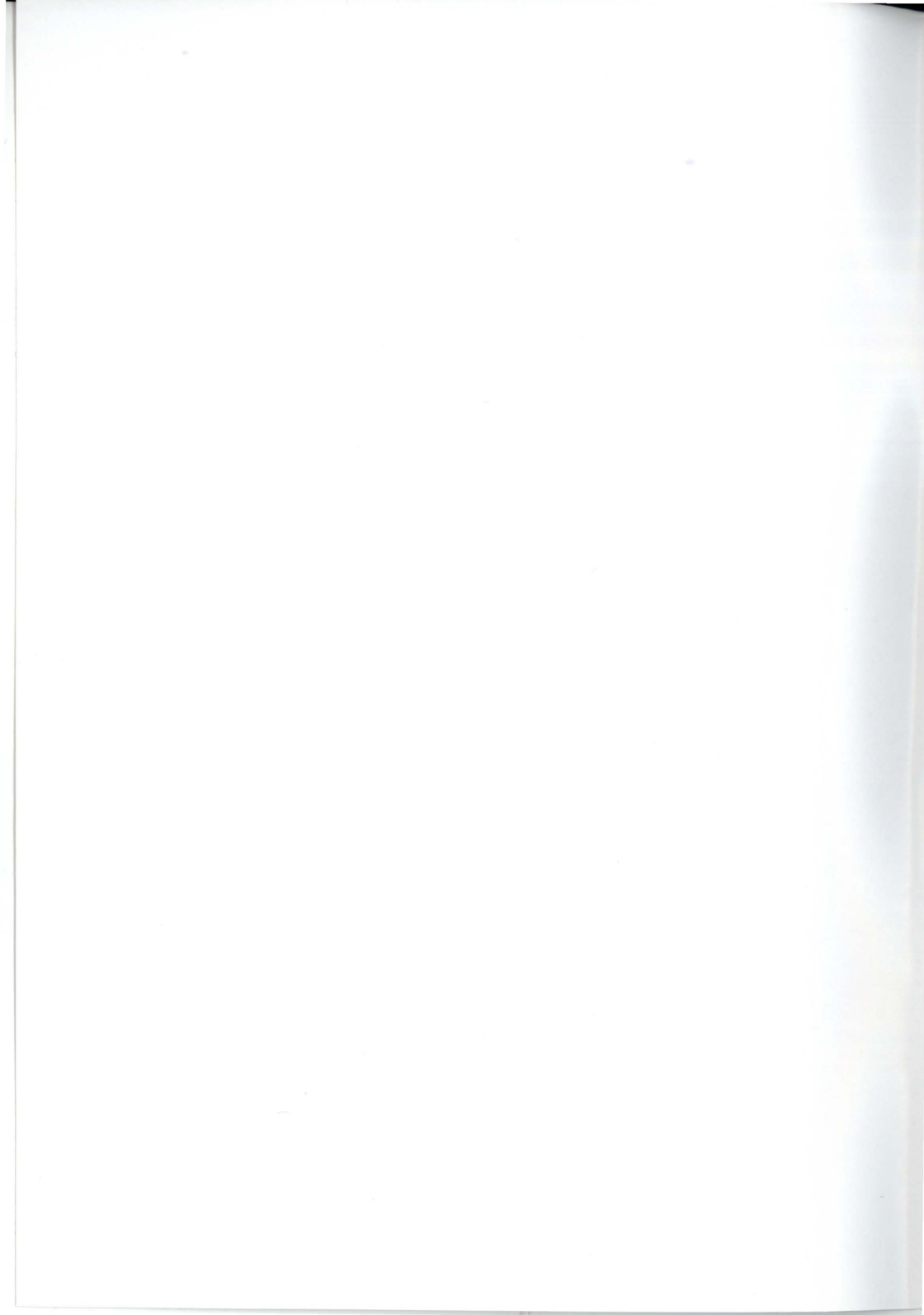


# **Gozo**

## **Past and Present**

**Editor M.N. Cauchi**

**University of Malta Gozo Centre**  
**Gozo 2002**



# **Gozo Past and Present**

**Editor M.N. Cauchi**

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# Introduction

## *M.N. Cauchi*

This publication contains a collection of talks which were given earlier on this year, and which were organised by the University Gozo Centre in conjunction with the Ministry for Gozo, on topics that in one way or another are linked with Gozo.

Starting at the very beginning, Mr Paul C. Saliba talks about our intriguing past with its cart-ruts and temples, the remains of our Phoenician origins, such as those at Ras il-Wardija, and burial sites. He also speculates about the origins of the name 'Ghawdex' itself, which he believes derives from the Punic word 'GWL'. While to some extent speculative, this work emphasises the importance of ensuring that archaeological findings should be carefully maintained and not wantonly destroyed as used to be the practice in the past.

With the talk of Mr Andre' Zammit, we have a nostalgic look at the Gozo of a few generations ago. We reminisce and hanker after the idyllic peace that existed then and wonder whether the rate of development currently taking place is indeed sustainable or more likely strangling in its continued destruction of life as we used to know it. In particular he laments developments like the damming up of valleys which permanently alter the environment and destroys the natural shoreline.

The third talk deals with the most recent development of all, namely the scientific work on environmental pollution being carried out at the moment at the University Gozo centre under the direction of Dr Ray Ellul. Here we find a quite advanced scientific laboratory collecting relevant data which is shared with European centres overseas, providing a model of how Gozo, in spite of its size and relative insignificance can collaborate with colleagues overseas and actually contribute very validly to the world scenario.

Finally, Mr Franco Masini reviews the development of Governance of Gozo over the ages, starting from Roman times up to and including the most recent political history of the island. He emphasises the role of individuals, like Archpriest Saverio Cassar during the overthrow of the French rule in Gozo, and that of Dr Anton Tabone in setting up the Gozo Civic Council and his struggle to ensure that Gozo retains some form of autonomous government.

These talks, while as distinct from each other as chalk and cheese, all emphasise some aspect of Gozitan life of which we should all be aware. Whether it is past history or current event, they are all relevant to the moulding of the concept of what Gozo is now or could be in the future. It is for this reason that it was considered useful to publish these talks in the form of a booklet, so that they become available also to those who missed the original presentation. It is hoped that other publications of this nature will be made available from time to time, on topics of relevance to the Gozitan public.



# Phoenician-Punic Gozo

Paul C. Saliba

## **The Phoenician Period - A blurred phase in Gozo's early historic period**

According to archaeological evidence, the Phoenicians arrived on the Maltese Islands, towards the end of the eighth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> during their determined expansion campaign across the Mediterranean. This event marks the end of the Prehistoric Period and the initial phase of the Historic Period for the Islands of Malta.

Little if anything is known about the reaction and behaviour to these newcomers from the Levant by the Bronze Age people, who are known for their bronze and copper implements, weapons and fortified hillocks<sup>2</sup>. Archaeological evidence retrieved from the Temple of *Astarte* at *Tas-Silg*, Malta, tends to imply a possible peaceful cohabitation between the two different cultures.<sup>3</sup> Such evidence has been used to give a general impression of a peaceful settlement from the initial phase of Phoenician occupation in all Malta and Gozo, overlooking the fact that an immediate peaceful co-existence is somewhat too risky to assume. One has to consider that at the end of *Borg in-Nadur* phase, there were a considerable number of Bronze Age sites made up of natural hillocks, sometimes fortified with cyclopean walls such as *Borg in-Nadur*, *Wardija ta' San Gorg*, *Qala* hill and *Fawwara*, Malta.<sup>4</sup> The local population, during the Late Bronze Age probably consisted of groups of people who used to find refuge in their fortified hillocks in case of local feuds or foreign interventions. What could have been the response, one may ask, of all these communities on the arrival of Phoenicians to the Maltese Islands?

The historical evidence, according to Pseudo Skylax, indicates that Gozo during the Phoenician-Punic Period had one city,<sup>5</sup> while Malta, according to Ptolemy had two, Melite (now part of Rabat and Mdina) and Chersonesos<sup>6</sup> (a coastal settlement). This could be a reflection of the policy adopted by the Phoenicians towards the occupation of the Maltese islands, their way of administration, and even their foreign policy which they possibly evolved in relation to the topography of the islands. Here one should add that places and features of cultural significance are powerful indicators of how past societies evolved with their topography and resources.

Unlike Sardinia and Sicily whose occupation by the Phoenicians was a slow process evolving from the coastal settlements and then progressing into the hinterland,<sup>7</sup> the Maltese islands by their inherent limitation offered the Phoenicians a straightforward approach, and the strategic position of the citadel in Gozo, and Melite (Rabat) and Chersonesos were probably easily identified and turned into established settlements.<sup>8</sup>

One should note here an important topographical change which probably reflects also the change in the social policy, transforming itself from one which was mainly focused on local relations during the Late Bronze Age Period, to one which was now based on foreign relations during the Phoenician Period.

Trade, which probably accounted for a fraction of the Maltese economy, now became one of the main sources of subsistence. From a number of about forty Bronze Age sites,<sup>9</sup> the permanent main Phoenician-Punic settlements were reduced to just three, (two in Malta and one in Gozo). The local communities who used to retreat to their separate fortified settlements in times of local or foreign threats, now became a unified population which found refuge behind the strong walls of these new citadels.

This does not mean that minor settlements did not probably exist, and that the coasts were not provided with adequate buildings for the functioning of trade. But the creation of the three main cities during the Phoenician-Punic period indicates a diminution of separate groups of people and the formation of two main local communities, one for Malta and one for Gozo.

A burial site discovered at *tal-Horof* near Xewkija, dating back to the seventh century B.C. is the earliest recorded archaeological evidence belonging to the Phoenician Period in Gozo. Among the artefacts retrieved from this tomb are

31 Egyptian amulets. The complex iconographical tradition of many Phoenician artefacts is predominantly influenced by Egyptian art. Such is the case with the discovery of the Egyptianising steatite amulet showing the god Thot (Ibis) which was retrieved from a tomb at *Ta' l-Ibragg*, in the west of Gozo, dated to the sixth century B.C. Other tombs of this period found in the outskirts of Rabat could signify that the latter was already developing into the main settlement in Gozo.<sup>10</sup> However, the ancient city of Victoria does not provide much evidence of visible Phoenician remains except for the small traces of Punic levels in restricted areas which were subject to excavation in 1960.<sup>11</sup>

## **The Punic Period**

The Punic Period started during the course of the sixth century B.C. with the emergence of Carthage as the leading Phoenician colony, when the hegemony of the Phoenician homeland over its western colonies started to decline owing to the rise of the Assyrians and the Babylonians.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a number of Phoenician colonies were vulnerable to attack from the indigenous population, since these were set up as small maritime trading posts, separated by considerable distances. For this reason there were increased links between the Phoenician colonies in the west and Carthage with the result that the Carthaginians assumed supremacy in Sardinia and Sicily which formerly acknowledged Phoenicia as their leader.<sup>13</sup>

## **Burial evidence**

Only twenty tombs have as yet been recorded in Gozo. This definitely does not reflect the real number of tombs which were actually found, as it is likely that many others were unearthed but left unregistered.<sup>14</sup> For example, Caruana indicated that during the late nineteenth century, a large number of Punic and Roman tombs were discovered during building works within the limits of Victoria.<sup>15</sup> However, the total number of tombs recorded in Victoria, up to this day is only twelve.<sup>16</sup>

Said-Zammit dates most of the 'Phoenician tombs' found in Gozo to the Punic Period. The Punic tombs found in the limits of Victoria consist of a single cluster situated about one kilometre away from the ancient citadel. Other Punic tombs were found at Xlendi, Qala, Ghasri, Mgarr, Sannat, and Marsalforn.<sup>17</sup>



Most of the Punic tombs in Gozo belong to the shaft and chamber type.<sup>18</sup> These were generally cut in the Upper Coralline Limestone. The shaft was usually of a rectangular form but in some cases circular shafts have been found. The burial chamber (in some cases the shaft opened into two or more chambers), was usually of a rectangular or oval shape. The dead body was laid straight on its back along the axis of the chamber.<sup>19</sup> The corpses, as it was customary in the Phoenician and Punic world, were sometimes also cremated. In Gozo, twelve cases of cremation have been recorded.<sup>20</sup> In some cases, when successive burials took place in the same tomb, the bones of the previous corpse were placed in funerary urns.<sup>21</sup> The deceased were often accompanied by funerary ceramic kits including amphorae, plates, cups, trefoiled lamps (oinochai) and other pottery items. Other wealthier burials also contained personal ornaments and objects, like rings, earrings, bracelets, and amulets.<sup>22</sup>

Other type of tombs in Gozo, apart from the shaft and chamber type, consisted of open shafts, burial chambers hewn in the vertical face of the rock and grave-pits.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Punic Complex at *Ras il-Wardija***

The scarcity of Phoenician-Punic remains in Gozo is not limited only to burials, but also to buildings, constructions and other features.<sup>24</sup>

The only main site in Gozo which has been considered as Punic is the one situated on the promontory of *Ras il-Wardija* in the West of Gozo. This site was excavated by the Italian team from the Archaeological Mission to Malta between 1964 and 1967 and was considered as a Punic sanctuary.<sup>25</sup>

It comprises a rectangular rock-cut chamber with five rectangular niches, an almost square tank, and a cistern on the north-west aspect having a rectangular orifice.<sup>26</sup> On the lower terrace of the promontory, there are the remains of a quadrangular building made up of blocks of globigerina limestone.<sup>27</sup>

The earliest pottery found within the precincts of this Punic Sanctuary belongs to the late Punic Period between the third century and the second century B.C.<sup>28</sup> Fragments of Punic-type bilychins lamps were also found.<sup>29</sup>



As already noted above, the excavation results pointed to the possibility that the site was used as a sacred complex.<sup>30</sup> Landscape analysis favours this suggestion. As in other Phoenician-Punic sites such as at Cadiz, the complex is situated on a promontory, a favoured spot for Phoenicians to build their temples. Moreover, promontories were the first points to be seen by the returning sailors, and these were marked by temples which were like *'milestones at every port of call, all the way from Cyprus, past Crete and Malta to the Pillars of Hercules'*.<sup>31</sup> Mingazzini also saw a lot in common between the rectangular Chamber at *'Ras il-Wardija'* and the rock-cut chambers of Sidon, Tyre and Byblos in Phoenicia and considered them as Punic Sanctuaries.<sup>32</sup>



*The rectangular chamber with five niches at Ras il-Wardija*

## Other structures

Further to the Punic remains at *Ras il-Wardija*, the discovery of two country houses in two different parts of Gozo revealed that the production of oil could have been an important industry during this period.<sup>33</sup>

### The Punic inscription C.I.S. 1. 132

An important archaeological find which throws ample light on Gozo during the Punic Period is the Punic inscription CIS.1.132 more commonly known as the *Melitensia Quinta*. This inscription which was discovered<sup>34</sup> or publicly known in 1855<sup>35</sup> is a proclamation of the whole people of Gozo represented by an assembly and commemorates the renovation of three 'objects' and four temples. Different authors give different dates of the inscription, the common dilemma being whether it is pre- or post- 218 B.C., the latter being the year when the Romans took over the Maltese Islands from the Carthaginians. Although part of the inscription is missing, the remaining available text throws quite some information on the socio-religious and political situation of Gozo, moulded in a Punic context.

The inscription has also to some degree, been given different interpretations. For example Heltzer states that the words '*m gwl* mean the *People of Gwl* (Gozo), but the term '*m* refers to a closed assembly and not a popular democratic representative body of the whole population.<sup>36</sup> Thus Heltzer makes a distinction between the different ethnic groups of Gozo. Vella remarks more convincingly that Heltzer is incorrect in this particular aspect and '*m* definitely makes no distinction between the people of Gozo.<sup>37</sup>

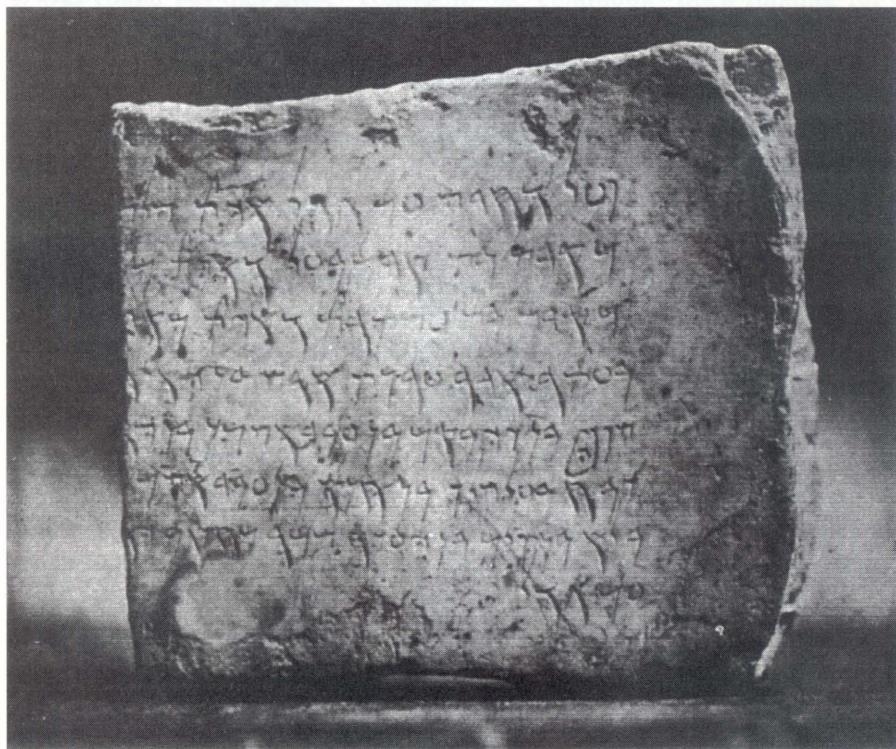
The inscription mentions two Phoenician divinities, *Sadamba'al* and *Astarte*, dedicated to two of the temples. The names of two other divinities are missing. There is also reference to two magistrates, the offering priest and the inspector of the quarry. The persons mentioned are dignified by the inclusion of their ancestry, a common characteristic in a number of Phoenician inscriptions.

The exact spot where the inscription was found is unknown, as different authors attribute to it different provenances. Cooke states that it was found in Malta, but it was probably brought to Malta from Gozo.<sup>38</sup> Vella states that the inscription was found near the citadel.<sup>39</sup> Mizzi writes '*not near the citadel*'<sup>40</sup>



and A.A. Caruana indicates that the inscription was found among the ruins of *Ggantija* temples.<sup>41</sup>

The inscription is said by most authors to be incised on a marble plaque,<sup>42</sup> or as specified by Wright,<sup>43</sup> on white marble. It is not. The plaque is made up of local Upper Coralline Limestone of a very hard type common in the central and eastern part of Gozo, sometimes also referred to as Gozo marble. A close scrutiny of the plaque reveals that the slab is highly porous and not solidly compact as marble should be. There are stains due to iron oxide impurities scattered over the surface of the slab in the form of brownish –orange dots. These stains occur on limestone, and are not common on marble. Some of the hollows distributed along the border and highly evident in the upper margin are due to deposits of fossilized crustaceans and not signs of deterioration. Such hollows are common in limestone and absent in marble.<sup>44</sup>



*Punic: Stone Inscription*

## Quarries and cart-ruts

The reference in the *Melitensia Quinta* to the keeper of the quarry provides evidence regarding the importance that the Phoenicians used to give to the building and quarrying industry in Gozo.

It is common knowledge that the Phoenicians were experts in the cutting and shaping of building stone. Their buildings were finished in a neat and harmonious manner, and the ashlar blocks laid one upon the other had the appearance of being natural rather than laid by man. The jointing of one ashlar block with another,<sup>45</sup> using the techniques of notches and dovetail joints,<sup>46</sup> was so perfect that mortar was unnecessary.<sup>47</sup> The ancient author Flavius Josephus gives a very clear account of the high quality construction work that was achieved by the combined efforts of the Tyrians, Sidonians, Gibrilites and the Israelites in the building of Solomon's Temple. He also gives an account of how the works were carried out in the quarries. Large blocks were first cut and then worked into shape and dressed. The stones were also checked to see that they fitted together before taken to Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup>

The Old Testament also gives vivid descriptions about the high standard reached by the Phoenicians in their building industry. References are made to quarrying,<sup>49</sup> the building techniques,<sup>50</sup> and the splendour of their buildings as, for instance, in Ezekiel's prophecy 'Against Tyre'.<sup>51</sup> Diodorus Siculus, the ancient Greek historian, in his account about Phoenician Malta, mentions that the '*dwelling on the island are worthy of note being ambitiously constructed with cornices and finished in stucco with unusual workmanship.*'<sup>52</sup>

The quarrying and building industry during the Phoenician-Punic Period brings into context another important aspect regarding the Gozitan and Maltese ancient landscape: the cart-ruts. Bonanno's suggestion that '*cart-ruts very frequently, almost invariably are associated with quarries*'<sup>53</sup> has been substantiated by the study carried out by Magro Conti and the present author with regards the site at 'Clapham Junction', Dingli, Malta, which contains a large and complicated network of cart-ruts. Their surveys revealed definite evidence that the cart-ruts at 'Clapham Junction' are not only possibly related to quarries and do not merely pass close by them, but are fully associated with them! They concluded that the site constituted an area of intensive quarrying works where irregular and regular blocks were cut from the coralline surface



and carried along the cart-ruts to the main roads in a number of vehicles to be transported away for the erection of buildings and any other structures.<sup>54</sup>

However the use of cart-ruts cannot be limited to the Phoenician-Punic Period only. The use of ashlar blocks and regular quarries was very much in use during the Phoenician, Punic, Roman and later periods. In the dating of cart-ruts and quarries, it is important not to be rigid and constrain oneself in dating the system to one period only. Cart-ruts and quarries could have been a system which saw its birth in the Neolithic Period and continued to be used until the Classical and possibly later periods.<sup>55</sup>

In Gozo there are at least four areas where cart-ruts can be found. These areas are located at *Ta' Lambert*, at *Ras il-Qala*, at *Ta' Cenc* and at *Dwejra*.<sup>56</sup> The cart-ruts at *Dwejra* were intensively studied by the author between 1993 and 1996 and, albeit the fact that they are highly interrupted and deteriorated, it was found out that these constitute one continuous track running for a distance of about 350 metres across the land overlooking the inland sea, towards the site known as *Il-Hofra tal-Berwin*. The track follows the gradient of the terrain all along the route but at the lower end, the cart-ruts turn sharply from the south-east direction to the western direction, with the consequence that apart from the normal gradient of the terrain, the track is subjected to a sideways inclination of about 30 degrees. The author linked the cart-ruts at *Dwejra* with extensive quarry and construction works along the littoral landscape of that particular area. As far as landscape archaeology is concerned he further placed the area within the Phoenician-Punic context.<sup>57</sup>



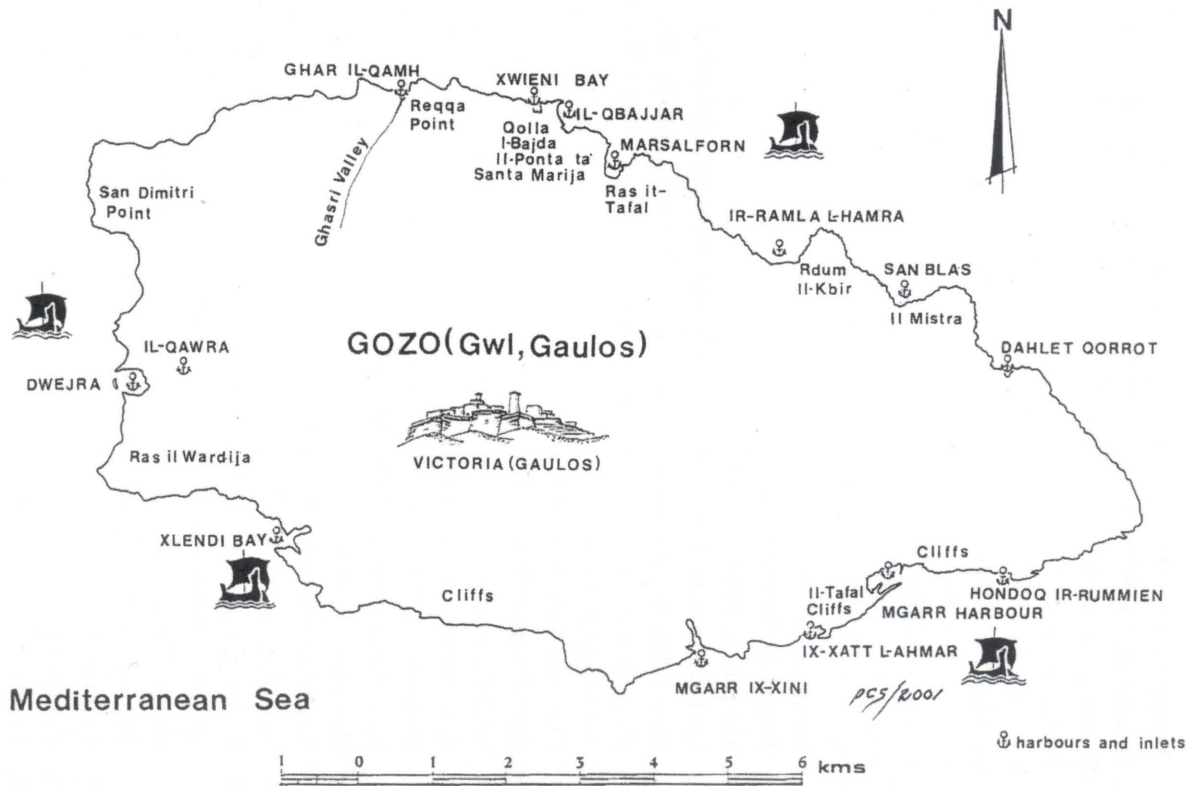
*Cart ruts at Dwejra*

## The littoral landscape of Gozo

In his recent study entitled '*New definition of Gwl, the Punic name for Gozo*', the author explained that Gozo does have a number of inlets around its coast which could have functioned as harbours and havens during the Phoenician and later periods. He based his study on the statement made by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus that *Gaulos* (Gozo), a Phoenician colony, is adorned with well-situated harbours, as well as on other statements made by different authors, and on a physical survey of Gozo's littoral landscape. Furthermore the author believes that the Punic word *Gwl*, which has been given various definitions by different writers, (the most popular being that of a '*Phoenician round merchant vessel*'), could possibly mean either '*the circuit of harbours around the coast of Gozo*' or '*the going around the island of ships in search of a safe haven*'<sup>58</sup>.

## Conclusion

The Punic Period came to an end in 218 BC when Titus Sempronius Longus conquered the Islands of Malta during the Second Punic War.<sup>59</sup> But the Punic culture lingered well into the Roman times lasting for more than seven centuries.



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# **The Changing Face of Gozo**

**Andre' Zammit**

The venue where we are meeting this evening (formerly the Gozo General Hospital), has some very happy childhood associations for me. One of my favourite uncles, who brought me into this world, was the resident medical officer, and later the principal here, and lived on the floor above. I used to climb on a chair to admire the map of the world in his study, and he gave me a jigsaw puzzle of the map which remained my favourite present for years and years.

This place was also on my way to school, the Seminary round the corner, a place I always remember with gratitude. Possibly in this very hall, I made my stage debut in that award-winning musical "The Barber's Shop". On a more serious plane, the building of the Gozo Hospital is attributed to the Capomastro Michele Cachia, an architect and patriot, who was one of the Maltese leaders in the insurrection against the French in 1798-1800, - with whom I have family associations, and whose notebooks, over two hundred of them, are in my possession. I hope one day to publish his biography.

I was asked to speak about the Changing Face of Gozo, and I would like to start with a very personal sketch, tending to an affectionate caricature, of the face of Gozo. What makes it so different from Malta? As from my infancy I have been infatuated with maps. I have always thought that the 36th parallel of latitude may have something to do with it. This very special parallel passes smack through the Gozo Channel and again smack through the Strait of Gibraltar separating Europe and Africa. It also passes through, or

skirts, a number of important cities throughout the world such as Teheran, Tokyo and Las Vegas, as well as the Karakoram and the Grand Canyon.

Gozo's smaller size, hilly configuration and absence of large all-weather harbours, have always kept the population down to what the island, on its own resources could support, and agriculture has always been the basis of its economy. Gozo's area is about 21% of the Maltese islands and its population has historically hovered around 14%, but has now become around 7%, as it has not shared in the population explosion of the sister island. This has meant that Gozo is more sparsely developed than Malta and has a more rural character as well as a more exciting topography.

Gozo was largely neglected by the Knights of St John, and the terrible Turkish raid of 1551 practically wiped out its entire population. Gozo was re-settled partly by a massive influx from Sicily which, though it was gradually absorbed, has left a number of marked differences from the sister island. Apart from somatic differences which have been largely evened out, there is the difference in the intonation of speech, the sound 'k' substituted for 'q', which is unpronounceable to Italians, and is particularly common in Xewkija. There are also words in common usage such as "imhajjem" (spoil), 'thaxxem' (to close as in a door) 'tirraġġa' (to indulge in horseplay) "fajjara" (catapult), or 'boxxla' (vestibule door), which are not used in Malta, while the word 'koċċ' means 'a lot' in Gozo, and 'a little' in Malta.

Gozo was also largely neglected during the period of British rule and its population was kept down by migration to Malta and overseas, at first to Tunisia, Egypt and the Mediterranean littoral, later to the U.S.A., Canada and Australia. Returned migrants or their remittances from abroad, account for a considerable part of the visible and invisible wealth of Gozo.

Possibly as a reaction to the secular neglect of Gozo, its people have tended to be either fatalist, accepting and making the best of their lot, like Shaw's "reasonable man", or go-getters, out to improve their lot, like Shaw's "unreasonable man". This may explain the disproportionate number of prominent people hailing from Gozo like the two Dingli's, the two Mizzi's, the four Chief Justices (Refalo, Mercieca, Camilleri and Cremona), the Archbishop and so many others. There is a charming anecdote by Sir Harry Luke in his "Malta, an Account and an Appreciation". He was attending an official function in St John's Co-Cathedral and his Maltese companion was

pointing out that the Archbishop, the Chief Justice, and a number of Canons, judges and other dignitaries were Gozitan. 'I suppose we ought to be thankful' he added 'that the sacristan is still a Maltese!'

A typical trait of the Gozitans is that if they accept you they call you by your first name. If they address you by your formal title or surname it means that you are an outsider, to be treated with diffidence. Surnames are seldom used, or known, and parents' names are preferred. Thus one would be called say "John of Paul" which is very similar to the Icelandic or Scandinavian "Jon Paulson" or the Irish "o' ", the Scottish "Mc", or the Norman "Fitz", or nearer home the Italian "di Paolo" which, however, has a more durable span.

The isolation of Gozo has encouraged its people to be more resourceful and to organise their own entertainment. Band clubs have traditionally been focal points of social life in Gozo and amateur dramatics and concerts were very popular. When I was eleven years old, practically all the Tigrja, (the name by which the main street of Victoria is known despite official pronouncements to the contrary), children were roped in for a musical, part of the war effort, called "The Barber's Shop", performed in this building, then a hospital, to cheer up the patients and the refugees. For my sins I was chosen to sing the lead and after sixty years I still remember the opening stanzas.

The love of music is so deeply rooted in Gozo that in the post-war period two clubs, doubling as opera houses were built in the Tigrja, and for the last thirty years or so, the Maltese have been coming to Gozo for opera. There must be great enthusiasm and dedication behind these ventures which are no longer viable in Malta with its much bigger catchment area. Band marches and concerts are still very popular in Gozo, and I am surprised at the zest and obvious musical competence of the ordinary people. Excellent choirs have also emerged in recent years, sometimes performing abroad, and one of them recently missing the World Trade Centre disaster by the proverbial cat's whisker.

One Gozitan musical tradition that has died out, to my knowledge, is that of small groups of street musicians that used to play in front of people's doors on the morning of New Year's Day and on special occasions like graduations, ordinations, promotions or even the passing of important exams. One of the most colourful Gozitan characters, the schoolmaster Giovan Battista Pace, fondly known as Patist, referring to his less devoted colleagues of the cloth at the Seminary, composed the famous epigram "Rosa rosae, zinna zinnae, xelin



u x-Xlendi', that is 'a smattering of latin, musicians at the ordination, mass for a shilling and away Xlendi'".

This brings us to another tradition that has largely died out: the disproportionate number of priests, some of them attracted only by the benefices, but really more interested in fishing, shooting and farming rather than in pastoral work. Nowadays there is a big shortage of religious vocations, though perhaps less so in Gozo than in Malta. Recently I went to mass at St Francis Church, across the square, where in my childhood the convent was overflowing with monks and the religious. The prior was saying that apart from himself, there was one other monk and a lay brother. I understand that the position at St Augustine's convent is fairly similar.

Another tradition which I am very glad to say has died out, is that of the hordes of beggar-women that used to descend on the Tigrija. Friday, - possibly pay-day, - was their appointed day, and the street would be darkened by black faldettas flitting from door to door. We were not that well-off ourselves, but we used to keep a small bowl with pennies, half-pennies and even farthings on the hall table, so that no one would go away without a blessing. Mercifully these are now things of the past.



*Seven-seater car*

Returned migrants often brought back new ideas as well as savings. Those who had been to Detroit usually got involved in the transport business and imported the seven-seaters or even nine-seaters and eventually buses.

This did not go down well with the coachmen of the horse-drawn *karozzini*, and these hit on the idea of scattering nails in strategic places in the streets - as if the potholes were not enough. Traditionally the *Gozitans* walked or cadged lifts on carts or private cars, but eventually the idea of public transport became accepted, and a streamlined, skeleton service was organised. In its pioneer days this service was very personalised compared to public transport elsewhere. There were no official bus stops and the driver would pick up passengers as they came and drop them off wherever they wanted to alight, usually without their having to ring the bell. As a sideline he would also do a bit of shopping for the summer residents of Marsalforn. Timetables were rather flexible and if any of the regulars were missing the bus would not leave before these turned up in their own good time.

The telephone service, when it was extended to Gozo, was similarly customised. You picked up the phone and the operator would pass the time of day and ask you who it was you wanted to speak to. You would give the name, often the nickname, and the operator might tell you that your party was having his afternoon nap, or gone to *Xlendi* for the day. In this way a lot of time, money and frustration was saved. Digital phones might be more sleeky but they are so impersonal and indiscreet.

Other aspects of the vanishing Gozo way of life can be recalled by means of a story from the law courts. A certain man was summoned and charged with driving a cab without wearing the statutory medal. He admitted, was reprimanded and warned not to do it again. Some twenty minutes later he was summoned again and charged with having the scales of his grocery shop out of order. He admitted again and during the reprimand, the magistrate (a Maltese) recognised him and asked him how come he was a coachman and a grocer. 'I am only a grocer my lord' adding apologetically, "I am scared of horses". "Then why did you admit to driving a cab without a medal?" shouted the magistrate. And the poor man, making a sweeping gesture with his hand towards the bench and the assembled lawyers, said "My lord, so many fine gentlemen, I did not have the heart to tell you no!"

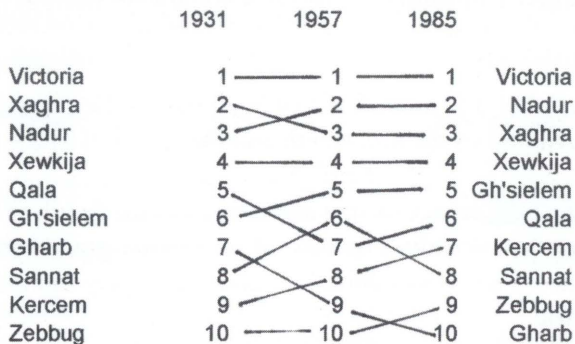


The special brand of Gozitan dry humour, changing but not in danger of extinction, is exemplified by the story of the two messengers who worked in my father's office during the war. The office was the Commissioner's Office and it included the Monte di Pieta' on top where pawned valuables were kept. The older messenger, Ġużepp, was the leisurely type and he was also the custodian, so that his duties included sleeping on the premises at night. When he felt he was being pushed he used to proclaim "Here I am paid to sleep." The younger messenger, Ċikku was the restless, active type, practically running the office, and one of the jobs he took upon himself was preparing the weekly pay packets. Once there was a cost-of-living bonus and the pay packets contained a few shillings more than usual. Ġużepp, who may have been lazy but was very conscientious, went up to my father waving the envelope, saying "I only want what is mine, there is more in the envelope!" Ċikku was writing at the other end of the room, and lifting his head said drily "Perhaps you slept a bit more this week Ġus"

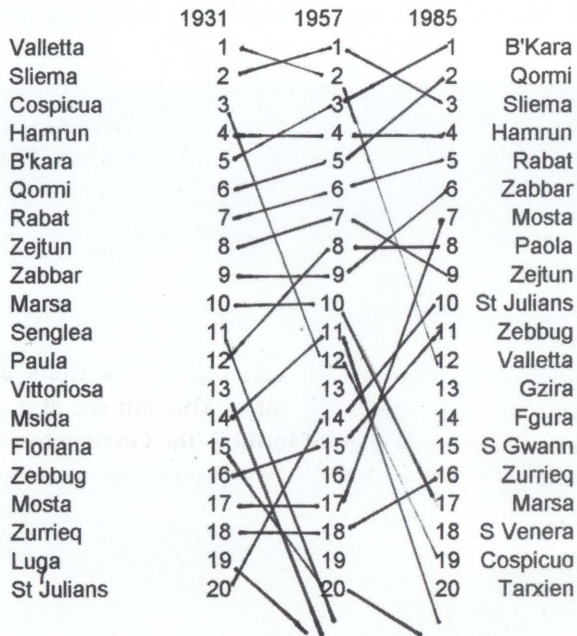
Gozo's was in a defenceless state in the past, at the time of the corsairs and under the Knights of St John. The Castello at Rabat was the only form of defence, and not too secure either, as the Turkish raid of 1551 tragically showed. Rabat was practically Gozo, and the villages only developed in the seventeenth century when times had become less hazardous. The first parish outside Rabat was Xewkija, established in 1678, followed by Gharb a year later and Nadur, Xaghra, Sannat and Żebbug, ten years later in 1688. This is some 250 years later than the corresponding time in Malta, where eight parishes were established in the countryside in 1436. Unlike what took place in Malta, the Gozo villages remained separate and retained their individuality and, by and large, their place in the hierarchy of settlements. In Malta a number of towns and villages have coalesced and their rankings in the hierarchy are constantly changing. The diagrams illustrating this aspect are taken from a study I carried out some years ago on the Rank Stability of Maltese Settlements in the twentieth century. You can see at a glance that while the Maltese towns are in a state of turmoil, the Gozitan towns are very stable. Since then there was the 1995 Census and the only change in Gozo is that Qala and Sannat have switched positions.

Gozo's defenceless state turned out to be to its advantage during World War II, as the Axis powers preferred not to waste valuable ammunition over it. There was therefore very little war damage and reconstruction in Gozo,

## Population Ranking over the period 1931 -1985 in Gozo and Malta



*Rank stability of localities in Gozo 1931 - 1985*



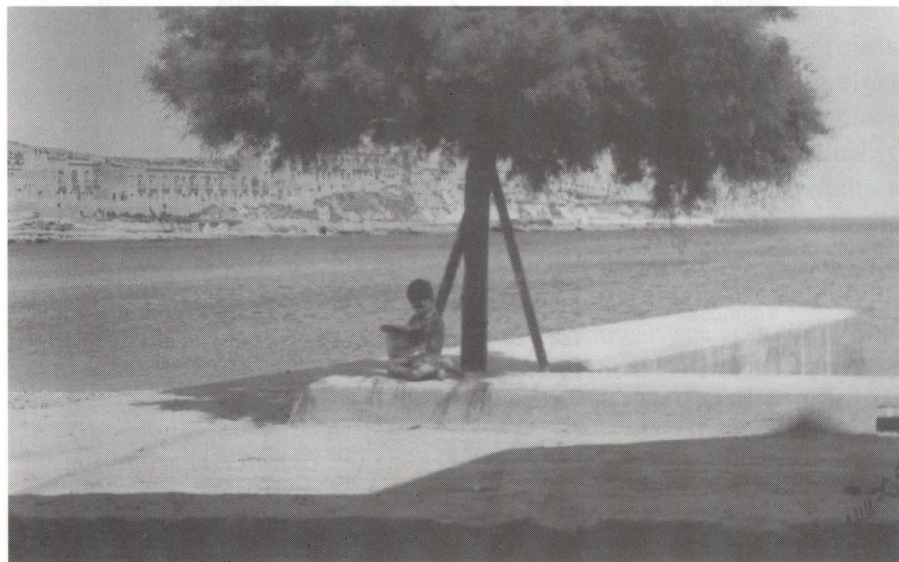
*Rank stability of localities in Malta 1931 - 1985*



and this gives it an air of relative stability and continuity. I say relative because the economic prosperity of the last thirty-odd years since Independence has led to a lot of new development and replacement of obsolescent buildings. Unfortunately, this has not always been in the best of taste.

The Tigrija, (my cradle), the main street of Victoria and Gozo, was built up largely in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. It is still a good example of enlightened development of harmonious houses with a distinct difference in size and tone from the South to the North side, but retaining the overriding quality of an urbane grandstand for the traditional horse races. In my childhood we could also play football without interruption by traffic.

Marsalforn, my original image of paradise, has been overbuilt, with some buildings sadly out of scale with the small bay, the Menqa and the little church with its steeple. But the biggest environmental crime was the damming of the valley some half a kilometre upstream trapping the sand and gravel of ages and stopping the natural replacement of the once glorious pebbly beach. The crowning glory of Marsalforn is now reduced to a miserable pile of dirty sweepings!



*Lost serenity*



△ *Marsalforn Valley (1993) upstream of the dam. The sand and gravel formed over the ages trapped on their way to the beach.*



◁ *The Damn Dam (1993). Gozo's biggest environmental crime. It thwarts the natural beach replenishment process letting nothing but dirty water and flotsam and jetsam to go down to the sea.*





*Old Marsalforn c.1930.*

*The beach, the Menqa and the little church with the dominant steeple.*



*New Marsalforn c.1990. The beach a relic, the Menqa overwhelmed,  
the church and steeple dwarfed.*

# **A GAW Station on the Island of Gozo In the Central Mediterranean**

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## **Abstract**

Ozone and carbon monoxide concentrations as well as meteorological parameters are being monitored on the island of Gozo at a remote background atmospheric station known as Giordan Lighthouse, 170 metres above sea level. It is planned to continue and extend the scope of the measurements over the next few years as more instruments become available. A sulphur dioxide measuring instrument will be installed late in 2002 to monitor ships' emissions.

## **Measuring Site and Experimental Methods**

Within the framework of a German-Maltese scientific project a monitoring station has been set up in a lighthouse on the Northwestern tip of the island of Gozo. Ozone measurements are also carried out at the University's Gozo Centre at Xewkija more towards the South East of the island. The location of the island and the stations are illustrated in Fig.1. The background station in question was established in Giordan lighthouse. It is only about 800



metres from the northern shore of the island, exposed to the prevailing winds from the Northwest.

The population in the vicinity is extremely low and the economy of Gozo is mainly based on agriculture and tourism. Gozo has 29,000 inhabitants only as opposed to Malta with 370,000 inhabitants.

The trace-gas measurements carried out at Giordan lighthouse are therefore hardly influenced by the direct advection of locally emitted pollutants, except for the wind directions between  $120^\circ$  and  $145^\circ$ , represented by the dashed lines in Figure 1. Ozone concentrations advected from that sector are likely to

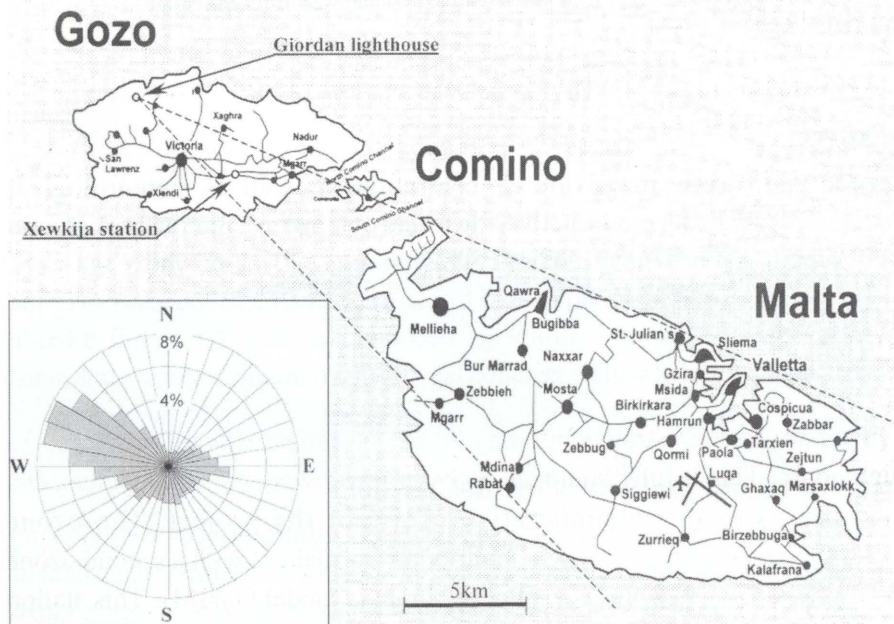


Figure 1: Geographic position of the Maltese Islands and wind rose (Jan.1997 – Jul. 2001) at Giordan lighthouse.

be influenced by emissions from traffic and industry on the main island of Malta. The co-ordinates of the lighthouse are: 36° 4' 24" North; 14° 13' 9" East.

The lighthouse consists of a rectangular two-storey building oriented East – West with a circular tower housing the lantern rising from the central part of the Northern wall. A room on the second floor on the Western side is used to house the instruments. The air sampling device on the roof is at a height of 7 metres above ground level and 167 metres above sea level, respectively. The anemometer used to measure wind speed and direction is located two metres above the highest point of the lighthouse lantern, thus ensuring minimal interference from the lighthouse building itself. The height of the anemometer is 21 metres above ground and 181 metres above sea level, respectively.

The ozone mixing-ratio, wind speed and wind direction have been monitored with a commercial ozone analyser (Dasibi, Glendale, U.S.A.; model 1008-RS) and a classic vane and cup anemometer (Lambrecht, Göttingen, Germany; model 14512) since January 1997. The lighthouse has both power and telephone cables so that the basics for installation and remote control of the instruments are available. A 1.8 kVA uninterruptible power supply (UPS) provides an 8-hour backup in case of power failure. After an initial incident with lightning in August 1997, which put some of our instruments out of action for several months, the voltage protection systems of the main power circuit and telephone system were modified and a new earth electrode installed at the lighthouse.

A maintenance laboratory and operational centre has been set up at the University's administrative building in Xewkija some 10 km away from the lighthouse. This is fully equipped with an office, workshop, computers, etc. and serves as the administrative centre of the project. The ozone measurements at the Xewkija laboratory are carried out with a second ozone analyser (Environnement S.A., Poissy, France; model O<sub>3</sub>41M). This station has a suburban character and the main influence by local pollution sources is traffic during limited rush-hour periods. The surrounding area around the station is fairly flat.

The air inlets to all analysers are made of PTFE (poly-tetrafluorethylene = Teflon) and equipped with a water trap and five micron PTFE filters to remove dust. These filters are regularly exchanged every week. All instruments are calibrated at six-monthly intervals using a portable ozone transfer standard from Karlsruhe, which itself is checked against an absolute long-path optical instrument (UMEG, Karlsruhe, Germany; model R-UV-PH). The stations are equipped with programmable data loggers (Campbell, Shepshed, U.K.; model 21x) to sample the data at intervals of 10 seconds and to store them as 15 minute averages.

## **Principal Results for 1997 – 2002**

The data are summarised in Figures 2 to 5. Fig.2 shows the trend of ozone mixing ratio over the last 5 years. An increase of about 2% per annum appears to be current.

Fig.3 sums up the behaviour of the ozone concentration with reference to the wind direction and month of the year. A continuous high background is clear with the influence of Malta itself apparent at 120 to 145 degrees (Nolle et al.2002a).

The correlation with the CO measurements is shown in Fig.4 and confirms the origin and nature of the air masses (Nolle 2001)

Fig.5 shows the difference between the ozone mixing ratios at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the present measurements. The historical records, based on the Schönbein test, were discovered on Gozo and corrected for humidity using a new method (Nolle et. al.2002b).

## **Future Work**

It is planned to extend the work to the monitoring of other trace gases and aerosols as the instruments become available. An sulphur dioxide measuring instrument is expected late in 2002 and funds for an automated fifteen channel aerosol instrument have been requested.

A total aerosol mass sampler donated by WMO is currently being put back into operation.

It is also our intention to work closely with modellers both on Malta and Karlsruhe to improve our understanding of the micro and mesoscale phenomena observed. We also expect to participate in European measurement campaigns as these become operational.

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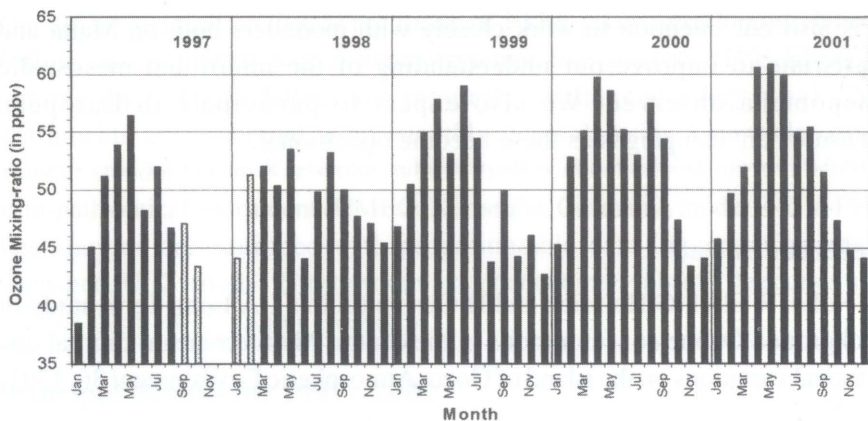


Figure 2: Monthly averages of background ozone mixing-ratios at Giordan lighthouse.

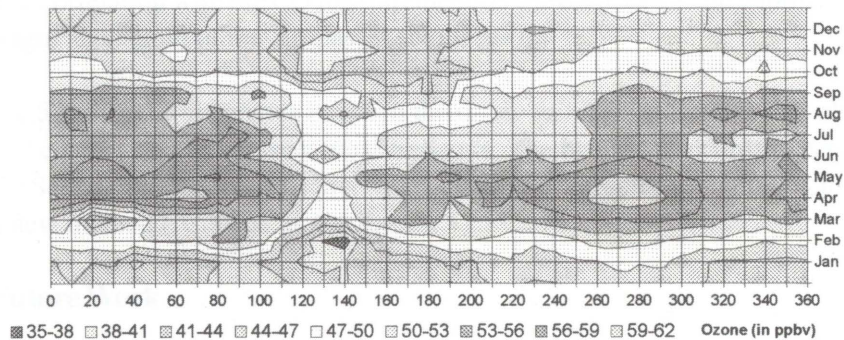


Figure 3: Monthly averages of background ozone mixing-ratios depending on the wind direction (data from Jan. '97 until Dec. '01)

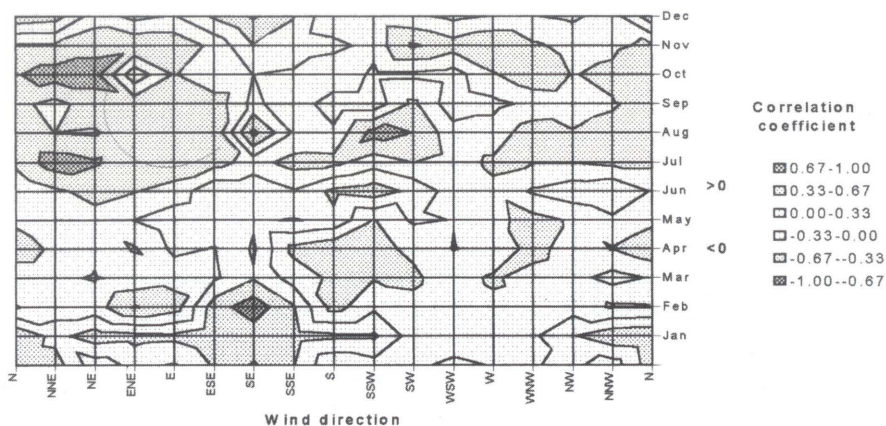


Figure 4: Seasonal changes of the Pearson correlation coefficient between background ozone and carbon monoxide (data from October '99 until July '01).

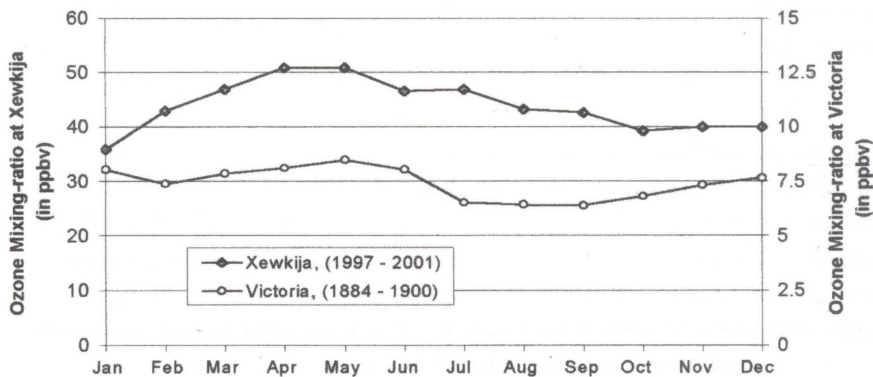


Figure 5: Comparison of modern ozone measurements at Xewkija with ozone measurements made at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at Victoria (corrected for humidity).



# **The Governance of Gozo**

**Franco Masini**

Most people consider Gozo as an integral part of Malta. They are of course absolutely right. But over the millennia Gozo seemed to have garnered for itself the ability to assume a measure of autonomy as far as administration is concerned. Today we speak of the regionality of Gozo, particularly within the context of the European Union. Many believe that because of Malta's impending accession to the Union, Gozo should feature as a Region. While this is of course true we must look back over the last two millennia at least to see how Gozo evolved administratively into a separate unit from Malta. Thus Gozo's undoubted qualifications as a separate region from Malta owe their origin to remote antiquity. Over the millennia right up to modern times there is an unbroken timeline of separate administration which is as important as it is fascinating. It would be useful if we were to give a bird's eye view of this interesting history.

Let us start at the beginning. Archaeologists hold that the first Maltese 'farmer' appeared in these islands before 5000 BC no doubt coming over from Sicily armed with a Neolithic farming "kit". Settling in Malta these farmers held on to the land and there is considerable evidence of the importation of material from nearby Sicily. This includes obsidian, that hard glass-like volcanic material which they used as a tool. In due course they evolved their own culture and produced that unique architectural marvel, the temple. We know very little about these people who are generally referred to as the Temple Builders. In fact some archaeologists insist on putting inverted commas around the word 'temple' as they are not so sure they were indeed buildings used for religious purposes. One of the most outstanding of these temple complexes is



Ġgantija. Other impressive ones are to be found in Malta where there are at least fifteen known temples or remains of temples. What has puzzled archaeologists is the technology used to construct these unique gigantic buildings. It is not only the planning, preparation and physical building which is hard to explain but also the logistics and the organisation behind this project. It is simply within the realm of conjecture trying to fathom out these problems.

A noted writer and archaeologist, Colin Renfrew in his book *Before Civilization* comes out with what has been described as the Chiefdom Theory<sup>1</sup>. He has examined the geographical distribution of these temples according to arable land and indeed managed to identify six territories, five in Malta and Gozo being the sixth. He has estimated the population of each territory to be not more than 2000. He then proceeds to postulate a theory which states that a hierarchical system is in place with a Chief at the top. Thus the people owing allegiance to a Chief would be organised in such a way that it would make possible the immense task of building a huge temple. All this is of course not borne out in any way by documents as writing had not been invented at the time. Yet for the purposes of this contribution it goes to show that Gozo might have been, even at such an early time in its history, governed autonomously from Malta.

In due course Neolithic Man gave way to the Bronze Age people. These warlike people concentrated on strategic positions and settled mainly on hills rather than plains. In Gozo one of the best known settlements is in-Nuffara the hill which stands between Xaghra and Nadur. For the purposes of this subject we have to omit this period as we cannot claim to know much about their organisation. The only thing we know for certain is that they defended strategic hill-top positions, both in Malta and Gozo with a Bronze Age walled village still clearly visible at Borg in-Nadur, Birzebbuga, Malta.

## **Punic Gozo**

The next important period is of course the Punic Period. The Phoenicians colonised Malta before the eighth century BC<sup>2</sup>. It is believed that Malta presented a strategic commercial location for this trading people. The Phoenician colony of Gozo, renowned for its ports<sup>3</sup> was one of the foremost colonies in the Central Mediterranean. Its importance can be gauged from the temple discovered and excavated at Ras il-Wardija in the 1960's. The most

important relic of the Punic period in Gozo is the so-called Melitensia Quinta, a small inscribed marble tablet. This is of extreme importance because it is the oldest political document in Gozo and indeed Malta. This tablet is generally ascribed to the II century BC, though the late Sabatino Moscati thinks it is earlier.<sup>4</sup> In this inscription, which has the ring of an official proclamation, it repeats twice the formula "The people of Gozo". This clearly states that Gozo was an autonomous unit. So much so that in this inscription, which records the construction and renovation of three sanctuaries, we are given the names of officials.

According to Michael Herzal<sup>5</sup> there was a fully fledged senate in Gozo. The members came from noble families. There were two *rabs* who also came from the senatorial class. These two magistrates held office probably for one year as in Rome and Carthage. The insight we are given into the governance of Gozo at the time confirms the autonomy which this island enjoyed. The duality at the head of the Government is common also in Carthage which was never an imperial state but was a collection of city states. Indeed Malta at the height of its Punic period was also founding colonies elsewhere. The city of Acholla on the Eastern Tunisian coast was colonised by Phoenicians from Malta<sup>6</sup>. This attests to the importance of the Phoenician colony of Malta. We have seen how the administration of Gozo in Punic times was separate from that of Malta.

## **Roman Gozo**

Malta became part of the Roman Empire in 218 BC during the Second Punic War. It appears to have been given its own senate. Gozo's importance as a separate unit is well documented. The setting up of the Gozo Municipium testifies to the importance the island occupied in Roman times. The minting of coins in Gozo in the early Roman period testifies to the importance of Gozo with equal powers as that of Malta. With its own Municipium Gozo had a certain autonomy. It is true that both islands were ruled by a single Procurator. In the Chrestion inscription<sup>7</sup> it is clearly evident that there was one Procurator for both islands. This does not diminish from the autonomous powers of the Gozo Municipium. In fact the granting of the status of Municipium meant a certain measure of autonomy which excluded an independent foreign policy. The Ceres Julia inscription in Gozo mentions a *quinquevir*, one of five

councillors or *decuriones*. This further confirms the existence of the Gozo Municipium<sup>8</sup>. It appears that this privilege was given to Gozo and Malta after the Roman conquest in 218 BC as a follow up of the Punic tradition of a dual form of Government individually for both islands.

The Municipium councillors administered the island with wide powers. They were generally elected but in due course the office became hereditary. They came mainly from the prosperous classes and rather than being paid they were expected to contribute financially to projects of a public works nature. In spite of this the office attracted honour and indeed for a period, the office was competed for. One of the five councillors was deemed to be the president of the council. It is interesting to note that one undated inscription found in Gozo records the setting up of a statue in honour of the president of the Council, one Cestius Poampius Varenianus Aemilianus who was not of Gozo but had been born in Paris. There were other inscriptions attesting to *quinquevirs* and the Council or Municipium which amply prove Gozo's autonomy during the long years of the Roman period. In fact the most recent of the inscriptions is datable to the third century AD, a full five hundred years after the arrival of the Romans.

As we have seen the Roman period provides a rich heritage of inscriptions which tells us a lot about Gozo's autonomous state. Unfortunately remains from the period just after the Romans are very scarce. The Byzantine period, which is so rich in remains in other countries, particularly Italy, is practically unrecorded in finds and inscriptions. In the early 1960's, however, a find was made in Gozo which throws some tantalising light on Gozo's political administration during this period. The find is a small leaden seal datable to the eighth century AD. It attests to an *archon* called Theophylact. This might indicate that Gozo had its own *archon* separate from that in Malta. One historian holds that Gozo was an important outpost of the empire and more important than Malta and this can perhaps be gleaned from the composite word *Gaudomelete* for both islands in a seventh century AD document quoted by this historian<sup>9</sup>.

We know practically nothing about the administration in Gozo during the Muslim period. It is held that the Arabs reduced the size of the old Roman town and limited the defensive walls to those encircling the Citadel as can be witnessed today. The finding of the Maimuna Tombstone, a re-used Roman marble slab, is perhaps the best known and certainly the most artistic of Arab



finds in both islands. But it has no relevance to the subject being treated. Indeed doubts about its Gozo origin have lately been expressed.<sup>10</sup> Some historians claim that the Maltese Islands were practically uninhabited during Muslim times, though this is challenged by other historians. With the so-called Norman conquest of 1091 Gozo features as being sacked by the liberating Roger the Norman on his way back to Sicily after allegedly ridding Malta of its Muslim rule. This is briefly mentioned in Goffredo Malaterra's eyewitness account of Count Roger's raid.<sup>11</sup>

## The Universitas

The next milestone in the governance of Gozo must surely be the setting up of the Gozo Universitas in the late fourteenth century. This institution, first mentioned in 1373,<sup>12</sup> survived till 1818. It is not certain when Gozo was granted this institution. The confusing times of the late Middle Ages saw the islands being assumed in the royal demesne and then being alienated from it. The pendulum swung back and forth several times. The Maltese and particularly the Gozitans often considered and made use of windows of opportunity to obtain advantages in these difficult feudal times.

For instance in 1335, the Aragonese King Peter II received complaints from the citizens of Messina and Syracuse that the Gozitans were ignoring their Customs franchise thus charging merchants from those cities the full dues. This was done on the pretext that Gozo was no longer forming part of the royal demesne. The King retaliated by instructing the Gozitans to abide by the customs franchise. He gave these instructions to officials in Gozo including but not exclusively the *procuratores bonorum*.<sup>13</sup>

That the Gozo Universitas was autonomous and independent of that of Mdina can be gauged from various written sources. In 1487, the jurats of Syracuse wrote to the Malta Universitas to inform it that the King of Aragon has signed a truce with the King of Tunis. They include a copy for the Maltese to forward to the Gozo officials. One notes that it is not the news which has to be conveyed to Gozo but an actual copy of the letter enclosed therein "*vi mandamula copia interclusa*"<sup>14</sup>.

In 1523 an outbreak of plague in Malta gives rise to correspondence between the two Universitates regarding the curtailment of communications<sup>15</sup>. The words used are rather harsh and the fact that a war of words took place

between the two Universitates indicates the separate jurisdiction of each and their respective autonomy. Three years later relations seem to have returned to normal such that the Captain of Gozo, Giovanni Soria on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1526 writes to the Maltese Universitas giving an account of an attack of two Moorish vessels on two Maltese vessels between Xlendi and Dwejra and giving them advance warning that these enemy vessels were sailing towards Malta<sup>16</sup>.

The Universitas was composed of four jurats and headed by a Hakem or Capitano della Verga. This state of affairs changed when the Knights of St John arrived in Malta and Gozo in 1530. In fact they abolished this post and in 1551 they appointed a Knight Grand Cross as a Governor of Gozo with plenipotentiary powers. In that fateful year the Turks laid siege to Gozo and carried most of the population, including the first Governor, to slavery. Thereafter the Knights resumed this system of appointing a Governor. There exists a list of Governors of Gozo reaching right down to the end of the eighteenth century. In 1801, the British appointed a Maltese Governor, Emmanuele Vitale who was followed by another one Filippo Castagna in 1803.

Turning back to the Universitas one must appreciate that this body was municipal in nature and generally dealt with the day to day affairs of Gozo. This notwithstanding, given the precarious state of travel between Gozo and Malta and the fact that Gozo for most of the Medieval period was generally left on its own, the Universitas may rightly be referred to as the Local Government of Gozo. In the second half of the fourteenth century, the troubled times included revolts against the King. We have documentary evidence which shows that the King rewarded faithful vassals for helping to subject Gozo to royal obedience<sup>17</sup>. Much earlier, in 1274 to be exact, the Genoese attacked and sacked Gozo to avenge the seizure by the Anjevins of two Genoese ships in Malta. Not for the first nor the last time, Gozo was depopulated. In fact the document clearly says that the Genoese leader *Gaudium depopulavit*<sup>18</sup>

The elections of jurats took place yearly on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, the feast of St John. The Universitas had its own officers who carried out their duties under the control of the jurats. In the eighteenth century the jurats managed to obtain certain privileges, including the wearing of special togas, and were allocated special pews in the Collegiate Church.

The Gozitan jurats were very jealous of their rights and when the Order of St John had been given Malta and Gozo in 1530 by Charles V of Spain they had sent him letters seeking reassurance about their rights. He replied to these from Brussels in March 1531 putting their mind at rest. In the meantime early that same year they had informed the Grand Master of the *capitula* or privileges which the Gozo Universitas enjoyed.<sup>19</sup>

It was during the period of the Knights that the coat-of-arms of the Gozo Universitas appeared for the first time. In fact these arms, an important milestone in Gozo's heraldic history, consist of three hills, black on a silver field. The motto, very apt for Gozo, runs as follows "*fertilis ab undis caput effero*" (fertile I raise my head from the waves). Examples of these arms are to be found in various places. Two places I know of are in the Citadel and in the old washing places at Fontana.

The Universitas was abolished with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1819 by proclamation issued by Governor "King" Tom Maitland.<sup>20</sup> With the abolishment of the Universitas, Gozo lost a form of Government which had seen it through thick and thin for at least 450 years. Thereafter the administration of Gozo lost most of its independence and for the next century a number of officials carrying diverse titles led the so-called administration of Gozo.

## **French Gozo and later**

The crucial last two years of the eighteenth century marked an important, not to say unique, chapter in the history of Gozo's administration. The French under General Reynier landed in Gozo on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1798. Though there were a few skirmishes, Gozo was taken rather quickly. The capitulation terms were succinctly put in six Latin words: "*Honores, proprietates et religionem habebitis maiorum*" (Your privileges, property and religion will be safeguarded). Betrayed by the Governor of Gozo, De Mesrigny and a handful of Knights who were nowhere to be seen, the Gozitans seemed to find an accommodation with the French. The French maintained the Universitas and endorsed the jurats that had been elected previously under the Knights. They split up Gozo into two municipalities and appointed members for them. Daily life seems to have settled down initially but the backlash of what happened in Malta had its effect in Gozo. Indeed when the Maltese rose up against the



French in September 1798, the Gozitans followed suit and in no time reclaimed the forts previously in French hands, except for the Citadel and Chambray. In due course this latter fortress fell into Gozitan hands, and the French led by Col. Lockey remained locked up in the Citadel. The Gozitans felt the need to set up an institution to plan the siege of the Citadel and the governing of Gozo, now almost completely in local hands.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1798 an important meeting took place. This was a congress of the people of Gozo during which a document was drawn up and a council of Government elected. The document is a very important one as it proclaims that the Gozitans do no longer recognise French rule and therefore proclaim the setting up of a Provisional Government. Arciprete Saverio Cassar was elected Head of the Government and Superintendent General. Other persons were elected to take command of the various villages. It is not within the scope of this work to discuss in detail the interesting struggle and siege of the Citadel. Suffice it to say that on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1798 the French capitulated. This was preceded by a meeting between Arciprete Cassar and Lord Nelson on his ship off Gozo during which the terms of capitulation were drafted out. As they later did in Malta, the French garrison refused to capitulate into the hands of the Gozitans, probably for fear of reprisals. They laid down their arms and surrendered to the English who had arrived for the purpose from Malta under the leadership of Captain Creswell of the Marines. The next day, the 29<sup>th</sup>, "the place was delivered up in form to the deputies of the island".<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that the English flag was raised at the Citadel on the 28<sup>th</sup>, probably for the first time in these islands. Yet it was substituted the following day by the Neapolitan colours as the provisional head of Government felt that with the Knights relinquishing their rule of Malta, the island reverted back to the successor of the Spanish King, viz. the Bourbon King of the two Sicilies in terms of the diploma of cession of Malta to the Knights by Emperor Charles V.

In the meantime, however, Gozo considered itself independent and there are documents which describe Gozo as "La Nazione Gozitana".<sup>22</sup> For two whole years and more, the Gozitans carried out the business of Government in a completely independent way. They maintained relations with the leaders of the Maltese who were undertaking the siege of Valletta where the French had retreated behind the formidable bastions of the Maltese capital city. These relations were not always smooth, and in spite of the fact that most of the stores found in the Citadel had been sent to Malta to feed the famished

population and arm the insurgents with arms and ammunition left by the French, Arciprete Cassar was censured for returning back to Malta some Maltese who had been sent as prisoners to Gozo. Arciprete Cassar's actions were considered politically unacceptable to the English who eventually denied him the Governorship of Gozo. In fact he died in relative obscurity and it is indeed shameful that ungrateful Gozo has not yet found an opportunity to pay suitable tribute to one of its greatest sons.

### **Commissioner for Gozo**

The next century was marked by a succession of officials,<sup>23</sup> some English but mostly Maltese (not Gozitans), who theoretically were in charge of the administration of Gozo. Initially the titles sound more of revenue-gathering and rent-collection of Government lands than of administration. The first of these so-called administrators was Archibald Dalzell, Collector of HM's Land Revenue. In 1884 the title was somewhat changed to Assistant Secretary to Government. The real and lasting change to the title occurred after the grant of self-government to Malta in 1921. From then onwards the title was established as that of Commissioner for Gozo. This lasted to 1973 when Mr Reuben Bonello left Gozo as the last Commissioner for Gozo. Thereafter, two holders of the post were appointed Assistant Secretary to Government, and the last one, Secretary for Gozo Affairs.

As has been stated, the powers of the head of administration in Gozo from 1819 till 1921 were very limited as the nomenclature of the holder suggests. After the coming into force of the Amery Milner constitution in 1921 and with the assumption of the name of Commissioner for Gozo, the holder became responsible for all Government Departments in Gozo except for the Police. This lasted right up to the grant of the MacMichael Constitution in 1947.<sup>24</sup> Eventually, these responsibilities were whittled down in such a way that the Commissioner for Gozo became almost a figurehead. The reason for this is obvious since the new Ministers wanted a tighter control and a bigger share in the administration of Gozo, particularly since the 1947 Labour Government, though obtaining a substantial majority in the Legislative Assembly, had failed to capture a single seat from the Gozo electoral district. In fact in the elections held in 1947 Gozo returned three seats for the newly formed Gozo Party and two seats for the Jones' Party.

Subsequently the Government set up a Commission for Gozo, headed by the Commissioner for Gozo. The Commission held thirty-eight sittings and presented its report in 1949. The report clearly states in its conclusion that until the duties of the Commissioner for Gozo were strengthened there was little hope that the problems of Gozo would be solved. In conclusion the report clearly and prophetically states that the only alternative to this would be the appointment of a Minister for Gozo. As usually happens in respect of Gozo, the report of the Commission was not even published let alone implemented. It was allowed to gather dust and in due course forgotten.

### **The Gozo Civic Council**

Vesting the Commissioner for Gozo with greater powers seemed to be the solution as had been long argued. The only flaw was that this was undertaken at a time when both Malta and Gozo were labouring under a substantial democratic deficit. In those years (1958-62) the country had no representative Government as the Constitution had been suspended in 1958 after the resignation of Mr Minto from Government. This political vacuum was of course not the ideal time to change course. Indeed the thirst for freedom was beginning to be felt, and in fact within five years from the most retrograde form of colonialism, Malta was propelled into independence.

But before that happened, another important event was conceived in Gozo. The setting up of the Gozo Civic Council provides an important milestone in Gozo's long governance timeline. This came into being by law in 1961 by Ordinance XI. A brainchild of Dr Anton Tabone, the Gozo Civic Committee had been set in 1959 and proved to be the precursor of the first statutory local government legislation. In June 1961, the first elections under the new law were held and Dr Tabone became the first President of the Gozo Civic Council. Until the early months of 1962 the Gozo Civic Council was the only democratically elected administrative body in the Maltese islands. With the enactment of this law, Gozo was given administrative autonomy. The Gozo Civic Council became responsible for public works, sanitation, museums, gardens, water and electricity, sewers, public dispensaries, and was given the possibility of establishing the order of priority of works under a global vote. It conducted its affairs with seriousness and efficiency. No wonder that it was regarded as a worthy successor of the old Gozo Universitas. For twelve whole years it flourished, and Gozo felt its benefits. As has been said, it was born in



a political vacuum. However it survived when the Nationalist Government took office under the Blood Constitution in 1962. It also survived when the Independence Constitution came into effect in 1964. When there was a change in Government in 1971 the first rumblings were heard. The Mintoff administration never saw eye to eye with the Gozo Civic Council and sought every opportunity to bring about its dissolution. In 1973 a shameful referendum was held in which an infinitesimal fraction of the electorate voted. Thereafter on the strength of this result the Gozo Civic Council was dissolved and Gozo was once again robbed of a say in its administration.

There followed a series of attempts to try and restore some sort of power to the senior civil servant in Gozo and in due course under the Mifsud Bonnici administration a Parliamentary Committee for Gozo was set up. To make up for the fact that the Labour Government had only two seats from the five Gozo ones, the committee was stuffed with civil servants to engineer a "majority" for the Government. The Nationalist Members refused to attend this "Parliamentary" Committee and even though some sittings were held, nothing came of it.

## **Ministry for Gozo**

The next important milestone was the setting up of the first Ministry for Gozo. After the 1987 General Elections there was a change of Government, and the newly elected Nationalist Administration, in keeping with its electoral manifesto, included a Minister for Gozo in the Cabinet in the person of Mr Anton Tabone, the son of the founder of the Gozo Civic Council. The importance of this appointment lies in the fact that it gave Gozo for the first time not only administrative autonomy but an actual seat in the Cabinet. Except for the short lived Labour Administration of 1996-98 there has been a Minister of Gozo who oversaw and administered all Government Departments and answered to the Cabinet. The benefits accruing to Gozo have been enormous. Attention is more focused and the physical presence of the Minister in Gozo ensures that progress is effectively made and monitored. The development of Gozo in the last fifteen years includes the setting up of sports facilities, infrastructureal works, progress in communications with Malta, the Gozo Centre of the University of Malta, tourism and other projects.

## **Local Councils**

The setting up of Local Councils in Malta and Gozo in 1993 can be regarded as the extension of the Gozo Civic Council experiment to the whole nation. Even though twenty years had passed since the inglorious demise of the Gozo Civic Council, the benefits accruing from a policy of decentralisation of government lingered in the collective memory of politicians. The Local Councils Act is now a reality and has also been entrenched in the Constitution.

Gozo was given fourteen Councils and elections have regularly been held in a third of all localities each March. As far as can be ascertained in the relatively short time that they have existed, it appears that they are in fact a success. Combined with the Ministry for Gozo, the Local Councils now provide a regional experience for Gozo which it is hoped will figure and evolve within the European Union framework.

## **Regional Council**

The short-lived Labour Government of 1996-98 published a White Paper proposing a Regional Council for Gozo. Subsequently a Draft Development Plan for Gozo for the period 1998-2000 was also published. Both these documents drew attention and criticism. However the sudden Parliamentary defeat of the Government and its subsequent defeat in the elections of 1998 put paid to any further action. With the return of the Nationalist Party to Government in September 1998, a Minister for Gozo was again appointed and the idea of a Regional Council on the lines proposed by Labour was shelved.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion one can say that the story of the governance of Gozo is an interesting and fascinating one spanning at least two millennia if not more. It is a story of good government and a long struggle for autonomy. It is indeed a good example to today's youth of the determined spirit of the Gozitans to manage their own affairs under various dominations.

- <sup>1</sup> Colin Renfrew: *Before Civilisation* Penguin Books pp 161-174
- <sup>2</sup> Sabatino Moscati: "The World of the Phoenicians" Cardinal Books p 237.
- <sup>3</sup> Diodorus Siculus quoted by Paul C. Saliba *New Definition of GWL, the Punic Name for Gozo* in "The Sunday Times" 14<sup>th</sup> January 2001.
- <sup>4</sup> Sabatino Moscati: *La Civiltà 'Mediterranea*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore p 259
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Heltzer: *The inscription C,1,132 from Gozo and the political structure of the island in the Punic period* in "The Journal of Mediterranean Studies, Vol 3, No 2, 1993, Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta.
- <sup>6</sup> Stephen of Byzantium *Ethnica*, (ed. A.Meineke) p 152, 19-20.
- <sup>7</sup> This inscription found in Malta refers to "Chrestion...procurator of the islands of Malta and Gozo". It is datable to the reign of Augustus.
- <sup>8</sup> Horatio C.R. Vella *Gozo in Classical Literature* in "Gozo and its Culture" 1995, p 32.
- <sup>9</sup> Mario Buhagiar *Gozo in the late Roman, Byzantine and Muslim times*, in: 'Melita Historica' Vol XII no 2 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>12</sup> *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, Part II ,Documents in the State Archives, Palermo, MUP, 1999, p 66.
- <sup>13</sup> A.T. Luttrell *The Administration of Gozo 1335*, in 'Melita Historica', Vol VII, no 1.
- <sup>14</sup> *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*. Part III, Documents of the Maltese Universitas, 2001, p 59.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p 157.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid* p 174.
- <sup>17</sup> *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, Part II Documents in the State Archives of Palermo, MUP 1999, pages 84, 238, 240.
- <sup>18</sup> Anthony E. Luttrell: *Medieval Malta*, 1975 page 41.
- <sup>19</sup> *The Making and unmaking of the Maltese Universitas*, a supplement of "Heritage", 1993, p 22.
- <sup>20</sup> *Malta Government Gazette*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1819.
- <sup>21</sup> Mons Alfredo Mifsud: *Origine della Sovranità 'Inglese su Malta*, Malta, 1907, p 173.
- <sup>22</sup> Rev Dr Joseph Bezzina: *La Nazione Gozitana*, in 'The Sunday Times' 25<sup>th</sup> October' 1998.
- <sup>23</sup> For a detailed list with titles and dates see article *Il-Kapijiet tal-Amministrattzjoni f'Ghawdex*, by Anton F. Attard, in "It-Torca" 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1994.
- <sup>24</sup> Unpublished manuscript of speech by Dr Francesco Masini delivered at a lunch given for Commissioner for Gozo, Joseph W. Attard, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1959. The occasion was the increase of responsibilities in the office of Commissioner for Gozo.



