

## L-Alfabet ta' l-Għaqda u Ninu Cremona

ħarsa oħra lura

Ġużè Cassar Pullicino

Is-Sur J.J. Camilleri ħareġ għad-dawl ħames ittri importanti bħala Appendiċi mal-kitba tiegħu fil-ħarġa ta' *Il-Malti* tas-sena 1989 (pp. 28-36). Tlieta minnhom (App. Ċ-E) kien ġiebbhom qabel, fl-istudju tiegħu *Storja ta' l-Edukazzjoni f'Malta* (Żjieda Ċ, pp. 124-139), manuskritt fil-Librerija ta' l-Università msemmi f'kitba qasira "Dwar Ninu Cremona" li dehret f'*Il-Polz* (Għadd 24, p.17, ta' Marzu-Awissu, 1973).

Huwa xieraq li l-ġenerazzjoni tal-lum tkun mgħarrfa bil-ħafna aspetti tal-kwistjoni tal-lingwa ta' 60 sena ilu, safejn kienet tolgot lill-Għaqda u 'l-Ilsien Malti. Biex jintlaħaq dan il-għan m'hux biżżejjed li tagħzel f'it dokumenti milli jkollok f'idejk u tiffoka bihom biss fuq bniedem bħalma kien Ninu Cremona fiċ-ċentru ta' dak li kien qed jiġri dwar il-Malti f'dak iż-żmien.

Hawnhekk jiena biħsiebni l-ewwelnett niċċara xi punti storiċi u fl-istess ħin noħroġ dokumenti oħra li ltqajt magħhom jien u li jittgħu iżjed dawl fuq il-pożizzjoni li kien ha Ninu Cremona dwar l-użu ta' l-alfabet ta' l-Għaqda fil-pubblikazzjonijiet tal-Gvern. Minn din id-dokumentazzjoni l-qarrejja jistgħu jieħdu idea aħjar (a) tal-pożizzjoni dgħajfa li l-Għaqda sabet ruħha fiha fiż-żminijiet diffiċli ta' taqlib politiku fl-1932, (b) tal-ħidma ta' Cremona fl-istess żmien biex għall-inqas ma jitwarrbux xi ittri ta' l-alfabet u bosta mill-prinċipji ortografiċi li kienu jaqblu ma' ta' l-Għaqda, kif ukoll (ċ) li kien biss għal raġunijiet prattiċi u biex, kif ngħidu, ma jintilfux il-qaleb u l-ġbejna, li Cremona sostna u ta parir lill-Gvern fl-1929-32 (App. D-E) biex *għall-mument jibqa' miexi bl-ortografija li kien juża qabel sakemm jidhol fl-iskejjel it-tagħlim tal-Malti bl-ortografija ta' l-Għaqda*.

Tajjeb li nagħmluha ċara illi meta l-Għaqda kitbet lill-Ministru ta' l-Istruzzjoni Pubblika t-tieni darba fil-5 ta' Diċembru, 1929 (App. Ċ), il-Ministru ma kienx Dr. E. Mizzi iżda l-Prof. Gustu Bartolo, tal-Partit Kostituzzjonali, li kellu din il-karika minn Awissu 1927 sa Ġunju 1930. U meta l-Gvernatur issospenda l-Kostituzzjoni kif ukoll l-elezzjonijiet fis-26 ta' Ġunju, 1930 huwa żamm lill-Ministri, fosthom lil Sir Augustus Bartolo, iżda għall-konsultazzjoni biss, sakemm saru l-elezzjonijiet ta' Ġunju, 1932, u Dr. Mizzi kien Ministru ta' l-Istruzzjoni Pubblika l-ewwel *ad int.* u mbaġħad, wara l-mewt ta' Mons. E. Dandria fit-3 ta' Lulju,

permanenti.<sup>1</sup>

Dan jispjega l-ghaliex, bit-taħwid politiku li kien hawn fil-pajjiż bejn Frar u Ġunju, 1930, meta l-Kostituzzjoni ġiet sospiża, kif ukoll wara, tul l-1931, bl-istħarriġ tal-Kummissjoni Rjali, imbagħad il-hruġ tar-Rapport tagħha, u l-emendi fil-Kostituzzjoni li wasslu għall-elezzjonijiet ta' Ġunju, 1932 u tela' Gvern ieħor, f'it li xejn seta' jsir biex tittiehed deċiżjoni mill-Gvern fuq it-talba ta' l-Għaqda tal-5 ta' Diċembru, 1929.

Fit-23 ta' Ġunju, 1932 il-Gvern il-ġdid hareġ ordni lill-Istamperija tal-Gvern, fejn kien impjegat Cremona, biex isir xi tibdil fl-ortografija tal-Malti fil-Gazzetta tal-Gvern. Cremona basar x'kien ġej u, biex jilqa', fil-karika tiegħu ta' Traduttur u Editur tal-pubblikazzjonijiet bil-Malti, fit-28 ta' Lulju, 1932 huwa ressaq lill-Kap tal-Ministeru rapport li bih ipprova jikkonvinċi lill-Gvern biex għallinqas jinżammu l-alfabet u l-ortografija li kienu ilhom jintużaw iżjed minn 40 sena u li, kif nafu, ma tantx kienu jitbiegħdu minn dawk ta' l-Għaqda. Silta twila minn dan ir-rapport, mehuda minn kopja li Cremona kien għadda lill-Prof. G. Aquilina, dehret stampata fil-*Papers in Maltese Linguistics* (1961) u qegħdin ingibuha hawnhekk bħala Dokument Nru. 1.

Wara li l-Gvern baqa' miexi bil-hsieb tiegħu u harġet iċ-Ċirkolari ta' Dr. Laferla, Direttur ta' l-Iskejjel Elementari, tas-6 ta' Settembru, 1932 bid-direttivi tal-Ministru dwar it-tagħlim u l-kitba tal-Malti (Dok. Nru. 2), l-Għaqda kitbet ufficjalment lill-Ministru nhar l-1 ta' Ottubru, 1932 u mill-korrispondenza bejniethom li għalqet b'ittra oħra ta' l-Għaqda tad-9 ta' Novembru, 1932 nafu li l-Għaqda b'argumenti sodi talbet biex il-Gvern jirriveidi d-deċiżjoni li kien ha dwar il-kitba tal-Malti u ppruvat tilqa' ruhha, bħalma għamlet l-"Għaqda tal-Malti (Università)" fl-istess żmien,<sup>2</sup> mill-attentat tal-Ministeru ta' l-Istruzzjoni Pubblika biex jinjora l-hidma tagħha u jmewwet il-qalb ta' l-imsejbin ta' l-Għaqda. Għat-tagħlim obligatorju tal-Malti mill-ewwel sa l-aħħar klassi ta' l-Iskejjel Elementari, il-Gvern waqqaf Kummissjoni ta' tlieta min-nies biex ilestu l-kotba tal-qari adattati għat-tfal skond id-direttivi mahruġin mill-Ministru tat-Tagħlim (Dok. Nru. 5).

1. Ara J.J. CREMONA, *An Outline of the Constitutional Development of Malta under British Rule*, Malta University Press, 1963, p.36; u Michael J. SCHIAVONE, *L-Elezzjonijiet f'Malta 1849-1981*, Pubblikazzjoni Bugelli, 1987, p.127.

2. Għal tagħrif dettaljat dwar dan l-episodju fil-hajja ta' l-Għaqda tal-Malti (Università) ara x-xogħol tagħna *Aquilina u l-Malti*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1974, pp.23-28

Importanti li l-qarrejja jsiru jafu bil-korrispondenza bejn l-Għaqda u l-Gvern li qieghda tidher hawnhekk fid-dokument Nru. 3, mhux biss għax f'din il-biċċa Cremona u l-Għaqda kienu qed jiġbdu habel wiehed, imma biex wiehed jifhem ukoll il-qagħda imbarazzanti u delikata ta' Cremona fil-karika uffiċjali tiegħu. Biżżejjed ngħidu li fi twegħiba tal-Kap tal-Ministeru għal Interpellanza ta' Dr. P. Boffa fis-seduta tas-7 ta' Novembru, 1932 hemm riferenza, b'ton kemm kemm mgħotti ta' theddid, sabiex persuni li jiddependu mill-Gvern għall-impjieġ tagħhom – bħal Cremona, għal min jifhem! – ma jagħmlux iżjed protesti dwar l-ortografija ġdida wżata fil-Gazzetta tal-Gvern għax il-Gvern ma jaċċettax protesti mingħandhom (Dok. 4).

Niġu issa għall-Minuta ta' Cremona ta' l-4 ta' Frar, 1930 (J.J. Camilleri, 1989, App. D) u l-parir li huwa ta' lill-Gvern ta' dak iż-żmien biex, *għall-mument*, ma jsirx tibdil fl-alfabet użat fil-pubblikazzjonijiet tal-Gvern.

Għandu mnejn ikun hawn min jistagħġeb illum li Cremona wera din il-fehma sittin sena ilu. Biss, tajjeb li wiehed jiftakar li (a) il-parir ta' Cremona kien intiż halli l-alfabet ta' l-Għaqda jirnexxi, u ma jiġrilux bħal dak tax-Xirka Xemija fl-1882-1888, u (b) li l-fehma ta' Cremona ma kenitx haġa li żammha sigrieta u li taha bil-moħbi u minn wara dahar šhabu ta' l-Għaqda. Kienet fehma šhiha li huwa kellu, u li magħha kien jaqbel Ġanni Vassallo, grammatiku ieħor, fehma li Cremona wera fil-beraħ u fisser b'konsistenza fil-gazzetti u f'rivisti lokali tul il-perijodu 1929-1935, sa minn qabel ma F.S. Caruana kiteb lill-Ministru fil-5 ta' Diċembru, 1929. Is-siltiet minn publikazzjonijiet u minn ittri li huwa hareġ fil-gazzetti ta' dak iż-żmien (Dok. Nri 7-10) juru sewwa kemm kien konsistenti fil-fehma tiegħu, l-iżjed fejn kien jišhaq illi biex l-alfabet ta' l-Għaqda jirnexxi jeħtieġ li qabel xejn jidħol u jibda jintgħallem fl-iskejjel. Nafu li kien hemm min fehmu ħażin dak iż-żmien – bħalma forsi jista' jiftiehem ħażin illum ukoll – mingħajr l-isfond li qegħdin nagħtu hawnhekk, kif jidher mill-ġustifikazzjoni tiegħu nnifsu li kiteb, wara li fl-1935 ir-Rev. C.L. Dessoulavy issuġġerixxa li huwa u xi oħrajn donnhom xellfu l-prinċipji ta' l-Għaqda (Dok. Nru. 10).

Dan li qed ngħidu jintrabat jekk wiehed iqis kemm ħabrek Cremona biex l-alfabet ta' l-Għaqda jirnexxi fit-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-iskejjel wara l-1934, kif huwa fisser fl-ewwel paragrafu tad-dahla għall-ewwel ktieb tat-*Tagħlim dwar il-Kitba Maltija*, miktuba f'Marzu, 1936 meta l-Malti kien diġà beda jintgħallem fl-iskejjel tal-Gvern u huwa kien inkarigat biex ilesti l-grammatika tal-Malti. (Dok. 11)

Fuq dan l-isfond u b'dan it-tagħrif quddiemna ngħibu issa d-dokumenti li ġew f'idejna dwar l-alfabet ta' l-Għaqda u Ninu Cremona.

## Dok. I

Silta mill-Osservazzjonijiet ta' A. Cremona, Traduttur u Editor tal-Pubblikazzjonijiet bil-Malti, mibghuta lill-Kap tal-Ministeru nhar it-28 ta' Lulju, 1932 dwar l-Inkonsistenzi tal-bidliet li ghamel il-Gvern fl-Ortografija tal-Malti fil-Gazzetta tal-Gvern.

"... The letter *j* in Maltese is necessary for the proper organic structure of the word and cannot, therefore, from a grammatical point of view, be eliminated. For example: *tiswija* and *tigrija* (infinitives of *sewwa(j)* and *gerra(j)*) are of the same structural form as *tahrċa* (*ħarrec*) and *takbida* (*kabbad*). The last consonants *c* and *d* of these words are in juxtaposition with the *j* in *tigrija* and *tiswija*. The dropping of *j* would affect the organic structure of the word as it would in the case of *tahrċa* and *takbida* if the consonants *c* and *d* were similarly dropped. *Mogħdija* is practically of the same structure as *tiswija* and *tigrija*. Morphologically these forms consist of three syllables each written, in Maltese, according to its natural pronunciation with the final diphthong *ja* preceded by the accented vowel. Similarly this form is also assumed by the Italian words with an accented penultimate as in the words *armonia* and *polizia*. These are "by analogy" written in Maltese *armonija* and *pulizija*. It should be noted that in Maltese a distinction is made between the accented termination *ia* in *armonia* (*armonija*) and the unaccented one in *giustizia* (*gustizzja*). The spelling of *pulizija* and of any similar word is based on the rule that between the accented vowel of a syllable and the vowel of the next syllable there must be invariably a consonant. Examples: *hi-ja*, *hu-wa*, *fi-ha*, *fi-ja*, *du-wa*, *mi-ja*, *pru-wa*, and not *hi-a*, *hu-a*, *fi-a*, *fi-a* (observe that in the two latter words there is no distinction between them), *du-ua*, *mi-a*, *pru-a*. Any variation in this rule would considerably divorce Maltese spelling from the pronunciation and, in some cases, from the real meaning. The correct plural form of *tigrija*, *tiswija* is *tigrijiet* and *tiswijiet*, not *tigriet*, *tiswiet*, as is being wrongly printed in the Government Gazette. The addition of the suffix *t* to form the plural throws the tonic accent on the final *a* giving it a long sound *a* which is commonly deflected into the dialectal sound *ie*. Examples: *ħmeri-ja*, *ħmeri-jiet*; *tigri-ja*, *tigri-jiet*; *tiswi-ja*, *tiswi-jiet*. It would, therefore, be also wrong to write *tigriet* instead of *tigrijiet*. By spelling *liġijiet* as *liġiet*, we would in this and other similar words entirely disregard the important element of accentuation. The plural of such words, as in the case of *siġġijiet*, *ommijiet*, etc. is *(i)jiet* and not simply *iet*. The changing of the consonant *j* into "i" as in *gerrei* and the arbitrary retention of *j* in *gerrejja* would render Maltese spelling inconsistent. The *j* as in *bejn*, *għajn*, *izjed*, cannot, under any circumstances, be etymologically substituted by "i". This is governed by the rule that (a) *diphthongs* are *etymologically made up of a consonant (j or w) and a helping vowel*; and that (b) *each syllable cannot be made up of more than one vowel*. Under rule (b) which is also applicable by analogy to Romance words, *kummissarju*, *uffiċċju*, *Lulju*, cannot be spelt as *cummissariu*, *ufficciù*, *Luliu*. The letter *j* as in *jressak*, *ċun*, is the prefix of the verb of the third person (Imperfect Tense). It is a consonant like its cognate personal prefixes *n* in *nressak* and *t* in *tressak*. It cannot, therefore, be replaced by the vowel *i* unless it becomes euphonically absorbed into a vowel after a word ending in a consonant as in *irid icun*. Italian and Sicilian are practically written as they are vernacularly pronounced and not according to their etymology. The permutation of the Italian surd *s* into the sonant *z* in *avvizi* is identical with that of *Trejzi*, *Žeža* (from *Teresa*). These are never written *Trejsi*, *Zesa*, or *Sesa*. The sound of *z* when final is softened into the sound of *s* as in *Žes*; also *avviž* which sounds *avvis*. The softening of the final sonant occurs also in all other words. Examples: *bieb*, *bajd*, *zebbuġ*, *Franciž*, *ħobz*, pronounced *biep*, *bajt*, *zebbuċ*, *ħobs*, *Francis*. In Semitic words they are restored to their primitive sound

according to their etymology and in imported words according to the sound acquired in Maltese pronunciation. The real sound and spelling of such words is ascertained by the addition of a vowel or a syllable. Example: *bieb-a, bajd-a, żebbuġ-i, ħobż-a, Żeż-a, Żeżi-na, avvż-i*. It is no doubt to be lamented but it is a fact that the few changes made, if allowed to continue, could render the Maltese orthography inconsistent and would reduce it into an utterly disorganised transcription."

(Miġjuba mill-ktieb ta' J. Aquilina, *Papers in Maltese Linguistics*, 1961, pp. 76-78)

## Dok. 2

Silta miċ-Ċirkolari maħruġa fis-6 ta' Settembru, 1932 minn Dr. A.V. Laferla, Direttur ta' l-Iskejjel Elementari, dwar it-Tagħlim tal-Malti.

Le seguenti decisioni ministeriali sono pubblicate per informazione del corpo insegnante:

...

### II.

Il maltese si dovrà insegnare per un'ora al giorno in ogni classe elementare.

Nelle classi infantili, dove il maltese deve servire di mezzo per insegnare la lettura, le direttrici vi assegneranno il tempo che riterranno necessario.

La minuta Ministeriale dispone:

1. Il dialetto maltese dovrà insegnarsi come è comunemente parlato e dovrà scriversi come si pronuncia.

2. In vista del fatto che il nostro dialetto contiene un grandissimo numero di parole italiane o derivanti dall'italiano, l'insegnamento del vernacolo dovrà essere tale da facilitare in seguito l'acquisto della cognizione della lingua italiana, molto più perchè, in base alla prima clausola delle Lettere Patenti del 2 maggio 1932, *l'inglese e l'italiano dovranno essere riconosciuti come lingue di cultura in pari grado all'Università e nelle scuole secondarie.*

....

(Lagħha ta' l-Assemblea Legiſlattiva tal-31 ta' Ottubru, 1932 – Parliamentary Debates: Official Report, Vol. 21 Legislative Assembly Session 1932-33 First Part, ... Malta, Government Printing Office, 1935, p.88)

## Dok. 3

Korrispondenza bejn il-Għaqda u l-Gvern fuq id-disposizzjonijiet li ttiehdu dwar it-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel Elementari.

(i)

Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti  
266, S.da S. Paolo, Valletta.

L-1 ta' Ottubru, 1932

Sinjur,

Fuq id-deċizzjonijiet li ttiehdu mill-Ministru tat-Tagħlim dwar it-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel

Elementari, imfissrin f'Ċirkulari mahruġa fis-6 ta' Settembru li hareġ, mid-Direttur tal-Iskejjel Elementari, lis-Surmastrijiet, il-“Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti”, ix-Xirka Letterarja Maltija, imwaqqfa fl-1921, bil-hsieb li thegħeġ l-istudju tal-Malti fuq sisien tajba tal-grammatka, tinsab fid-dmir li tagħmel u tressaq dawn l-osservazzjonijiet sabiex il-Gvern joghġbu jiflihom.

2. “Il-Għaqda” jidhrilha tajjeb u bir-raġun illi l-metodu tat-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel Elementari, kif ġie ordnat fiċ-Ċirkulari tad-Direttur, jekk jitwettaq u jsehh, ikun ta' hsara għall-istat tal-Isien Malti. L-ordni tal-Ministru, infatti, li hemm fiċ-Ċirkulari, tgħid, ċar:

- (a) illi l-Malti għandu jkun mgħallem bħalma soltu nithaddtu bih;
- (b) illi għandu jinkiteb bħalma nippronunzjawh;
- (c) illi t-tagħlim tal-Malti jsir b'mod li bih l-iskulari jkunu jistgħu l-quddiem jitgħallmu l-Isien Taljan b'akbar heffa.

3. It-tagħlim tal-Malti bħalma soltu nithaddtuh, haġa ċara hafna, jagħlaq it-triq għal dan l-ilsien u ma jhallihx jimxi l-quddiem li jkun jista' jieħu qagħda ta' Isien letterarju. Hemm differenza kbira bejn il-Isien kif inhu mitkellem u l-Isien użat fil-kitba, u din id-differenza ssibha fil-pajjiżi kollha. Din ix-xorta ta' tagħlim, bla dubju ta' xejn, tkun ta' hsara lil għadd kbir ta' nies fost il-poplu Malti, illi billi ma jafux jakraw u ma jistgħux jifhmu ebda Isien ieħor għajr ilsienhom, jiġu b'hecc imċaħħdin minn haġa ta' fejda u ta' ġid, jiġifieri dik li jistgħu jzejnu l-moħħ bil-qari ta' kitba maltija maħduma sewwa u kif jixraq.

4. Tikteb il-Malti kif tippronunzjah ifisser ċar li għandek tiktbu b'sistema ta' kitba fonetka wehidha, jiġifieri tikteb il-kliem malti sew-sew kif jinħass, sistema li billi ma hu imrazżan minn ebda regola grammatikali, għandu ta' bil-fors ihalli l-bieb miftuħ għall-kittieba, biex dawn jiktbu l-Malti skond kif kull wiehed minnhom jifhmu, b'ortografija li hija għalhekk ukoll imgerfxa għat-tagħlim u għall-kitba tal-Malti; haġa li s'issa qatt ma ġrat fil-letteratura tal-Isien Malti.

5. Fl-aħħarnett il-“Għaqda” tixtieq tfiehem b'mod partikulari illi l-Malti u t-Taljan huma żewġt ilsna differenti fil-għamla tagħhom grammatikali, u meta t-tagħlim tal-wiehed isir fuq it-tagħlim tal-ieħor, lill-Malti ma tkunx qiegħed tagħmillu haġ'ohra hliet tikkundannah sabiex, qajl-qajl iżda fiż-żgur, jithassar u jisfa fix-xejn.

6. Il-“Għaqda” jidhrilha wkoll illi jekk jitwettqu d-deċizjonijiet tal-Ministeru, il-ġieħ tal-Isien Malti jonqos bis-shiħ quddiem il-ġhajnejn ta' bosta orjentalisti kbar barranin, illi, minn mindu l-Malti ha l-qagħda tiegħu letterarja, kienu qegħdin jiehdu sehem sewwa fl-istudju tiegħu, l-iktar f'dak li hu studju ta' nisel u xebħ tiegħu ma' ilsna tal-istess gherq.

7. Taht dawn iċ-ċirkostanzi, il-“Għaqda” titlob lill-Gvern sabiex jarga' jifli d-deċizjoni li ha u li giet imxandra fiċ-Ċirkulari hawn fuq imsemmija, sabiex it-tagħlim u l-kitba tal-Malti jitqiegħed fuq sisien grammatikali shah, li jkunu jaqblu mal-bixra tiegħu bhala Isien Malti.

Għandi l-unur  
inghodd ruhi bil-qima kollha,  
Serv tiegħek,  
(ft) F.S. Caruana  
Segretarju

Lill-Onorabbli  
Kap tal-Ministeru,  
Auberge d'Aragon, il-Belt.

(ii)

Nru. 385/32

Uffiċċju tal-Ministru tat-Tagħlim  
Auberge de France, il-Belt.  
24 ta' Ottubru, 1932.

Sinjur,

Inkarikat ingharrfek illi t-talba tiegħek tal-1 ta' dan ix-xahar, dwar it-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel Elementari u mibgħuta lill-Kap tal-Ministeru, intbagħtet kif kien imissha, lill-Ministru tat-Tagħlim.

Għandu wiehed jifhem illi l-"Għaqda" tagħkom kellha xi laqgħa sabiex waslet biex tagħmel l-osservazzjonijiet li jinsabu fl-ittra tiegħek li fuqha qiegħed inwiegħbek. Il-Ministru jkollu wisq pjaċir li inti tibgħatlu l-ismijiet tal-membri li haġu sehem f'din il-laqgħa, flimkien ma' kopja tal-minuti ta' din l-istess laqgħa.

Għandi l-unur ingħodd ruhi  
Serv tiegħek,  
(ft) F. Camilleri,  
Segretarju  
tal-Ministru tat-Tagħlim.

Lis-Sur F.S. Caruana,  
266 S.da San Paolo, il-Belt.

(iii)

Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti,  
266 S.da San Paolo, il-Belt.  
9 ta' Novembru, 1932.

Sinjur,

Fuq dak li talbet is-Sinjuriya tiegħek b'Ittra Nru. 385/32, fl-24 tax-xahar li haġeg bi twegiba għall-"Memorandum" tal-"Għaqda" bid-data tal-1 ta' l-istess xahar, il-Kumitat tal-"Għaqda" talabni nfisirlek:

a) illi l-"Għaqda", kif uriet fil-"Memorandum" tagħha, m'hix haġ'ohra ħlief Xirka letterarja u filoloġika, imwaqqfa bil-ħsieb li twettaq u tmexxi l-Kitba Maltija fuq sisien ta' prinċipji grammatikali;

b) illi s-suggerimenti li għamlet il-"Għaqda" dwar it-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel Elementari, jaqblu għal kollox mal-ligijiet elementari, li hadd ma jista' jiċhadhom, tax-xjenza ta' l-ilsna u li KULL WIEĦED mill-membri tax-Xirka, bħala mxieriek fil-"Għaqda", għandu jhares u jimxi fuqhom;

c) illi l-"Għaqda" meta għamlet dawn is-suggerimenti, kif ukoll meta giet biex tikteb din l-ittra, xejn ma qanqalha biex tagħmel dan kollu ħlief xewqa safja li ma thallix tinqered fl-ilsien Malti dik li hi grammatka *tiegħu* li tagħzlu minn ilsna ohra; u fl-istess ħin li tghin lill-Gvern fi kwistjoni teknika ta' ħtieġa kbira.

d) illi wara li fela u qies dan kollu, il-Kumitat ma jsibx raġunijiet biż-żejjed biex jagħti l-ismijiet tal-membri li ġew fil-laqgħa li ssejthet u saret għal dan l-iskop, flimkien ma' kopja tal-minuti ta' dil-laqgħa.

Lill-Onorabbli  
Ministru tat-Tagħlim,  
Auberge de France, il-Belt.

Għandi l-unur  
ingħodd ruhi  
Serv tiegħek.  
(ft) F.S. Caruana,  
Segretarju.

(Minn *Il-Malti* - Ir-Raba' Ktieb ta' l-1932, pp. 121-124)

## Dok. 5

## Thejjija ta' Kotba tal-Qari Malti għall-Iskejjel Elementari bl-Ortografija li ried il-Gvern

(Mid-Dibattitu dwar l-Estimi Supplementari għall-1932-33 - Vot 21: Skejjel Elementari)

Onor. Dr. E. Mizzi,

...

La partita 13a riguarda la stampa di libri scolastici in maltese. Credo che questa partita sarà approvata prontamente e calorosamente anche dall'onor. Dr. Boffa. Gli allievi delle Scuole Elementari devono oggi imparare il maltese dalla prima all'ultima classe, ed è quindi necessario mettere dei libri scolastici a loro disposizione. Sono ben note, non solo le Lettere Patenti che hanno reso obbligatorio l'insegnamento del maltese, ma anche le istruzioni che ho fatto diramare con la Circolare del 6 settembre e che sono state già approvate dal Parlamento.

...

Mr. BENCINI (*In Maltese*): I should like to know from the hon. Minister whether these Maltese Readers have already been compiled.

Onor. Dr. MICALLEF: Non ancora.

Onor. Dr. MIFSUD BONNICI: Si stanno compilando con criteri paesani.

Onor. Dr. E. MIZZI: Essi non sono ancora completi. Si stanno compilando da una commissione composta di tre insegnanti, cioè dal sotto Capo del Dr. Laferla, da un altro insegnante delle Scuole Elementari, e da un insegnante delle scuole private. Tutti i tre conoscono perfettamente il maltese, e sono convinto che forniranno degli ottimi testi per le classi elementari a norma delle istruzioni da me emanate e che sono state ormai approvate anche dal Parlamento. L'insegnamento del maltese ci è stato reso obbligatorio dalle ultime Lettere Patenti; non l'abbiamo imposto noi, ma a noi spetta di compilare e fornire i testi necessari a tale scopo. Devo poi dire che probabilmente questi libri potranno essere stampati dalla stessa Stamperia di Governo. Dico probabilmente per non impegnarmi per l'avvenire.

...

Onor. Dr. E. MIZZI: Quanto alla compilazione dei libri scolastici in maltese, ho già detto che questa è stata affidata ad una commissione composta di persone competenti, le quali naturalmente compileranno questi libri nel miglior modo possibile, tenendo conto anche delle ben note istruzioni che ho dato con la Circolare del 6 settembre e che sono state approvate già dal Parlamento. Stando alle mie istruzioni si deve insegnare il maltese comunemente parlato e si deve scriverlo come si pronunzia, e il suo insegnamento deve esser fatto in modo da facilitare in seguito l'apprendimento della lingua italiana. Mi pare che istruzioni più chiare e più ragionevoli di queste non si possano dare. Ed è per lo meno ridicolo pretendere che non si debba insegnare il maltese come comunemente si parla e che non si debba scriverlo come si pronunzia. Comunque, gli onor. Signori di quella parte possono stare più che sicuri che a norma delle mie istruzioni saranno compilati i migliori libri scolastici.



Mr. BENCINI (*In Maltese*): Could the hon. Minister give us the names of the gentlemen who are compiling these books?

Onor. Dr. E. MIZZI: I membri componenti la commissione sono: il signor Sapiano, il signor Rocco Farrugia ed il signor Giovanni Vella.

(*Laqgħa ta' l-Assemblea Legislativa tas-7 ta' Novembru, 1932 – Parliamentary Debates: Official Report Vol 21 ... Malta, Government Printing Office, 1935, pp. 275 – 276*)

## Dok. 6

### **Maltese Orthography Used By The Government – Protests Against. *Proteste contro l'Ortografia Maltese usata dal Governo***

204. Mr. BENCINI: Is the hon. Minister for Public Instruction now in a position to lay on the Table a copy of all the correspondence that passed between the hon. Minister and the "Għakda tal Chittieba tal Malti" and the "Għakda tal Malti" (University).

Onor. Dr. E. MIZZI: Questa interrogazione si riferisce alla risposta da me data nella seduta del 31 ottobre, alla precedente interrogazione Nro. 37 dello stesso onor. interrogante.

Debbo dire che in data del 24 ottobre ultimo scorso, io feci scrivere ai tre firmatari delle due proteste o petizioni domandando a loro di indicarmi i nomi delle persone che li avevano incaricati di avanzare al Governo quelle petizioni e di fornirmi anche i processi verbali delle sedute tenute a tale scopo. In data del 4 e del 9 del corrente mese, rispettivamente, i firmatari si rifiutarono di darmi queste informazioni, ragion per cui ho deciso di considerare come anonime o quasi anonime quelle due comunicazioni.

Non mi sembra fuor di luogo aggiungere che con le risoluzioni del 31 ottobre e 9 novembre rispettivamente l'Assemblea Legislativa e il Senato hanno già pienamente approvato a grandissima maggioranza tutti i provvedimenti scolastici presi a mezzo mio dal Governo, compresi quelli relativi all'insegnamento del maltese, da me spiegati alle due Camere del Parlamento.

(*Laqgħa ta' l-Assemblea Legiſlattiva tat-22 ta' Novembru, 1932 – Parliamentary Debates: Office Report Vol. 21 Legislative Assembly Session 1932-33 – First Part ... Malta, Government Printing Office, 1935, p. 382*)

## Dok. 7

### **Silta mill-'Preface' tal-'Manual of Maltese Orthography' (1929) ta' A. Cremona**

"... The transliteration of words is chiefly represented by the alphabet of the *Accademia Filologica Maltese* (1840), with the exception of *u* which has been replaced by *w* when it has the value of a consonant.

Whilst one cannot vouch for the scientific correctness of this alphabet it must be admitted that the long-established practice of transliterating Maltese with an alphabet which is *not purely phonetic* will take considerable time until it may be superseded by some scholastic

system aiming at its scientific standardization.

The rules I have adopted for the building of words are in accordance with the theories outlined in Vassallo's "*Muftieħ tal-Chitba Maltija*" (1901), and, with the exception of some phonetic symbols, in the *Tagħrif tal-Kitba Maltija* issued by the *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti*, (1924).

A. CREMONA

Malta,

October, 1929

## Dok. 8

### A Standard Maltese Orthography

**Tweġiba iffirmata "A.C." għall-artiklu tar-Rev. G. Pace Spadaro li deher fid-*Daily Malta Chronicle* tad-9 ta' Ottubru, 1929.)**

5. The failure of a phonetic alphabet (*Xirka Xemia's*) even in the Elementary Schools when it was improvidently taught in the lower classes before coaching teachers, shows that phonetic symbols cannot be made to replace in a language others in use in a few years (1882–1888). Preca himself, who had a prominent part in the framing of that alphabet, blamed the Educational Authorities for having adopted it in lower primary classes and charged the Educational Office with want of foresight. He declared that "if the alphabet was so excellent in its scientific bearing it was not perhaps a fit tool for the people"

(*Daily Malta Chronicle* tat-22 ta' Ottubru, 1929, p.6)

## Dok. 9

### The Maltese Alphabet

**(Siltiet mit-tweġiba ta' 1-4 ta' Novembru, 1929, iffirmata "A.C.", għall-artiklu tar-Rev. G. Pace Spadaro li deher fid-*Daily Malta Chronicle* tal-31 ta' Ottubru, 1929).**

3. As a scholar, I am an avowed upholder of the phonetic signs and I would be the last one to repudiate them in a *philological work*, considering them by principle as the only appropriate Maltese transliteration. But I must admit that what in science is good enough, the case is quite different, nay dangerous and harmful, in practice, until the time comes when through a new scholastic evolution of the language a scientific transliteration is likely to be established. That time, however, is still even a desideratum in great national languages which are more literarily and officially developed than Maltese. For the Maltese language, which is radically a Semitic one, the success may be easier, though it more depends on the prevailing national education than on the solitary activities of literary Societies or Academies.

4. In a scientific transliteration, I would be even more theoretical than Reverend Pace Spadaro or the "Għaqda" itself by resorting to purely phonetic and distinguishing symbols for such sounds as the 'ayn (gh), the *elif* (a), the glide or Imâl (ie) and the emphatic *ha* (h) and *Għajn* (Gh).

10. In my opinion the general familiarity with a phonetic alphabet cannot be judged by any amount of occasional poetries written with that alphabet for academical purposes (or under presumed conditions for winning prizes), but by its characteristic adoption by a good number of local Editors and Writers. As I have previously pointed out, the general adoption of a phonetic alphabet is not likely to take place unless a thoroughly different system of education in schools is used, and this will take a good number of years to develop and generalize new characters.

(*Daily Malta Chronicle* tas-7 ta' Novembru, 1929, p. 13)

## Dok. 10

### Cremona Jigġustifika Ruħu fl-1935 kontra s-“Seeming Backsliding” imsemmi mir-Rev. C.L. Dessoulavy

In pointing out the difficulties in the practical adoption of a reformed alphabet, Father Dessoulavy has shown a sense of great experience, but the examples he gives of such difficulties may be regarded as showing that he either has had unreliable information from sources meaning to cast doubt on some of the members of the *Għaqda* or, he himself has never gone into the history, difficulties and development – literary, popular, scholastic, political, administrative – of the *Għaqda*'s Alphabet. Consequently blame is undeservedly cast on some of the most prominent members of the *Għaqda* that are connected with the compilation of the text of the newly-reformed, Maltese orthography. The writer states: “Such are the practical difficulties which face reformers everywhere, (that) some of the *Għaqda* have not seldom, when working under other auspices, proved unfaithful to the *Għaqda*'s spelling.” The question of adopting, universally, a system of spelling quite strange to the ordinary writers, or rather of forcing upon the Government the official adoption of the *Għaqda*'s system of spelling when it was still in its infancy, would have been, from a practical point of view, an unwise, not to say, dangerous attempt and none better than the writer of this review (who happened to be entrusted with the compilation of the system and became eventually in the early stages of Responsible Government, an Editor and Translator of Maltese publications) could realize the impracticability of its adoption for journalistic or administrative purposes or in Government Administrative Departments *when it was not yet introduced in schools*.

The original purpose of the *Għaqda*'s system was uniformity of spelling on sound grammatical principles amongst the writers in Maltese. But, as expected, it was an utter failure for the whole 15 years because the alphabet, as sanctioned by the Committee appointed for the purpose, went against the common long-established usage of writing Maltese after the phonetic Italian spelling as *was first taught in schools*. Under almost identical circumstances, the *Xirka Xemja*'s Alphabet was doomed to failure, for, after a life of hardly two years (1883) in the scholastic programme, it was suppressed as too pedantic and as an obstacle to the success of the bilingual system (Italian and English) then prevailing in schools.

Ever since the year 1900 the C-K system or the ordinary one or the *Muftieħ*'s system was always adopted in the school text-books (Readers and Grammars), in which Maltese was used as a *written medium* ...

Even after the *Tagħrif*'s publication at Government expense, the common transliteration

continued to be used by the different Parties in Power until the Mizzian Reform in 1927 (*sic*) which aimed at an Italian transliteration.

It was owing to the above circumstances that even the President of the *Għaqda*, the late Chev. G. Muscat Azzopardi, published his translations of the Gospels in the old transcript and several members of the *Għaqda* followed his example and the *Għaqda's* spelling was thus limited to the organ *Il-Malti...*

It was similarly, under such circumstances that the *Manual of Maltese Orthography*, which was meant for the use of the police and Government servants, as Father Dessoulavy asserts, and, eventually, for use as a text-book in the evening classes for candidates for the Civil Service (Maltese having been included as an optional subject), had to be published in the old script, that is, in the official spelling then still used by the Government. For the same reason, Mr. G. Vassallo published his second edition of his *Muġtieh tal-Kitba* (1931) in the old spelling. But both the author of the *Manual* and of the *Muġtieh* showed their loyalty to the alphabet of the *Għaqda* in publications of purely literary or scholastic merit, the former in his *Weraq mar-Riħ* and the latter in his *Ortografia Maltese*. The anomaly of this seeming backsliding, as Father Dessoulavy describes it, is however clearly explained and justified in the preface of the *Manual*.

The *wise step* taken by the authorities in introducing the *Għaqda's* system by starting from the bottom, that is from the Infant-schools, was an alternative which had been indicated by the writer of this article whenever any attempt for the successful universal adoption of the *Għaqda's* transcript was discussed. The success of such a scientific alphabet could only be brought about by a change in the educational, administrative and legal spheres and never by the activities of any literary or academical society. It was only through the recent events affecting the status of the Islands that Maltese, as written by the *Għaqda*, was introduced in the Educational and Administrative Departments. The long expected reform opened the way to a new stage in the literary evolution of Maltese for several good readers, anthologies, new text-books, etc, have been compiled by the members of the *Għaqda*, the *Għaqda tal-Malti (Università)* and the Education Department. I believe that full recognition has not been given to, and full appreciation shown, of the pioneering work.

The Rev C.L. Dessoulavy (and perhaps other scholars interested in our tongue) is, perhaps, not familiar with all the circumstances underlying the phases of the alphabetical systems which have played such a prominent part in the writing of Maltese during the last thirty years in the schools and administrative organizations; and perhaps he is not even aware of the politico-administrative circumstances which have attended the fate of any sound system and, in some particular cases, affected the position of those who upheld it, from the literary and official view-points against a policy of innovation undermining the life of literary Maltese. If some members of the *Għaqda* appear to fail in their allegiance to the system of the *Għaqda*, it is only because they had to learn the bitter lesson of the value of expediency in gaining what they have already gained ....

(Minn "The 'Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti' and Modern Maltese Literature", reċensjoni ta' A. Cremona fil-*Journal of the Malta University Literary Society* (Vol. 2, No. 7, October 1935, pp. 317 – 323), ta' l-artikolu ta' C.L. Dessoulavy "Modern Maltese Literature" li deher fil-*Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (London Inst. – Vol.vii, Part 4, 1935)

## Dok. 11

**Silta mid-Daħla “Għalfejn u Għal Min Dan il-Ktieb” bid-Data ta’ Marzu, 1936 fil-Ktieb ta’ A. Cremona, *Tagħlim Fuq il-Kitba Maltija* l-Ewwel Ktieb (Oxford University Press, 1936)**

“Qatt qabel din id-darba ma nħasset hekk qawwija l-ħtieġa li jinkiteb ktieb fuq it-tagħlim tal-Kitba Maltija għal idejn it-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh. U dan imħabba bosta ħwejjeġ, fosthom, it-tagħlim tal-Malti fl-Iskejjel tal-Gvern, id-dħul tal-lsien Malti fil-Qrati u fl-amministrazzjoni tal-Gvern u t-tixrid tal-kitba Maltija fost il-qarrejja f’dawn il-Gzejjer u barra minn Malta. Izda l-ewwel u l-akbar ħtieġa ta’ dan il-ktieb huwa t-tagħlim sħiħ tal-kitba Maltija fost dawk it-tfal ta’ l-Iskejjel li għad iridu jkunu s-sisien li fuqhom bi hsiebhom jinbnew il-plieri l-kbar tal-lsien Malti.”