

THE G OZO OBSERVER

No. 44, 2021
ISSN 1996-3114



www.um.edu.mt/ugc/publications

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The Gozo Observer

The Journal of the University of Malta – Gozo Campus. Published two times a year with the support of the Ministry for Gozo.

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Print version: ISSN 1996-3106
Online version: ISSN 1996-3114

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Front Cover Picture: Xlendi valley,
Courtesy of Joseph Calleja.

Editorial: The University Gozo Campus – Thirty Years On

Almost thirty years ago, in August 1992, I was asked by the University of Malta to coordinate courses which could be offered in Gozo. Later I learned that Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, then University Rector, was being very actively prodded by Mr Anton Tabone, then Minister for Gozo, to open a University branch in Gozo. At first I was inclined to refuse the offer. I was sure that very few lecturers – if any – would want to offer their services in Gozo, given the time and discomfort involved in travelling to and from the Island. Relying on Gozitan lecturers was not an option, since there were very few of them and in any case, most of them worked in Malta. Finding a solution to this problem was a major challenge.

The solution turned out to be a very simple one. We decided to hold the lecture sessions on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. This arrangement worked, because it did not unduly disrupt the work schedules of the lecturers involved. Additionally, this permitted them to combine work with leisure. Crossing over to Gozo every weekend or every other weekend still involved discomfort for the lecturers, especially due to the fact that a two-hour lecture required about four hours travelling and, as often as not, a long wait at the Ċirkewwa Quay on Friday afternoons. This, not to mention the frequent inclement weather during the winter months. The response of the lecturers was however satisfactory, and the first BA course commenced in February 1993.

The Gozo Campus story would not even have been conceived had it not been for the initiative taken by the Hon. Anton Tabone who had a vision which he wanted to put into practice. Professor Roger Ellul Micallef, Professor Juanito Camilleri and Professor Alfred Vella, who succeed Professor Serracino Inglott as University rectors, continued to extend excellent support to the Gozo Campus. We also found very useful support from the Ministry for Gozo.

I served as Director of the Campus between 1992 and 2002, and was succeeded by Professor Joe Friggieri (as Pro-rector for Gozo) and Professor Louis F. Cassar as well as Professor Philip Von Brockdorff

(as Rector's delegates), the three of whom continued building on and improved the work I had started. The lecturers who accepted the Gozo assignment also played a major role in the success story of the Gozo Campus. It goes without saying that without them, classes would not have been held, and the whole project would have floundered.

During its 29 years of existence, the Gozo Campus has seen many things happening there. Students have got married during their studies, others have had babies (one student had two). Many found their partners in marriage at the campus. The campus has experienced sad events, in particular when a death of a former student or lecturer was announced. It also had joyous events, especially when students graduated. We have seen students on the verge of desperation on learning that they failed a study unit and others in a state of jubilation after getting an A, especially when they expected a lower grade.

The Gozo Campus has helped hundreds of Gozitan students to graduate from a tertiary institution, thereby offering the much needed services for the promotion of higher education in Gozo. Most students at the UGC are mature students with a full-time job, and they would not have found it possible to travel to Malta to attend part-time courses.

I am of the opinion, that the campus has done much more than was expected of it. Many would have thought that the campus would just offer a few evening lectures, with some possibly leading to a certificate or a diploma. In reality the campus has done much more than that. Many degree courses have been offered in Gozo, including post-graduate ones.

The campus also involves itself in publications. Its publications include *The Gozo Observer*, issued twice yearly, and a number of books. The campus has proved itself capable of offering University courses in Gozo. It also has potential as a regional, national and even international conference centre, given that a well-equipped conference hall is in the offing.

Lino Briguglio

A Regional Development Strategy for Gozo

MARIO BORG

Introduction

A consultation document on Gozo Regional Development Strategy for 2021-2030 that was launched in July by the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) will serve as a roadmap for future initiatives undertaken with respect to Gozo in the next ten years.

The draft strategy proposed on a number of key priority areas that are crucial for the future success of Gozo. These cover all aspects from social development, development of new industries to the islands' infrastructure, ensuring a holistic approach that safeguards and sustains the wellbeing of Gozo, its inhabitants, visitors, business investors, and future generations.

The GRDA has put forward for discussion over 80 measures across eight key priority areas, outlining how these and other measures will be incorporated following consultation. The key priority areas are Spatial Planning and Sustainable Urban Development; Infrastructure and Accessibility; Economic and Talent Development; New Economy; Sustainable Tourism; Social Development; Rural Development and Eco-Gozo and finally Culture, Heritage and the Arts.

Why the Need of this Document?

The consultation document embraces a strategy that acknowledges that Gozo is a small island with economic and social specificities as well as challenges that arise from the combined effects of double insularity, environmental vulnerability, population density and limited resources. The inherent characteristics of Gozo, among which its smallness and double insularity, imply the need for specific interventions in order to rectify market frictions and barriers which inhibit its development on a level playing field with the rest of the national and EU economy.



Cover photo of the GRDA Regional Strategy for Gozo 2021-2030 Consultation Document.

On the other hand, Gozo possesses environmental and cultural assets whose sustainable use could be productively used for the development of the island as well as the national economy. A good use of such assets is fundamental in the long run development path for Gozo. A use that will enhance their potential, enrich the social fabric of the Island and also contribute to the economic growth.

This last point is important. Although the Gross Domestic Product per capita of Gozo is lower than that of Malta due to lower rates of employment and lower productivity, there is upside potential if we, collectively, take the right decisions to safeguard the mentioned assets and make such use of them in a way that help compensate other structural challenges.

The draft strategy document considers spatial planning as pivotal to Gozo's development. To successfully implement this vision, it is essential to factor in both costs and benefits to avoid damaging Gozo's long term potential. Due to its extremely small size, the use of space often brings with it an element of friction caused by different sectoral claims.

In this context, Gozo requires a balanced approach where land use planning and sectorial policies are more in line with each other, avoiding as much as possible, situations which compromise future options. Gozo has untapped potential and can provide numerous opportunities for business to grow while offering a high level of quality of life to its residents. Creating productive employment needs to be at the core of a long-term strategy that ensures the creation of wealth while safeguarding the interests of future generations.

Although economic activity generates economic growth, it is important that this is not carried out at the unnecessarily high expense of natural and cultural resources. Standards of living do not depend exclusively on income and the scale of productivity. In certain cases, islands like Gozo may offer a better quality of living based on other factors besides income and production.

It is therefore essential that such factors are acknowledged, supported and incentivised in a way that complements sustainable economic activity in Gozo. The island's core needs should be strengthened and supported. Social cohesion through solidarity and networking should be acknowledged and encouraged. The Gozo that the strategy document foresees for the next decade is one that builds on its strengths to become a destination of excellence where quality matters over quantity.

The Key Thoughts Behind the Document: Internal Consistency and Focus on the Long-term

The draft regional strategy touches on a number of aspects and explores several dimensions. Two aspects were given particular attention: the importance that the document is internally consistent and that of having a long-term focus.

It is relatively easy to fall into the trap of isolating measures, especially when trying to present a rather holistic plan. It can often be the case that two or more particular measures are viewed positively when taken in isolation, but the results change when considered together. This is because one measure might have indirect results which offset the benefits generated from a separate measure. Hence, this draft strategy makes particular efforts to minimise such risks.

Gozo does not have the space to spare and cannot afford to accommodate every activity without a holistic approach from a planning perspective. The objective of the GRDA is to be a main actor in the research for a balance between the environment, economic and social aspects. The Regional Development Strategy will act as a guidance for all other regional and national policies, in terms of what outcomes are to be achieved, and minimise the risk of fragmentation between sectors and ensure that all the players are moving towards one unique goal, within the same set of parameters.

The second aspect is the focus on long-term solutions. In fact, the draft strategy, with its long-term approach based on accountability as well as checks and balances, strives to achieve the highest standards for Gozo and aims to take the island forward in a creative, sustainable and holistic way. This can be done while developing synergies with all stakeholders with a view to ensure a climate that is conducive to business development and the wellbeing of Gozitan society.

The following priority areas embrace the effort to protect the Gozitan lifestyle in full respect of its environment, resources, culture and identity and to ensure that all these play a significant part in presenting a vibrant community that attracts more visitors and investors to the island while sustaining the balance between economic growth and sustainable development.

The Priority Areas

The first priority of the draft strategy document is 'Gozo Spatial Planning and Sustainable Urban Development'. Gozo necessitates a focused approach towards an integrated system where land use, planning and sectorial policies are



Gozo Regional Development Authority CEO, Mr Mario Borg, explaining the proposed vision for Gozo for the coming ten years.

in synergy with Gozo characteristics. Spatial planning should be providing an expression to the economic, social, cultural and environmental policies relevant to the island's balanced regional development.

Optimal use of land increases the chances that land is available for the future envisaged spatial development requirements. It also safeguards and enhances Gozo's unique cultural and natural characteristics, which are an important requirement for economic growth, capable of improving the quality of life.

The goals under this priority of the strategy document are the following: A better quality of life for the residents of Gozo and visitors; A natural network of open space to be enjoyed by the community; Safeguards the green open spaces between villages which are Gozo's green lungs; Ensures that the rural communities remain vibrant and alive; Manages economic development to one that is consistent with and true to sustainable development; Planning and building a sustainable environment that contributes to economic prosperity of present and future generations.

The second priority of the strategy document is 'Infrastructure and Accessibility'. Gozo's double insularity impacts on the movement of people and goods as well as the provision of services. Gozo's economic performance is hindered by constraints on production and the lack of diversification that makes the strengthening of connectivity a primary consideration. Improved connectivity is crucial to continue improving Gozo's productivity and is key for Gozo to close the development gap and to serve as the basis for socioeconomic development based on Gozo as a distinct island. This requires an approach based on sustaining resilient infrastructure that can enhance connectivity in a safe and enduring manner to enable competitiveness and overcome insularity.

The goals under the second priority of the strategy document are the following: Build safe and resilient infrastructure that meets Gozo's today as well as future needs; Improve accessibility and connectivity to overcome insularity and increase the productive capacity of the economy; Build safe and enduring infrastructure that enables Gozo to boost competitiveness including attracting inward knowledge-based investment; Work closely with lead ministries responsible for implementing core backbone infrastructure.

The third priority of the strategy document is 'Economic and Talent Development'. The Gozo economy has traditionally been centered around a few sectors. Over the last four decades, a shift towards services became more evident but a manufacturing base, albeit small, is still present and should be supported. Irrespective of the type of activity, human talent is central to economic development. Gozo can offer a quality lifestyle location of choice for work, education, innovation, culture, health and tourism. Gozo stands to gain by attracting talent and promoting the provision of training and skills learning, organisation and career development.

The goals under the third priority of the strategy document are the following: Create Productive Jobs; Make Gozo an attractive place to work; Close the development gap between Malta and Gozo through the creation of higher value-added employment; Provide opportunities for micro firms, which are prevalent for Gozo's economy to grow.

The fourth priority of the strategy document is 'New Economy'. A holistic approach designed specifically for the island of Gozo is required for the development of a digital and innovative eco-system to establish the island of Gozo as a centre of excellence, research and innovation. Gozo has the potential to attract new, high growth industries that are on the cutting edge of technology and that can be an important driving force of economic growth and productivity. New products and services can be created using technology platforms and testing them in Gozo. The new economy can highly benefit from the second fibre optic cable and the Gozo Innovations Hub at Xewkija.

The goals under this priority include the following: Close the development gap between Malta and Gozo through the creation of higher value-added activities; Develop an eco-system of companies in the digital sector in Gozo; Attract talent required to allow these new economy sectors to expand to their full potential; Increase the overall competitiveness and resilience of the Gozitan economy; Establish Gozo as a centre of excellence in digital and technology innovation.

The fifth priority of the strategy document is 'Sustainable Tourism'. Tourism related activities generate considerable income and employment in the economy of Gozo. It is a pillar of Gozitan economy. At the same time, increased activity inevitably put pressures on the infrastructure and the environment. Thus, it is essential that more emphasis is made on the quality rather than on the quantity. This implies that certain type of tourism is incentivised and supported while monitoring takes place on other types of activities to be able to take corrective action when necessary to minimise any undesirable consequences.

The goals under this priority are the following: Increase the quality of visitors to Gozo and decrease seasonality; Improve the visitor's journey experience by partnering with the private sector to improve the Gozitan brand and product; Increase returning visitors; Create new 'anchor' attractions.

The sixth priority of the strategy document is 'Social Development'. Social sustainability and inclusion are central to improve the overall well-being and standard-of-living of every Gozitan citizen. Social

development is based on the willingness to nurture a people-centered culture that promotes equity, inclusivity, social justice, and sustainability to develop resilient and responsive Gozitan communities.

Social development addresses the specific and long-lasting demographic, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities of Gozo, by investing in citizens to increase social capital to enable shared prosperity. Future social development for sustainability and inclusion in Gozo will require all socio-political institutions and sociocultural systems to adjust their operational processes and practices to build up their abilities to withstand shocks to successfully meet the challenges of globalisation.

The goals under the sixth priority are: Strengthen Gozo's society and its communities' underlying social capital; Address the needs of the elderly members and promote active ageing; Support Gozo's youth and families; Develop secure communities; Eradicate social exclusion and discrimination; Facilitate the assimilation of an increasing diverse population; Ensure adequate social development infrastructure; Develop appropriate and effective responses to housing needs.

The seventh priority of the strategy document is 'Rural Development and Eco-Gozo'. Rural Development plays a key role in the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of Gozo. The island is rooted in its rural culture, and it is a central priority to preserve the cultural and traditional tapestry that makes Gozo a unique community. However, the preservation of Gozo's rural heritage is being challenged in view of development pressures.

The EcoGozo concept represents actions circulating around the pillars of sustainable development namely the economy, environment, society and culture. It aims to be the benchmark example of local government achieving an increasingly sustainable society through committed grassroots involvement by the Gozitan community.

The goals of this priority are: Keep rural Gozo an attractive place to live and work; Valorise Gozitan food and produce as a brand and strengthen its value under the EU Geographical Indications Framework; Support farmers in building sustainable enterprises



Gozo Regional Development Authority Chairman, Mr Michael Grech.

and in doing so increasing rural employment particularly among the younger generation; Carry out R&I to counter climate change impacts through technological developments; Protect and enhance Gozo's biodiversity, natural, traditional and historical heritage; Heighten Gozitan communities' awareness and appreciation of our natural, traditional and historical heritage; Handover to future generations a sustainably managed environment.

The eighth priority of the strategy document is 'Culture, Heritage and Arts'. On a national level, the culture and creative industry account for a substantial share of the value added created. Depending on its definition, the share can be considered as contributing to as much as ten per cent of value generated. For Gozo, potentially it can be even greater.

The island region's cultural asset base is also expected to increase next year, when the Gozo Museum project for an innovative, multi-disciplinary regional museum and cultural centre is scheduled to be completed. Gozo's art, culture and heritage should not be only protected and preserved but should be promoted through investment so that it continues to yield benefits in the years to come. This priority area should be read in conjunction with Reġjun Għawdex bid for Gozo to be the European City of Culture in 2031.

The goals under this priority are: Enhance accessibility and connectivity to cultural heritage, resources and activities even through digitalisation; Enable conditions for local talent to flourish; Revitalise and re-purpose heritage assets for new forms of cultural activities, and as a new source of income generation for creative industries; Enhance cultural connectivity and dialogue and strengthen regional cultural governance; Promote a culturally distinctive Gozo; Enhance economic diversification, enterprise stimulation and job creation through a stronger creative sector.

How will the Measures be assessed and eventually Implemented?

The consultation strategy document lists numerous policy measures under each of the eight priorities which can all be categorised and prioritised. This is done in view of the fact that the implementation requires prioritisation and resources. The GRDA is proposing a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), that aims to assess the priority of each policy measure in terms of its effectiveness, implementability and futureproofing by considering its contribution or the risks that it poses to several judgement criteria.

The basic concept of a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) is to evaluate the performance of different policies with respect to a set of judgement criteria that capture the key dimensions of the decision-making problem. Indeed, the criteria considered in this MCDA are to reflect the key needs of the economy of Gozo.

These criteria include: Better synergies between sectors – Improved collaboration between different economic sectors; A more balanced approach to investment – A balanced pattern of investment including productive, human, environmental, climate mainstreaming, social and institutional capital; Countercyclicality – Moderation of the impact of cyclical fluctuations due to the business cycle; Socio-demographic balance – Filling gaps related to demographic imbalances, social cohesion and inequality; Potential for mobilisation of social and civil actors – Promotion of the collaborative action between social and civil actors; Ability to attract public and private financial resources – Attraction of the necessary financial and other



Minister for Gozo Clint Camilleri addressing a press conference during the GRDA Strategy Document launch.

resources for implementation; Futureproofing – Sustaining the benefits over the longer term.

An important point is how the various measures will be implemented. It is safe to say that the GRDA will not be directly implementing the great majority of the measures that will be included in the final strategy. However, the GRDA will be responsible for overseeing that the strategy will be implemented. This will be achieved through a two-pronged approach.

First, where possible, internal resources will be used to implement a small number of measures. Secondly and most importantly, the GRDA will, in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo (MGOZ), delegate measures to entities within MGOZ and other competent National Authorities. To manage the collaboration with other external entities, the GRDA will be drawing a number of Performance Agreements (as per Schedule 1 of the Act) which will govern such relationships and make sure that roles and responsibilities are well defined.

The Next Steps

The consultation document has been launched. The consultation period was formally closed on

the 31st August. As GRDA, we have always and repeatedly stated that this consultation document is being proposed to simulate a discussion around the way we want to see Gozo in the next ten years and how to get there.

We invited all those that harbour an interest in Gozo, to come forward and propose ideas and measures. The consultation process resulted in over thirty meetings with different entities and NGOs and three public events. The result was that the GRDA received over 300 ideas, proposals, and suggestions which it will be analysing with a view to include in the final Regional Strategy document.

These ideas and suggestions will also be used as an input in the discussions that the GRDA will be holding with various national entities, given that these entities will remain the competent authorities on particular and specific areas, thus the engagement of national entities is fundamental.

Mario Borg is Chief Executive Officer at the Gozo Regional Development Authority.

Bernardo De Opuo

Fact or fiction?

JOSEPH BEZZINA

Four hundred and seventy years ago this year, the island of Gozo suffered its worst siege in recorded history. In his *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione et Ill[ustrissi]ma Militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano*, first published in Rome in 1602, Giacomo Bosio, the official historian of the Knights of St John, wrote how *questa tragedia* was consummated on Sunday, 26 July 1551.

The Ottomans under the military command of Sinan Pasha, a first-grade pasha, and Turgut Reis, the most dangerous corsair in the mid-sixteenth century, known by his peers and in popular culture by his nickname *Dragut*, had laid siege and bombarded the medieval citadel since early Friday morning. On Saturday night, Galatian de Sessé, the Governor of Gozo, in agreement with the principal inhabitants of the citadel, lowered Padre Bartolomeo Bonavia, an Augustinian friar, theologian and preacher, from the walls so as to parley with the enemy. It was agreed that the Gozitans would throw the gates of the citadel open on condition that the Ottomans would leave forty foremost citizens walk free.

The full story of the siege that led to the depopulation of Gozo in 1551 is chronicled in my just published book *1551 – the siege that stifled Gozo*. This contribution regards only *Bernardo De Opuo*, an unsung hero of this tragedy.

No One, Except a Sicilian Soldier

At dawn of Sunday, 26 July 1551, when, as agreed, the gates were thrown open, the Turkish troops did not rush inside. They were afraid of some stratagem and stood in front doubtful whether they could enter unhindered or not. After a few interminable moments, Padre Bonavia walked towards the entrance to let them in peacefully.

Hell, immediately broke loose. One detachment of the Ottomans fell upon the multitude and rounded them up in small groups. A second detachment started to ransack every church, chapel, and building



Bernardo De Opuo with a clenched fist and a drawn sword in his right hand ready to pummel the enemy approaching his home. His two lifeless daughters, that he had just ended their tortuous life, are strewn on his side. Design by Robert Caruana-Dingli (1882-1940) in *Outlines of Maltese History* (1943).

laying their hands on whatever could be carried away and destroying the rest. No one offered them the least resistance. No one, except a Sicilian soldier, Bernardo De Opuo.

In the year 1579, twenty-eight years after the Siege, the *Universitas Gaudisii* unveiled an inscription on the façade of a house inside iċ-Ċittadella in memory of this hero.

1579
AVDACIS MILITI
FORTVNA IVVAT
BERNARDO DE OPVO
SOLDATO IN GOZZO DE
VILLA MIRADOS

Fortune favours the bold combatant – Bernardo De Opuo, soldier in Gozo, from the hamlet of

In 1745, according to De Soldanis, the people held that the inscription had been affixed to the house of De Opuo. In a publication of the University of Malta, this episode was referred to as legendary. Other historians concurred, but sources prove otherwise.

The story of this valiant soldier of Gozo is first recorded by Nicolai Villagagnon in his *De Bello Melitensi* written in the immediate aftermath of the event.

mixture of soldier, scientist, explorer, adventurer, and entrepreneur. He professed in an account that he penned two years later, that he decided to travel to Malta immediately to offer his assistance during the looming siege of Malta. He left France before a general convocation of the knights, in fulfilment of his duty as a member of the Order so as to offer his help and advice. In *De Bello Melitensi*, published in Paris in 1553, he starts his story with the words: *erat in eorum numero vir Siculus*, there was amongst them a Sicilian.

The story is retold by Nicolas de Nicolay, who was in Malta in August 1551. In his treatise: *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales*, first published in Lyon in 1568, he starts his account: *C'est d'un Sicilien, de long temps habitué en ce lieu.*

De Bello Melitensi, that is quoted at length by Giacomo Bosio in the above quoted book, is reproduced word for word in its original Latin version by René-Aubert Vertot in his *Histoire des*



NICOLAS DE NICOLAY, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales*, Lyon 1568. First edition • BML – Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon.

Chevaliers Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem appelez depuis Les Chevaliers de Rhodes et aujourd'hui Les Chevaliers de Malte, first published in Paris in 1726. This is how he related the story in his English translation of 1728.

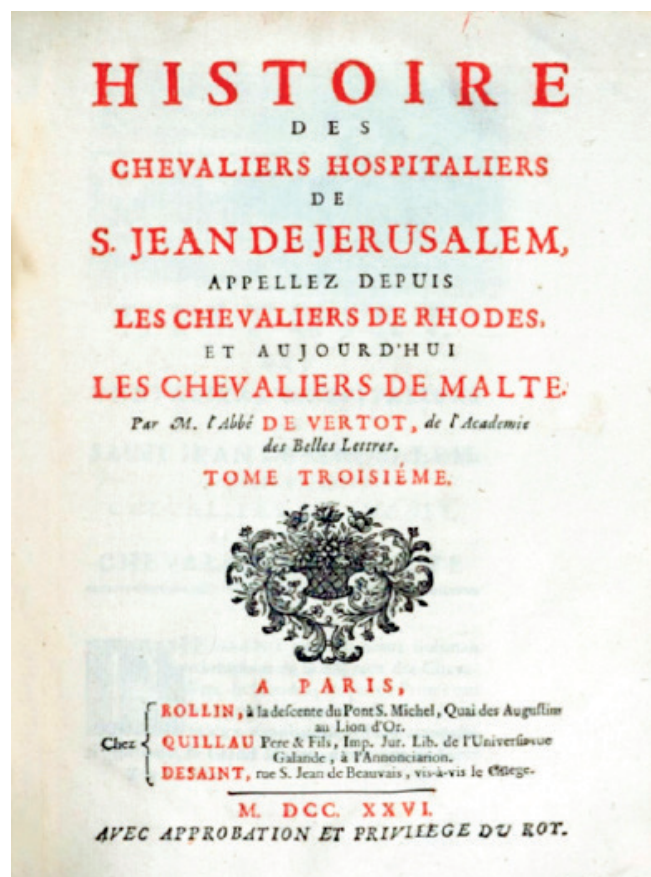
Among these poor inhabitants [of Gozo], there happened to be a Sicilian, that had been settled for many years at Gozo, who preferring death to slavery, delivered himself and all his family, by the inspirations of a bloody compassion, from the hardships and shame that attend upon slavery, after a very tragically manner. The Sicilian, transported with rage and jealousy, stabbed his wife and two young daughters whom he had by her; when resolving not to survive them, he takes up a fusee and a cross-bow, with which he killed two Turks, and afterwards throwing himself sword in hand into the midst of a crowd of enemies, he, after having wounded several of them, was cut to pieces, and met with the death he so eagerly sought after.

Giacomo Bosio, quoting the previous narratives as well as oral sources, concurs with the narrative. He

praises the bravery of this *soldato Siciliano* as he was one of the few who dared to offer resistance to the Turks. During the siege, he carried out his duties with untold bravery, but he was aware that the citadel could not hold out for long. Part of the outer fortifications were collapsing and the besieging army far outnumbered the defenders inside. As a knight, loyal to his oath of service, it was not certain death that troubled him, but the plight of his wife and daughters. He knew only too well what would happen if they were dragged away to slavery in a foreign land. So, he stabbed them one after another and was soon afterwards killed himself while fighting the Turks.

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne

The story of Bernardo caught the attention of none other than Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (23 Feb 1533–13 Sep 1592), the famous French essayist, one of the most significant philosophers of the French Renaissance, and widely regarded as the originator of the modern essay. He wrote about prominent



RENÉ-AUBERT DE VERTOT [L'ABBÉ VERTOT], *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem*..., Paris 1726 • BnF.



Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1570s) by an unknown artist • Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux.

personalities and ideas of his age in his sceptical *Essais*. In one of them, *Coustume de l'Isle de Cea*, an early essay written in the 1572–74 period, he refers to the Gozo episode.

This essay was first published in Book I, Chapter 3, in the first edition of the *Essais* of 1580. However, the Gozo episode does not appear in this first edition, nor in the following two expanded editions, nor in the subsequent major edition of 1588. However, De Montaigne continued to revise the text, to make improvements, and insert additions until his death in 1592. A famous copy of the 1588 edition – known as the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* – on which the author made these revisions is considered to be Montaigne's last literary wish.

The *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* – so called as the revision was carried out on the family estate at Saint-Michel-de-Montaigne, close to Bordeaux – is conserved at the *Musée d'Aquitaine*, Bordeaux. It includes the addition of the Gozo episode to the essay *Coustume de l'Isle de Cea* in his own hand.

This particular essay is considered a rhetorical masterpiece and it carries, as in other essays, an oblique title where the basic subject of the essay is reached only at its end. After a short preface, it deals with suicide from beginning to end – a rather dangerous theme to discuss in writing in 1580 if the author was not prepared to condemn it outright.

Montaigne argues both sides of the argument. He begins with a pro-suicide argument. Death is the *prescription for all our ills*, it is not to be feared. On the other hand, to kill oneself for any reason is not acceptable, there must be some moderation so that one's life is not ended over a minor incident. Yet if Fortune has given us such a blow that it is clear we cannot hope for life, we can choose death. Death is also permitted at one's discretion in order to avoid a worse one. Montaigne gives one example after another of suicide in order to keep one's honour or to avoid slavery or torture and death at the hands of the enemy. It is at this point that he inserted the story of Bernardo.

L'isle de Goze forcée par les Turcs, il y a quelques années, un Sicilien qui avoit deux belles filles prestes à marier, les tua de sa main, et leur mere apres, qui accourut à leur mort. Cela faict, sortant en ruë avec une arbaleste et une arquebouze, de deux coups il en

tua les deux premiers Turcs, qui s'approcherent de sa porte : et puis mettant l'espée au poing, s'alla mesler furieusement, où il fut soudain envelopé et mis en pieces : se sauvant ainsi du servage, apres en avoir delivré les siens.

When the Turks took the island of Gozo by storm a few years ago, a Sicilian, who had two beautiful daughters ready for marriage, killed them with his own hand, and, after them their mother, who came running up at their death. This done, he went out into the street with a cross-bow and harquebus, and two shots killed the first two Turks who approached his door; and then, taking sword in hand, he went furiously into the melee, where he was suddenly immediately surrounded and cut to pieces, thus saving himself from slavery after delivering his family from it.

The Inscription of 1579

Villagagnon and Nicolas de Nicolay refer to this hero without identifying him. His name is known from the 1579 inscription mentioned supra.

It is almost certain that it was the Governor with the *Universitas* that took the initiative to commemorate this valiant soldier. Fra Bernardo d'Aldana, the Governor of Gozo at that time (1578–1581), was a contemporary of the 1551 Siege. A well-known *Generale dell'Artiglieria*, he commanded artilleries in the Papal States in 1556–57, and in the planned, but eventually aborted, attempt to retake Tripoli in 1559. He resided inside the citadel and he must have heard an account of what happened from the survivors themselves, foremost amongst them Don Lorenzo de Apapis, then vicar at the Matrice and a citadel resident.

The inscription is surmounted by the date 1579, intertwined with a fleur-de-lis – a stylise lily composed of three petals bound together near their bases. It is especially known from the former royal arms of France, in which it appears in gold on a blue field.

The inscription starts with a widely diffused Latin proverb *audacis militi fortuna iuvat*. This axiom exists in several forms with slightly different wording but effectively identical meaning – *Fortune favours the bold combatant*. The closest in classical writings is *audentis Fortuna iuvat*, a phrase uttered by Turnus, the major antagonist of Aeneas, in the *Aeneid* by Virgil (VIRGIL *Aeneid* X, 284). *Fortuna*

raison humaine, cet accident de malheur, qu'il s'en vend delivré sans aucun inconuenient. Et Cælius & Brutus au contraire, acheuerent de perdre les reliques de la Romaine liberté, de laquelle ils estoient protecteurs, par la precipitation & temerité, de quoy ils se tintent auant le temps & l'occasion.

Mais dicit variis que labor matabilis aui

Reuoluit in melius, postea aliter reuifcit

La fin, ce en solide sur sa fortune la suit.

Plin dit qu'il n'y a que trois sortes de maladie, pour lesquelles eurer on aye accoustumé de se tuer la plus apte de toutes c'est la pierre à la vessie, quand l'urine en est retenue: la seconde de la douleur d'estomach, la tierce, la douleur de teste. Pour euitter vne pire mort, il y en a qui sont d'aduis de la prendre à leur poste. Les femmes Iuifues apres auoir fait circéneir leurs enfans, falloient precipiter quât de eux, fuyât la cruauté d'Antiochus. On m'a conté qu'en prisonnier de qualité, estant en nos conciergeries, les parens aduertis qu'il seroit certaiement condamné, pour euitter la honte de telle mort, apostiferent un prestre pour luy dire, que le Souuerain remede de sa deliurance, estoit qu'il se recommandast à tel saint, avec tel & tel vœu, & qu'il fut huit iours sans prendre aucun alimēt, quelque de faillance & foiblesse qu'il sentit en soy. Il l'en creut, & par ce moyen se desist sans y penser de sa vie & du dangier. Scribonia conseillant Libo son nepueu de se tuer, plustost que d'attendre la main de la justice, luy disoit, que c'estoit proprement faire l'affaire d'autrui, q̃ de cōseruer sa vie, pour la remettre entre les mains de ceux qui la viendroient chercher trois ou quatre iours apres; & que c'estoit seruir ses ennemis, de garder son sang pour leur en faire curée. Il se liēt dans la Bible, que Nicanor persecuteur de la Loy de Dieu, ayant enuoyé ses satellites pour saisir le bon vieillard Rabsas, surnommé pour l'honneur de sa vertu, le pere aux Iuifs, comme ce bon homme

O o ij



The inscription on the façade of the house of Bernardo De Opuo (1579), now at the Gozo Museum. It is replaced in situ by a replica • Heritage Malta / Daniel Cilia.

refers to luck or its personification, a Roman goddess.

This is followed by the name of the bold combatant, *Bernardo De Opuo*, identified as a *soldato in Gozzo*, a soldier in Gozo. It then refers to his stock, *de Villa Mirados*, that is, *from the hamlet of Mirados*. The word *villa* in late medieval times referred to a *piccolo centro rurale*, a small rural centre, hence a village or hamlet. He hailed from the otherwise unidentified village of *Mirados*, possibly a Castilian toponym, at a time when Sicily had been under the Aragonese for close to three centuries.

It is clear that the valour of De Opuo had remained alive in the collective memory.

The above is a résumé of the relative chapter in my book *1551 – the siege that stifled Gozo*, published and launched in November 2021 by the Cultural Heritage Directorate, Ministry for Gozo, on the 470th anniversary of the siege of Gozo.

Joseph Bezzina, born in Victoria, Gozo, is a graduate of the University of Malta and the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, from where he earned a first-class Honours doctorate in Church History. He was for seventeen years Head of the Department of Church History at the University of Malta. In 1989, he founded the Gozo Section of the *National Archives*, which he directed until his retirement in 2020. During the same time, he was Assistant National Archivist. He is the author of close to eighty books and many studies published in English, Maltese, French, German, and Italian.

Gozitan Prisoner of War killed at a Satellite Camp of Sachsenhausen

CHARLES BEZZINA

There is never a shortage of Second World War stories, as new ones are uncovered either in written or oral form. These stories about those terrible war years have now been written for posterity in illustrated volumes, leaving an undeletable record of those events marking the 20th century.

Despite their small size, Malta and Gozo also suffered the horrible effects of battle during the war years. The people of these islands had to defend themselves against Nazi and Fascist forces. Many Maltese and Gozitans had to don uniforms and defend their country; many ended up joining the artillery manning anti-aircraft and coastal guns. There were also those who joined the Merchant Navy whilst numerous others were enlisted or drafted as soldiers in the foreign lands they had emigrated to, to fight against the evil forces that were threatening world freedom.

The story that follows is not an extraordinary one but a lesser-known one, about a Gozitan, from the village of Għarb, Gozo, who under the ugly misfortunes of war ended up as a prisoner of war.

Gozitan Prisoner Shot in Berlin

The story takes us back to 25th March 1941, when the Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia was forced to sign the Tripartite Pact, putting his country in allegiance with Nazi Germany. This agreement was not supported by the people of Yugoslavia leading to a *coup d'état* commanded by General Dusan Simovic whereby King Peter II (nephew of the Prince Regent), who was just 17 years of age, took control of Yugoslavia instead of Paul. General Simovic headed the government and immediately broke the Pact. This move shocked Hitler to the extent that instead of invading Greece and Bulgaria, ordered the invasion of both Greece and Yugoslavia. On 6th April 1941, German forces attacked Yugoslavia with 33 Divisions, assisted by about 1,200 *Luftwaffe* planes. Although the Yugoslavs put on a brave fight,

they could do little to contain the overwhelmingly superior and well-equipped German forces. On 17th April, Yugoslavia surrendered.



Guzepp Cauchi at the age of 16. Photo taken in 1926.

Greece was invaded on the same day. In two days, Salonika fell into German hands. On 20th April, the Greek government announced that further resistance would be futile and Greece surrendered the next day.

The Nazi Swastika was unfurled on the 27th April on top of the Acropolis in Athens. British, Australian and New Zealand troops under General Wavell arrived from the North African campaign, landing in Greece during March 1941 in order to assist in the battle. The force, totalling 56,657 soldiers, was led by General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and included the 1st Armoured Brigade, the

6th Australian Division and the 2nd New Zealand Division. But despite this help, this force was forced to lock in a small area in Thermopylae. It was becoming evident that the British had no other option but to evacuate as many troops as possible from the island. The situation was similar to Dunkirk but under worse circumstances. On 26th April, German paratroopers captured the bridge over the Corinth Canal that joined the Peloponnese with the rest of Greece.

General Wilson was providentially the right man at the right place as he executed a skilful plan by which he managed to save the majority of the army under his command through evacuation to Crete and Egypt. The evacuation of the troops took place between 24th April and the 30th of April. Out of a total of 56,657 troops a little over 43,000 were evacuated, mainly to Crete. Most of the equipment and ammunition was left behind to fall into German hands. Apart from the casualties suffered by the British force, about 11,000 were taken prisoners under the command of Fieldmarshall Wilhem List. Among these prisoners was Ġużepp Cauchi, aged 31, a bachelor from Ġharb, Gozo.

Ġużepp Cauchi (Ta' Neriku), was born in Ġharb on 3rd January 1910. He was the son of Ġorġ, a policeman and Ġulja Mifsud.¹ His mother was from Qala. He had four other siblings: Neriku, Manwel, Lippu and Mari-Tereż. When he was aged 12, he was already demonstrating that he was a promising lad. He was a very courageous and daring person and possessed great skill and determination which later on, served him well in life, but ultimately cost him his life.

He was brought up and lived at house no. 81, Church Street, Ġharb. He enjoyed his time working in a small field or garden owned by his father in the same village. Towards the end of July 1926, when aged 16, he immigrated to Adelaide, Australia. His passport number was 889.²

Many other Gozitans sought to find virgin land in Australia to earn a decent living. For some time, he lived at Innisfail, Queensland and lived close to his cousin Mananni Mintoff. He was 5 feet 6 inches tall, with brown eyes and chestnut hair. Before

enlisting with the Australian Division towards the end of 1940, he worked on bridge construction work and when on holiday he spent his vacation time with Mananni Mintoff.

He also served as a soldier with the Australian 6th Division in North Africa in January 1941 under General Sir Archibald Percival Wavell during the campaign against the Italian forces. Under Wavell, they managed to capture Tobruk and later Benghazi. This streak of luck, under Wavell, lasted until 12th February 1941, when the German General Erwin Rommel arrived in Tripoli and commenced his brilliant offensive. On 4th March the 6th Australian Division and the 2nd New Zealand Division together with British troops were taken to Greece to help the Greek forces.



Ġużepp Cauchi in Australian Army Uniform.

When Ġużepp Cauchi was taken prisoner in Greece towards the end of April 1941, he was taken, together with his mates, on a long and arduous journey to the POW (Prisoner of War)

¹ PRG, Birth 1910/22.

² National Archives of Malta, Malta Foreign Affairs/01/889/26 (NAM/MFA/01/889/26).

Detention Camp or Nazi Stalag in the suburbs of Berlin, where he suffered very bad treatment. This camp was a satellite camp of the much larger Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Due to his lively and rebellious nature, Ġużepp tried to escape. As punishment, he was tortured. This also acted as a warning not to repeat any further attempts.

Although he appears to have died in an infirmary in Germany, according to the Parish Archives of Għarb, in reality Ġużepp Cauchi was killed by the Nazis on 4th September 1944, when he tried to escape again.³

During this last attempt, Ġużepp Cauchi had jumped the warning wire of the perimeter fence which was out of bounds to the inmates of the camp. He was shot as he attempted to jump the barbed wire.

This story was uncovered by the Gozitan researcher Frank Bezzina (1925-96) and was confirmed by the same author during 1976, when he compiled first-hand information from other prisoners who were with Ġużepp Cauchi in the same camp.⁴ In fact, one of the inmates of the camp told Frank Bezzina that when Cauchi tried to escape, he already had one foot out of the barbed wire, and his father, who was still alive, had received £50 as compensation.

A few years ago, a monument was erected by the Għarb Local Council and unveiled in memory of Ġużepp Cauchi in Santu Pietru, Għarb.

(This story, which is recorded in the 2020 published book ‘*Il-Qilla tal-Gwerra fuq Għawdex 1940-1943*’ with added details, was written by Frank Bezzina’s son, Charles Bezzina, author of several books on Gozo during wartime.)



The unveiling of the Għarb War Monument by the then Minister of Gozo Juystne Caruana, on Sunday, 25th November 2018.

Charles Bezzina, born in 1961, is a poet and a writer, who has published 20 books. He won twice the Book National Prize for poetry. He is also a researcher about Wartime Gozo, and has published several books about this subject. He is the son of the late Frank Bezzina (1925-96), who was the first writer in the Maltese Islands who wrote on Wartime Gozo in the 1970s. Charles Bezzina worked for 38 years at the Bank of Valletta.

³ Parish Archives, Għarb, *Liber Def.*, Vol VII No. 173.

⁴ See, *L-Oriżont* newspaper, (Malta) of 14 August 1979, 10.

Curious Gozitan Place-Names - Part III

Revealing some of Wettinger's Unpublished Gozitan Place-Names

SIMON SALAFIA

Introduction

In this article, some of the place-names from Godfrey Wettinger's publication (Wettinger 2000) are analysed and explained. In his excellent book about Maltese and Gozitan place-names, Wettinger lists a total of almost five thousand headings or entries (toponyms) from the earliest sources he had researched throughout his academic career till the year 2000, when this book was published. In the introduction of this book, under the subsection 'Comprehensiveness', Wettinger states that *'innumerable place-names have been missed in this work. Reasons are obvious. For one thing, it has not been possible to search all the possible sources of place-name documentation.'*

When he refers to Gozitan toponymy, under the same subsection, he states that the Military 6-inch to 1-mile Maps, prepared in the beginning of the 20th century do not include Gozo, and that *'J. Zammit Ciantar's thesis on Gozitan place-names contains a larger number of current place-names than the present work, but still misses scores of those dealt with here'*.

Moreover, in the Addenda (pages 637 to 645), Wettinger lists some 180 entries, out of which more than 30 entries refer to place-names in Gozo. As a general introduction, Wettinger states:

'The following entries contain verbal elements which could not be rendered confidently into the current standard Maltese orthography. They are given here so that the documentary information itself may be preserved and to enable others to provide their own explanations, perhaps in the light of fresh documentation.'

In this article 'new' or 'never-published' Gozitan place-names are identified thanks to the original documentation published in Wettinger's Addenda.

Some Important Considerations

The intrinsic wealth in Wettinger's publication is the massive amount of Maltese words found in documentary sources (mainly from the Notarial Archives in Valletta) yielding thousands of toponyms in the Maltese Islands, mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries. One must keep in mind that these words (in Maltese) precede Caxaro's Cantilena by at least a hundred years. However one must keep in mind that no standard Maltese orthography existed during this period, and hence each notary had the 'freedom' to write these Maltese words according to the best way he was academically trained to interpret the Maltese sounds that existed at that time. The fact that almost invariably the Gozitan toponym 'il-Gharb' is written as 'garb', 'garbi' or 'garbo' is a clear indication that the harsh sound of the Maltese "ġhajn" was being pronounced at that time. This is the equivalent of the Arabic "rġhajn" (ر). This is also attested by the Maltese word equivalent to a field, 'il-Għalqa', which is almost invariably documented as 'galca'.

Hence, when rendering the original documentation in today's standard Maltese orthography, one is faced or is exposed to errors or inaccuracies as explained below.

Possible inaccuracies by the notaries (in old documents)

Each notary could write the official contract in Latin, Sicilian, Catalan, Spanish and/or (Old) Italian, according to his academic formation. Hence, one may find a Maltese word/place-name with a Latin declension. Moreover specific 'sounds' or phonemes could be represented by different letters or digraphs. As an example, any 'ch' can easily be interpreted as having the Maltese 'k' or 'q' sounds or the Maltese 'ċ' or 'x', the latter two being more of a Catalan or Spanish influence.

One must keep in mind, that in this period of time (14th and 15th century), the Maltese language was more semitic oriented and hence more semitic productive. Moreover, certain Arabic sounds were still being pronounced, with no equivalence in any of the Romance languages known to these notaries. Hence these ‘sounds’ had to be adapted and written in the best way the notaries heard them.

One must keep in mind also that these notaries may or may not have understood the Maltese language. Hence one finds some forms of concatenation of two words or a different or an anomalous separation of two words. Some are easy to detect (for example: *ta libiar* > *tal-ibjar*), but others can pose difficulties.

In addition, one must keep in mind also that these notaries could have been prone to orthographic mistakes, either due to the fact of misinterpreting or misunderstanding the informant, that is the oral source, or because of their occasional spelling mistake.

Possible inaccuracies by the researchers

Researchers must be trained in palaeography when transcribing old documents. However, even the most trained researcher can find situations where there is uncertainty and/or ambiguity to decide how a word can be transcribed. Some letters can be easily confused, such as: an S with an F (or vice-versa) or an N with a U (or vice-versa) and an N with an M (or vice-versa).

There may also be inaccuracies when rendering the word into standard Maltese orthography. Moreover, the researcher can also state that he is transcribing the word as it is known to be written today (and not the grammatically correct renderings). Hence, today *Mġarr* is accepted instead of *Mġar*/*Mġâr*. Moreover, the researcher can state also that he is using an all-inclusive approach, meaning that if there are two or more possible interpretations, both are to be included. This will be the approach used in this article.

The Place-Names

In this article, only five different sources have been analysed and compared with other known toponyms, either from Gozo using the publication *The Place-Names of Gozo Volume I – Part 1* as a

point of reference. Sometimes, other place-names in Spain, Malta and Comino are used for comparative purposes only to be able to decipher and/or to give a plausible meaning to these place-names.

Place-names

1. Ġhalaq ta' Paskwalinu, il-Ġhalaq ta' Bisqallin, il-

Text: *Jl ghalac ta pascualino, territorium in contrata migiar Jxini*, Gozo (as stated by Wettinger)

Date: 1585

Source: Notarial Archives, Valletta (Malta) BGWe (2000), pg. 638, entry no.16

Comments: To transcribe this entry was quite straightforward when considering that there are other toponyms in Gozo having the lexeme “Ġhalaq”. Refer to BSSa (2020), pg. 140, where there are 8 entries (located in Munxar, Kerċem and Qala). Bisqallin is the archaic Maltese equivalent of Paskwalinu. Refer to the toponym *Hal Bisqallin* in BGWe (2000), pg. 273.

Meaning: There is no doubt that “Ġhalaq” is related to “Ġhalqa”, in the sense that this is a closed or an enclosed territory. However, it is difficult to state whether this is considered to be a singular noun or a noun in the collective form (like *Ramla – Ramel*). However, we do know that it belonged to Paskwalino or Bisqallin, and that this territory is located in the area of today's *Mġarr ix-Xini*.

2. Lok tal-Klejba, il-

Text: *Jlloc tal ghileipe, locum unum rusticum cum duabus clausunculis mandrettis cisterna et area in contrata ta Cabesa*, Gozo (as stated by Wettinger)

Date: 1585

Source: Notarial Archives, Valletta (Malta) BGWe (2000), pg. 639, entry no.4

Comments: The most problematic word to transcribe is *ghileipe*, but when one considers that there is the toponym *il-Wilġa tal-Kelba* (Refer to BSSa (2020), pg. 417: located in Ġhasri), and that this place-name is located in the vicinity, near the hamlet of Santa Luċija (previously known as *ta' Qabbiesa* or *tal-Qabbiesa*), the transcription of *Klejba* is quite plausible. For those who are not familiar with the Maltese language, *Klejba* is the semitic diminutive of *Kelba*.

Meaning: Here the most plausible meaning of Klejba is that of a nickname, especially since there is the definite article with the preposition ta' (tal-Klejba). Thus, this is the rural residence (locum unum rusticum) of this person, having also two small fields (clausunculis) or mandrettis (small mandras, considered to be small gardens in Gozo) and a cistern. This rural residence is located in the area of ta' Qabbiesa (today's Santa Lucija).

3. *Ibjar ta' Bejn il-Qlejja', tal-*

Text: *ta libiar ta beyn Jl chileye, clausura*, Gozo (as stated by Wettinger)

Date: 1594

Source: Cathedral Museum, Mdina (Malta) BGWe (2000), pg. 642, entry no.6

Comments: Here the most problematic word to transcribe is chileye, since this can be *Qlejja'* (the plural of *Qalgħa*, just as *Snajja'* is the plural of *Sengħa*) or *Qlejgħa* which is the semitic diminutive of *Qalgħa*. Given that there is the preposition *Bejn*,

which means 'between' in Maltese, the obvious choice is the plural form *Qlejja'*. This can be confirmed by comparative analysis with other place-names such as *Bejn il-Kmiemen*, today erroneously known as the Blue Lagoon. Refer to BSSa (2020), pg.16 and pg.17 for more examples in Gozo. These include *Bejn il-Ġebliet* and *Ta' Bejn l-Isqawi*. Here *Ġebliet* is the sound plural of *Ġebbla*, whilst *Isqawi* is the broken plural of *Saqwi*, whilst *Kmiemen* refers to both the islands of *Kemmuna* and *Kemmunnett*.

Meaning: This is quite clear: it refers to a field (clausura) having wells or cisterns (*tal-Ibjar*) located between hillocks (*Bejn il-Qlejja'*). However, the only place-name which possess the lexeme *Qalgħa* in Gozo according to Wettinger's Place-names is today written as *il-Qala*. Refer to BGWe (2000), pg.430. However this does not preclude that other hillocks in Gozo could be similarly described as *Qalgħa*. One must note that *Qalgħa*, is only given the meaning of a hillock in the Maltese context. The real meaning in Arabic is a castle. In Spain, there are innumerable places with the lexeme *Alcalá*, where



An early 19th century map showing the Area tal-Qabbiesa (known as Santa Lucija nowadays).

one can see either the castle or the ruins of the castle built during the Muslim occupation of Spain.

4. *Imwejjed tas-Sittin*, l-

Text: *Jl mueyd ta Sittayr, pecia terrae in contrata cabese*, Gozo (as stated by Wettinger)

Date: 1551

Source: Notarial Archives, Valletta (Malta) BGWe (2000), pg. 639, entry no.6

Comments: The most problematic word to transcribe into standard Maltese is *Sittayr*. Here, to date, the only plausible way to render this word is that it should have been *Sittayn*: the inaccuracy could easily be made by the Notary or by the Researcher. Hence *Sittayn* can easily be the dialectal version of *Sittin*. This is also reinforced by the surname Busuttil, where a certain Fidericu Busitin is mentioned in the Militia List (c.1417). Refer to BMCa (2003), pg. 60 where the occurrence of the surname *Butletin* is attested in Muslim Sicily in the 12th century thanks to Fiorini (1986). Moreover, it is pertinent to state that there are similar toponyms in Gozo with the same format. *Tal-Erbatax* is a place-name in Gozo attested both in Wettinger (2000) and Salafia (2020). Refer to BGWe (2000), pg.121 and BSSa (2020), pg.66. It is interesting to note Wettinger's source dates back to 1575. The second similar toponym is *Tal-Hamsin*, a field located at Xewkija. In this case, Wettinger's source is even earlier (1562). Refer to BGWe (2000), pg.296. Hence, by comparison, *tas-Sittin* is used since *ta' Sittin* is less likely and/or plausible.

Meaning: This place-name refers to a field-strip (*pecia terrae*) belonging to this person whose nickname is *Sittin* located in an area where there are elevated tablelands (*Imwejjed*). Here *Imwejjed* is considered to be the broken plural of *Mejda*. But, in order to make sense, this must refer not just to ONE field-strip but to MANY field-strips. The other more plausible meaning is that *Imwejjed* (like *Imwejda*) is the semitic diminutive of *Mejda*, which means an elevated tableland. A similar example is *Irħajjel* which is the semitic diminutive of *Raħal*. From the many place-names containing the lexeme *Mejda*, and which can be located on a map, one can safely state that the elevated tableland is usually roundish or elliptical. Refer to BSSa (2020), pg.259 and pg.260, where there are about 40 entries with the lexeme *Mejda* in Gozo.

5. *Wied Ghisa*, *Wied Lisa*

Text: *gued lixa, terrenum in contrata Sancte Agathe*, Gozo (as stated by Wettinger)

Date: 1565

Source: Notarial Archives, Valletta (Malta) BGWe (2000), pg. 638, entry no.2

Comments: First of all, there is no doubt that *gued* is equivalent to *Wied* (in Maltese) or its Arabic equivalent (*Wādi*). One should not be surprised that its description is given as a piece of land (*terrenum*) since the name of the valley may refer directly to the area where there may be water flowing when it rains. Moreover, in my research about place-names of valleys in the Maltese islands, there have been instances where a specific place-name of a valley literally consists of some three fields having the topography of a small valley but with no specific or marked water-course. Before trying to explain the name of the valley (*lixa*), it is pertinent to point out that this valley is located in the area (*contrata*) called *ta' Sant'Agata*. The only place-name found to-date in Gozo with this denomination is located in Rabat. (Refer to BSSa (2020, pg.355). As regards the name of the valley (*lixa*), there is a mention of *Wied Lisa* (also in Gozo) in Dusina's report (1575) as transcribed by Aquilina and Fiorini (2005). Given that *lixa* could be interpreted as the proper name *Lisa*, then *Wied Lisa* is a plausible way to render the text into standard Maltese orthography, *Lisa* being the abbreviated form of the biblical name Elizabeth. Hence, at this stage one may ask what is the earliest references to the name Elizabeth in Maltese toponymy. From Wettinger (2000), one will find two references: *ta' Bitti*, a field located in the vicinity of Żejtun, documented in 1546 and *ix-Xagħra ta' Sbetta*, as documented by G.F. Abela in his *Descrittione di Malta* (1647). Both *Bitti* (i.e. a variant of *Betti* or *Bettina*) and *Sbetta* are other local forms of Elizabeth. However when analysing some of the Spanish place-names of Arabic origins, and comparing them with similar (almost identical) ones in the Maltese islands, I noticed a great similarity between a small town in the province of Alicante, called *Benisa* (written *Benissa* in Catalan or Valencian language) and the way G. F. Abela documented the place-name *Benghisa*. On page 22, there is the place-name *Punta Bin Iisa*, listed just after the entry *Cala Frana*.

El Cala tà Vyed il Buni, cioè Seno della valle di *Buni*, nome proprio arabico.

Cala Frana, seno così detto.

Punta Bin Iisa, chiamata anco *tà sicca*, cioè Punta del figlio di *Iisa*, nome proprio arabico, ò fia della secca, che quiui si vede; In questo luogo è vna guardia detta come siegue.

Mellyeha cioè della salina per qualche poco di sale, che colà si raccoglie.

Cala tà Vyede sciacca, cioè picciolo seno della valle di *sciacca*.
Vyed Sznuher, Valle di *Pini*.

Ghar Hasàn, Grotta di quel tal Arabo; quiui dentro è vn continuo distillo d'acqua freschissima, che inuita al tempo d'estate l'andarui per diporto, essendo il luogo assai opportuno, esposto alla vista del mare, e frequentato da colombe, che vi si prendono con le reti.

Punta Bin Iisa, detail.

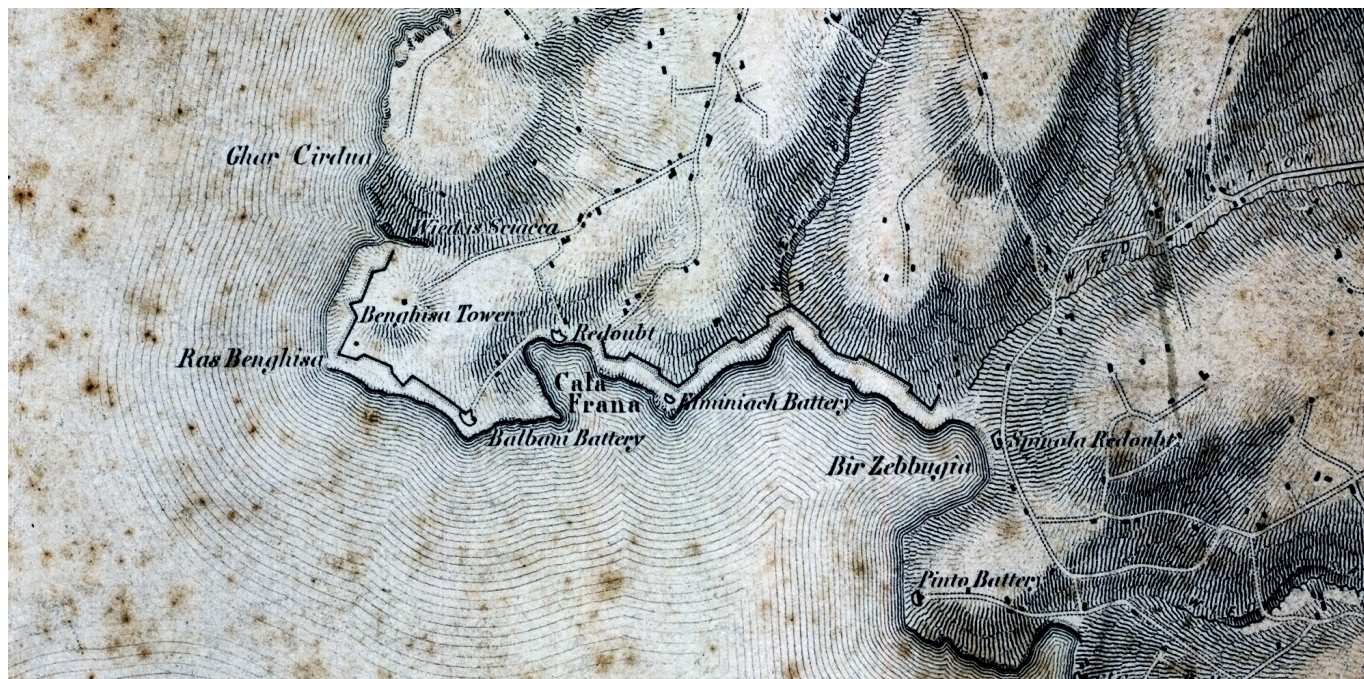
When analysing the manner in which place-names are written down by G. F. Abela, it is obvious that *Bin Iisa*, refers to *Bin Ghisa*, today written as *Binghisa* or incorrectly, in my opinion, as *Binghajsa* or *Benghajsa*. Given the fact that *lixa* is not written with a capital L, one might be correct to think that the original intention was *gued Iixa* (with a capital I instead of a capital L). This interpretation would give a more plausible meaning to this place-name since there would be two separate toponyms (in this case, one in Malta - *Bin Ghisa*, and one in Gozo - *Wied Ghisa*), proving from the construct state (*stat kostrutt* in Maltese) that *Ghisa* is a personal first name.

Meaning: Here, there are two interpretations: either Lisa's valley or Ghisa's valley. Lisa is a name derived from the biblical name Elizabeth, whilst Ghisa is an Arabic name, equivalent for Jesus. Further documentation may shed light which is the correct version out of these possibilities, but for the time being, I consider *Wied Ghisa* as the better interpretation and the more plausible meaning.

Conclusion

In this article, some interesting place-names were identified from the original texts as documented in the Addenda of Wettinger's book about Maltese Place-names. Some interesting information emerged, such as the anthroponym *Ghisa*, possibly present also in Gozo. However, this article includes only five texts out of some thirty texts referring to the place-names in Gozo. In my opinion, they could be rendered into standard Maltese. More research from relatively more recent sources (such as notarial contracts from the 18th and the 19th centuries) is needed to be able to decipher and render into standard Maltese place-names from earlier sources.

As a final note or disclaimer, it is pertinent to note that it was not possible for me to see and observe meticulously these texts in the original documents. However, even if this were possible, I do not consider myself trained in medieval palaeography to carry out such a task.



Ras Benghisa.

End Note on Abbreviations

To facilitate the references to place-names and surnames mentioned in this article, the following abbreviations were used.

BMCa - (2003) **Book** by **M. Cassar** (published in 2003), *The Surnames of the Maltese Islands*.

BSSa - (2020) **Book** by **S. Salafia** (published in 2020), *The Place-Names of Gozo* (Vol.I, Part 1)

BGWe - (2000) **Book** by **G. Wettinger** (published in 2000), *Place-Names of the Maltese Islands*.

c. circa

pg. page

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Book Review:

Hajja u Mewt. Il-Mard u s-Saħħa f'Għawdex fi Żmien l-Arċipriet Dun Martin Camilleri 1910-1921

Mario Saliba

Gozo (2021); 346 pages

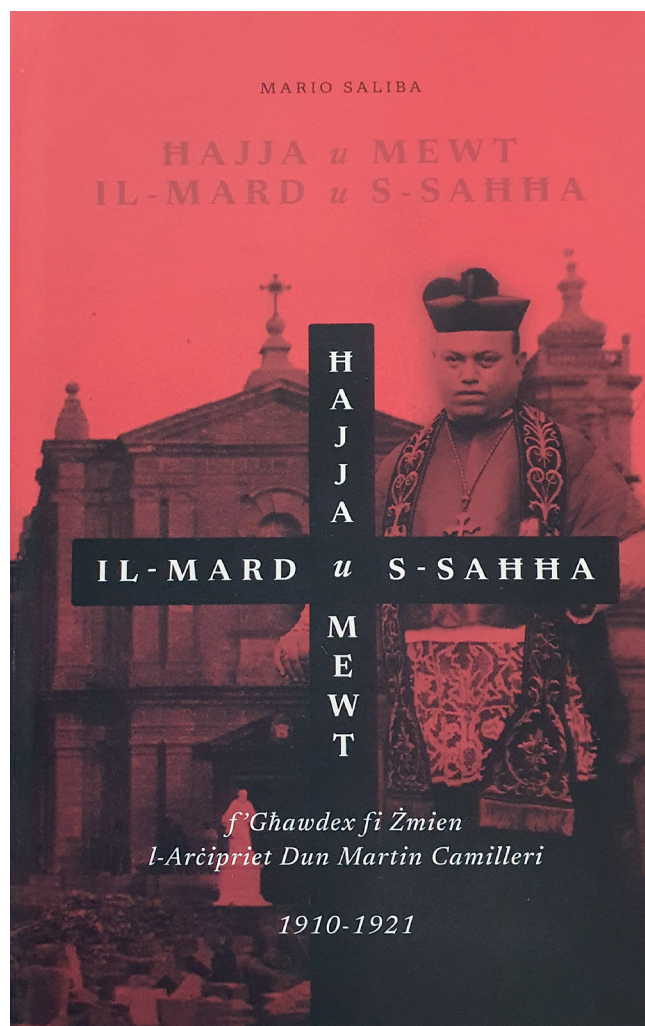
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Hajja u Mewt. Il-Mard u s-Saħħa f'Għawdex fi Żmien l-Arċipriet Dun Martin Camilleri 1910-1921 is the name of a new publication by Gozitan doctor Mario Saliba. The book gives a detailed account of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918/19 set within the broader context of the sanitary conditions and medical history of the island of Gozo during that decade. The book has just been published to commemorate the centenary of the death of Camilleri which occurred in 1921.

Mario Saliba's book is inspired by the clerical figure of Archpriest Martin Camilleri but it is no biography. Neither is it a history of the elitist establishment that may have surrounded this eminent parish priest who is considered as one of the most renowned among Nadur's pastoral leaders. On the other hand, this book provides us with a 'history from below'; in fact, Saliba presents us with the socio-economic milieu in which Camilleri's pastoral role unfolded at the end of, what was then known within the British empire as the Edwardian era.

Camilleri became parish-priest in the same year in which King Edward VII died and was succeeded by his son King George V. Although Malta was a colony of the empire, Gozo was very much Malta's backwater. If one would like to understand prima facie the notion of Gozo's double-insularity, he cannot do better than to read Saliba's work. It is in fact a masterpiece in Gozitan social history and this becomes clear as soon as one reads Dr Michael Refalo's introduction.

I get the impression that the author felt motivated to publish this work not merely due to the centenary commemoration mentioned above but also due to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on himself as an individual as well as on the entire



Maltese community. Being a general practitioner himself and having had a lasting interest in the history of health and medication on his native island from his early days as a student of medicine, Saliba is truly the ideal person to provide us with such a meticulous study. He has written many articles about the subject and, having been a doctor for more than forty years, he is in the best position to write about the subject.

While the entire book makes for interesting reading, the sixth chapter offers a scientific

glossary of the main ailments that struck the Maltese islands throughout the ages. However, the author does not merely provide the reader with scientific information; as an able medical person, he shows us how the different diseases affected the common folk and how mortality was part and parcel of early 20th century Gozitan daily life. The title of the book encapsulates very well the contents of the publication. The style in which the book is written is attractive to the point that the reader may – with an exercise in self-control – manage to read the book in one sitting. Having said this, the great amount of empirical knowledge that features so systematically in Saliba's book gives it such prominence that one will certainly go back to it from time to time, since to a certain

extent, this publication can almost be considered a reference book.

Dr Mario Saliba's book is of interest to the general reader but will go down very well with students and researchers in local history. It will also attract the attention of those who have a keen interest in our nation's medical history. As to the inhabitants of Nadur, Gozo's most populous village, I can only say that this book should find itself on their bookshelves together with the various others who have already been written about it in the past decades. Last but not least, the book is self-published and can be obtained directly from the author (email: mariosaliba@gmail.com) or from the bookshops in Gozo.

Book Review:

Kannibali Demokratiċi u Drammi Ohra

Joe W. Psaila

Gozo: BCD Printing Gozo (2021); 320 pages

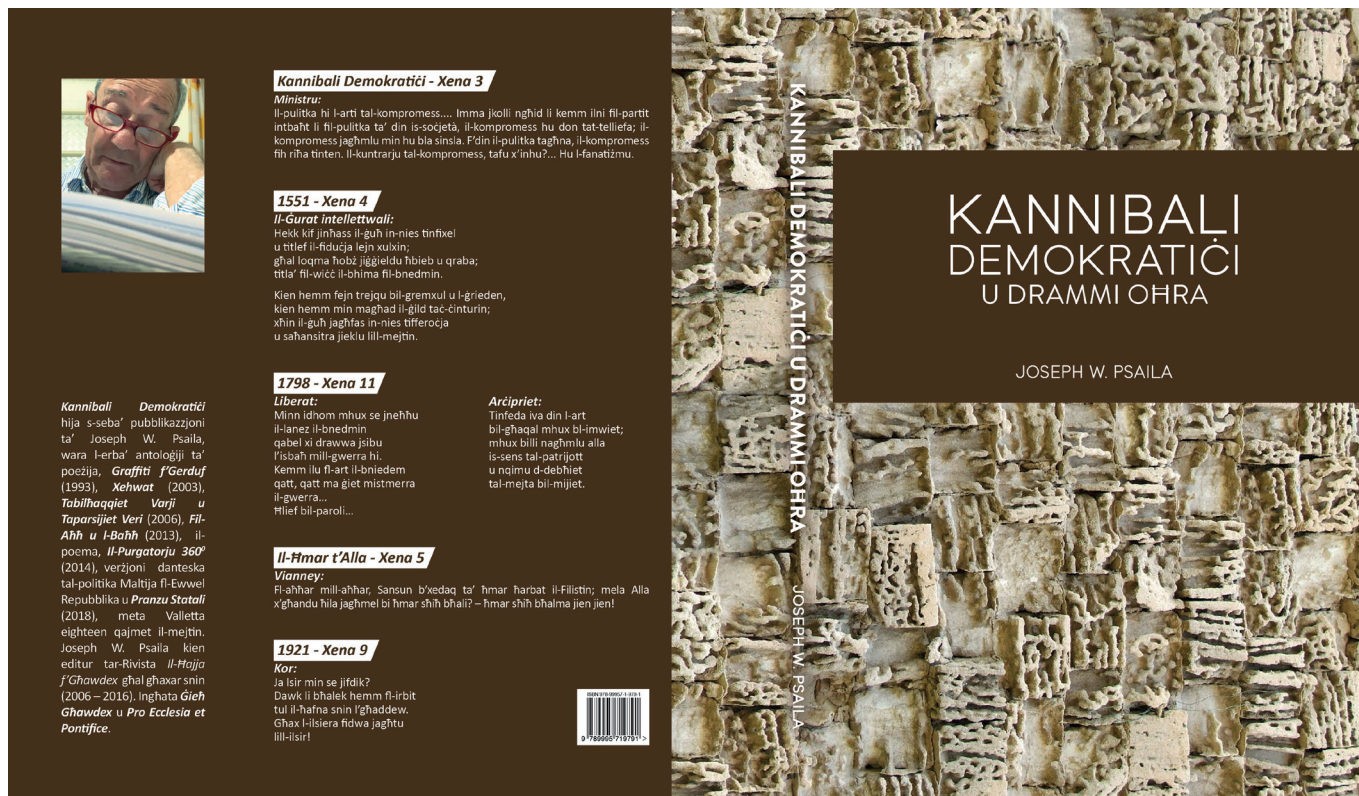
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

After spending a lifetime of service in the field of education, Gozitan author Joe W. Psaila seems to have decided not to put his feet up and enjoy his retirement passively but rather dedicate his energies to a different type of work: that of writing. This is not to say that Psaila's contribution to literature is merely synonymous with his advancing age; on the other hand, I believe that now he has more time to himself and he is spending it in writing both poetry and prose.

Kannibali Demokratiċi u Drammi Ohra is neither a purely poetical opus nor a piece of prose in the literal sense of the term. It is rather a collection of dramatic works. A dramatic work has been conventionally defined as a play for theatre, radio, or television. Psaila's present work fits in well to this definition; his works have attracted various producers of radio programmes and

cultural events. However, beyond their utilitarian perspective, Psaila's dramatic works are a feat sui generis. This particular collection consists of three sections. The first one bears the name of the main title of the book; the second part consists of three plays inspired by three distinct historical events while the third and last part is of a more religious nature.

The local political milieu has caught the interest of our author various times before. In fact, his latest two publications *Il-Purgatorju 360* (2014) and his *Pranzu Statali* (2018) are both clear reflections of his timely preoccupations with the local socio-political context, always set within the wider European background. Being well read in the history of political thought, philosophy and local anthropology, Psaila's work makes for interesting reading. It will attract the attention



of all those who hold dear our demo-Christian values which are constantly being challenged by what has been termed as a post-Christian secular agenda. Psaila's style is captivating; in no way does he condemn or censure social deficiencies. On the other hand, he allows for self-reflection and gives ample space to his readers to revisit the social values that have become part and parcel of the local Gozitan community.

Historians and lovers of Gozo's past cannot bypass this publication; the second section of the book catches the true Gozitan spirit and the character of the early modern Gozitan character. If 1551 was an *annus horribilis* – as Psaila calls it and as it in fact was – what about 1798 and its two consecutive years? One may read Psaila's book without having an inkling of the historical background and still understand the sufferings of the Gozitans during this turbulent period. As for 1921, I am not sure how much the Gozitan contemporary community is aware of what happened and what was the significance of the Assembly that met one hundred years ago to prepare our islands for self-government and eventual independence from colonial rule. Again, reading Psaila will help all of us to appreciate what our ancestors were prepared to do in order to give the local people a say in the government of their own country. The

book's last section has a religious bent; it focuses on the saintly Polish Pope John Paul II, St John Mary Vianney and last but not least the Blessed Virgin Mary. The historical, liturgical and religious significance of the Assumption of the Virgin for the people of Gozo can hardly ever be overestimated; Psaila manages to present it in its right perspective, expressing in the best of words the proper feelings of the Gozitan community for this Marian festivity.

Psaila is arguably the best Gozitan writer of drama since Ninu Cremona, although I have to say that his original philosophical concepts remind me of the late professor Oliver Friggieri; the insights they contain are both enlightening and pleasing at the same time. This is not to say that Psaila tries to please his audience; he rather tries to encourage it to think for itself and come to its own conclusions. This is the ability of a good writer and thinker who after having reflected about the direction of his own community, then proceeds to invite his readers to do the same. *Kannibali Demokratiċi u Drammi Ohra* is a book that merits the appreciation of the general public, a book that readers from both the big Lilliput and the little Lilliput will enjoy reading; and if you want to know what type of places the two Lilliputs consist of, you might as well get a copy of the book and read it. You will utterly enjoy it!

Book Review:

MUŽAJČI tat-tafal

Joe Camilleri
Gozo: Horizons (2020)

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH W. PSAILA

Human Nature Caught Red-handed

“Modern man,” the French philosopher-poet, Paul Valéry, once said, “no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated... It is as if the decline of the idea of eternity coincided with the increasing aversion to sustained effort.” There is a school of thought which holds that even storytelling has witnessed this destiny. It is a fact, however, that legends, fairytales, anecdotes and colourful gossiping – very often stories in a nutshell – have been with us long before the era which tentatively but consistently has been trying to send “eternity” into oblivion. There are, today more than ever, many nameless storytellers in the streets and squares of Malta and Gozo, in the wine shop at the corner of the village square, in the outlet of the local butcher or carpenter, at the tables of coffee shops and restaurants, and on the internet where experiences are exchanged and commented on. It takes, however, a sensitive and intelligent author to present a written version of such oral bartering of ideas and to analyse them with an insight into the depths of human nature.

Such an author is Joe Camilleri and such a written version is his latest publication, *Mužajči tat-tafal* – *Mosaics of clay*.

The “here and now” culture of instant information has induced and nurtured western societies to disregard intelligence coming from afar, in terms of space and time. This tragedy is compounded by the fact that too often even our inner “self” is deemed to be a far away phenomenon which we reluctantly approach. The short stories of “Mužajči” make the reader realise not only the discrepancy between the naked “self”, the core of the persona, and the performing “personality”, the public face, but also, in some circumstances,



make him or her aware of one’s own rejected thoughts. This is the leit-motiv of Mužajči” from introduction to blurb.

A disclaimer on page 15 points out that any resemblance between the characters in the stories and real personalities is totally incidental. This declaration is appropriate, for anyone reading these pages is bound to get an impression that somewhere, somehow, someday one has had some inkling of experience with such and such a person before, only that, unlike the author, one has not

got the sixth sense of recognition. It cannot be otherwise, since Joe Camilleri is discerning men and women beyond the mask of personality.

In most of these short stories, Joe Camilleri catches human nature red-handed in its deficiencies and inconsistencies, its foibles and hypocrisies, its discreet vices and its arrogant ones. The intoxication of alienating fantasies (which in Maltese, I would call “*is-sakra tal-istħajil*”) has the power to heavily condition and disrupt the actual life of a person or of a community. However, with Camilleri, life’s vagaries never stretch credulity beyond breaking point.

The stories capture reality and are exquisitely balanced with a bittersweet flavour in a narrative with regular moods and modes... and some welcome interruptions as in “*Ftajjar tal-Makku*” which even though lamenting the loss of a pet kitten, draws out, in the innocent mourning of the altar boys, a smile from the reader, and in “*Kwestjonarju waqt X-Ray*”, a love story in prose poetry, ingeniously narrated. The narrative in “*Mużajċi*” is sustained by a language rich in metaphor, imagery and stirring detail. The author has the ability to catch the attention of the reader from the first simple sentence of the story and to keep him or her engrossed throughout. Camilleri is a master of the short simple sentence and uses it with good effect. The author leads the reader along, one step after another but in a way that the reader soon forgets the presence of the author and feels himself or herself among the people: those enwrapped in obsessions or predudices, those anchored to their past tribulations or embarrassing memories, those in excessive fear of the future, those yearning for an intimate caress, those living in a day-dream of sexual fantasies, those victims of a disintegrating marriage, those being gnawed by conflicts of conscience and sense of guilt ...

The psychological connection of the events is not forced upon the reader. One can take it within one’s stride and, like some sort of detective, as in working out a crossword, anticipate the next move. But then, all of a sudden, the author has a way of upsetting the reader’s foreboding.

Joe Camilleri employs another interesting stratagem. Very often the story is left free from a

conclusion in the final scene. It is left open ended: “Did they live happily ever after or...?” “Were the protagonists brother and sister or...?” “Was it a murder or just a threat, exacerbated and overstated for an ulterior motive?” “Where does reality end and make-believe begin?” It is for the reader to interpret the chain of circumstances and excogitate for himself or herself how matters did end. In this way the narrative achieves an amplitude beyond the perusal and, moreover, it becomes related to the personal experiences of the reader. It pents up the reader in a state of discernment all along to the end of the story... and indeed beyond the end. The dialogue in these short stories is brisk, factual and to the point. In some of them, Joe Camilleri presents the Gozitan dialect – if one is born and bred in Gozo, somehow this is bound to surface. The detail in the descriptions of people and places betrays in Camilleri the discerning eye of the art critic. However, the clues deduced from conversations and relationships tell much more than meets the eye: from manners and mannerisms of religious practice or superstition to sexual innuendos, from ministerial idiosyncrasies to intimate postural attitudes in moments of love or lust – which in some instances may verge but never indulge in perversity. For this too forms part of that curious phenomenon called “Man” in whom according to orthodox Freudian doctrine, there exists a pressure of the unconscious upon conscious existence; and the unconscious is described as chaotic, primordial and instinctual. There is proof enough of all this in Joe Camilleri’s *Mużajċi*.

The poet Trilussa has some verses in Roman dialect: “*Adamo chiese: “E come voi che faccia / a conservarmi l’anima innocente / se Dio mi fabbricò co’ la mollaccia*” – “Adam asked: How can I preserve the innocence of my spirit, if God has produced me out of mud.”

The men and women in Joe Camilleri’s “*Mużajċi*” are not of “mud” but of “clay”. Civilisation and culture may have turned the mud into the nobler clay... but clay, like mud, still remains a derivative of earth and water.

Recent Activities at the University of Malta - Gozo Campus

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Rector's Delegate for Gozo

In October 2021, the Rector Prof Alfred J. Vella, has appointed Prof Philip von Brockdorff as the new Delegate for Gozo. Prof von Brockdorff is an applied economist and a Resident Academic at the Department of Economics, at the University of Malta. He holds an MSc in Economics (University of Wales) and a DPhil in Economics (University of York). He is filling in the shoes of outgoing Delegate for Gozo, Prof Louis F. Cassar. The University Gozo Campus would like to thank Prof Cassar for his valuable effort and his sterling job carried out during the past five years.



Professor Philip von Brockdorff, Rector's Delegate for Gozo

Courses at the Gozo Campus

In October 2021, a number of courses commenced at the Gozo Campus. The Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy opened the two-year programme leading to the Diploma in Commerce.

The same faculty also opened the Bachelor of Commerce programme which was made available to all those who had successfully completed the Diploma in Commerce. The Bachelor of Commerce programme, which is offered on a part-time basis, is spread over three academic years and covers a range of topics in Economics and Management.

The Faculty for Social Wellbeing opened for the first time in Gozo a course leading to a Master in Counselling. This programme is intended to all those who intend to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies for professional practice in counselling.

Another course which started in October is the Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of Ethics in Schools. This programme, which is being delivered by the Faculty of Education, provides an overview of different ethical theories and the developmental stages of moral development, as well as the main theories of curriculum development. The whole course extends over a period of one year of part-time studies.

The other courses running at the Gozo Campus during academic year 2021-22 are the following:

- Pre-Tertiary Certificate in the Baroque Culture of the Maltese Islands (Yr 1)
- Diploma in Commerce (Yr 2)
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (Yr 2)
- Bachelor of Psychology (Hons) (Yr 2)
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Criminology (Yr 4)

Scholarship

A scholarship for the Bachelor of Commerce course, aimed at those students who wish to read for this degree offered by the University of Malta at the Gozo Campus, was launched by Minister for Gozo Clint Camilleri on 3rd August 2021. This initiative was taken by the Gozo Regional Development

Authority, in collaboration with the University of Malta.

During a press conference held at the Gozo Campus, Minister Camilleri said that in a changing world that is becoming more globalised, it is important that as a country we are competitive and offer the best human talent by having a workforce that is academically qualified, creative, and open to change.



Minister for Gozo Clint Camilleri addressing the press conference during the scholarship launching.

Mr Mario Borg, Chief Executive of the Gozo Regional Development Authority, explained how this initiative will be covering no less than 90% of the costs related to the course. He added that this is one of the first initiatives that the Authority is embarking on after earlier publishing a consultation document to draw up the strategy for Gozo for the coming years.

Professor Frank Bezzina, the University's Pro-Rector for International Development and Quality Assurance and Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, acknowledged the collaboration between the University of Malta and the Gozo Regional Development Authority for the development of this scheme which is intended to encourage more students to continue enhancing their academic qualifications. Professor Bezzina hoped that this collaboration would be further strengthened in the coming years.

University of the Third Age

The University of the Third Age opened once again its academic year at the Gozo Campus. The opening ceremony, which was held on 15th

October, included an introductory speech by Ms Simone Ellul, administrator at the University of the Third Age, and a Holy mass celebrated by Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina. The event was also attended by Minister for Gozo Hon. Clint Camilleri, who was accompanied by Ms Joyce Dimech, Director Gozo Services at the Ministry for Gozo.



Minister for Gozo Clint Camilleri addressing the audience.

Visit by the Minister for Education

On 22nd October, Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana, paid a courtesy visit to the University Gozo Campus as part of a series of visits at various educational institutions across Malta and Gozo. During her visit the Minister had the opportunity to meet with the students following the U3A classes.



Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana with U3A participants.

In her speech she stated that her ministry's intention is to keep offering every possible opportunity to the people, in order not to only help them learn and improve their skills, but also to continue to improve

the quality of their lives in general. Minister Caruana reminded those present that a document treating lifelong learning policies was launched earlier this year. She expressed her appreciation at having met this group of mature students who are attending these courses in their continued quest to broaden their knowledge.

Graduations

Following the absence of graduation ceremonies last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Malta held the undergraduate ceremonies for both 2020 and 2021 during November and December.

From the courses held at the Gozo Campus which came to an end in 2020, six students were awarded the Bachelor of Psychology (Hons) after having successfully completed a five-year programme. The graduants are Carmen Bernardette Briffa, Alexis Samantha Falzon, Louise Annabel Sultana, Elena Grech, Hilda Grima and Jo-Martha Saliba. Five other

students obtained a Diploma in Lace Studies after successfully completing a two-year programme. They are Rita Agius, Miriam Azzopardi, Anna Brincat, Anna Gafa' and Jannette Magro. Sefora Camilleri was awarded a Higher Diploma in Commerce.

From the courses which came to an end in 2021, 38 students graduated in Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Facilitating Inclusive Education, after successfully completing a 3-year top-up course at the Gozo Campus. It is to be mentioned that one of the graduates, Karen Bugeja, classified first in class from both the Gozo and Malta cohorts. Four other students, namely Kurt Galea, David Muscat, Analise Refalo and Li Ana Said Dempsey were awarded the Diploma in Commerce.

Joseph Calleja is Manager at the University of Malta – Gozo Campus.



The six graduates who successfully completed the Bachelor of Psychology (Hons.) at the Gozo Campus.



The graduates in the Diploma in Commerce. In photo: Kurt Galea, Analise Refalo, David Muscat. In absentia: Li Ana Said Dempsey.



The graduates in the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Facilitating Inclusive Education.



The graduates in the Diploma in Lace Studies. In photo: Rita Agius Testa, Anna Gafa, Prof Lino Briguglio, former director of the ISSI, Dr Consiglia Azzopardi Coordinator of the course, Anna Brincat. In absentia: Jannette Magro, Miriam Azzopardi.



The Gozo Observer is published twice a year by the University of Malta - Gozo Campus. It contains articles relating to all aspects of life in Gozo, including culture, education, business, arts and literature. Those wishing to submit articles for inclusion in the Gozo Observer should contact the Editor of the magazine (contact details below).

The Gozo Observer is distributed without charge, upon request, to interested readers. Current and past issues of the magazine can be obtained, subject to availability, from:

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