

# THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOZO: 1335

by

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Owing to the loss of the royal registers in Sicily, the materials available for the internal history of Malta from 1282 to about 1355 are extremely scanty, while documents concerning Gozo are even more rare. The text of 1335, which survives in a seventeenth-century copy at Siracusa (1), was known through the brief excerpt published by Rosario Gregorio (2) and, through Gregorio, to Alfredo Mifsud (3). It is presented here in the form found in the transcript, which contains some apparent corruptions. A will of 1299 shows that Gozo then had three judges or *judices Gaudisii* though it is not clear who appointed them, and that Gozo shared with Malta at least three royal notaries, the *regii publici insularum Malte et Gaudisii notarii*; the Count of Malta and Gozo had his agent or agents, his *procuratores honorum*, to manage his personal possessions or *bona* in both islands, and it was the Count or his representative who nominated a castellan for the Gozo castle, the *castellanus in castro Gaudisii*, as well as a *capitanius* or two *capitani* to govern for him in Malta (4). The document of 1335 mentions a number of officers conducting the administration of Gozo separately from that of Malta, and it provides evidence of Sicilian trade on Gozo as well as in Malta. The relative powers and precise jurisdictions of the royal *curia* and the Count, and of the Maltese and Gozitan officials mentioned in 1299 and 1335 are still far from clear, and the text of 1335 raises a number of problems which require detailed discussion not attempted here. There was considerable confusion on many such matters in fourteenth-century Sicily,

1. Siracusa, Biblioteca Comunale, *Liber Privilegiorum*, I, f.92v-94 [olim 79v-81]; a marginal note in a later hand states *Collatum cum originale*, and a few corrections can be seen. Further details in S.L. Agnello, "Il 'Liber privilegiorum et diplomatum nobilis et fidelissimae Syracusarum urbis'," *Archivio Storico Siracusano*, v-vi (1959-1960).
2. R. Gregorio, *Considerazioni sopra la Storia di Sicilia*, iv (1st ed: Palermo, 1807 prove 38 n.55), and in subsequent editions, eg. *Opere rare edite ed inedite riguardanti la Sicilia* (2nd ed: Palermo, 1873), 329 n.2.
3. A. Mifsud, "Richiami alle signorie del passato di Malta," *Archivum Melitense*, iii no.7 (1918), 277 n.1, and subsequently A. Luttrell, "The House of Aragon and Malta: 1282-1412," *Journal of the Faculty of Arts: The Royal University of Malta*, iv no.2 (1970), 161 n.23.
4. Text in H. Besc, "Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano," *Melita Historica*, vi no.3 (1974), 317-320. On late-medieval Muslims as royal captains and Jews as *secreti* on the island of Pantelleria, see H. Besc, "Pantelleria entre l'Islam et la Chrétienté," *Cahiers de Tunisie*, xix (1971), 106-107, 117.

and Maltese institutions should not be inserted into supposedly permanent, rigid "feudal" or bureaucratic systems and hierarchies which, in practice, did not function regularly in Sicily, let alone in the lesser islands.

In 1316 Arnaldus de Solimella *miles* was *Castellanus castri et Iustitiarius eiusdem insole Malte*, while two *notarii*, Simone de Carolo of Messina and Guglielmus de Ragusia, were *procuratores iurium, reddituum et proventuum gabellarum, iurium et bonorum Curie nostre dicte insole Malte* for the king (5). In 1318 the same Arnaldus was *regius castellanus Iustitiarius et procurator Insole et castri Malte* (6), and he was still the *iusticiarius* and *castellanus* in 1320 (7). Arnaldus de Solimella was a royal official, and probably there was no Count at that point; indeed it is not clear when Guglielmo Federico d'Aragona, Duke of Athens, actually became Count of Ma'ta and Gozo. It must have been before 18 November 1330 when he ceded the County to his natural brother Alfonso Federico d'Aragona and his heirs; they were to hold it *in capite* from Guglielmo's *curia* to which they were to owe the military service of three *milites*, and they were to enjoy the criminal jurisdiction and the *merum et mixtum imperium*, though Guglielmo reserved rights of appeal to his *cūria*. Alfonso Federico's father, King Federico of Sicily, confirmed the act of cession two days later. To what extent the Count of Malta had powers to appoint officials and raise taxes is not altogether clear, but the grant of 1330 expressly excluded the royal rights to the *exite*, the *tercius dohane*, the *collecte* and the *subvenciones*, all these incomes being reserved to the Crown (8). At about this time the Count of Gerace in Sicily was administering his castles and estates through a *curia* with an archive and a scribe, with a *magister procurator*, a *magister racionalis* and a wide variety of *castellani*, *cabelloti* and other estate managers and *officiales* (9).

Some time before 1330 the Kings of Sicily had exempted the men of Siracusa and Messina from payment of certain taxes, the *iura dohanarum*, and of other dues owing to the royal *secrezia* throughout the royal

5. Text in R. Valentini, "Il Patrimonio della Corona in Malta fino allo venuta dell'Ordine," *Archivio Storico di Malta*, v (1934), 32-34.

6. Copy of 1398 in Palermo, Archivio di Stato, Cancelleria, Reg. 32, f.181-184v.

7. Text in *Acta Siculo-Aragonensia*, ii: *Corrispondenza tra Federico III di Sicilia e Giacomo II d'Aragona*, ed. F. Giunta — A. Giuffrida (Palermo, 1972), 181-182.

8. Text in A. Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari de l'Orient català: 1301-1409* (Barcelona, 1947), 482-485.

9. Text of 1307 or 1322 in E. Mazzaresse Fardella, *I feudi comitali di Sicilia dai Normanni agli Aragonesi* (Milan, 1974), 109-116 (discussed *ibid.*, 74-77); the document refers to a *ritus dohane*, to *gabelle* and so forth, but it is not clear whether the royal *iura dohane* or other incomes were involved. This important work throws much light on some obscure questions but leaves many documents to discuss and problems to solve.

*demanium* (10). In 1335, however, the councils or *universitates* of the two cities complained that the officials on Gozo were proceeding against their merchants trading there on the grounds that the island had become part of a county, the implication being that it was no longer part of the royal *demanium* and that the royal exemptions had therefore lost their validity in Gozo. On 28 April 1335 Pietro II, who acted as king during his father's lifetime, sent instructions both to the *Iustitiariis, vel capitaneis, ac Procuratoribus Insule Gaudisii*, and also to the financial officials on Gozo, the *dohaneriis, credenceriis, seu gabellotis dohane* (11). Pietro affirmed the validity of the exemptions enjoyed by Messina and Siracusa which, his letter stated, had been explicitly safeguarded in the cession of 1330 and were being recognized in Malta, if not on Gozo. He instructed the *Iustitiiarii*, the *Capitanei* and the *Procuratores* to ensure that the *dohanerii*, the *credencerii* and the *gabelloti* should repay whatever they had taken by way of the *iura dohane* since the previous September. It is not, however, clear either from the text (12) or from general Sicilian practice which, if any, of these officers were royal officials, whether all of them were appointed by the Count, or who controlled the office of the *secrezia*.

DE NON SOLVENDO IVRE DOHANAE in Insulis Gaudisij, & Melitae

PETRVS II, Dei gratia Rex Sicilie Serenissimi Domini Domini Friderici Reuerendissimi Patris sui Regis eiusdem Regni in ipsius administratione generaliter Locumtenens Iustitiariis, vel captaneis, ac Procuratoribus Insule Gaudisii pro parte Curie seu (13) Alfonsi Friderici Comititis ipsius Insule, ac Insule Meliueti Fratris sui, nec non dohaneriis, credenceriis, seu gabellotis dohane eiusdem Insule Gaudisii tam presentibus, quam futuris fidelibus suis gratiam suam, & bonam voluntatem. Pro parte Vniuersitatum hominum Ciuitatum Messane, & Syracusarum nostrorum fidelium fuit nuper cum querela coram nostra expositum Maiestate. Quod cum singuli Messanenses, & Syracusani ex priuilegiis eis ab olim per Dominos predecessores nostros Clare Memoriae dictum Dominum Regem Patrem nostrum, & nos indultis, atque concessis sint, & esse

10. It is not clear to which of numerous royal exemptions the document of 1335 referred: cf. Agnello and C. Trasselli, *I privilegi di Messina e di Trapani: 1160-1355* (Palermo, 1949), with numerous references.
11. On the gabelles of Gozo, including the *dohana*, in 1372/3, see H. Bresc, "The *Secrezia* and the Royal Patrimony in Malta: 1240-1450," in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. A. Luttrell (London, 1975), 130, 134 *et passim*.
12. See especially *infra*, n.13.
13. Gregorio, *Opere*, 329 n.2, published the first few lines with a number of changes and errors, omitting the *seu* which is in the Siracusa copy although it reads clumsily and increases doubts as to whether the *Iustitiiarii, vel capitanei, ac Procuratores* were all comital rather than royal officials; possibly the original had *atque* (cf. *infra*, n.15).

debeant in singulis ciuitatibus, terris, & locis nostri demanij a solutionibus iurium quorumcunque dohanarum, & aliorum dirictuum spectantium ad officium secretie liberi, & immunes, ac huiusmodi immunitate, & libertate ante scilicet concessionem factam dicto Comiti de Insulis supradictis in eis tanquam in terris nostri demanii, & post concessionem eandem in dicta Insula Meleueti usi fuerint, & gauisi, (14) ac gaudeant, & utantur Vos presentes Dohanerij, seu gabelloti dicte dohane tenoribus priuilegiorum dictorum penitus obauditis dicentes dictam Insulam Gaudisii in Comitatu esse, et propterea, & Syracusanos prefatos ac Messanenses in ea predictis libertate, & immunitate gaudere non posse, nonnullos Syracusanos, ac Messanenses accedentes ad dictam Insulam cum diuersis eorum rebus, & mercibus, ac negociantes ibidem ad soluendum vobis proinde iura dicte dohane, ac aliorum dirictuum spectantium ad dictum officium secretie, tanquam rendabiles compulstis, compellit, & etiam molestatis ipsos propterea pignorando, tam contra tenorem dictorum priuilegiorum, quam in eorum damnum preiudicium, & grauamen; & nostro Culmini humiliter supplicatum super hoc eis per nostram Curiam opportuno Iusticie remedio prouideri, huiusmodi itaque supplicatione utpote iusta per nos benigne admissa quia de tenoribus priuilegiorum predictorum; quodque dicti Messanenses, & Syracusani in dictis Insulis a solutionibus dictorum Iurium, & dirictuum liberi, et exempti tractandi sint itaque libertate in dicta Insula Meleueti gaudeant Curie nostre constat, Volentes in obseruantia predictorum priuilegiorum eisdem Messanensibus, & Syracusanis predictam libertatem per uos in predicta Insula gaudisii tenaciter, & inuiolabiliter obseruari quatenus in illa dicta Insula Meleueti utuntur, & gaudent, & maxime quia sub ipsa conditione, & onere dictus Comitatus predicto Comiti fuit concessus, & de iis in priuilegio sibi comitatu ipso facto expressa mentio facta est fidelitati Vestre sub obtentu nostre gratie firmiter, et expresse mandamus quatenus vos predicti dohanerii credencerii, seu gabelloti dicte dohane predictos Messanenses, & Syracusanos a solutionibus quorumcunque Iurium dohanarum, & aliorum dirictuum prescriptorum pro quibuscunque rebus, & mercibus eorum per eos in dictam Insulam immissis, & de cetero immittendis ab inde extractis, & extrahendi immunes, & exemptos trattare, Vosque predicti Iustitiarum, atque (15) Capitanei ac Procuratores eosdem dohanerios, credencerios, seu gabellotos ad premissa inuiolabiliter obseruanda ad restituendum cum integritate qualibet dictis Messanensibus, & Syracusanis, si quid contra tenores immunitatum, & libertatum ipsarum a proxime praeteriti mensis Septembris huius III. Inditionis usque nunc per dictos presentes dohanerios, seu gabellotos perceptum fertur fuisse eosdem praesentes dohanerios, seu gabellotos dicte dohane stricte prout expediens fuerit compellere debeat in executione presentium taliter uos gerendo, quod huiusmodi immunitates dictis Messanensibus, & Syracusanis quatenus in dictis eorum Priuilegis sunt expresse sine difficultate qualibet in dicta Insula obseruentur, & ad vos propterea iterari alias nostras literas non sit opus sicut nostram gratiam caram habetis. Datum Cathaniae Anno Dominice Incarnationis M.CCC XXXV. XXVIII. Aprilis III. Inditionis.

14. Read *gaudisi*.

15. *seu* is written above *atque* in the same hand.