered both demographically and in her economic life. Round about 1648 it was officially reported that Gozo had about six thousand inhabitants, not including those who visited the island during sowing time and on short monthly stays. Seven hundred of them could carry arms in case of need.⁶⁸ Between 1 November 1661 and 31 October 1662, Gozo exported to Malta 1515 goats and sheep, 215 bovines, 685 rams, sheep, goats and lambs, 827 pigs, 403 piglets, 4075 turtle-doves, 20929 of various types of fowl, and 1637 cantara of various fruit. Gozo also produced 2185 salme of wheat, 2335 salme of *mahlut* (a mixture of wheat and barley), 5130 salme of legumes, 1000 salme of grain for ecclesiastics (who could not be taxed with the rest of the population), together with 2000 cantara of cotton, 300 cantara of bitter cumin, and about forty cantara of sweet cumin or aniseed.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ B. Blouet, *Gozo* (Malta, 1965).

⁶⁶ A. Hoppen, *The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 114-25.

⁶⁷ NLM. Libr. MS 670, fols. 63-67.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 68.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 18.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE ORDER

As the population expanded and the land settlement pattern became less highly concentrated than it had been throughout the later Middle Ages, the organisation of the Church now followed a different pattern. Gozo came to have a parish, on a collegiate organisation, at St. Mary's in the Citadel,⁷⁰ and another parish at St. George's in Rabat, at first a combined parish. These were followed by the erection of a parish at Xewkija in 1678, Għarb in 1679, which adopted a collegiate organisation in 1774, and four other country parishes at Nadur, Sannat, Xagħra and Żebbuġ, all in 1688. Hence originated the interminable parochial disputes which have characterised and even vitiated religious life on Gozo in some respects even since, as in some parts of Malta, with endless disputes on priority of erection, status and other rights and privileges, disputes of which there is no hint in the substantial surviving documentation of pre-1551 days.

26 - Ancient carved stones, usually regarded as tombstones, of obscure age and provenance.

⁷⁰ NLM. Libr. MS 643 Duzina's Visitation, 1575, fols. 411-414.





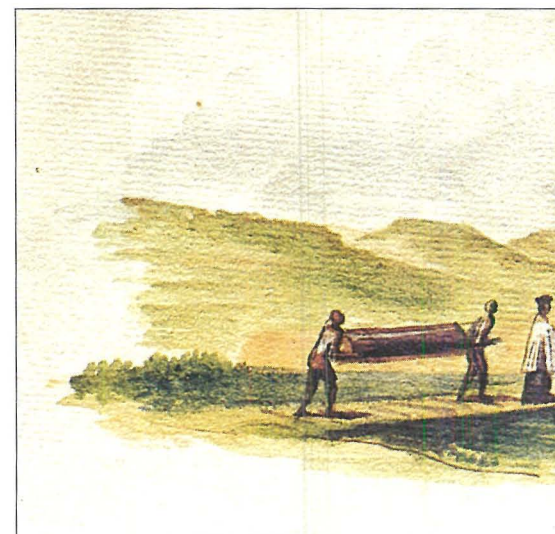
EARTHQUAKES AND PLAGUES

The great earthquake which devastated south east Sicily as well as Malta on January 1693 also caused much damage on the island of Gozo. Both the Matrice and the church of St. George's were seriously damaged and had to be largely rebuilt. Several towers, citadel walls and forts revealed serious cracks and lesions, and they had to be repaired, but it was officially stated that the defects then observed were the result of lack of maintenance rather than the earthquake. Other minor shocks have occasionally been felt on the island, but they caused much less damage.

The island was to escape the plague epidemic of 1675 which is reputed to have carried off some 11.000 people in Malta, but not that of 1813. In the latter outbreak, the disease reached Gozo when it had well-nigh run its course in Malta, and infected solely the village of Xagħra, when 102 persons died of it. One person was shot by the police when found roaming in the streets, and another was executed by shooting for concealing that he was sick of the plague. In Malta some 4572 had died of the disease in 1813.⁷¹

THE FRENCH TAKE GOZO

Gozo was occupied by the soldiers of General Napoleon on behalf of the French republic on 10 June 1798. The militia of the island consisted of a regiment of musketeers of 800 men, a regiment of coastguards of 1200 men, and a company of 300 men, fifty of whom were mounted, a total of 2300. All these were spread out along the coast. The French chose a point which was less well guarded at Rdum il-Kbir between the new tower and ir-Ramla. Gozitans rushed from all quarters when they noticed the approach of the French boats and opened a heavy fire on them. Eventually, however, 200 French soldiers reached the heights. Their numbers were rapidly increased by fresh men, and the islanders then withdrew. French gunboats fired repeatedly on the coastal fortifications. By the end of the day both Fort Chambray and the Citadel surrendered. 140 guns were found in the island's forts or towers and taken. No prisoners could be taken because the defenders did not wear any distinctive uniforms and had withdrawn before they could be captured. The



⁷¹ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta* (London, 1964), pp. 172-86.

27 - *Gozitans being taken into captivity in 1551: a modern historical painting by Giovanni Battista Conti, Collegiate Basilica of St. George, Rabat.*

28 - *A. Azzopardi, Water Colour of the Funeral to Tal-Għonq Cemetery during the Cholera Epidemic: Notarial Archives, Gozo, Volume of deeds of Notary A. Azzopardi, 1850.*

French found Gozo ruled by means of a village representative subordinate to the central government at Rabat. This consisted of four aldermen or jurats and their chairman or governor of the island. The latter was replaced by another person suggested to the French by the aldermen themselves.⁷² On 23 June 1798 Gozo was divided into two municipalities: (i) the Citadel, Rabat, Għarb, Sannat and Xewkija, and (ii) Żebbuġ, Xagħra and Nadur.⁷³ The former was headed by Francois Cassar and also consisted of Xavier Busuttil, Joseph Bondi, Francois Pace, and Jean Cassar, the secretary. The chairman of the latter was parish priest Cauchi of Xagħra and consisted of the priest Fortune Grech, Bartholemi Busuttil, Jean Marie Sapiano, Francois Attard and the secretary Benigne Cutajar.⁷⁴ All were local islanders but were mere appointees of the French.

THE GOZITANS TAKE THE GOZITAN COUNTRYSIDE

Soon after the rising of the Maltese village people against the French early in September 1798, the Gozitans did the same and rose against the French in their island. A French force of fifty soldiers was besieged within the Citadel, ninety having been taken prisoner elsewhere. The rebels had a camp on Gelmus Hill overlooking the latter. Attempts were made to persuade the French soldiers to surrender, but they refused to do so, probably not trusting that the rebels would spare their lives. In the meantime, the whole countryside was held by the armed and hostile Gozitans. On 18 September 1798 the Gozitan rebels, assembled in a Congress of the whole people, appointed the arch-priest of the Matrice D. Saverio Cassar, head of the government of the island and superintendent. The lawyer Fortunato Spiteri became his secretary.⁷⁵ The commandant of Fort Chambray was Antonio Mallia. the commandants of Rabat were Antonio Mallia and Francesco Zammit, those of Sannat Angelo Vella and Giuseppe Muscat, of Għarb Tommaso Cassar and Felice Grech, of Żebbuġ Dr. Giuseppe Grima and Martino Hasciach, and of Xagħra Liberto Grech and Liberto Sultana. Mallia was responsible for removing the French from Fort Chambray, Garzes tower and the tower of Mġarrxini as well as keeping up the pressure subsequently on the French besieged in the citadel.⁷⁶

THE BRITISH TAKE THE WHOLE ISLAND

On 28 October 1798, the French in the citadel finally surrendered to Alexander John Ball, Esq., captain of His Britannic Majesty's ship *Alexander*, then conducting the blockade of the French in Malta under Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson.⁷⁷ The French marched out with all military honours of war, and surrendered their arms. The citadel was delivered to the British officer appointed to take over. The French were guaranteed their personal security and their

⁷² Berthier to Napoleon Bonaparte, 13 June 1798, in H. Scicluna, 'Acts and Documents relating to the French occupation of Malta in 1798-1800', *Archivum Melitense*, V 1 (1922), pp. 132-35.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

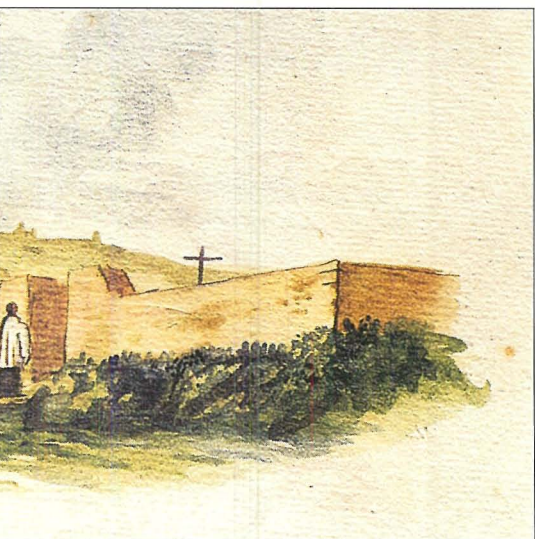
⁷⁵ A. Mifsud, *Origine della Sovranità Inglese su Malta* (Malta 1907), pp. 182-83.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁷⁷ W. Hardman, *A History of Malta during the Period of the French and British Occupations, 1798-1815* (London, 1909), pp. 140-41.



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journey back to France. The Gozitans were guaranteed that, if the French surrendered to the British, they would be taken under their protection. Articles found in the Citadel of Gozo on its surrender included: 50 barrels powder; 9000 ball cartridges; 1000 musket cartridges without ball; 1700 flints; 3818 pound cartridges, filled; 14012 pound cartridges, filled; 4506 pound cartridges, filled; 2084 pound cartridges, filled; 253 pound cartridges, filled; 882 pound cartridges, filled; 118 pounder gun, good, and 200 shot; 212 pounder guns, good, and 990 shot; 46 pounder guns, good, and 2985 shot; 400 hand-grenades filled; 90 pikes and 90 halberts; and 3200 sacks of corn. Some of these, with the corn were delivered to the Maltese in arms.

In October 1799 Facondo Asciak was entrusted to carry a joint petition signed, it was claimed, by the majority of the people of Gozo (in reality, apparently, by a number of individuals and parish priests in the name of their parishioners) to Grand Master Hompesch, then in exile, asking for the return of Gozo to the Order of St. John.⁷⁸ This plan was, however, scotched by informers who reported that the petitioners were planning a rising and had Asciak immediately arrested. The British were to stay in Gozo until the acquisition of Maltese independence almost two centuries later.

29



GOZO UNDER BRITISH RULE

On 9 November 1801 Antonio Mallia, the first alderman or Jurat of Gozo, was charged by the representatives of Gozo with a mission to London in order to present at the foot of the British throne the “state, situation and needs of the said island and to beg His Majesty to make necessary provisions and to take (Gozo) under his perpetual protection”. In the long petition he presented

⁷⁸ A. Mifsud, *Origine della Sovranità Inglese su Malta*, pp. 344-45.

together with five representatives of the people of Malta, it was argued that the return of the Order was tantamount to handing the islands over again to the French.⁷⁹ On 15 June the famous *Declaration of Rights* was proclaimed in the name of the Congress of the two islands of Malta and Gozo. The King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland would be their lawful ruler for the future, failing whom they would themselves choose someone else. They claimed the right of petitioning for redress of grievances; the Popular Council would legislate for the two islands with the consent and assent of the representative of His Britannic Majesty. The British King would be the protector of the Religion of the islands and all spiritual matters would be referred to the Pope and to the heads of the various religious orders. All free men had the right to choose their religion freely. Toleration was thus established as a right, but no one could molest the religion of anyone else. No one would have any right over the life, property or liberty of anyone else. Power resided solely in the Law.⁸⁰

In the meantime, local government in Gozo remained pretty much on the same establishment as it had been ever since the Middle Ages, with its four aldermen, until that ancient institution was abolished by the British government in 1818.

When a form of representation was introduced in 1849 into the over-all administration of the Maltese Islands, Gozo was allowed to elect one out of the eight elected members of the Council of Government, which also comprised ten official members. Gozo promptly elected Dr. Adrian Dingli, a brilliant young Gozitan lawyer then at the start of a most successful career. Subsequently, under that and the improved constitution of 1887, Gozo elected as her representative Dr. Fortunato Mizzi, another Gozitan, who subsequently founded the Nationalist Party.

GOZITAN DEMOGRAPHY SINCE 1841

The population of Gozo increased between 1842 and 1956 by 0.58% annually, while that of Malta increased by 0.96 annually. The difference was no doubt caused by the greater availability of work with the forces and generally in the harbour area in Malta compared to Gozo. The result was that the population of Malta trebled while that of Gozo did not quite double in that period.⁸¹ It is probable also that large numbers of Gozitans settled in the Malta harbour area during the period.

Since 1911 the population of Gozo has not increased much. In the period 1911-21 it actually decreased, and it again decreased slightly from 1948 onwards. It has also suffered considerably in most of the last post-war period from sex imbalance, owing to the emigration of so many of the males.

GOZITAN MIGRATION

Migration undoubtedly already occurred in the Middle Ages. During the terrible deprivations caused by the scarcity of rain during 1467-69, it was reported

⁷⁹ W. Hardman, *A History of Malta during the Period of the French and British Occupations, 1798-1815* (London, 1909), p. 417.

⁸⁰ E. C. Vassallo, 'The Constitution of Malta', *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated*, ed. A. Macmillan (London, 1915), pp. 250-251.

⁸¹ H. Bowen-Jones, J. C. Dewdney and W. B. Fisher, *Malta* (Durham, ca. 1960), pp. 133-63.

that large numbers with wife and children fled abroad to Sicily by boat, many being drowned in the process through their weakness. Those who reached Sicily were dispersed over that island.⁸² Others left Gozo on other occasions for a variety of reasons. Laurencza, the freed slave of Don Matheus de Brunecto went to join her Gozitan paramour at Trapani thus circumventing the problem of the existence of a wife.⁸³ Don Antonius de lu Gozu became a canon of the cathedral of Syracuse, himself perhaps not a first generation Gozitan migrant.⁸⁴ On the other hand, on 29 November 1495, Nicolaus Grecu of Gozo, speaking through an interpreter, undertook to enter the personal service of Matheus Bartalu, a Maltese citizen of Syracuse, binding himself to serve for a year.⁸⁵

Migration seems to have been very strong after 1551 among the returned captives of Gozo. They seem to have felt that life in Gozo was far too insecure to be worth it. So they settled elsewhere, in Malta or Sicily. They must have helped to swell the population of the towns that were soon to appear around Malta's Grand Harbour.

Gozitan migration during the nineteenth century was directed mainly to North Africa. One of the more well-known migrants was Ninu Cremona, the Maltese grammarian, who spent several years in French North Africa in his youth before returning to the Maltese Islands and settling down in Malta to his life's work.⁸⁶ Migration had however not yet got into full swing in 1911; only about thirty a year left the island to settle mainly in North Africa at Philippeville or Algiers. A large proportion of the migrants used to return, and spend the rest of their life in their home island. Two men had, however, already left Nadur for North America.⁸⁷

In later years, Gozo was to vie with Malta in migration. In 1978 no less than 411 migrated from Gozo, though it was not by any means a record year, 97 of them from Nadur alone. Almost half went to Australia, two-thirds of the remainder went to the U.S.A. and one-third to Canada.⁸⁸

THE ECONOMY OF GOZO UNDER BRITISH RULE

In 1911 about one third of the population produced its own wheat and baked its own bread, thus escaping the tax on imported wheat. Gozo then also had as many sheep on a smaller acreage as Malta had, and exported a considerable amount of cheese (about 8000 cantars annually) from their milk and that of goats and cows to places in the Levant like Alexandria and the Ottoman Empire. But it then came under severe restrictions owing to the incidence of undulant fever.⁸⁹

Official sources record that in 1911 ca. 30,000 cantars of fruit and 500 can-

⁸² Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 123, fols. 190-191, 194.

⁸³ Cathedral Museum, Mdina, Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, Acta Originalia, vol. 9, fol. 29.

⁸⁴ Archivio di Stato di Siracusa, *Notai Defunti*, Not. Niccolò Vallone, vol. 11233, fol. 225, deed dated 6 December 1496.

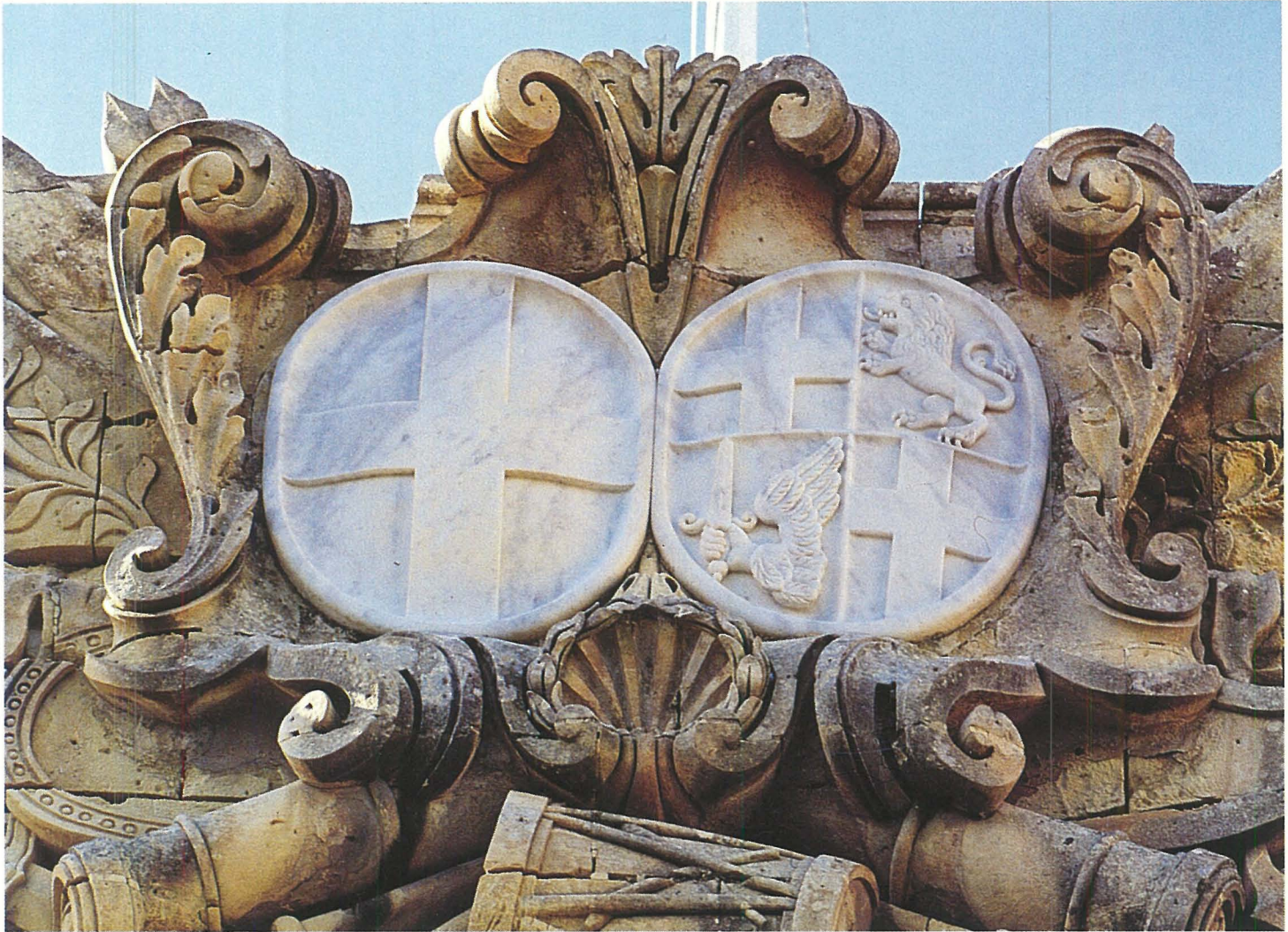
⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 10234, fols. 214-215, deed dated 29 November 1495.

⁸⁶ R. Mifsud Bonnici, *Dizzjunarju Bijo-Bibliojografiku Nazzjonali*, *sub voce*.

⁸⁷ Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Condition and Judicial Procedure of Malta: Minutes of Evidence (Malta, 1912), pp. 251.

³⁰ Central Office of Statistics, Malta, *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, 1978, (Malta, 1980), pp. 18-19.

⁸⁹ Royal Commission on the Finances, ... (London, 1912), pp. 252-53.



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30 - Particular of the Banca Giuratale or Town Hall, Rabat.

tars of cotton were exported to Malta, and that lace was fetching an impossibly low price at the time.⁹⁰

The Gozo lace industry had received a good stimulus when Sarah Austin interested Queen Victoria in it.⁹¹ It always remained a cottage industry, and suffered from the normal constraints of that organisation, especially the exploitation of the women lace makers. It was also suffering particularly from what was locally described as unfair foreign competition around 1911, the foreign product being sold as Maltese lace both in Malta and London.⁹² Still, lace making became and has largely remained a traditional and characteristic occupation of the Gozitan housewife.

Breakfast in 1911 for the common people consisted of bread and coffee, a soup of vegetables and paste at midday, and dinner again merely of coffee and bread in the evening.⁹³

⁹⁰ Government of Malta, *Reports on the Working of Government Departments* (Malta, 1912), p. A 4.

⁹¹ A. V. Laferla, *British Malta* (Malta, 1938), p. 169.

⁹² *Royal Commission on the Finances*,... (London, 1912), pp. 292-93.

⁹³ *Royal Commission on the Finances*,... (London, 1912), p. 246.



EDUCATION IN GOZO IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

In 1911 the only provision for secondary education was that provided by the diocesan seminary (founded in 1886) and a tiny government secondary school with two classes and sixty-six students. Those who could afford it had to go to the University at Valletta for their Tertiary Education as nowadays, and some already did so. Primary education was provided by the government on the same basis as for Malta. There were primary schools for boys and for girls at Rabat, Nadur, Xagħra, Sannat, Xewkija, Għarb, Żebbuġ, Għajnsielem and Qala, as well as Infants' Schools. However, it is recorded that children in Malta and Gozo were then normally withdrawn from school before the age of ten to help in the financial support of the family.⁹⁴ By 1936 Gozo had its own Lyceum with 36 pupils in four classes. There was also a Government Central School also providing Secondary School type education, with 75 pupils, several of them girls, in five classes.⁹⁵

An important educational and cultural institution was the Gozo Public Library, opened on 21 November 1853. It had the following numbers of books in 1936-37:

Oriental languages including Maltese	509
Latin	784
English	4041
Italian	4747
French	277
Spanish and Portuguese	14
Total	16807

In 1981 the Gozo Public Library contained some 63,000 books.⁹⁶ It is now organised into a Reference Library at Vajringa Street, and a lending Library. The former also contains the Archives of the old Municipality of Gozo. Branch libraries also exist in various other localities.

ECCLESIASTICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen the creation of several new parishes: Għajnsielem (1855), Għasri (1921), Qala (1872), and so on. But undoubtedly the greatest ecclesiastical development has been the creation of the new diocese of Gozo in 1864. The first bishop of Gozo was Mgr. Michele Buttigieg. This event was followed by the establishment for a short time of the Jesuits in Gozo and the subsequent establishment of the seminary for the training of the clergy.

In Gozo, as in Malta, this was also the time when parish organisation took its modern form with the foundation of innumerable social clubs usually concentrating on the keeping of a brass band and the celebration of local and parochial occasions. Churches have been rebuilt, invariably to a larger and more elaborate design and in an ornate style, with the frequent use of expensive materials.

⁹⁴ *Royal Commission on the Finances...* (London, 1912), p. 186.

⁹⁵ *Reports on the working of Government Departments during the Financial Year 1936-37* (Malta, 1938), pp. 503-506.

⁹⁶ *The Year Book*, 1981, p. 280.

On the other hand, the numerous clergy, frequently trained abroad, has not only been able to meet Gozo's rather limited own needs but has frequently found preferment elsewhere, in the missions, America or Australia. At least two of Malta's archbishops have been Gozitans in the last hundred years.

GOZO AND MALTA

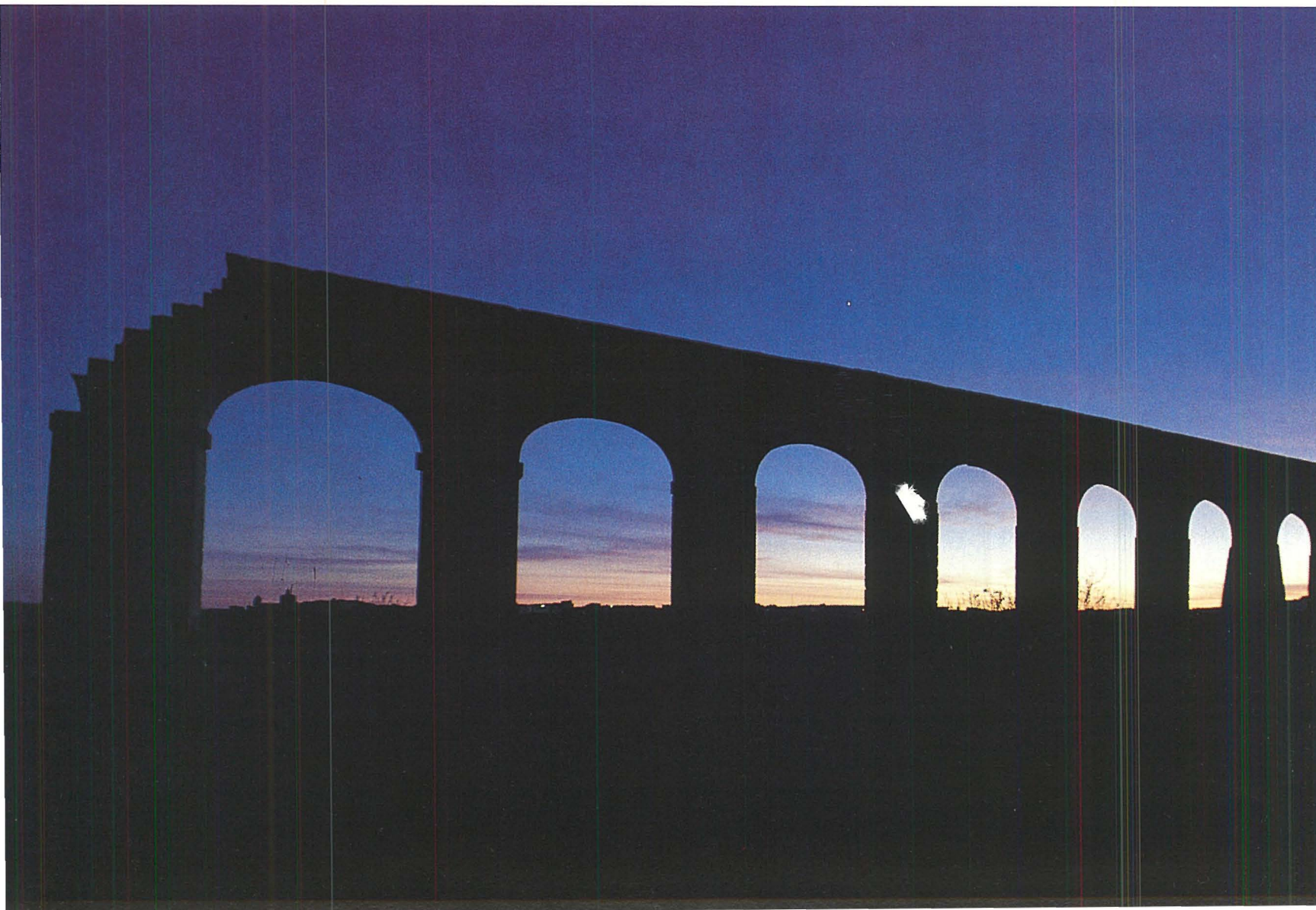
The transportation system between the two islands has always been a matter of vital concern to both islands, but particularly to Gozo. In the Middle Ages and in Early Modern Times, the main problem was that of the interruption of communications by hostile corsairs, frequently lurking in the creeks of Comino. The erection of the Castle of Comino in 1618 solved that problem. The economic problem remained, that of providing easy and cheap means of transportation for man, beast and other cargo in both directions.

The ferry between the two islands was the source of a regular revenue for the government in the Later Middle Ages. In 1241 the government obtained 300 tarenì from the *Cabella madie*.⁹⁷ On 6 April 1373 the revenue was granted to Anselmo de Sancto Gervasio, being referred to as that of the *Gabella Madie seu barce deputate pro passagio dictarum insularum*.⁹⁸ It normally went to

⁹⁷ Giliberto Abate's Report in E. Winkelmann, *Acta Imperii Inedita seculi XIII* (Innsbruck, 1880), pp. 713-15.

⁹⁸ ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 5, fol. 227.

32 - Nineteenth century water aqueduct in western Gozo.



the Secrezia or Royal Treasury of Gozo and the money was usually obtained by farming out its collection.⁹⁹

For long during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, about which time more information is available, reliance was placed on the speronaras, small, narrow and fast boats relying both on sails and oars. They seem to have been eventually replaced by the traditional Gozo boats with their large lateen sails. Boisgelin reports that late in the eighteenth century some five or six boats took provisions every morning from Gozo to Valletta, returning to Gozo the same afternoon «with all such merchandise and eatables as were not to be found at Gozo». These were supplemented during the nineteenth century by schooners. There was no regular service between Marfa and Mġarr, though way back in the fifteenth century people crossed over through there. The first steamer started operating in 1885.¹⁰⁰ She was named the *Gleneagles*, 136 foot long, and was purchased at Aberdeen. She made her inaugural trip on Saturday, 13th June 1885, with the Governor himself on board. She had left the Grand Harbour at 3.00 p.m., arrived at Mġarr at 4.10, and returned to the Grand Harbour at 9.00 that night, having also sailed round Gozo. In 1930 the first caisson type modern mole was inaugurated at Mġarr, enabling the ferries to moor alongside, thus doing away with the necessity of the passengers having to be carried to and from the ferry by boat. The *Gleaneagles* was followed by a long line of steam ferries, until the motor vessel *Royal Lady* arrived in 1937. She fell victim to the Luftwaffe in 1942. In 1949-50 the Gozo-Malta service was provided by the *Calypso G*, now world famous as the *Calypso* of Jacques Cousteau. The first car ferry, the *Jylland*, came into operation in 1968. In 1970 work started on improving the harbour at Mġarr by the construction of a much larger breakwater of the boulder type by an Italian company. It was completed in 1973, and the harbour facilities at Mġarr were considerably improved. These were soon to be complemented by extensive harbour works at Ċirkewwa on the Marfa side, and minor facilities at St. Paul's Bay, and eventually also by moorage facilities at Sa Maison , Marsamxett.

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GOZO AND WORLD WAR II

In June 1940, Gozo, like Malta, found herself plunged into active warfare with Italy, which was less than sixty miles away. Although Gozo had none of the military, naval or air installations which attracted to Maltese targets some of the heaviest bombing of the Second World War, the little island did not pass through the three years' siege unscathed. On several occasions enemy bombers both Italian and German, sometimes finding themselves under attack of English fighters, especially the Spitfires, when still over Gozo, simply dumped their bombs where they were, thus causing havoc below in the otherwise peaceful Gozitan towns and villages. This happened to Rabat itself on 24 December 1941, to Nadur on 3 and 15 January 1942, to Xagħra on 23 January 1942, and so on. Several persons were killed by such bombing, and many more were injured. On the whole, however, Gozo escaped the worst rigours of the bombing. The island became the refuge of at least three thousand Maltese refugees, especially after the attack on the *Illustri-*

⁹⁹ ASP, *Real Cancelleria*, vol. 12, fols. 203-204; see H. Bresc, 'The «Secrezia» and the Royal Patrimony', *Medieval Malta: Malta before the Knights* (London, 1975), p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ Most of the information in the rest of this section is based on Graeme Somner, *Ferry Malta: Il-Vapuri ta' Għawdex* (Kendal, 1982).



ous. Boats crossing between Malta and Gozo had a rough time, being repeatedly attacked and machine-gunned, several occupants being killed or injured. There was also the constant danger from mines. On 7 May 1942 the Gozo ferry *Royal Lady* was bombed and sunk by the Germans at Mgarr. The Germans were then in complete command of the air. For some time they regularly even machine-gunned people on the ground on Gozo as on Malta.

Even then, Gozo was able to come to Malta's assistance when the sister island dearly needed it. The siege was going badly for the defenders. Stocks of food were at rock bottom. Only three ships of a March convoy reached harbour. One was sunk at her moorings in Marsaxlokk Bay. The two others were repeatedly bombed in the Grand Harbour, hit and set on fire and had to be sunk before they were unloaded to prevent a gigantic explosion which would have caused a holocaust around the harbour. No other convoy was expected before summer. It was suspected that farmers on Gozo as on Malta had hoarded much wheat. The Governor Lord Gort therefore appealed to Mgr. Michael Gonzi, bishop of Gozo, to persuade the Gozitan farmers to release their hidden stocks of grain. Some grain was, in fact, obtained but it is not clear how much.

In the later stages of the war, when the invasion of Sicily was being prepared by the Allies, the American Armed Forces constructed two converging airstrips between Xewkija, Ghajnsielem and Nadur. The task was finished with modern equipment in a fortnight, but the airfield remained in use for only a few days.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since the war, Gozo has participated fully in the constitutional developments of the Maltese Islands. In all-post-war elections Gozo has formed a separate electoral division. In most elections, however, Gozo has shown a strong reluctance to follow precisely the political swings currently influencing the Maltese electorate. In the late 1940s and the 1950s Gozo had its Gozo Party and then the Jones Party. In 1962, the Malta Labour Party was almost wiped out in Gozo. In 1987 the same Party gained in Gozo almost as much as it lost in Malta.

Soon after Independence, Gozo was provided with a district council of its own. Clergymen were able to get elected to the council, something they could never do in the old municipal council of the later Middle Ages. It was abolished soon after 1972. Since then both of the main parties have provided their own individual solutions to the Gozo problem. At the moment, Gozo has a Minister of its own in the Cabinet.

An important recent development has been the installation of an industrial estate at Xewkija. Though it has met with some serious problems, it has been able to provide a reasonably regular and permanent employment to several hundred Gozitans, thus obviating their necessity to emigrate or move to Malta for the purpose of finding employment. In addition, tourism is also reaching Gozo, though not with the same intensity as Malta, and several large hotels have been built, and several foreign settlers have retired to Gozo, including some world famous persons like the late Nicholas Monsarrat.