

## INTRODUCTION

**Joseph Farrugia and Lino Briguglio**

**I**t is arguable whether one may speak of a specifically “Gozitan” culture but there is no doubt that Gozo possesses a soul, a character which is distinctly perceptible and intrinsically its own.

It is a character rooted in its physical features, its geographical location and insularity, and abides in the island’s geology, natural territorial features and vegetation.

It is a cultural character which has drawn from the almost constant presence of man on the island for almost 7000 years. It therefore has had a varied ethnic input which started as far back as the dawn of Mediterranean civilization, and which it now exudes. Gozo’s central position in the Mediterranean placed it at the crossroads of many civilizations and this determined the wide cross-fertilization of its culture.

It is a character moulded by history, bearing memories of plenty and want, peace and violence, freedom, colonization and slavery. The Gozitans have experienced events of great historical moment, events which marked the passage of historical eras and which often saw the local population helplessly entangled in developments which swamped them and anonymously decided their fate and daily fortunes.

Gozo’s character is also a religious one, serenely acknowledging the innate human desire to reach beyond the confines of physical life and establish some kind of contact with perceived divinity and continued life after death.

There is also a contemporary aspect in Gozo's character, in the sense that the island does not wallow in its past, but expresses itself in the more prosaic terms of the present and applies its resolute will to survive and achieve its well-being, in spite of the severe constraints it faces due to its very small size.

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Such is Gozo's small size that one can mistakenly assume that the personality and character of the island are of little significance, and need not be studied and understood. The contents of this volume show otherwise. The title *A Focus on Gozo*, was chosen precisely because the editors felt that it is very worthwhile zooming in on a number of areas related to the island's physical and cultural development to understand the multifaceted impacts that have shaped the island's character, as we know it today.

Various themes are treated in this book. Dr George Zammit Maempel and Mr Edwin Lanfranco focus their attention on natural and environmental aspects.

Professor Anthony Bonanno explores the island's prehistoric archeology and introduces us to its earliest history.

Rev. Dr Joseph Farrugia explores the religious dimension of Gozo's personality and traces its evolution down the island's history.

Professor Stanley Fiorini, Dr Eugene Montanaro, Dr Albert Camilleri, Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina and Mr Franco Masini respectively tackle interesting aspects of Medieval, Hospitaller and British Gozo.

Dr Victor Mallia Milanes and Mr Pawlu Mizzi introduce us to some hitherto unexplored problems connected with Gozitan historiography, and issue an important warning as to the interpretation of history.

Professor Joseph Vella, Dr Mario Tabone and Mr Joseph Attard Tabone enrich this publication with their respective focus on some important features of Gozitan culture.

It is hoped that this book will constitute another valid contribution to the literature on Gozo.

We would like to thank the authors of the papers included in this volume, and all those involved in the production of this book, notably Mrs Maryrose Vella, for her secretarial assistance.