

The Cultural Impact of Economic Conditions in Gozo

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This chapter attempts to show that economic realities have a major influence on the culture of a society, and this hypothesis is discussed with reference to the island of Gozo.

The word culture is often associated with artistic behaviour and scholarly achievements (as in the German tradition), but the definition used in this chapter is wider and covers various aspects of human activity such as language, customs, norms, values and beliefs.

There are two points that need to be emphasised with regard to the manner in which the discussion will develop in this chapter. Firstly, the arguments to be presented are not intended to serve as evidence that culture is determined by the economic base only, or that there is a one way causation between the economic base and culture.

Secondly, the discussion does not attempt to prove or disprove that certain economic conditions in Gozo cannot also be found in mainland Malta, and that, therefore, the two islands do not share certain cultural features. What this chapter tries to do is to associate commonly encountered traits in the Gozitan culture with underlying economic conditions in that island.

This chapter is organised as follows. The next section describes the economy of Gozo, and focuses on some characteristics which are thought to have a major impact on Gozitan cultures. The third section considers the issue of smallness and insularity and their cultural impact. The sections that follow deal with three specific characteristics of the Gozitan economy, namely emigration and return migration, the high dependence

on agriculture and fishing, and the high incidence of self-employment, and assess how these characteristics have influenced the Gozitan culture. The chapter is concluded by a prediction that the Gozitan culture will be radically transformed as the Gozitan economy further modernises itself and as certain forms of production become more expensive to maintain, while others become more profitable.

THE GOZITAN ECONOMY

In the past, the Gozitan economy was associated with unemployment and emigration. Between the middle of the fifties and the middle of the eighties, around 14,000 Gozitans had to emigrate (a figure exceeding the number of births during that period). Until recently, agriculture and fishing were the most important economic activities, but the economy is undergoing a process of modernisation, with tourism and manufacturing increasing their contribution to the economy.

In recent years, employment in Gozo has grown rapidly. Between 1987 and 1994, there was an increase of around 3400 jobs, so that by December 1994, gainful employment reached just under 10,000, which is 37 percent of the Gozitan population – about the same participation rate for the Maltese islands as a whole.

The Structure of the Gozitan Economy

There are various ways in which one can describe the structure of an economy. A common method is to look at the percentage contribution of main economic sectors, including the public sector, the manufacturing sector, and the services sector. The relative contribution is generally measured in terms of gainful employment relative to total gainful employment or in terms of sectoral net output relative to GDP. The structure of the Gozitan economy will in this chapter be described in terms of employment, since data on Gozitan sectoral net output is not available.

Table 1 gives the distribution of total gainful employment in Gozo and in the Maltese Islands.

Table 1
Gainful Employment in Gozo and Malta (Dec. 1994)

	Gozo		Maltese Islands	
	Persons	%	Persons	%
Public Sector	4610*	45.7	55209 [§]	41.2
Private Sector	5470	54.3	78691	58.8
of which:				
<i>Agriculture/Fishing</i>	602	6.0	3129	2.4
<i>Industrial Employment</i>	2407	23.9	34829	26.0
<i>Services</i>	2461	24.4	40733	30.4
Total Employment	10080	100.0	133900	100.0

* includes persons working in Malta. § Includes temporary employment

Source: ETC and Malta's Economic Indicators (C.O.S.)

Agriculture and Fishing. It can be observed that there is a notable difference between the structure of the Maltese economy when compared with the Gozitan one, in that the agriculture and fishing sector in Gozo is relatively much larger than that of the Maltese Islands as a whole. As a result, around 30 percent of farmers and fishermen in the islands are Gozitan (Camilleri, 1992), even though the population of Gozo amounts to around 8% percent of the Maltese population. Agriculture and fishing production are associated with certain cultural attitudes which shall be described below.

The Public Sector. Another important difference between the Gozitan economy and the economy of the Maltese Islands as a whole, is that the percentage of Gozitans employed in the public sector is larger in Gozo than the corresponding percentage for the Maltese islands, even though certain administrative centres such as the Office of the Prime Minister, are located in Malta. This may suggest that there could be over-employment in the Gozitan public sector.

The majority of workers in the public sector in Gozo are employed in five Government departments, namely education, public works, hospitals, agriculture/fishing and public cleansing.

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The Industrial Sector. The industrial sector in Gozo, made up mostly of manufacturing and construction activities, is relatively smaller than that of Malta. Up to the middle of the sixties, the manufacturing sector was extremely small, and dominated by industries related to agriculture such as tomato paste production and wine-making, and furniture-making. For this reason many Gozitans, who did not wish to earn a living from farming, and could not find jobs with the public sector, had to emigrate.

The Xewkija Industrial Estate was officially inaugurated in April 1971, and initially employed about 370 employees. The number of employees increased significantly and reached about 1,840 in the late seventies (Azzopardi 1984; Portelli 1989). In the eighties there was considerable loss of employment as factories began to lose markets, and by the middle of the eighties, the number of employees was reduced to about 700 persons. The number of employees at Xewkija is increasing again and reached just over 1000 employees by the end 1994.

About 42 percent of the employees at the Xewkija estate work in textiles/garment manufacturing, about 18 percent work in furniture manufacturing, about 16 percent in shoe manufacturing and about 14 percent work in food production. The remaining 10 percent work in tools, tiles and boat manufacturing. There are 14 factories in all, and many of the employees are young females.

Market Services. Market services consists of firms connected with retail and wholesale trades, transport services, banking and finance, and personal services, including those associated with tourism.

Although official statistics show that there are about 2,500 persons employed in this sector, it is well known that a large number of persons operate in this sector informally. This sector is very much dependent on tourist expenditure, which in Gozo is becoming increasingly important (Briguglio 1994; Micallef 1989).

Labour Supply

Labour supply consists of persons who are gainfully occupied and those registering as unemployed.

Table 2 shows that there are two important differences in the labour supply of Gozo as compared with that of the Maltese islands as a whole. Firstly the rate of unemployment in Gozo is higher than the average for the Maltese islands, and secondly a number of Gozitans work in Malta. Table 3 shows that there is a third important difference, namely that the number of self-employed persons is relatively higher in Gozo.

Unemployment. Traditionally, the rate of unemployment in Gozo tended to be higher than that of Malta, although there is some doubt as to whether or not all those who register as unemployed in Gozo are really not gainfully occupied (see Briguglio 1993 for a description of certain characteristics of Gozitan unemployment). A feature of Gozitan unemployment relates to what is termed "hard core unemployment". In Gozo a high proportion of those registering for work tend to spend a relatively long time on the register.

Table 2.
Unemployment in Gozo and in the Maltese Islands (Dec. 1994)

	Gozo		Maltese Islands	
	Persons	%	Persons	%
Gainfully Occupied in Gozo	9523	89.4	133900	96.0
Working in Malta	557	5.3	—	—
Unemployed	558	5.3	5585	4.0
Total	10638	100.0	139485	100.0

Source: ETC and Malta's Economic Indicators (C.O.S.)

At the end of 1994, the unemployment rate in Gozo was 5.3 percent, which is on the low side when compared to previous years. It is however still higher than that prevailing in the Maltese Islands as a whole. In addition about 5.3 percent of the Gozitan labour force worked in Malta during that year. In the absence of employment opportunities in Malta, the Gozitan unemployment rate would probably have been higher.

Self-employment. Another important characteristic of the Gozitan economy

relates to the self-employed. At the end of 1994, about 27 percent of the gainfully employed in Gozo were self-employed, which is much higher than the corresponding percentage of 12 percent in the Maltese Islands.

Table 3
Self-Employment in Gozo and in the Maltese Islands

	Gozo		Maltese Islands	
	Persons	%	Persons	%
Wage earners	7410	73.5	117915	88.1
Self-employed	2670	26.5	15985	11.9
	10080	100.0	133900	100.0

Source: ETC and Malta's Economic Indicators (C.O.S.)

An important reason that may explain this phenomenon is that in Gozo, there is a large proportion of employment in the agricultural and fishing sectors, as shown in Table 1. The prevalence of self-employment has cultural implications, which will be discussed below.

INSULARITY AND SMALL ECONOMIC SIZE

Gozo is small and insular. These realities are associated with certain economic characteristics, which often lead to dependency on other economies (Bertram 1993; Briguglio 1993;1995) and which, as we shall see, have important influences on the culture of the island.

Characteristics of a Very Small Economy

The most common economic characteristics of very small economies, such as the Gozitan one, include the following:

Limited Natural Resource Endowments. Small islands tend to be poor in natural resources and have a relatively high import content. This makes the island highly dependent on other economies.

Very Small Domestic Market. Small size is associated with a small domestic market and with the need to find external markets for economic development. This again leads to very high dependence on economic conditions in the rest of the world.

Dependence on a Narrow Range of Products. In many cases, small size restricts the country's ability to diversify its exports, and this renders the country dependent on a very narrow range of goods and services. This carries with it the disadvantage associated with having too many eggs in one basket. Gozo, for example is highly dependent of agriculture and tourism.

Limited Ability to Influence Domestic Prices. Small size renders the economy a price-taker of a very high order, since in a small economy importers and exporters are unable to influence prices in the country trading with them.

Limited Ability to Exploit Economies of Scale. Small size renders it difficult for an island to exploit the advantages of economies of scale, mostly due to indivisibilities and limited scope for specialisation. In turn this gives rise to high per unit costs of production, high costs of infrastructural development per capita, high per unit costs of training specialised manpower, and a high degree of dependence on imported technologies, since small size inhibits the development of endogenous technology.

Limitations on Domestic Competition. Domestic competition tends to be curtailed in small economies due to the fact that small size does not support a large number of firms producing a similar product. This generates a tendency towards oligopolistic and monopolistic organisation.

Marginalisation. Small islands tend to be marginalised from the world economy due to their inability to form part of the global strategies of transnational companies. They therefore turn to preferential arrangements for survival, enhancing the culture of dependency.

Problems of Public Administration. Small size creates problems associated with public administration, the most important of which is probably

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a small manpower resource base from which to draw experienced and efficient administrators. Moreover, many capable persons from the islands emigrate to larger countries where their services are better utilised and where remuneration for their services is higher.

At the same time, in many small islands the public sector tends to be relatively large, because of certain indivisible administrative functions. Moreover, employment in this sector is considered by many to be the best occupation, because it is secure, relatively well paid and permits the employees to have part-time jobs.

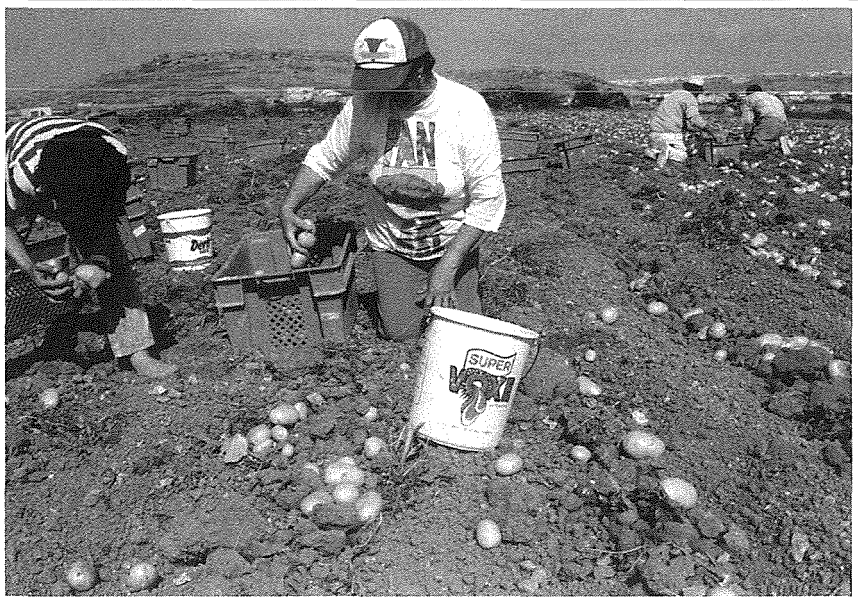
An added problem relates to recruitment. In a small island, people know each other well, and are often related to each other. This could work against impartiality and efficiency in the civil service and against a merit-based recruitment and promotions policy. In addition, in many small islands recruitment in the public sector, not being generally motivated by profit and efficiency, lends itself more easily than employment in the private sector for the fostering of a culture of political patronage.

Small Size and Culture. Small size therefore carries with it a number of economic disadvantages, which, it is argued here, have a major impact on the cultures of the islands. In particular, the attitudes of the locals *vis-a-vis* foreigners are likely to be influenced by the fact that the islanders' survival depends on relations with and conditions in, larger economies.

Another major cultural impact relates to the public sector. Many of the tendencies prevailing in small islands in this regard, described in the previous sub-section, are also found in Gozo, and preference for public sector employment, is a characteristic of the Gozitan labour force (see Galley 1993: 79 for past experience in this regard).

Insularity and Transport

The fact that Gozo is an island leads to a high dependence on sea transport for merchandise and passengers. Transport costs related to merchandise trade of small islands tend to be relatively high. The main reason for this is that a small island usually imports and exports small and fragmented cargoes, constraining its ability to exploit the advan-



Picking potatoes. The agricultural sector in Gozo is relatively large and generates considerable employment. *Photo: Victor P. Borg*

tages of modern and technologically advanced means of transport.

Moreover insularity gives rise to problems associated with time delays and unreliability in transport services, especially for merchandise. These create uncertainties in the provision of industrial supplies. This reality has often been identified as a main disincentive for economic development in Gozo.

Another problem is that when transport is not frequent and/or regular, enterprises in islands find it difficult to meet sudden changes in demand, unless they keep large stocks. This implies additional cost of production, associated with tied up capital, rent of warehousing and wages of storekeepers.

Transport and Culture. The transport constraints just described have made the Gozitans extremely conscious of transport problems. Issues related to transport therefore feature very predominantly in Gozitan

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culture, such as amongst other things, a sharp awareness of weather conditions and of the might of the sea.

The Gozitan business community also assigns major importance to developments in transport arrangements between Gozo and mainland Malta (see for example Magro 1992: 38).

Insularity and the Environment

Small islands like Gozo tend to face large pressures on the environment, and these become more intense with the process of economic development. The recent debate on the building of an airstrip is a case in point. To some this is considered to be an important requirement for the development of upmarket tourism in Gozo, but its construction is likely to have large undesirable environmental impacts.

Small islands that seek to develop economically tend to experience a fast depletion of agricultural land, accompanying increased demand for residential and industrial construction, and a very intense use of the coastal zone, accompanying the growth of tourism. These problems are of course also faced by larger countries undergoing a process of economic development, but their effect on small islands is likely to be much stronger due to their small size.

The Environment and Culture. These environmental realities, as expected, have an impact on the cultures of islands. The Gozitans, for example, are very conscious of the services offered by the physical environment, since it directly effects the livelihood of a large section of the population. Although much damage has already occurred by the process of economic development, there is a growing awareness among the Gozitan population that environmental protection should be placed high on the policy agenda of the government.

EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION

Emigration from Gozo is mostly conditioned by economic conditions in the island (see King and Strachen 1979). Return migration is also to a large extent conditioned by economic conditions, in the sense that many

Gozitans return to their homeland either after accumulating sufficient wealth abroad, or on becoming aware than employment conditions in Gozo have improved. Added to these economic reasons there are non-economic ones, such as that for many Gozitan emigrants, ties with the island of their birth remain strong.

The impact of emigration on the Gozitan culture is multifaceted, and only the most conspicuous effects are considered here.

Changes in Demography and the Organisation of the Household

A large proportion of emigrants were males of prime age. Many were married, and left Gozo on their own. This meant, among other things, a demographic imbalance, in terms of gender proportions and in terms of age cohorts. It also meant that many husbands and fathers left the island for a long time, sometimes permanently, leaving the rest of the family residing in Gozo. This gave rise to changes in the behaviour and organisation of many Gozitan households. One such impact was that many wives and mothers became effectively heads of their families.

Changes in Material Welfare

Emigration often permits improvements in material welfare of the family, through amongst other things, remittances from abroad by the emigrant member of the household. Gozitan emigrants are known to be hard-working, and many have returned to Gozo after having amassed considerable wealth in Australia, the USA, Canada and other countries. It goes without saying that changes in material wealth have a direct impact on the consumption and savings behaviour of the households in question, which in turn effect the overall culture of the population of the island. This impact is mostly evident through better houses, and improvements in the overall standard of living of many Gozitan households.

Changes in the Modes of Behaviour

Apart from bringing income with them, returned migrants also import modes of behaviour from abroad. Although many Gozitans emigrate to areas where other Gozitans have migrated before them, forming Gozitan communities abroad, they are exposed to foreign cultures and absorb

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aspects of it. They therefore return to Gozo with different views regarding education, social interaction, religion and so on.

Changes in the Spoken Language

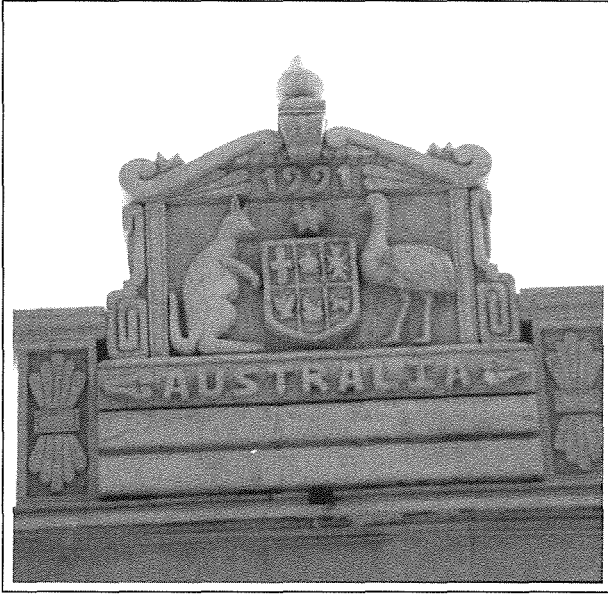
Another impact of returned migration relates to the language. One notices in Gozo that certain sections of the population use a Gozitan dialect interspersed with American or Australian phrases. This may be due to various reasons, including that returned migrants find that they can express themselves more readily by using foreign terms commonly used in the country to which they had emigrated and that using American or English expressions upgrades the social standing of the speaker.

Changes in Gozitan Tastes

The increase in incomes of returned migrants has enabled many Gozitans to afford to have a house built for their family – very often with a style of architecture reflecting foreign influences. In many cases, the imported architectural style has intricate stonework (*lavur*) superimposed on it - permitting the occupant to show off his or her material success. As Borg (1986) says, “returned migrants’ dwellings are immediately recognisable. Architecturally they are hybrids between local styles or the bungalow and suburban villa common in North America and Australia.... they appear as alien intrusions into the village shape” (see also King and Strachen 1979).

Many houses of Gozitan returned migrants also sport an oversized flagpole on the roof, from which an oversized US, Australian, Canadian or British flag is flown. Such houses are often given a name, written on a slab on the side of the door, associated with the country from which the ex-migrant returned (see also Galley 1993: 188). In some cases a sculptured symbol of the same country is placed very prominently and conspicuously on the façade of the house, generally on the roof parapet wall.

There could be a number of motives for such manifestations. It could be an expression of gratitude towards the country which had received the emigrant and which had helped him improve his material welfare. It could also be an exhibition of material success and social status by the



A returned migrant's status symbol or a show of gratitude?

returned migrant. There could also be an element of pique and rivalry (two common traits in Malta and Gozo) between one returned migrant and another.

Internal Migration

Many Gozitans work in Malta. The persons involved are very often young and single, with a relatively high level of education.

Internal migration carries with it a number of hardships to the Gozitans involved, including costs of travelling, early rising, fatigue, time wasted in travelling, insufficient facilities at Ċirkewwa and Mgarr harbours, accommodation costs, separation from the family, and difficulties of integration with Maltese society (see Mizzi 1988).

Like international migrants, Gozitans who travel often to Malta have an impact on the Gozitan culture by importing habits, tastes, language, religious attitudes and other traits from Malta.

HIGH DEPENDENCE ON AGRICULTURE AND FISHING

Traditionally the Gozitan economy was based on agriculture and fishing and dependence on these two sectors is still relatively high, as shown in Table 1. There are certain forms of behaviour and cultural attitudes usually associated with the farming and fishing communities, and these are commonly found in Gozo.

Understanding of the Rhythms of Nature

Farmers and fishermen depend on the weather much more than workers in the industrial and the public sectors. The failures and successes of farmers and fishermen are only partially dependent on their hard work, since nature plays an important part in this regard.

Moreover, their work pattern is influenced to a large extent by seasonal variations. As a result, persons engaged in these sectors tend to develop a keen awareness of the rhythms of nature, an ability to forecast weather changes, and a high degree of recognition of the power of natural phenomenon.

Fatalistic Attitudes and Superstitious Belief

Belief in supernatural forces tends to be very strong in the farming and fishing community, and many farmers are guided by the belief that there is some form of destiny which cannot be avoided. This probably results from closeness to nature and natural phenomenon, and the inability to control natural forces associated with weather on land and sea.

Superstitious beliefs abound in Gozo, and these are often intermingled with catholic religious practices (see Galley 1993: 200). Fishermen, for example, recite special secret exhortations to counteract the forces of a water spout (Attard, in this volume). Farmers place cattle horns on the roofs and in other prominent places to avert bad luck and to counteract the evil eye.

The Gozitan Diet

Gozo is known for its variety of fresh food, probably the result of the

prevalence of farming and fishing. A large proportion of Gozitans also grow vegetables in their own garden, a practice which was more prevalent in the past (see Galley 1993: 24). Cheese and wine making is common among Gozitan farmers. There is as a result a distinct character in Gozitan food, mainly because some ingredients are easily recognisable as made in Gozo.

Independent Attitudes and Utilisation of Family Labour

Farmers and fisherman are generally independent producers, tend to be suspicious of government interference and prefer not to divulge the financial outcomes of their business to outsiders. They also tend to utilise family labour. In farming communities it is common sight to see women and children working in the fields and helping out in chores associated with this occupation. These traits are common features if firms run by self-employed persons, and they are discussed separately below.

HIGH INCIDENCE OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

The prevalence of agriculture, fishing and service activities in the Gozitan economy, and the relatively small size of firms in Gozo, are associated with a high incidence of self-employment in Gozo.

This has an impact on the Gozitan way of life, because self-employment is linked to, amongst other things, a culture of tax evasion, a high degree of attachment to the business, independent attitudes, a strong dislike of government interference, a high degree of employment by family members, and conservative attitudes regarding technology and management practice.

Tax Evasion and the Informal Economy

Tax evasion often requires concealing one's income, in other words participating in what is known as the underground economy, which, in Gozo, is rampant. Associated with the underground economy one is likely to find illegal employment of persons and a distorted tax burden, with wage earners bearing a proportionately higher tax burden.

The impact of underground economic activity on the Gozitan way of life

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is multifaceted, and includes a culture of misreporting business accounts and a preference for currency as a monetary asset.

However certain developments such as the introduction of the Value Added Tax and the new investment opportunities that are emerging, are working against the further growth, and possibly leading to the contraction of underground economic activity in Gozo. The Value Added Tax is making it increasingly difficult for producers to procure supplies and to get paid for their services without formally registering for a VAT registration number. The new investment opportunities are pushing up the opportunity costs of keeping currency at home for tax evasion purposes.

Independent Attitudes

Boissevain (1991: 2) argues that an important thread running through the literature on small entrepreneurs is the value they attach to independence that being on their own gives them. They therefore tend to strongly dislike government interference. This is especially so if such interferences restricts their ability to juggle their accounts, as was the case recently when the government imposed the use of fiscal cash registers.

High Degree of Commitment to the Business

The self-employed have a high degree of attachment to their business mainly because they are motivated by self-interest in the well-being of the firm. They work overtime and their working week often extends to Sundays. This workaholic attitude is prevalent in Gozo.

Utilisation of Family Labour

Firms run by self-employed persons tend to utilise family labour, because this is usually cheaper and more loyal than hired labour. Family members often work without a workbook and do not involve the firm in high leave or sick leave costs. Moreover, the costs of hiring and firing family labour are practically nil. For these reasons, employment of family labour, including children, is a common occurrence in Gozo.

The question of child labour was studied by Cremona (1989) on the basis of a survey which he carried out in November 1989. He found that 49 percent of school boys and 17 percent of school girls (13 to 17 years old) worked, mostly in family business.

Conservative Business Attitudes

Small firms tend to utilise traditional technology, and tend to have old fashioned methods of management. Such firms are therefore not generally associated with innovation and efficiency - even though the owners work very hard to ensure the survival of the firm. On the positive side, however, self-employed persons tend to be flexible, less bureaucratic and do not experience waste of time and money in industrial relations problems.

Enterprising Females

Gozitan females tend to be very enterprising. Women are often engaged in knitting and lace-making, running of shops, renting of property and conducting a wide variety of other business. This cultural trait could possibly be related to the well-entrenched self-employment tradition in Gozo.

Frugality

Another cultural trait in Gozo is frugality, which could be explained in terms of the grave economic difficulties experienced by Gozitans in the past. In addition, however, there could also be a connection with the prevalence of self-employment in Gozo, since running one's own business makes one very conscious of the hard work that goes into making money from a small business.

CONCLUSION: THE MODERNISATION OF THE ECONOMY

This paper has attempted to show that economic conditions in Gozo have major impacts on the culture of the island. It has been argued that the traditional dependence on agriculture and fishing, the economic uncer-

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tainty prevailing in the past, and the prevalence of public sector and self-employment are important underlying economic realities which have to a large extent moulded the Gozitan culture.

One should expect that as the Gozitan economy changes, the culture of the island will also change – although as stated in the introduction, the relationship should not be interpreted as being strictly deterministic and as having a one-way causation.

The main changes that have occurred in recent decades and are still taking place relate to the erosion of the dominance traditional agriculture, and the growth of modern manufacturing and modern market services.

The establishment of the industrial estate at Xewkija in the early seventies, has ushered in new attitudes towards female employment in Gozo. As stated earlier, there was a decline in employment in the estate in the eighties, but the trend has been reversed in recent years. The majority of employees at the estate are young women, and this has had a significant impact on the role of women in Gozo.

The market services industry in Gozo is being transformed as modern services, such as those associated with finance, communication and tourism, provide new employment opportunities for the Gozitans.

Tourism in particular has an important demonstration effect on the Gozitan culture (see Inguanez 1994), as tourists expose the Gozitan community to influences of foreign cultures.

Business associated with evening entertainment, some of which is induced by tourism, has also had an important impact on the Gozitan culture, especially with regard to Gozitan youth, who frequent discos and night spots.

In Gozo there has also been a growth of what are known as culture industries - a the term referring to such activity as theatre and music, television and radio, publishing of books and newspapers and sport. With the growth of tourism and the improvements in material welfare of the Gozitans, the contribution of these industries to the Gozitan economy has

increased considerably. Since these industries are directly connected with culture, one expects that their impact on the Gozitan culture is likely to be considerable.

By way of conclusion therefore, it is likely that as the Gozitan economy continues to transform and modernise itself, the Gozitan culture will also change. Whether this will be good or bad for Gozo is a matter of debate, since such developments very often involve a trade-off between the preservation of the Gozitan culture as we know them, and improvements in material welfare as perceived by the policy makers and by people engaged in economic activities which transform their own culture.

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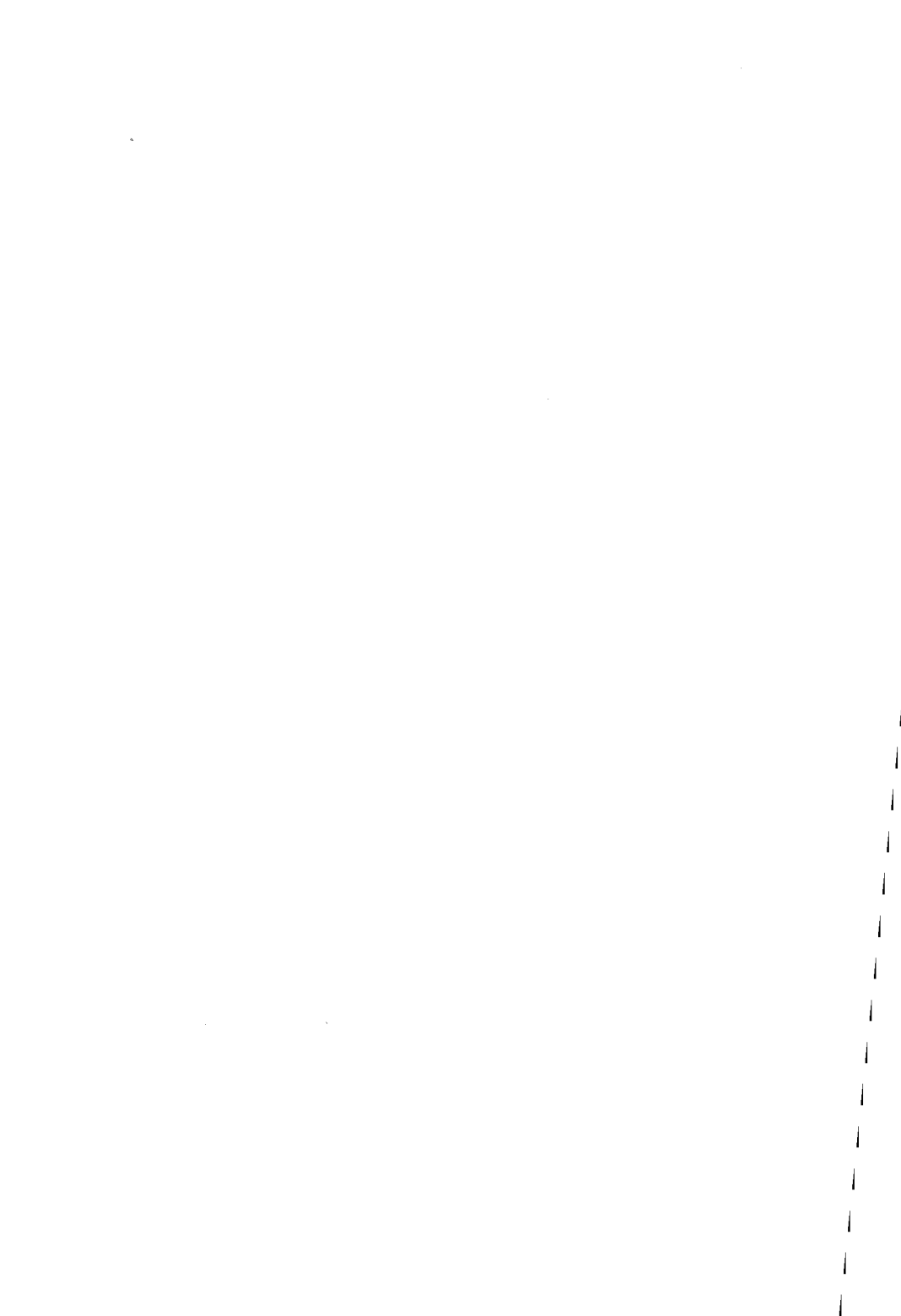
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The 1995 Löwenbräu Seminar Inauguration and Closing Speeches



H. E. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, President of Malta (right) delivering the inauguration speech at the 1995 Löwenbräu Seminar. On his left is the Hon. Anton Tabone, Minister for Gozo (left), who gave the concluding address.

The inauguration and closing speeches, and the address by Dr. Paul Debattista, General Manager Löwenbräu, Malta, at the inauguration session, are reproduced on the following pages.



Inauguration Speech

H.E. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici

President of Malta

When Gozo was an island isolated from another island somewhat less isolated from the rest of the world, it acquired specific traits which are more than simple variations of the national character. So perhaps one is sometimes justified in using the appellation: “Maltese and Gozitans”, because in certain contexts a difference is discernible. Gozo has the culture of Malta, but there are typical cultural idiosyncrasies brought about by special and particular historical circumstances.

In the Maltese Islands, Christianity is the most constant cultural influence. The presence of the Church is felt throughout Malta and Gozo. But whilst Malta, and especially, but not exclusively, those areas within the bastions, was directly exposed to lay cultural influences through the Order of St. John and its members, who were not only religious, through the presence of the British military forces, through commerce and its attendant social contacts, through the University which has always somehow transcended all religious conditioning, Gozo was more culturally dominated by religious influence. Accordingly, as expected by the paramount position occupied in Gozo’s social and cultural life, this has resulted in a higher frequency of priestly vocations, in a more intense attention to churches, feasts and liturgical ceremonies, than that found in the larger Island. Until some time ago, the moral regimen of the individual by social conditioning was stricter and more intense than that in Malta. According to a high Vatican prelate, the diocese of Gozo provides the highest number of vocations in the world, as a proportion of the population.

Another characteristic trait of the Gozitan culture is the place occupied by operatic music. This was formerly part of a tradition common to Malta, but whilst this tradition does not seem to have been seriously disturbed in Gozo, in Malta, British influence was stronger and has somewhat

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displaced operatic music, (Italian and French), from the taste of a section of the Maltese public. The appreciation of opera and the esteem for this type of music explains the fact that Gozo not only possesses two opera houses built without state aid, but sees opera productions very minimally assisted when opera everywhere has to be very heavily subsidized.

Objectively speaking, one can safely affirm that these two phenomena - one of significance in religious culture and the other in the culture of the art of music - really distinguish Gozo as an Island.

Other distinctions may be purely the fruit of subjective observation and should be premised by some preliminary reflections.

When one lives for an appreciable time in a country, one starts becoming aware of nuances in the language, in the mentality, in the culture which a hurried passage would not reveal. Malta is a small country, comprising two Islands of unequal size but which, one would have thought, share the same attitudes, styles of life and speech. However, in almost every town or village in the Maltese Islands there exists a distinct spirit which is a synthesis of many influences. Attitudes towards what one should wear, towards food, work, affluence, good manners, saintliness, sex, differ from town to town and from village to village. At times, villages quite near each other astonish us with their difference. Ghaxaq and Gudja, Safi and Kirkop, Imqabba and Qrendi are examples. Sometimes, one needs to have a fine ear to distinguish one village dialect from the inflexion of the next. On occasion, the pronunciation and intonation are markedly different. Żejtun, for example, possesses an accent which is unmistakable and which is far removed from that of its neighbour, Żabbar.

How can one explain these differences? How can one account for the different modulations in accent and pronunciation, beyond the actual setting out of the facts of linguistic study. But perhaps more important still, how does one explain away the *stadtgeist*, which distinguishes town from town and village from village? How isolated were the inhabited nuclei of the Maltese Islands from each other, up till a century ago? From whence their accretions? Was there an identifiable figure: perhaps the headmaster, the Parish Priest, the member of Parliament, the local chemist, or the doctor, that left a mark on the place? Sometimes, the influence of a particular Headmaster who in years gone by had led the

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village school for a number of years, persists and one could attribute good results in that schools to his influence, even after a lapse of time. In the case of a number of characteristics of an older centre, one can analyse only with some difficulty the different elements which had influenced it throughout the centuries.

The alchemy of the different *charismata* of important personages, now forgotten, of the effects of traumatic events, now fortuities of history, is there, but it is far from easy to sort out the genealogies and decipher the reasons.

It is not an easy task to explain why Gozitans have their own distinct manner of pronouncing words and formulating phrases. Their intonation is also very recognisable. There are a number of words, such as *bajju*, which in Malta are not known. As Gozo has contributed some of the best scholars in the study of language, from Agius de Soldanis to Ninu Cremona and Guze' Aquilina, it would not appear out of place to hope that some Gozitan scholar might now research Maltese as spoken in Gozo and the various dialects of the Gozitan villages.

Perhaps most subjective would be the perception of the differences in mentality. First of all, the very concept of intelligence. It is well known that people in Gozo, as a result of circumstances, and by long tradition, reserve special consideration for the use of one's wits, prudence and circumspection, administrative stratagems, mental energy, well directed ambition, with a minimum of rhetoric. These may be results, but they are only explicable by the high esteem in which knowledge and observation are held in Gozo. Thus, the schools in Gozo achieve some of the best results. Also a good number of Gozitans have ascended the highest rungs of the *cursus honorum* in in the Maltese Islands: Presidents of the Republic (Buttigieg and Tabone); Presidents of the Courts (Dingli, Mercieca and Camilleri); and Bishops. The contributions made by Gozitan minds to Malta's political, artistic and scientific life are indeed important. One can observe in Gozo the phenomenon of people living in communities which realised that in the absence of resources and with the disadvantage in all dimensions, they had to further whet their mental capabilities.

One can also see another result of the particular circumstances of the Gozitan environment, in the attitudes to waste and profligacy. An

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eminently agricultural island, with a restricted number of jobs and salaries, looked at money as a scarcity, not easily earned. The average Gozitan is therefore generous but rarely a spendthrift. Other parts of the Maltese Islands have taken on some Englishmen's penchant for considering money as easy come, easy go. All through the centuries, there were not many instances when money was flowing easily into the Gozitan's pockets.

In the same way, one can understand the proverbial reticence of the Gozitans, in speaking out or discovering what they know. In a society where everybody is everybody's acquaintance, and everything is known without being discovered, one feels uncomfortable in owning up to the discovery of information, leaked in whispers. The spoken word has a social dimension beyond its sound. It does not pass the critical sieve too easily. Restraint in speech is the result of a drill of self-control in exercise from childhood. The sincere declaration coming from a Gozitan is a deliberate act, as a conscious act of generosity and is therefore precious and to be relied upon.

The study of cultural diversity is important, indeed necessary, but also entertaining as much as the study of bio-diversity. Cultural evolution, as much anthropological as it is sociological, and indeed history, merits all our attention. That of Gozo presents itself well for scientific study, because the typical concentration is still there, though the isolation has diminished considerably and will continue to diminish. It is a unique case, which history will not repeat.

It is also interesting to note how the Gozitan spirit, the produce of the still of the special circumstances of this island, has contributed through its past representative figures to the political and cultural history of the nation. Many of Malta's politicians had Gozitan roots or were directly influenced by the Gozitan spirit of taking life seriously and in earnest. The Gozitan attitude was a determining factor in the movement towards the achievement of political independence.

The yeast from Gozo was definitely kneaded into the whole country's assertion of its independent nationhood.

Speech on behalf of Löwenbräu

Dr Paul Debattista

General Manager, Löwenbräu, Malta

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address this seminar for the second year running.

The first Annual Löwenbräu Seminar, which was held in January 1994, was a great success in terms of attendance as well in terms of the quality of the papers presented. The topic covered last year, namely tourism, is of great importance to Gozo, and the seminar, together with the book of proceedings published by the University Gozo Centre, have shed new light on the problems and prospects of this industry.

The theme of this year's seminar is culture, another area of major importance to Gozo. Gozo has its own cultural identity, and the purpose of this seminar is to discuss this identity, with the aim of preserving and enhancing it. The list of topics included in the programme shows that the discussion will touch upon a large variety of topics, including art, archaeology, history, village life, religion, folklore, language, and economic relationships. These aspects of social life have together moulded a unique culture, which though not completely distinct from that of mainland Malta, has its identifiable characteristics

A classical definition of the word culture was given by the renowned English Anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor, in the introductory chapter of his book written in 1871 entitled *Primitive Cultures*. In this book he gives this definition: "Culture is the ensemble of faith, arts, morality and custom and heritage obtained by mankind as a member of the society where he lives."

Going by this definition, this topic should be studied from a wide array of perspectives. The organisers of this seminar were therefore right to include papers on the various aspects of culture. I was particularly pleased to note that one of the papers deals with prehistory, and that

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other papers also take a historical angle, because a proper understanding and appreciation of a culture requires the study of the origins of human settlements, and their development during millennia. This in turn would help us understand and appreciate the inheritance that each era contributed to our society.

Culture is not a static occurrence; it evolves and expands in the course of time. It is this evolution that makes a culture unique and different from other cultures. We are meeting today to analyse the Gozitan culture, not only to understand and appreciate it better, but also to suggest ways in which the Gozitan cultural endowments can be passed on to future generations.

We are lucky enough to have inherited a rich cultural patrimony from our forefathers, starting from prehistoric times, covering art, language, religion, and other aspects of human endeavour. We have the duty to preserve this inheritance, and to make sure that we do not destroy this most valuable asset. As H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici said in the inauguration speech, cultural diversity is very important for humankind, and like bio-diversity, could be a major contributor to the survival of our species.

This seminar is therefore addressing a topic with major implications for society. It is for this reason that as General Manager of Löwenbräu, I feel honoured to be associated with the organisation of this event. The cooperation between the Löwenbräu Brewery, the University and the Ministry for Gozo is a good example of how the public and private sectors can work together to promote scholarly endeavour, with the aim of fostering interest in an area with important policy implications. The Löwenbräu Brewery firmly believes that it has a social role to play and it is this belief that prompted our company to extend our support in this regard. Being one of the leading companies on the Maltese Islands, we feel it is our responsibility to serve as an example to others.

To conclude, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for Gozo, Mr. Anton Tabone and Prof. Lino Briguglio, who directs the University Gozo Centre, for their involvement in the organisation of this seminar, and for giving our company the opportunity to continue supporting cultural development in our islands.

Concluding Address

Anton Tabone

Minister for Gozo

“**O**ne of Gozo's major assets is its culture. Gozo has its own distinct identity, its special character, its special development potential, and its special interests.” I could not think of more appropriate words to close this seminar than this succinct, significant excerpt from the Acting President's address delivered on the 9 July 1987 outlining the Government's policy and programme, when he was inaugurating the sixth Legislature of independent Malta.

The history of Gozo goes back thousands of years. Its prehistoric sequence is in line not only with that of Malta, but also with those of Sicily and other areas of Europe and North Africa. Then again with the advent of history, Gozo shared practically the same vicissitudes which the main island of Malta went through.

So how is it, one may ask, that Gozo has its distinct identity and characteristics? It could be said that the culture and heritage of Gozo are distinctive owing to a great extent to its relative isolation, its size and topography.

Gozo's relative isolation and peripherality always kept it farther away than Malta from the mainstreams of human activities and influences. The size and topography of the island have always constrained the development of new economic activity and made its population reliant almost entirely on the primary sector, on agriculture, fishing and the construction industry. Gozitans had always had to face harder adversities and a fiercer struggle for survival which discovered in them the virtues of hard work and of intimate attachment to their family and land. These quantitative and qualitative natural disadvantages have moulded in Gozitans a different life-style and different characteristics. They have given Gozo a distinct culture. We are fortunate to have saved that.

We have now to bring about in the most effective way possible the valorisation of Gozo's unique cultural heritage. Our culture has both an economic and a social value which can improve not only our standard of living

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but also our quality of life. We have therefore to appreciate fully these values so as to be in a better position to preserve our cultural identity, of which we are all so proud, in the face of the modern means of communications and the development of tourism with their tendency towards cultural standardisation.

Today, more than ever before, a struggle goes on continuously in every culture – and Gozo's in no exception – between new and alien ideas and trends and the forces of conformity, that is the desire to do things according to custom and tradition. We need of course to maintain conformity, to maintain our established social and moral customs in order to safeguard our identity. However, we also need new ideas to permit progress. Our culture is likely to be strong and progressive if we strike a balance between conformity and change. This is no mean task. We have to steer continuously between Scylla and Charybdis.

We have on the one hand to strive hard to catch up with the rest of the developed world if we want to survive. And we cannot survive without adequate and efficient means of communications whether they are transport or telecommunications. We cannot survive without properly and fully exploiting the island's potential in the tourism sector.

We have on the other hand to be very careful to preserve and protect our traditions and customs. How? It has to be inculcated upon everyone of us that British tourists need not come to Gozo to enjoy a good English breakfast; Italians need not come here to swoon over a Neapolitan *canzonetta*; German tourists need not come to us to buy Dresden china. Tourists, whoever they are and wherever they come from, would prefer to savour local agricultural products, to be served typically Gozitan dishes; they cherish a folkloristic *ghanja* (song) and dance; they marvel at a hand-made intricate piece of Gozo lace; they admire the Gozitan farmer tilling his terraced fields or the Gozitan fisherman's fish-laden *luzzu*; they enjoy the simple rustic life of our villages; they find it interesting to learn a few words in Gozitan dialect; they wonder at our rich archaeological and architectural heritage; they are impressed at the way we celebrate our religious feasts; they like our way of merrymaking. These are the things that make us distinctively Gozitan. These are the heirlooms that we have to preserve and protect.

It is because of our awareness that our cultural heritage gives Gozo a natural advantage both socially and economically that the Ministry for Gozo has been implementing a policy that enhances our cultural patrimony and leads to a resurgence of interest in it.

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My Ministry has in fact always acted in the belief that there is scope to support and strengthen the links between culture, community, identity and economic development of the island, thereby providing the foundation for economic and social regeneration. Action is concentrated in three main areas, namely the conservation of the island's architectural and archaeological heritage; support and training for artists and workers in traditional trades; and widening the audience for culture.

In its efforts to conserve Gozo's architectural heritage, the Ministry has embarked on an extensive programme of restoration and rehabilitation of Gozo's monuments and buildings, which programme has been going on uninterrupted for these last eight years. To date it covered the Cittadella, the Ġgantija Temples, the Ta' Kola Windmill, the aqueducts, fountains, arches and rubble walls.

Our action to support and train artists and workers in traditional trades includes:

- the opening of schools, notably the School of Arts, the School of Music, the School of Drama and the Centre for Catering Studies;
- the leasing of workshops and boutiques to craftsmen; and
- the allocation of plots of land to tradesmen for the construction of workshops.

In its programme to widen the audience for culture, the Gozo Ministry:

- has opened a Cultural Office in Gozo and set up a Cultural Council to organise and promote cultural activities;
- helps artists to put up exhibitions of their works;
- helps authors publish or launch Maltese-language literary works and works on Gozo;
- gives financial assistance and other indirect incentives to folklore groups and band-clubs; and
- promotes and supports the organisation of Conferences on different aspects of cultural life in Gozo.

This annual seminar is a case in point. In the organisation of this seminar, my ministry has collaborated very closely with the Gozo Centre of the University and with Löwenbräu Malta. This collaboration is paying dividends, as is amply evident from the successful outcome of this seminar.

The Authors of the Seminar Papers

Mr Anton F. Attard was born in Rabat, Gozo in 1943. He received his education at Victoria Primary School, the Lyceum, Gozo and St Michael's Training College, St Julians, where after a two year course (1963-65) he obtained the Teacher's Certificate. He also studied at the University of Malta (1968-73) where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts. Mr Attard served as a teacher in Government schools, as Administrative Officer in Government General Service and as a full-time Secretary in the General Service Section of the General Workers' Union. He is at present Director of the Customer Services Department within the Ministry for Gozo. He is the author of several publications on Gozitan folklore. As a folklorist Mr Attard gathered a vast amount of information directly from the people of Gozo and translated into Maltese many folk tales of foreign countries which he also published in the local press.

Professor Joseph Aquilina is Emeritus Professor at the University of Malta. He was born in Munxar, Gozo in 1911. He studied at the Seminary of Gozo, at the University of Malta and at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He was the first Professor of Maltese and Oriental Languages at the University of Malta (1937-76) and acted as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts between 1948 and 1966 and between 1972 and 1975. He was Pro-Rector of the University of Malta between 1970 and 1974. In October 1963, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He was President of the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce between 1972 and 1982. He is the author of a large number of publications of a scientific and literary nature including a comparative dictionary of Maltese proverbs and an etymological Maltese-English dictionary. His work has had a major impact on the Maltese literary scene.

Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina was born in Rabat, Gozo. He had his higher education, at the University of Malta and at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He was ordained priest in Rome by Pope Paul VI in 1975. He holds three history degrees, including a first class Honours doctorate in Church History, and has also won the Pope's Award, the University's highest honour, after being placed first in the 1982 finals. He also specialized in Archivology and Library Science. He is Head of the Department of Church History, Patrology and Christian Archeology in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Malta, as well as lecturer in Church History and allied subjects in the same Faculty, in the Faculty of Arts and at the Sacred Heart Seminary in Gozo. He is also the keeper of the Bishop's Archives, Gozo, and of the Gozo Section of the National Archives and acts as advisor on archives to the Government of Malta. He is the author of over twenty books in English, Maltese, German and French, and of several papers in Scientific journals.

The Authors

Professor Anthony Bonanno studied and graduated at the Universities of Malta and Palermo and at the Institute of Archaeology, London University. He has taught Archaeology and Classics at the University of Malta since 1971. He is now Professor of Archaeology and Head of Department of Classics and Archaeology at the same University. Between 1990 and 1992 he was also Dean of the Faculty of Arts and between 1987 and 1992 he served on the Council of the University of Malta. He has convened two international conferences. He has authored a large number of scientific papers and various publications on Roman Art and Maltese Archaeology.

Professor Lino Briguglio directs the Gozo Centre of the University of Malta and the Islands and Small States Institute at the Foundation for International Studies. He lectures at the University of Malta and acts as consultant on island affairs to international organisations. He studied at the University of Malta, the University of Oxford and the University of Exeter, U.K. where he obtained a doctorate in Economics. He has published a large number of scientific papers and authored several books on topics related to Economics and Island Affairs.

Dr Mario Buhagiar holds a B.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. from the University of London. His fields of specialization are Western Art History and Appreciation and Paleochristian and Byzantine Antiquities. He is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the University of Malta where he also coordinates the B.A. and M.A. courses in Art at the Faculty of Arts. He is a consultant to the Planning Authority on historic buildings and sits on the Development Control Commission. He has authored many academic publications including three books on Maltese artistic and historical and archeological heritage.

His Lordship Mgr Nicholas Joseph Cauchi, Bishop of Gozo, was born at Gharb, Gozo in 1929. He studied at the Sacred Heart Seminary, Gozo and was ordained priest in 1952. He proceeded to the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, where he graduated Doctor of Philosophy and obtained a Licentiate in Social Sciences in 1956. He performed pastoral work at Ladispoli Parish, Rome. In 1956 he was appointed Lecturer at the Seminary and Parish Priest at Fontana, (1956-63). In 1967 he was appointed Titular Bishop and Apostolic Administrator for Gozo. He was consecrated Bishop in April 1967 and nominated Bishop of Gozo in July 1972. His solemn entry into the Cathedral took place on September 10, 1972.

Professor Stanley Fiorini is Head of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Malta. His main interest in Maltese History is the late medieval period on which he has written a number of papers and three books. He is the former president of the Malta Historical Society and editor of a number of publications of the same society.

The Authors

Rev. Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, Rector of the University of Malta, was educated in Malta, Paris and Oxford. At Oxford he was Rhodes Scholar and was awarded the Chancellor's Prize for English Prose. He is a visiting lecturer at the University of Paris II (Sorbonne-Pantheon); a member of the Planning Council of the International Ocean Institute and sits on the editorial board of several international journals. He is also chairman of the Malta Council for Science and Technology. Professor Serracino Inglott is the author of several books and numerous articles on Maltese art and culture

Dr Horatio Caesar Roger Vella is a Senior Lecturer in Latin and Greek at the University of Malta (1989-), formerly also at the University of Zimbabwe (1979-89) and at the University of Malawi (1984), where he was also external examiner (1985-86). He studied at the Archbishop's Seminary in Floriana (1964-69), Thornleigh Salesian College in Bolton, U.K. (1969-71), St Thomas Aquinas College at Rabat (1974-75). He graduated at the University of Malta in 1976, 1977 and 1979. He did post-doctoral studies at the University of Thessaloniki (1980-81). He is the author of several books on classical literature and of several articles and papers whose subject-matters vary from Prosody, Novel, Religion, Mythology, Archaeology, Chronology, History, and Melitensia. He is active in Catholic pastoral work at the Parish of Kirkop, of which Council he is the Chairman and representative of the fifth district at the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Dr Vella was the first Mayor of the Village of Kirkop.

GOZO AND ITS CULTURE

The history of human settlement in Gozo goes back seven thousand years. It could be said that the Gozitan culture started to develop with the arrival of the first settlers from nearby Sicily, and reached a zenith during the Temple period as evidenced by the monumental Ġgantija temples. Subsequent historical phases left their mark on the Gozitan way of life, and this has led to the development of contemporary Gozitan culture with its own distinct identity and character.

The purpose of this book is to present, in one volume, a number of papers on Gozitan culture, originally presented during a seminar on the theme "Gozo and its Culture" held at L-Imġarr Hotel, Gozo, on 3 March 1995.

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