

## The Duties of the *Secreto* during the period of the Hospitallers\*

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When Malta was given to the Knights Hospitallers, the office of the *Secrezia* fell under the direct and personal control of the Grand Master.<sup>1</sup> The *Secreto* was appointed by the Grand Master from among the Maltese noble gentlemen who were serving the Order in the administration of the Islands.<sup>2</sup> Hence the Office carried with it honours, prestige and particular duties which made the Office one of the best positions which men of ability and ambition hoped to achieve.

In order to administer his office the *Secreto* required to have his own staff. For this purpose he had the authority to appoint a judge, an assessor and a registrar, a *Capo Maestro* or land surveyer sometimes referred to as *perito* for public affairs, a *Capo Maestro Ribucatore* or Head Leveller, a *Capo Maestro Falegname* or Master Carpenter, an official known as *Visconte* who acted as a senior officer over the man-servants who were known as the *famuli* of the Magistral *Secrezia*. With regard to the last mentioned, the *Secreto* was expected to have at least two for each *casale*. They acted as messengers and supervisors over fields but could be asked to do any other work required by the *Secreto*.

The Office of the *Secrezia* had its Tribunal to deal with

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the valuation of rents and leases of magistral lands. The passive cases and all cases related with scisa were dealt by the judge of the Secrezia. Thus the debtors concerned with property were made to appear in the Tribunals which were held in Notabile and in Gozo. In Gozo civil cases were also dealt by the Office. All passive cases concerned with tenants of magistral lands were dealt with by the Judge who received a salary of 500 sc. per year during the XVIIIth century. The principal registrar received a salary of 360sc. per year, while the assistant registrar received 120sc. The Office also held its own 'bank' or rather depository where fines and dues were collected. The person in charge of this depository was sometimes referred to as the Chancellor of the Secrezia.<sup>3</sup>

The Secreto had to ensure that such offices of employment with the Secrezia were also to be filled separately in Gozo. He had to appoint two soldiers and a chaplain for the Tower of Comino. Each of these employees received a letter of appointment known as *patente* directly from the Secreto.<sup>4</sup>

Though such employees reflected more than anything else the administration of the land revenues, there were also others which indicated particular rights. Some chaplains were also employed by the Secrezia. The Secreto had to appoint a chaplain for the church of the Assumption found in Ceppuna, Marsa, and another chaplain for the church of St. Nicholas at Boschetto. These chaplains also received their *patente* obliging them to fulfil their ministerial duties and to celebrate festivities in their respective churches whenever the Secreto instructed them.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the Comino Tower, the Secreto also required a *Castellano* or Keeper, who had to be a Bombardier employed with the Order. This *Castellano* was sometimes referred to as Capo Maestro and his appointment had to be confirmed by the Grand Master and certified with a *patente*. Other places which came under the jurisdiction of the Secreto and required particular officers, were the Boschetto, the Bordonari of the Magistral Palace and the Magistral fiefs. At the Boschetto he had to keep two

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Guardians were also given the *patente* to define their duties: one had to work in the Boschetto and had to take care of the animals that were kept there, cultivate the gardens of the Secreto, and fulfil other general services; the other had to take care of all the work that was required to take place around the Boschetto. Another Guardian had to be employed for the Bordonari of the Palace, and he had to be approved by the *Signor Cavallerizzo*<sup>6</sup>.

From among the famuli and sometimes from among local farmers, the Secreto had to appoint a *Castaldo*, that is a custodian for each magistral fief he had in his care in Gozo. This Castaldo had to care after the fief during such occasions as reviews and false alarms.<sup>7</sup> From the time of Grand Master Ximenes the Secreto also started to appoint famuli who were given the rank of *Ufficiale* or *Custode* of particular villages and nearby areas such as Kirkop, Lia, Zebbug and other casali.<sup>8</sup>

The Secreto's terms of reference seem to have been extensive and precise. It was his duty to issue licences to permit the demolishing or the rebuilding of walls over the same foundations in the country, to permit the opening of doors, windows, to permit the cutting of stones found in public spaces, and to permit the collection of white or red soil. Those who requested to collect more than twenty five loads (*vicggi*) of soil had to make a petition to His Eminence by presenting a relation to the Secreto and, permission granted, they had to pay 25tr. for each 100 loads. The money that was collected was to be applied for the repair of roads in the service of His Eminence. Before issuing a licence the Capo Maestro had to go to examine the area to ensure that what was going to be done was not to be of any prejudice or inconvenience either to the public in general or to private individuals. The Capo Maestro was paid 4tr. for each licence whenever he had to go to examine the place personally.

Sometimes Maltese householders or tenants made requests to get some part of the public space near their property to straighten up the walls. Such applications had to be made to the Secreto who taxed the applicants not less

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than 28tr. according to the concession. Those who wished to occupy a large measure of public space were required to make a 'memorial' to the Grand Master which had to be noted by the office of the Secreto and examined before the request was granted.

When trouble arose between neighbours because of doors, windows, public spaces, and such other related matter, which projected onto the public streets, it was the duty of the Secreto to examine the differences and act as judge. In making such examinations or inquests, the Secreto had the right to 1sc. and the Capo Maestro to 4tr. per examination.

Those who wished to improve the outward appearance of their houses by building balconies '*alla romana*', by adding a room upstairs or columns near the front doors, also had to obtain the Secreto's licence. His permission was also necessary for the making of shelters, defences or supporting walls called '*dolfini*', covered staircases and steps, including those leading to cellars, pavements or kerbs, and covered canals to conduct water to private houses.<sup>9</sup>

Besides being concerned with landholdings and building improvement, the Secreto was also expected to take charge of the provisioning of barley and straw for the Magistral Stable. When the month of May arrived, he had to ask the *Signor Cavallarizzo* to inform him of the amount of barley and straw that was required. Having obtained this information the Secreto had to send two officials to collect as much straw and barley as was required, and these officials had to take decisions in public in front of testimonies. The Secreto was expected to establish the required quantity and to give a reason for the collection. He then had to ensure that the barley would be consigned from the various territories of His Eminence. The carrying of the straw and barley was usually made by the *famuli* of the *Secrezia*. However no mariner or boat-owner could transport barley from Gozo before first having obtained the *polizzino* or permit from the Secreto addressed to the notary of the *Secrezia* in Gozo. It was the duty of this

notary to send barley every now and then with trusted boatmen. Such boatmen were to be given a certificate to show the quantity they had loaded on their boats. On their arrival in Malta, they had to present it to the Gran Visconte or another person who was well known by the Secreto.

During the earlier period of the Hospitallers' administration and up to the first two decades of the XVIIth century, the Secreto had another interesting duty. At the time when wheat (*grani*) was to be reaped and other fruits collected from the lands, the Secreto was expected to go with thirty or forty estimators whose duty it was to examine the lands on the same day. Each estimator was given a particular plot to examine and calculate the possible production per salmo and to tax them for the *dritto reggio* or the Grand Master's right to an annual *canone* and for the *massaro* or farm-hand at *ratione laboris*. The products examined included barley, mixed barley (*mischiato*), wheat, peas, beans, cotton and other industrial fruits. The collection of the tax in kind, in tumoli, used to be made by the Secreto on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul.

This right was not to be exacted unless the taxable lands did produce enough industrial fruits. When a scarcity happened, the farmers were not expected to pay anything; but they could not leave their lands unsown. They were expected to sow their fields for three years, and on the fourth year they were to leave the fields fallow and were then to be taxed. Moreover the patrons of such lands who set up a vineyard or a garden had the privilege of being freed from the tax in kind if they paid a carlino per year.

In 1625-28, during the times of De Paule, the patrons of taxable land felt aggravated by this annual estimation and they besought the Grand Master and his Chapter General to re-arrange the situation. A Commission of Illustrious Persons studied the problem by holding discussions to see how this could be changed and reduced into money-tax which could be paid annually. A notice or *bando* was issued, calling the patrons of the lands concerned to reveal at the office of the Secrezia their lands which

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they knew to be subject to this *canone* under pain of confiscation if they did not turn up.

They were expected to report the quality of their lands and state how much grain they could produce and how much tax they used to pay every year or *interpollarium*. To ensure justification, the Commissioners went to examine the lands together with experts to see with their own eyes and then they presented their report.

It was agreed that if farmers or land patrons wanted to pay their tax in kind, the tax was to be valued in the following way: the mixed barley was to be taxed at 3sc. for each tumolo, and other fertile land at 16oz. per salma per *salmaria* per year or *interpollarium*, was known as *ticherin* whilst the sterile land, which was taxed at 8sc. per salmaria per year or *interpollarium*, was known as *gimen* because of the fact that it was not sown.

To ensure the collection of this tax a notice was to be issued to all interested. It was to be read in all the chapels and churches of the Islands. Within eight days they were to appear at the Office of the Secrezia, and since many turned up, it appeared to the Commissioners that they could raise it (*sbassarla*) from the 13th to the 14th of the month, and once again to give notice to those interested as before so that within eight days they were to appear if they found themselves aggravated. But on this occasion the majority reported that it was happy and that the tax was well made; only 14 persons out of about 500 wished to maintain the old system and so their plots were re-estimated. As a result it seemed to the Commissioners and those who had appeared to make another rebate (*ribarcio*) of 14tr. 7gr. per salmo, and in this way they had reached this *ius*, which had been collected in kind, to the value of 264sc. per year.<sup>10</sup>

In March the Secreto was expected to despatch licences for the manufacture of salt along the shores of Malta. It seems, however, that this depended on the conditions of lease that were made for the *gabella* regarding the Saline.<sup>11</sup>

Another interesting aspect of the Secreto's office was

the public auctioning of leases for the magistral property. This had to be done a year before the end of the previous lease or rent. The Secreto was expected to issue a circular for each parish priest of the country fifteen days before the occasion so that the list of property to be leased would be made public. Another circular to which used to be attached further information used to be affixed to the walls of each village. During the days of Pinto such auctions, sometimes were held in a house at Floriana.<sup>12</sup>

Various conditions were laid when the magistral lands were leased.<sup>13</sup> Particular attention was given to conditions regarding the Boschetto portions where vine trees and citrus trees were found in abundance.<sup>14</sup> One particular and different lease was, however, that regarding concessions for tunny fishing. It seems that conditions made in 1564 served as a basis for those made later as those of 22nd April 1758.<sup>15</sup>

Now in order to help him ensure his will, the Secreto had the authority of imprisoning anybody who contravened his orders or jurisdiction, either in Malta or in Gozo, and he had the power of arresting debtors.<sup>16</sup> The magistral gabellotti and their pledges as well as the various officials employed in the Secrezia also received special protection. Together with the famuli they were protected by the Court of the Office of the Magistral Secrezia in civil cases. Moreover those who became debtors to the magistral gabellotti and to other creditors regarding the *finanze regie* as the *Diritto di Dogana* and the *Diritto di Scisa*, could be called to explain their behaviour.

To the drudgery of the office of the Secreto, honours were added in the sense that the Secreto was given his dues by being granted places of honour in such activities as meetings of the Popular Councils, the Procession of *Corpus Christi*, the annual visit to the Hospital of Notabile, and the solemn entry of a Grand Master elect or Bishop elect into the city of Notabile.<sup>17</sup>

The meetings of the Consiglio Popolare were held once in the Palace of the Jurats at Notabile and once in the Mu-

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nicipal House of the Jurats of Valletta, once the latter had been built. The Secreto was expected to attend and to sit in the first place to the left side of the table where the Seneschal would sit.

Once the relation of the counsels of the notary was read, the Secreto was expected to vote by casting the vote in which there would be inscribed the name of the person to be elected, into the jug (*boccale*) on his side, at the same time as the Capitano della Verga of Notabile, who would be sitting to the right side of the table.

Every year in June the two Magistrates of Notabile and Valletta, used to meet in the Municipal House of the Jurats of Valletta to discuss the *Mete delle Vettovaglie*. The Secreto had to be informed to attend these meetings to discuss the victuals. Having established the matter in the morning, he was expected to give a relation to the Seneschal in the afternoon, and to take note of the *Mete* to the Grand Master. During the discussion with the Magistrates, he also held a place of honour: he sat in the middle at the head of the table in the Jurats' Hall while the Jurats of Notabile sat on the right and those of Valletta on the left.

The Procession of *Corpus Christi* was always a pageant. Various notables of the Island were expected to participate, and they seemed to have guarded their right of precedence with some jealousy. The Secreto had to participate in the procession that was held in Notabile. He had to accompany the *conducenti* or celebrants holding a torch until they arrived at the door of the Church. From then onwards he had the right of holding the front left staff of the canopy while the Capitano della Verga held the right one.

That the person of the Secreto was held in high esteem may be seen by the honorary position that he was granted on the occasion of the visit of the Magistrate of Notabile to the Hospital of Santo Spirito, and the official entry of the Bishop of Malta into the old city. The Magistrate of Notabile was expected to visit the Hospital on Holy



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Saturday once every year. For such occasion the Governor of the City and the *Secreto* had to be invited.<sup>18</sup> The *Secreto* had to be treated with the same formality as the Governor, however, while the Governor sat on the right, the *Secreto* sat on the left of the table that was brought for the occasion. When the Bishop made his solemn entry into *Notabile*, the *Secreto* was also expected to accompany him by walking on his left while the Governor stood on the right and the jurats marched in front. The procession traditionally started from the Dominican Priory of Rabat where the Bishop elect used to welcome the distinguished personages.<sup>19</sup>

If the *Secreto* happened to go on board a galley he had the honour of being saluted by three gun salutes. This salute used to be repeated also when the *Secreto* was disembarking.<sup>20</sup> Whenever he was on his way to Gozo, he received a nine gun salute, five of which were *con palla*, from the Tower of Comino, where the flag had to be hoisted as soon as the *Secreto's* boat was perceived. The same thing had to be done when he was returning to Malta, and the same formality of salute had to take place as soon as he approached the Tower of Mgarr.

When the *Secreto* arrived in Gozo he was expected to pay a visit to the Governor in the Castle and he had to inform him beforehand of his visit by sending a messenger. Arriving at the Castle, the bridge had to be lowered and the guards had to present arms and salute him. Every time he passed in front of them, they had to salute him by presenting arms — *presentandosi con le armi in ispalle*. The Governor was expected to repay him his visit in the same manner, and if the Governor happened to provide him with a dinner the *Secreto* was expected to do the same! As long as he remained in Gozo, moreover, the *Sergente dal Castello* was expected to visit the *Secreto* every evening to tell him the password '*ossia il Santo*' that was issued by the Governor for the guards.

While he was staying in Gozo the *Secreto* could extract anything for his personal use without requiring li-

cence. He could go hunting for such game as hares and partridges in the island of Comino which was also a magistral reserve.

In Malta the Secreto was expected to move about the Island to inspect public spaces and magistral fiefs. For this purpose he had a cab or calesse of the *Cavallerizza* of the Grand Master completely at his disposal. This cab was to be daily at his service according to his own wishes.

But perhaps the job which entailed much flattery was connected with the solemn entry of the Grand Master into the city of Notabile. A day before such occasion the Secreto was to invite the Governor, and the Jurats of Notabile for a dinner on a table provided for the occasion by the *Cavallerizzo Maggiore* of the Grand Master. He was also expected to invite for another dinner, the Judges *Capitanale*, *Fiscale*, and *Tesoriero*, and those gentlemen who could turn up with a horse to meet the Grand Master in the morning. This dinner used to be held in the Palace and for this purpose the Grand Master used to provide a table that would accomodate every guest.

On the day the solemn entry was to take place, the Secreto could accompany the Grand Master with his own cab from Valletta instead of coming on horseback. And when the procession that used to leave the Cathedral to welcome the Grand Master used to arrive at the Gate of the City, the Secreto was expected to appear dressed in black to hold the front left staff of the baldacchino.

When the Grand Master reached the Palace he used to be provided with a present by the Magistrate. The present was then handed to the Secreto to divide it among deserving citizens. The Secreto used to give 10 zecchini as gratuity to the men who would have carried the present and this used to be distributed among them by the Treasurer under the Supervision of the Governor.<sup>21</sup>

The present consisted of a dozen basins of black sweets, four calves, six rams, twelve piglets, twelve big cocks, two dozen chickens, a dozen ducks, forty-eight pigeons, and a dozen hens.

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Having received the present, the *Secreto* was expected to distribute it thus: two basins of sweets for the Pages of the Grand Master; ten basins of sweets and a calf were presented to the Cathedral Chapter; a calf, four piglets and four ducks were given to the Jurats; four big cocks, two chickens, two ducks and a piglet were sent to the Governor.<sup>22</sup>

The chaplains of the Grotto of Rabat received a calf; the Monastery received six cocks, four chickens and a ram. The Dominican Priory and the Franciscan Friary as well as the Friars Minor (*P.P. Soccollanti*) received one ram each, while the Augustine Fathers were given a ram and six ducks. The Carmelite Friary also received a ram. The Treasurer of the Università of Notabile received a cock and a chicken, as did the Chancellor of the Magistrate. The youth who recited the oration during the ceremony received a calf, while the Master of Ceremonies was awarded two chickens and a piglet for his pains. The rest of the present, that is, two capons, twelve hens, twenty four cockerels and forty eight pigeons were sent to the Procurator of the Hospital of Santo Spirito to provide some good dishes for the sick.<sup>23</sup>

The *Secreto* could well dust his robe and go to take a rest after fulfilling his commissions in the services of his master and employer, the all-powerful Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers and Prince of the Maltese Islands.

### APPENDIX I LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT

- (1) **Appointment of a *Secreto***  
[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, ff.1-1v.]

FRATER EMMANUELE PINTO dei gratia Sacra Domus Hospitalis Sancti Joanni Hierosolimitani Militari Ordinis Sancti Sepulchri Dominici Magister humilis pauperumque Jesu Christi Custos Nobili Comiti JOANNI FRANCISCO PRETIOSI fideli vassallo nostro nobis dilecto salutem in Domino et prospero ad vota successus virtutem tuorum me-

rita, alique preclara talenta, quibus personam tuam ornatam novimus, promerentur, et nos hortantur, ut ea tibi conmittimus, que sub tua cura, ut confideamus, susceptura sunt incrementum cum igitur proviso officium SECRETIÆ insularum nostrorum Melite e Gaudisii ad nos spectare dignoscatur. Hinc est quod confidentes de tua fide, et sufficientia, serie presentium de nostra certa scientia, et speciali gratia dictum officium Secretie Civitatis et Insularum nostrorum Melite, et Gaudisii tibi nobili comiti Joanni Francisco Pretiosi ad nostrum beneplacitum concedimus, committimus, et fiducialiter commendamus, cum salario solito, et consueto, et cum prerogationis preeminentiis, auctoritate, et facultate ad ipsius officium spectantibus, et pertinentibus, beneficiendo in eodem, teque Secretum dicturum Insularum nostrarum Melite e Gaudisii constituimus et ordinamus. Proviso tamen, quod prius duramentum consuetum de benefideliterque te gerendo in manibus eius, ad quem legitime spectat prester. Precipientes, et mandantes omnibus et quibuscumque officialibus, et hominibus dictarum Insularum Melite, et Gaudisii in vim fidelitatis, et homagii, quo nobis, et Religioni nostre sunt ustricti, ut et pro Secreto, ut premittitur, habentes in possessionem dicti Officii Secretie inducant et in ductum conservent, ac de fructibus, et emolumentis, sique sunt, honoribusque dictum officium concernentibus respondeant, responderique faciant. Taliter ergo in premissis to exhibere curabis quaternus in primis Deo sit satisfactum, et opinio, quam de to concepimus nos minime salat. In cuius rei testimonium Bulla nostra Magistralis in cera nigra presentibus et impressa.

Dat. Melite in Conventu nostro die xviii mensis Januarii 1740 Ab.Inc. juxta stylum nostre cancellarie, Secundum verò cursum ordinarium 1741.

= Registro. in Cancell. =

Fra Rochus de Tavera, Vice Cancell.  
= Locus ꝛ sigilli.

(2) **Note of Appointment of a Judge**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act. Orig., Vol.II, f.159v.]

Comparavit paenes acta huius Off. Mag. Secretiæ Illus.

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D.D. Caietanus Bianchi Melitensis Patritius anconitanus, et comes de Veterana Secretus Suae Celis Ser.ma Principis Nos.i dignissimi, et Magistralis Secretiae harud Insularum Melite et Gauli Procurator Generalis et pris. elegit, et nominavit in Judicem huius Off. Mag. Secretiae, Penill.rem. V.E.I.D. CAIETANUS BONAVIDA praerogativis, praehe-

mimentis, antelationibus, honoribus quoque, et ononibus quibus eius antecessoris et memere pato. hactenus gravisi sunt Unde. S.

xii nov. 1775

(3) **Appointment of a Surveyor**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.161.]

Noi Conte Gio F. Preziosi Secreto di sua A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque che Mro. Filippo Pace di Casal Birkirkara è stato da noi eletto per Capo Maestro e Perito della Magstral Secrezia in questa Isola di Malta che per ordiniamo di volerlo ogni uno riconoscere, a stimare per tale con renderli quella ubbidienza che si deve per l'esecuzione dell'ordini nostri concendendo ai simili Cap Maestri ed altri famuli della Mag. Secrezia in questo Dominio di Malta obligandolo d'intervenire prontamente ad ogni mo. comando in caso d'occorenza. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnta. sotto scritta di mo. proprio pugno e sugellata col sugello della Mag. Secrezia.

Data in Città Valletta di quest'Isola di Malta li 15 Maggio 1750.

Pretiosi. Locus ✚ sigilli.

R.to Not. Fran. Alfano, Off.Mag.Secretiae, Magr. Not.

(4) **Appointment of a Head Carpenter**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.9.]

Noi Conte Don Gio. Francesco Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque che Mro. Giuseppe Galea della Valletta è stato da noi eletto per Capo Maestro Falegname della Mag. Secrezia per quest' Isola, che però ordiniamo di

volerlo ogn'uno riconoscere e stimare per tale con rendergli quella ubbidienza, che si deve per l'esecuzione delg'ordini nostri concedendo al medesimo tutte quell esenzioni, e prerogative, che sin oggi hanno goduto simili capi maestri e altri famuli della Magistral Secrezia in questo dominio. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnte. sottoscritta di nostro proprio pugno e suggellata col sugello della nostra Magistral Secrezia.

Dat. Melite in hac Civ. Valletta. hac die Prima Feb. 1741.

Il Conte Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S.

Locus † sigilli.

R. Not. F. Alfano, Mag. Secrezia Mro. Not.

**(5) Appointment of a Famulo**

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.5.]

Noi Conte Gio. Francesco Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S. facciamo noto à chiunque, che Giovanni Grech di Birkirkara e stato da noi eletto per Famulo della Magistral Secrezia in quest'Isola di Malta, che pero ordiniamo di volerlo ogn'uno riconoscere e stimare per tale, con rendergli quella ubbidienza, che si deve per l'esecuzione de gl'ordini nostri, concedendo al medesimo tutte quel esenzioni, e prerogative, che sin oggi hanno goduto simili Famuli obligando intervenire ad ogni nostro comando in caso d'occorenza. In fede di che abbiamo spedito la pnte. sottoscritta di nostro proprio pugno, e suggellata col sugella della nostra Magistral Secrezia.

Dat. Melite in hac Civ. Valletta, hac die xxxi Jan. 1741.

Il Conte Pretiosi Secreto di S.A.S.

Locus † sigilli.

R. Not. Fran. Alfano, O.M.S., Mag. Not.

APPENDIX II

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF LEASES

[A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, ff.621-633]

Die xxiiii Feb. 1768

Per l'affitti delli Beni Magistrali

Patti Generali ed Universali

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1. Che in tutti li beni magistrali non possa secondarsi il seminario, cioè non possa da gabellotti seminarisi per due anni consecutivi fromento primitivo detto volgarmente fromento forze, orzo, meschiato nella medesima porzione di tali beni.
2. Che non possa seminarisi in detti beni da gabellotti erba di cenere se non nelle parti arride, ed incoltivabili ad altro, e con licenza espressa dal Signor Secreto.
3. Che non possa seminarisi in detti beni da gabellotti nell'ultimo anno dell'affitto cumino, ne lente.
4. Che saranno tenuti di mantenere le terre, orti, o giardini nello stesso stato in cui si troveranno in tempo, che li sarà stata concessa tale gabella, ne potranno senza previa licenza del Sgr. Secreto cambiar la coltura delle rispettive porzioni di terre, cioè continuando a coltivare in orti le porzioni, che erano coltivate orti, in giardini li giardini; e non dovranno permettere per colpa propria il delizzionamento de beni, altri sarà lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto non solamente obligarli al risarcimento dei danni, mà potra espellere subito li gabellotti dalla gabella, ill tutto senza formalità giudiziaria.
5. Che saranno tenuti li conduttori di tali gabelle pur anche durante li quattro anni di gabella fare li piccoli ripari, val'à dire, risarcere li muri, e catene per l'altezza di palmi cinque, irralzare le brescie cadute, che non oltre passeranno in lunghezza una canna, risarcire le terrazze con ribuccare le crepatore, ad oggetto di impedire li spordenti dell'acque, ripulire li canali, e ribuccarli come pure di fare il risarcimento de legnami, sia in porte grande rustiche per la di cui spesa non oltre repassará rispettivamente li tari' sei.
6. Che succedendo per qualsisia accidente danno notabile nelle terre, e beni sudetti saranno tenuti di farne subito partecipe al Sgr. Secreto, e mancando di farlo, dovranno soggiacere incontrastabilmente al risarcimento di quei danni maggiori, che un seguito ne diveranno appurtata dal detto Sgr. Secreto potrà la verità del fatto, senz'alcuna formalità di giudizio.

7. Che restando debitori della gabella, o di parti di essa per un'anno, o più, non solamente il Sgr. Secreto potrà agire per il pagamento contra li gabellotti, e suoi pleggi, ed obligati in solidum, ma gli sarà permesso ancora d'ingabellarli à danni e spese de gabellotti debitori e suoi pleggi, ed obligati in solidum, senza altra formalità di giudizio, ma con farne semplice nota nell'immargine del quatterno di gabella.
8. Che saranno tenuti di dare un idonea pleggeria coll'obbligazione solidale benvista al Sgr. Secreto quale si farà nell'istio di gabella e non dandosi sarà lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto di nuovamente ingabellarli ad altri à danni, e spese dei gabellotti, senza, che sia tenuta d'interpellarli giudizialmente e fare nessuno formalità giudiziaria.
9. Che se nel decorso della gabella il pleggio, ed obligati in solidum si scopriranno non idonei, saranno tenuti li gabellotti à semplice richiesta del Sgr. Secreto dare altri pleggi idonei, ed a lui benvisti, e mancando di farlo tra terne di ogni quindici, da contarsi dal giorno che il Sgr. Secreto richiederà nuova pleggeria, di cui farà nota in margine dell'istio di gabella, gli sarà parimente lecito d'ingabellarli ad altri senza nessuna formalità giudiziaria a spese danni, ed interessi dei gabellotti.
10. Che in caso di qualunque notabile guasto, o danno, che sopravverrà in detti beni in tempo della gabella, come se per mancanza di pioggia, o che l'annata sarà stata sterile, è non avrà prodotto, o per abbondanza di pioggia, grandine, tempesta, innondazione, e qualsivisa accidente mancasse la sostanza degli'effetti agabellati, verrà l'uso di detta gabella in tutto, o in parte impedito i suoi prodotti, profitti notabilmente diminuiti, non sarà al gabellotto accordato defalco, se non quello solamente secondo la disposizione solita darsi dalle leggi in casi di danni gravissimi, avuto riguardo a tutto il tempo della gabella.
11. Che durante la gabella di quelli di detti Beni che si troverranno saranno mai compensati al gabellotto qualunque danni, guasti, che soffrirà a cagnativi dall'ani-



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mali di caccia, che si tratengono in tali riservati, o' per causa di loro conservazione.

12. Che non sara permesso ai gabellotti durante l'affitto svellere alcun albero, o' sia verde, o' pure secco, che possa trovarsi nei giardini, o territorii magistrali da loro tenuti a gabella, ma occorendo farcio, devono parteciparlo prima al Sgr. Secreto quale rincosciuta la necessita, farà svellere tali alberi, e la legna appartiene ad esso Sgr. Secreto, e contravenendo ai tali patto nelle forme sopra espresse, li gabellotti, saranno tenuti a pagare in pena quel tanto, in cui saranno condannati dal semplice ordine del detto Sgr. Secreto senza alcuna appellazione.
13. Che li gabellotti a' cui saranno liberate le gabelle di qualsisia bene magistrale esistente in quest'Isola di Malta, saranno tenute pagare al Sgr. Secreto oltre la gabella, li soliti carnaggi da regolarsi a' un scudo per cento sopra la totale gabella da pagarsi il giorno quindici Agosto d'ogni anno.
14. Che li gabellotti a' cui saranno liberate le gabelle di detti beni, non possan' ammettere altri compagni, ne rinunciare, subaffittare o' il totale, o' parte di detti beni avuti a' gabella, senza aver avuto prima il consenso ad espressa licenza dal Sgr. Secreto, senza di che sarà nulla la compagnia, rinuncia, o subaffitto fatto e sara lecito al detto Sgr. Secreto di spogliare il subaffittavolo dal subaffitto avuto, anche doppo fatto il contratto di esso.
15. Che il gabelletto a' cui saranno liberati le gabelle di detti beni saranno tenuti pagare l'annua pensione convenuta per tale concessali gabella in tre paghe uguali, la prima nel di quindici Agosto, la seconda a' Natale, e la terza a' Pasqua d'ogni anno.
16. E finalmente che detti beni si gabellano presentamente e sempre sotto tutti li altri patti, con cui sono stati soliti gabellarsi, benché ora non nominiamo, ma s'intendano nominati perche sono più che notori.
17. Sarà lecito al medesimo Sgr. Secreto durante la gabella,

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migliorare il territorio, terre, e giardini in tutto, o in parte, con doversi poi far regolare da comuni periti da parte ammigliorata in riguardo al maggior fruttato, che sarà per rendere, ed il gabellotto sarà tenuto pagare nell'anni consecutivi dopo fatto tal miglioramento quel tanto di più averanno giudicato detti periti.

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### SOURCE REFERENCES

1. D. Miede, *Histoire de Malta*, Tome II, p.353; NLM, Libr. 388, p.14 para.3 notes this formality and adds "eletto dal S.E. il Secreto, otterà dal Cameriere Maggiore di S.A. un polizzino diretto al Secretario della Cancelleria, il quale in vigor di detto li spedirà le solite Bolle, ossia diploma essendo incominciato tal uso dai 18 Gennaio 1741...". It should be added that letters of appointment were sent to the Secreto since the days of L'Isle Adam, however. The legal terms of reference of the Secrezia were embodied in the Laws of the Islands, see *Del Diritto Municipale di Malta* (Malta 1784) Cap.XVII-XVIII.
2. The income of the Grand Master came to him as Head of the Order and Prince of the Islands; it was directed by the Office of the Ricetta Magistrale. The Receiver, the president of this office, presented information to the Grand Master of his administration for every semester. In consequence of the Cession of the Islands, the emoluments of the fiefs and leases which in the past belonged to the 'Regia Secretia', and of those which the Grand Master acquired by means of sale or confiscation. The fiefs and benefices became to be known as "Della Secrezia". With the income of the Secrezia was included the right of Scisa (tax) which was paid 'in occasione della translazione dei beni stabili'. The collection of the rights of the Dogana which formed a principal article in the Income of the Grand Master were channelled into the Ricetta Magistrale. An example of this is the Scisa on wine which had been imposed by Ferdinand of Aragon in 1507 in favour of the Università of Notabile. In 1595 it was transferred to the Grand Master 'coll'obbligo dell G.M. di pagare l'Unità un compenso stabilito di 625sc'. TREAS. B. 289 Gionta, p.1, notes that from time immemorial the Kings, and when the Islands were handed over to the Knights, the Grand Masters, had the royal right called 'canont' on certain lands annotated in a *quinterno* known as Juliana which used to be preserved by the Secrezia.

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3. A.O.M. 6405, Div. Scrittura D, f.43.
4. Copies of *patente* are found in Reg. Act. Orig. Vols. I & II (A.S.C.J.) examples of which are given in APPENDIX I.
5. A.S.C.J., Reg. Act. Orig. Vol. I (1740-70), f.8, notes the appointment of Rev. Carlo Hagius of Curmi as chaplain of Ceppuna Church on 25 Feb. 1741. He had to celebrate Mass, and fulfil liturgical functions and others requested by the office of the Secrezia.  
A.O.M. 6535, f.66 notes that the chaplain of Ceppuna used to get 73sc. per year for Masses while that of Boschetto used to get 122sc. 10tr. 8gr. from the Treasury.
6. NLM. Libr. 388, p.19f., under 'Autorita del Secreto'.
7. *Ibid.*, p.21, last paragraph states that this was made 'in vigor di sovran decreto emanato li 8 Maggio 1723, registrato nell'Ufficio della Magistral Secrezia del Gozo: come apparisce anche dal formula di simili patenti'.
8. A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.II presents various appointments issued by Secreto Muscat Sceberras and his successor Secreto Stanislao Xara Cassia.
9. NLM, Libr. 388, p.10 notes 'se però il balcone sarà con sagliature, si deve fare supplica a S.A. che vien rimessa al Secreto, appartenendo a lui conoscere ogni incidente che riguarda lo spazio pubblico'. And in the section 'Ufficio del Secreto nelle Isole di Malta e Gozo', last paragraph adds 'E' officio del Secreto relatare le suppliche di coloro che vogliono fare in istrada canale coperti per condurre le acque dalla fontana, che vien in città, per i propri lor beni: nel che non dovrà altro riconoscere se non l'appartamente allo spazio pubblico, che non resti pregiudicato, come anche i vicini, niente ingenerendosi del gius della fontana, essendo altro ispezion'.
10. TREAS. B 289, Gionta, pp.1-4. It seems that the Secrezia intended to levy this tax on ecclesiastical lands as well — Bishop's, Convent's, Abbatial Houses' and individual religious persons' — but the persons concerned neither revealed their property output nor did they consent to accept the innovation. The Bishop was ready to excommunicate anybody who dared infringe ecclesiastical rights and other ecclesiastics pointed out that the licence of the Pope was required for the collection of royal tithes from the property: 'excommunicamus omnes eos, qui in terris suis nova pedagia seri gabellas faciunt ... nel cap.27.26L ... per bulla di P.Pio V la 2a. juxta eos: qui collectas decimas ... et alia onera clericis personis — eorum bonis — ...'. With the same Gionta there are attached pages of a *Quinterno del canone*

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*dovute alla Magistral Secrezia dal anno 1625-26 et 1627-28.* The total given is 258sc. 7tr. 2gr. and the word *pago* is written four times along the right hand margin.

11. A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.514. Fishing in the Salina area was a reserved right of the Secreto.
12. NML, Libr. 388, p.10 sqq.
13. See Appendix II: General Conditions of Leases.
14. A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig., Vol.I, f.513, & Vol.II, f.209-210.
15. A.O.M., 562, ff.166-167v.
16. NLM, Libr. p.19 paragraph 8.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 14 under "*Onori e funzioni del Secreto di Malta*". The statement '... dal diciotto Gennaio 1741, essendo stati noi, per somma bonta di S.A. eletti per secreto dell'Emm.Emmanuel Pinto felicemente regnante', indicates that this MSS is a transcription of a monograph of the Secreto Count G.F. Preziosi.
18. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15a; P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta* (London 1964), p. 30.
19. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15 sq. mentions the entry of Mgr. Alferan during the reign of G.M. Vilhena when Count G. Preziosi was Secreto; A.S.C.J., Reg.Act.Orig. Vol.II, f.14 provides a declaration made by Pietro Paolo Pace Testaferrata on the 16 December 1770, that concerns the solemn entry of Mgr. Bartolomeo Rull (1757-1769) which occurred in June 1758. It says that the jurats led by the Governor on the right and the Secreto on the left went on horseback to meet the Bishop elect at the Dominican priory. The Bishop received them at the door and then sat on a throne for the reception during which two jurats and the Governor sat on his left. Afterwards they moved to the Barracca in the following order of precedence: the grand cavalcade of the Bishop's court headed the procession followed by gentlemen after whom walked the four jurats followed by the Bishop with the Governor on his right and the Secreto on his left; *See also*: P.Galea, O.P., "The New Bishop of Malta with the Dominicans at Rabat on the eve of their solemn entry into the Cathedral," *Scientia*, X, 3, pp.125-144 which also notes that the first bishop known to have done this, according to the *Juliana*, Vol.V, 2, n.611, kept at the Dominican Priory of Rabat, was Mgr. Balaguer Camarassa. Galea adds information about the entry of Mgr. Rull which occurred on 27 June 1758 and of Mgr. Pellegrano in November 1770; NLM, Libr. 5, p.484 notes the antiquity of the custom while on p.238 it refers to the solemn entry of Bishop Alpheran. On p.486 it gives some particular information regarding the entry of Mgr. Fra Gaspare Gori Mancini which

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occurred on 13 September 1722: it says that the Capitano della Verga was invited to accompany the Bishop from the Dominican Priory to the Barracca on horseback and then under canopy to the Cathedral. The Secreto *showed new pretensions* for he wanted to go on horseback with the Capitano della Verga although this was against custom. The Grand Master ordered that if his Secreto wished to go to accompany the bishop, "non potere ne devesse in conto alcuno precederli, ne prender la mano a' verreno de ss. giurati con che queste" while on p.491, para.11 it says that the Secreto stayed with the Bishop even at the Barracca where they had to wait for the Cathedral Chapter to arrive. See further: P.D.M. Callus, "Tradizione Ospitalità Dominicana al novello Vescovo di Malta" *ARCH.MEL.*, Vol.III, p.3-11, and E.B. Vella, "Solemn Entry of Mgr. Rull. Grand Master Pinto present at the Cathedral", *Scientia*, X,4, pp.180-184. pp.180-184.

20. NLM, Libr. 388, p.15 notes that Secreto Count G.F. Preziosi received this honour from General Bali Denin, in Mgarr, Gozo, when he was on the *Galera Capitana* in August 1748. The same happened when he was on the ship *S. Nicola* in St. Paul's Bay in June 1750 and when he was on the same ship later in August of that year in Mgarr, Gozo.
21. *Ibid.*, p.16 notes the frivolity of G.M. Pinto who ordered the Secreto to distribute 20 zecchini instead of 10.
22. *Ibid.*, the present for the Cathedral Chapter had to be sent to the house of the Dean, 'come dignita Magistrale per dividue con i colleghi'. At the solemn entry of Pinto an ethical error was committed: it was sent to the Canon Precentor. The Jurats' share was forwarded to the First Jurat who then divided it among his colleagues.
23. *Ibid.*, f.16a; P. Cassar, *op.cit.*, p. 30.