



Malta  
Classics  
Association

# MELITA CLASSICA

Vol. 2  
*2015*

*Journal of the  
Malta Classics Association*

# MELITA CLASSICA

Vol. 2  
2015

*Journal of the  
Malta Classics Association*

All rights reserved.  
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing by the publisher.

**MELITA CLASSICA**

*Vol. 2, 2015*

Text © Malta Classics Association  
Design and layout © Book Distributors Limited

ISBN: 978-99957-847-37

**Malta Classics Association,**  
The Department of Classics and Archaeology,  
Archaeology Farmhouse, Car park 6,  
University of Malta, Msida  
[classicsmaltasoc@gmail.com](mailto:classicsmaltasoc@gmail.com)

**[www.classicsmalta.org](http://www.classicsmalta.org)**

# CONTENTS

## **Notes on the Text of Juvenal**

S. J. Harrison 9

## **The Serpent, the Moon, the Underworld**

Horatio C. R. Vella 17

## **Economic Strategies of a Roman Landowner – Pliny the Younger**

Levente Takács 37

## **Truth Vindicated: *Tristia ex Melitogaudio***

Stanley Fiorini and Horatio C. R. Vella 53

## **Comparing history and tragedy: the case of Polybius and Plutarch**

Nijole Juchneviciene 73

## **Grandmothers in Roman Antiquity: A Note on *Avia Nutrix* (AE 2007, 298)**

Christian Laes 99

## **Reflections on the Literary Sources on Byzantine Malta**

Biagio Vella 115

**Dissertations in Classics successfully  
submitted to the Department of Classics and  
Archaeology, University of Malta 1997-2002**

Horatio C. R. Vella

121

**Book Reviews**

125

**Guidelines to Contributors**

135

## **The Malta Classics Association Committee 2015**

Hon. President	Dr Biagio Vella
Executive President	Profs Horatio C.R. Vella
Vice President	Mr Samuel Azzopardi
Secretary	Ms Joanna Zammit Falzon
Treasurer	Mr Victor Bonnici
Creative Officer	Mr Carmel Serracino
International Officer	Prof. Horatio C.R. Vella
Members	Ms Jennifer Mitchell
	Ms Ilaria Labbate

## ***Melita Classica* Editorial Board 2015**

Editor	Mr Victor Bonnici
Members	Prof. Horatio C.R. Vella
	Mr Carmel Serracino
	Fra Alan J. Adami O.P.

# Truth Vindicated: *Tristia ex Melitogaudio*

Stanley Fiorini and Horatio C. R. Vella

## Introduction

A public talk by Professor Jeremy Johns on the 20th of May, 2015, at the *Aula Magna* of the University of Malta, Valletta Campus, on early Medieval times in Malta concluded with an appendix, quite extraneous to the topic of the lecture, which aimed at marring the work the laborious *editio princeps* of *Tristia ex Melitogaudio: Lament in Greek verse of a XIIth-century exile on Gozo*, published in 2010, entailed. This epilogue was Johns' reference to Marc D. Lauxtermann's article which appeared in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* in 2014 entitled 'Tomi, Mljet, Malta'. The present paper attempts to correct, avoiding however Lauxtermann's abusive tone, his misunderstanding of the text which treats the crucial passage in *Tristia* (ff. 84-84v.) and his manipulation of the truth behind that passage to invent a different history of the times under discussion. The honest search for truth requires that one faithfully renders, as closely as possible, a translation of the relevant text before conceiving any historical conclusions. We claim that Lauxtermann, on the contrary, has opted to invent a scenario different from the real one, and then attempted to twist the Greek and a translation of the important passage to support his plan.

## The Place of Exile

The author of the Greek poem published in *Tristia ex Melitogaudio*<sup>1</sup> refers to the islands of Malta and Gozo by three different terms and in each case the choice of name is far from arbitrary, but nonetheless it is dictated by the context in question. We encounter *Melitogáuidos* in f. 84.6, which is rendered as *Melitēgaiúdos* in f. 84v.9m. and f. 85v.12m,

---

1 J. Busuttil, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella eds (2010).

two slightly different versions of the same name between which we feel no real difference can exist. In order to arrive at a meaning of this composite toponym, Lauxtermann's analysis has recourse to Sanskrit. It is understood that, in such compound proper names of places in Sanskrit, the first element is indeclined, while the second indicates the locality concerned, being the most important word in the compound. This process of forming compounds belongs to the *karmadharaya tatpurusha* class of compounds. In our case, *Melitogaúdos* or *Melitēgaúdos* would mean 'Gozo of Malta' or 'Gozo next to Malta'. Another category in Sanskrit allows such compounds to mean that both proper names are of equal standing and, therefore, co-ordinated, so that *Melitogaúdos* would mean 'Malta and Gozo', a category which in Sanskrit is called *dvandva*.<sup>2</sup> Lauxtermann opts for the latter, bluntly declaring that 'most if not all compounded toponyms in Medieval Greek are *dvandva* compounds', and then goes on to contradict himself when he clearly places the poet on Malta as his place of exile.<sup>3</sup> Understandably, he could not have placed the exile in both Malta and Gozo, unless he was unaware that these are two distinct islands. We will discuss the context in which the poet uses this name later.

The poet also uses the name *Malta* in f. 35v.15m. and f. 54v.7m. and the name *Melitē* in f. 85.9 and f. 85v.3. *Malta*, the Arabic version of the name, is very appropriately adopted when he describes his place of exile as 'in the land of Barbary', 'the land of the godless Agarenes'. This is clearly the case of using the name of the largest island for the whole archipelago as one still does today. On the other hand, the two references to *Melitē* clearly refer to Malta as the place of St Paul's shipwreck, doubtlessly out of deference to the text in *Acts* 28:1, ἐπέγνωμεν ὅτι Μελίτη ἡ νῆσος καλεῖται.

But our erudite poet, well versed in Latin and Greek literature, was well aware of other variants of the name for the Maltese Islands. In particular, he knew that the same shipwreck narrative in the apocryphal Vth-century *Acts of Sts Peter and Paul* twice refers to the island as *Gaudomelētē*, expressly stressing that the island in question

2 We are indebted to Prof. Michael and Mrs Maria Zammit, our chief experts on Sanskrit for their help with this interpretation.

3 M.D. Lauxtermann (2014), 156, n.9.



was that particular *Melítē* associated with *Gaudos*, not to be confused with some other, like *Méleta* (modern *Mljet*) off the Dalmatian coast.<sup>4</sup> The poet who chooses his words very carefully, however, avoids *Gaudomelētē* and opts instead to coin a variant, *Melitēgaúdos*, that is a *hapax legomenon* in Byzantine toponymy. There must be a very strong reason for this deviation, certainly not one that is merely dictated by prosody. What he has just called *Melítē* (f. 85.9; f. 85v.3) he now decides to call *Melitēgaúdos* (f. 85v.12m) – not *Gaudomelítē* – when referring to Publius' father: τὸν πατέρα τοῦ Ποπλίου τοῦ δεσπότης τῆς Μελιτηγαύδου.

In order to make sense of this, here one has to keep in mind the sequence in which the poet (and scholiast)<sup>5</sup> use the toponym. The poet uses this composite name once (in the poem's text) when describing Roger II's attack<sup>6</sup> on the island – ἔξαρχος ... Μελιτογαύδω ... ἔπλευσε – (f. 84.3,6,7) and twice (in the marginal scholia) to emphasize, firstly, that his place of exile was the same as the fortified place (just mentioned) attacked by Roger II – ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ Μελιτηγαύδω (f. 84v.9m) – and, soon afterwards, as the same place of exile (that is, shipwreck) of the Apostle Paul – τὸν πατέρα τοῦ Ποπλίου τοῦ δεσπότης τῆς Μελιτηγαύδου (f. 85v.12m),<sup>7</sup> with which the poet sees a parallel with his own exile. It is only natural that in this sequence in quick succession, the same name is adopted to link all three places – Roger's attack, poet's place of exile, and Paul's shipwreck – by the use of the selfsame toponym, even if in this there is some latitude and licence of expression. The choice of name is governed by the first exigency: Roger's attack.

4 An interpretation favoured by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (Gy. Moravcsik, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. De Administrando Imperio* (Budapest: 1949; English translation) 36:16-18).

5 For the identification of the author of the marginal notes, the scholiast, with the author of the poem, see J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella (eds) (2010), xvi-xviii.

6 We contend that the attacker was Count Roger II, contrary to Lauxtermann's opting for George of Antioch; this point is discussed *infra*.

7 In this excerpt there must be understood νήσου before Μελιτηγαύδου, and, likewise, in the preceding.

It is to be remarked that, in his analysis of compound place-names, Lauxtermann ignores completely the most clear and the most obvious instance he could have cited, namely *Gaudomelētē* (the place of Paul's shipwreck in *The Acts of Sts Peter and Paul*) which is an undeniable rendering of *Melītē* (the place of Paul's shipwreck in *Acts* 28:1). One concludes that the poet's deliberate choice of the unique *Melitegaúdos*, which he coined, meant *Gaúdos* and neither *Melītē* nor *Melītē kai Gaúdos*. This interpretation is the most natural which, in the relative scarcity of strictly toponymic compounds, conforms with the vast majority of Greek compound nouns (such as *κοσμοσώστου* (f. 2.5), *φωσφόρου* (f. 2.10) etc., citing from *Tristia*)<sup>8</sup> and semi-toponymic compounds (typified by *Constantinopolis*, *Chersonesos*, etc.) and other geographical descriptors like *Hellenogalatai*, *Libyphoinices*, and *Syrophoinice*. This is the natural interpretation adopted by authors of the calibre of Theodore Tsolakis.<sup>9</sup>

In the opinion of the present writers, the place of exile of this anonymous poet, who is suggested in *Tristia* to be identified with Eugenius of Palermo and Hugo Falcandus,<sup>10</sup> still remains that of Gozo, sister and smaller island of the Maltese archipelago. This opinion is based not only on the above interpretation of the text, but on a number of other arguments.

One compelling reason is the fact that Giliberto Abate's census of ca. 1241,<sup>11</sup> almost a century after the writing of our poem, shows that Malta's population at that time was in its majority Muslim, whereas in Gozo the exact opposite held, the majority there being Christian. This shows an essential difference between the ethnic composition of the populations in the two islands, indicating that the vicissitudes of the two neighbouring islands were quite different in the centuries leading up to that date, that is, during the Arab period. The clue to the solution of this riddle is found in the poem itself and precisely where we find ourselves at variance with Lauxtermann.

---

8 F.M. Pontani, (1965), 285-288.

9 E. Tsolakis (1973).

10 J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella (eds) (2010), xliii-liv.

11 See discussion in J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella (eds) (2010), lxii-lxix.

## Who led the attack and against what was it directed?

The tone of Lauxtermann's paper is set by his radical re-reading of the translation in *Tristia* of the passage relating to the attack on *Melitogaúdos* and the consequent discussion of the Bishop and his Christian community among the Moslem inhabitants. First of all, our interpretation diverges as to who led the attack on *Melitogaúdos*. We think it was Count Roger II, contrary to Lauxtermann who opts for Roger's vizier, George of Antioch. Lauxtermann, repeating Fiaccadori (2010, 340), declaredly does so because the attacker is referred to as ἔξαρχος ἀρχόντων ὅλων when it is known that the vizier assumed the title of ἄρχων τῶν ἀρχόντων.<sup>12</sup> For historical correctness, it must be noted that this title was only assumed after the establishment of the kingdom in 1130, whereas the attack on *Melitogaúdos* took place before that, in 1127.

Referring to the passage in question, the verse 'Did not the great leader of the admirals himself open the troublesome gates of the foreign, godless Agarenes?' (f. 83v.13-15), which probably led Lauxtermann to his conclusion, must be read with reference to the following verse and sequel (f. 83v.16-17): 'Do you not even know, Sir, how, while the sceptre was not yet raised, ... the most resplendent leader of all the leaders, ... sailed to *Melitogaúdos* ...?' 'The most resplendent leader of all the leaders' can only be Roger II who, throughout the poem, is consistently referred to as light-bearing (ff. 2.10, 25.10, 26.17 *et passim*). There is no contradiction in calling Roger 'leader of the admirals' and 'leader of all the leaders' because George of Antioch, ἄρχων τῶν ἀρχόντων, was his subject and inferior to him. George of Antioch was indeed at the apex of the pyramidal power hierarchy, but he was always subject to the King: 'head of the general council' (f. 2.7), but still 'deputy of the ruler' (f. 2.8). Furthermore, even if the poem was written after the establishment of the kingdom, the events described here occurred before – 'while the sceptre was not yet raised' (f. 83v.16-17) – when the title of ἄρχων τῶν ἀρχόντων had not yet been adopted by George of Antioch. Besides, although it is readily admitted that Roger's usual practice was to entrust his naval

---

12 For a detailed philological analysis of the text, cf. *infra*, the section 'Texts, Translation and Comments'.

enterprises to his admirals (e.g. the attacks on Mahdiya in 1123, on Amalfi in 1131 and on North Africa in the 1140s), it appears that Roger conducted this particular attack on *Melitogaúdos* in person, possibly in view of the Mahdiya fiasco of 1123, under George of Antioch's own command.

But there are other objections: if the passage refers to George of Antioch, then this is the only place in the whole poem where George is referred to in the 3rd person (cf. ff. 2; 9.2; 10v.3; 12.17; 15.16; 17.1 ; 19.13; 21v.9; 22.15; 22v etc.). Lauxtermann (p. 1) is in agreement with us that the poem is addressed to George of Antioch whom the poet consistently addresses in the second person. There is also the fact that this incident of 1127 is documented elsewhere. In his interpretation of Telesinus, Amari sees the attack as happening against the backdrop of and in retaliation for piratical activities against Patti, Catania and Syracuse by the Moslems. This is also Houben's reading of the events who further identifies Pantelleria and Malta as the bases from which the pirates operated. These attacks took place in July 1127, so that the attack on the islands including Malta took place precisely in that month when Roger's campaign was suddenly interrupted by the news of the death in Salerno of his nephew William, the Duke of Puglia, which we know from other sources to have happened on 20 July 1127. Telesinus' account is very clear when he stated that it was Roger(!) himself who, with seven galleons, sailed directly to Salerno to claim for himself what the Duke of Puglia had left behind him.

## **The Bishop and his Christian Community in Malta**

Even if we were to admit with Lauxtermann that *Melitogaúdos* refers to Malta (which we do not), we certainly disagree with him in his interpretation of the Bishop and the Christian community. Lauxtermann would have it that George of Antioch (*sic*) did not find a Bishop and his community on *Melitogaúdos*, but that he implanted them there himself! Did they, by any chance, accompany his 'small naval expedition of spear-bearing archer-infantry'? Would George burthen his 'charge with his light brigade' with an ecclesiastical community on the off chance that his expedition this time (unlike

Mahdiya, four years before) would be successful? Is Admiral George of Antioch known to have established churches anywhere else in the wake of a successful campaign?

But Lauxtermann's interpretation is refuted also on philological grounds. He translates the passage as:

εὐσεβεῖς δὲ τοῦ τόπου	he selected pious
οἰκήτορας δείκνυσι σὺν Ἐπισκόπῳ	settlers for this place
	together with a bishop

The verb δείκνυμι (f. 84.15) in the active voice, as it is used here, means 'to show'. It clearly does not mean 'to select', and should not have been used as such unless the intention was to alter the sense according to a pre-conceived idea, as Lauxtermann did. The warped meaning was further compounded by him taking τοῦ τόπου, clearly in the genitive case, to be in the dative ('for this place'), grammatically untenable. The most natural translation of τοῦ τόπου οἰκήτορας is precisely 'inhabitants of the place'. For '(selected settlers) for the place', you would have needed a dative or, perhaps, even better, a prepositional phrase like εἰς τὸν τόπον. This means that the Christian community had been on the island all along, and this is precisely the reason to ground our contention for continuity of Christianity, at least, on the island of Gozo.

Then there is the key word πατρόθεν for which Lauxtermann (fn. 77) prefers a complicated interpretation according to which the word contains a veiled reference to the orthodox denunciation of *filioque*. Syntactically, his interpretation necessitates πατρόθεν to be construed with the nominal phrase Τριάδα Θεῶν. Even if it is not totally impossible to construe an adverb like πατρόθεν with a substantive or a nominal phrase, it is not a solution that recommends itself, if there is a more natural explanation readily available. This is precisely the case here: the word immediately preceding πατρόθεν is προσκυνούντας, with which the adverb becomes a natural qualifier, both syntactically and semantically: the worship of the Holy Trinity was performed by the (formerly hiding) Christians of the island as part of a heritage 'from their fathers'.

Our assertion is confirmed if we consider the context in which this whole passage is set. If we return to the opening phrase of this passage (f. 83.13 *et seq.*), it is seen that the poet's argument is the natural development of Joshua's narrative (ff. 82v.1 *et seq.*) which concludes with a comparison of Roger's inspired achievements for his new kingdom and its people. In particular, emphasis is made on 'redeeming the gathering of this **concealed** people (f. 83.3), ... they who were judged by even being condemned to the cross and by means of other punishments decided by [their] law (f. 83,10-11)'. Is not this a reaffirmation of the 'bringing to the light' of the suppressed Christian community of *Melitogaúdos* (f. 84.14-15)?

We reiterate that the members of this Church had been existing in suppression under the Moslems whom they hated (ff. 84.11, 17; 84v.2). Incidentally, one can ask: by whom were Mohammed and his *mouddibi* hated, if (according to Lauxtermann) there had been no Christians on the island? Would Lauxtermann suggest that they were hated by the Moslems themselves? One can also ask: could this Christian community have been implanted by Roger I in 1090? If this were the case, then such a community would have been free and not found in bondage and in suppressed conditions by his son Roger II. If it ante-dated 1090, then this community belonged to the Greek-rite Byzantine Church as can now be independently confirmed from Fiaccadori's important discovery of the existence of Malta's *Protopapás* Nicolaos and of his wife Milo who died in 1230 and in 1229, respectively. We find no difficulty in postulating that the *episcopos* (overseer) found by Roger II was in fact a *protopapás*, as it is known that in the XIth – XIIIth centuries, Constantinople was appointing a *protopapás* or *archipresbyter* instead of a bishop in some of its dioceses. It need hardly be stressed that the title of a *protopapás* implies the existence of a Greek hierarchy and a Greek Christian community. In view of the Normans' brief from Pope Nicolaus II in 1059, binding them to return the lost churches in the occupied territories to Latin Rome, establishing a new Greek Church in the Maltese Islands would not have made sense.<sup>13</sup> This conclusion has the logical corollary that the Church found by Roger II was a Greek Church, as it had been

---

13 P. Herde (2002), 219 *et seq.*, esp. 223.

since before the Arab take-over. The special role of Gozo in this saga is highlighted in the important report of *ca.* 1241 by Giliberto Abbate to Frederick II, which shows that, by contrast with the Maltese population which had a 59% majority of Moslems, for Gozo the exact opposite was true where the Christians were in a 54% majority. Many facts point towards the survival of the Greek Church in these islands which is not without parallels both in Sicily and in the Maghreb. Let it suffice here to recall how as late as 1575 no less than 95% of all church dedications belonged to saints of the pre-Islamic period, and that a considerable number of the saints' dates of celebration coincided with that of the Byzantine calendar.

The later history of the Church in Malta and in Gozo points towards important differences between the two structures with the Gozitan antecedents leaning towards a Byzantine origin. We list two major points of divergence: (i) The medieval parish organization in Gozo, in which four parishes each with a mere handful of parishioners, are all huddled together in the narrow confines of the acropolis and its rabat, exhibiting a very close resemblance with what is known of the Greek parishes of the Island of Rhodes before 1522 and the four Greek parishes in Birgu after 1530.<sup>14</sup> (2) The collegiate status of the medieval Gozitan Matrix Church in which the majority of the canonries are founded by shared *jurapatronatus* established by various families – a number of them significantly of Greek extraction, such as the Calimera, de Episcopo, de Apapis, and Anastasi – which is again a completely different set-up from the corresponding Maltese Cathedral Chapter whose Canons enjoy individual prebends in the gift of the Bishop or of the Monarch.<sup>15</sup>

Among other reasons which help us to identify *Melitogáudos* with Gozo, one can list the vicinity of Gozo to Sicily and the latter's clearer sighting from Gozo particularly from its headlands (f.12v.1-2): προθεσμίας ... ἄκταις. It was from these heights in Gozo that the poet could console himself by seeing his native country (f.101.14-16).

---

14 This argument is gone into in S. Fiorini (2010), 18-22.

15 This argument is discussed at length in S. Fiorini (2016), forthcoming.

Also, buttressing this argument is the fact that Gozo was a small island suitable for keeping undesired individuals in exile, able to roam about without being able to escape. Indeed, Gozo already had a long tradition of being a convenient place for banishment of these individuals.<sup>16</sup>

By way of summing up, all these pointers induce us to reaffirm the thesis in *Tristia*, whereby Gozo appears to have constituted a link, however tenuous, with pre-Arab Christianity, irrespective of what may have happened on the larger island. Although not yet proved, this may have happened if, unlike events in Malta where military resistance provoked a savage crushing by the Arabs of the defendants, in Gozo, with its much smaller proportions and smaller defence force, opposition to the Aghlabids in 869 did not make much sense, so that some kind of pact of *dhimma* type permitted the survival of the Christian population, albeit in inferior conditions, until Norman times. On this point, we are re-assessing our position of the “pact of old” referred to in the *Tristia* (84.16) - ὅστις, κινήθεις δεξιᾶς πρὸς τῆς ἄνω, - . The governing word in this phrase is ὅστις which, despite its occurrence immediately following Ἐπισκόπῳ, does not refer to the bishop or to his community, but to Roger II. We are now of the opinion that this pact was not the *dhimma* agreement as held in the *Tristia*, but refers to what Roger I had agreed to (*amān*) with the Moslems in 1090-1091.<sup>17</sup>

## The Texts, their Translations and our Comments

Melitogaúdos / Melitēgaúdos

ἄρ' ὁ πρόκριτος τῶν ἀμηράδων μέγας	f. 83v.13
οὐκ αὐτὸς ἠνέωξε δυσκόλους πύλας	
τῶν ἀλλοφύλων Ἀγαρηνῶν ἀθέων;	

16 J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini, H.C.R. Vella eds (2010), xxiii-xxiv, particularly the cases of the Jew Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia who, in 1288, was exiled to Comino, a tiny island between Malta and Gozo, (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ii, 185-6) down to the XVth-century Sicilians Joannes Castelletta of Palermo exiled at Gozo in 1491 (ASP Prot. 214, f. 248) and Joannes Antonius Sticca, also at Gozo, in 1494 (*DSMH* II/4, Doc. 307).

17 J. Johns (2002), 34-37.



οὐ κ' οἶδας,<sup>18</sup> ὦ τᾶν, πῶς ἔτι σκηπτουχίας  
 οὐκ ἐν τοσοῦτοις ἀγαθοῖς ἐπηρμένης,  
 οὐ τοῦ τροχοῦ δὲ τοῖς τόποις ὑπερτέροις  
 ὑπερβεβηκυίας τε<sup>19</sup> τῶν ἀμηράδων,  
 ἔξαρχος ὑπέρλαμπρος ἀρχόντων ὄλων,  
 νηῶν συνάξας πλείστον οὐδαμῶς στόλον  
 δορυφόρων τε τοξοτῶν πεζῶν ὄχλον,  
**Μελιτογαύδω**, τῇ πατρίδι τῆς Ἄγαρ,  
 ἔπλευσε, θράσος μὴ πτοηθεὶς ἀθέων,  
 περικυκλώσας μηχαναῖς διαφόροις,  
 καθ' ὑπέταξεν<sup>20</sup> εὐτόνως τῷ Δεσπότῃ;  
 ἐπεὶ δὲ τούτους αἰρεσιάρχην μόνον  
 καλοῦντας εἶδε, παμμίαιρον Μουχάμετ,  
 ἀποστρακίζει τῶνδε τοὺς ὑπερέτερους  
 χώρας πανοικὶ καὶ λαοὺς αἰθιόπων,<sup>21</sup>  
 οὐ μὲν<sup>22</sup> μετρητοῦς. εὐσεβεῖς δὲ τοῦ τόπου  
 οἰκήτορας δείκνυσι σὺν Ἐπισκόπῳ·  
 ὅστις, κινηθεὶς δεξιᾶς πρὸς τῆς ἄνω,  
 τὰ μὲν μισητὰ οἷς ἐκάλουν Μουχάμετ  
 μετατίθησιν. εἰς ναοὺς θεωτάτους  
 τῶν μουδδίβων δὲ μισαρωτάτ{ων} τόπους<sup>23</sup>  
 ἔστησε θεῖους ἱερεῖς καὶ χρησίμους  
 Τριάδα Θεῖαν προσκυνοῦντας πατρόθεν,  
 ἐντυγχάνοντας τῇδ' ὑπὲρ σκηπτουχίας,  
 αὐτοῦ τε<sup>24</sup> μᾶλλον τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγνισμένης·

f. 84.1

f. 84v.1

18 We confirm that this is the correct reading of the ms., not as in N. Zagklas (2012), 296: οὐκ οἶδας.

19 τὲ MS.

20 We confirm that this is the correct reading of the ms., not as in N. Zagklas (2012), 296: καθυπέταξεν.

21 We confirm that this is the correct reading of the ms., with the umlaut on top of the second iota, and not as in N. Zagklas (2012), 296: αἰθιόπων.

22 οὓ μὲν MS.

23 μισαρωτάτ{ων} τόποις MS.

24 τὲ MS.

‘Did not the great leader of the admirals himself open the troublesome gates of the foreign, godless Agarenes? Do you not even know, Sir, how while the sceptre was not yet raised, in so many good [circumstances], while it still did not even exceed the limits of the council of the admirals, the most resplendent leader of all the leaders, having mustered only a small naval expeditionary force and a host of spear-bearing archer-infantry, sailed to Melitogaúdos, the country of Hagar, [and] not having been dismayed at the impudence of the godless [sons of Hagar], having encircled [them] with diverse engines of war, he subdued [them] with might and main for the Lord? When he saw, on the one hand, these [inhabitants] invoking only the heresiarch, the all-abominable Mohammed, he banished from the country their sheikhs, with all their households and [their] black slaves, not indeed a few. He, on the other hand, brought out into the open the pious inhabitants of the place together with their Bishop; who, having departed from the pact of old, got rid of the indeed hated things by which they used to invoke Mohammed. He then established into most sacred temples, places [formerly] belonging to the most hated *Mouddibi*, sacred and useful priests who were worshipping the holy Trinity from ancestral times, interceding with this [Trinity] on behalf of the sceptre-bearing, and rather for his purified soul.’

[ἐνθάδε] φησί πῶς ὁ ποιητῆς ἐξω[ρί]σθ[η] ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ **Μελιτηγαύδῳ**  
(f. 84v.7-9m.)

‘Here he says how the poet was banished in Melitēgaúdos itself’.

Prof. Marc D. Lauxtermann<sup>25</sup> has this translation: ‘he selected pious settlers for this place together with a bishop, who, moved by

25 M.D. Lauxtermann (2014), 156.

the Hand of Heaven, turned the hateful [mosques] where they called upon Muhammad into most holy churches and installed, in place of the most despicable mu'addibs, holy and good priests who worship the Holy Trinity in the way of the Fathers'.

We confirm that ὁ πρόκριτος in 83v.13 cannot be other than Roger II, since no such title as 'leader of the admirals' could have been bestowed to his deputy, George of Antioch without offence to Roger II. As explained in Addendum II on pp.cv-cvi of our text, the account of Roger II's achievements over Gozo starts here in f. 83, culminates in f. 84 and finishes in f. 85v. This poem starts with an invocation to George of Antioch (f. 2), compares historical and biblical references with Roger II in Part I (ff. 3-50v.), literary, mythological and biblical ones with the author himself in Part II (ff. 52-68v.), puts Roger II's achievements in between biblical, philosophical, historical and mythological references in Part III (ff. 69-100), and Biblical, historical, mythological and literary references with again the author's own situation on Gozo in Part IV (ff. 97-113v.). It is clear from the above scheme that the reference to sceptre-bearing in f. 83v.16-17, which belong to Part III, could not have been intended for George of Antioch.

From f. 83v.12 till f. 84v.6, we have the following subjects in the nominative case singular and verbs in the third person singular, all referring to Roger II:

ὁ πρόκριτος ... μέγας (f. 83v.12: 'the great leader'), οὐκ αὐτὸς ἠνέωξε (f. 83v.14: 'did not ... himself open'), ἕξαρχος ὑπέρλαμπρος (f. 84.3: 'the most resplendent leader'), συνάξας (f. 84.4: 'having mustered'), ἔπλευσε (f. 84.7: 'sailed'), μὴ πτοηθεὶς (f. 84.7: 'not having been dismayed'), περικυκλώσας (f. 84.8: 'having encircled'), καθ' ὑπέτακεν (f. 84.9: 'he subdued'), εἶδε (f. 84.11: 'he saw') ἀποστρακίζει (f. 84.12: 'he banished'), δείκνυσι (f. 84.15: 'brought out into the open'),<sup>26</sup> ὅστις, κινήθεις (f. 84.16: 'who, having departed'), μετατίθησιν (f. 84v.1: 'got rid of'),<sup>27</sup> and ἔστησε (f. 84v.3: 'he ... established').

The only time in this passage where another person is introduced occurs in f. 84.14, when the bishop is mentioned (σὺν Ἐπισκόπῳ: f.

26 Lit.: 'revealed'.

27 Lit.: 'changed'.

84.15); yet, the word after, ὅστις (f. 84.16), qualified by the participle κινηθεῖς, cannot be made to agree with him, but with the original subject, that is, Roger II, for the bishop himself, had he been able to 'depart from the pact of old,' would not have waited so many years until Roger II's arrival 'to get rid of the hated things by which they used to invoke Mohammed', something which the subdued Gozitans were powerless to do: not so Roger II who used force to achieve this important liberation for the islanders. Also, the liberated priests, in recognition of Roger II's intervention, were now able to pray for Roger II, the liberator, referred to clearly here by the reference to the sceptre-bearing (ὑπὲρ σκηπτουχίας: f. 84v.5) who, conscious of his past sins, had purified himself (αὐτοῦ τε μάλλον τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγνισμένης: f. 84v.6) and looked forward for a coronation approved by the Holy See.

The verb δείκνυμι (f. 84.15) in the active voice as it is used here can only mean one of the following: 'bring to light, show forth'; 'portray, represent, render'; 'show, point out, point towards'; 'make known, explain'; 'prove'; 'inform against'; 'display, exhibit'; 'offer, proffer'. In short, it means 'to show'. It clearly does not mean 'selected', and should not have been used as such unless to alter the sense deliberately as Lauxtermann did. The sense was further aggravated by him taking τοῦ τόπου, clearly in the genitive case, to be in the dative ('for this place'), a mistake which a person of little Greek knowledge avoids doing. δείκνυσι takes a direct object (εὐσεβεῖς ... οἰκήτορας: f. 84.14-15), and not (Ἐπισκόπῳ: f. 84.15), which is in the dative case governed by σὺν.

κινηθεῖς, from κινέω, means 'set in motion'; 'remove, meddle with, change, innovate, change treatment'; 'inflect, alter'; 'disturb, arouse, urge on, attack, assail, incite, stir up, call in question'; 'set going, cause, call forth'; 'employ action'; in the passive it means 'be put in motion, go, be moved, stir'; 'be stirred'; 'move forward'; 'be disturbed, be in rebellion'. Some of these examples are clearly used in the active sense using a passive form as in deponent verbs, which the present writers have recognized to be the case. Lauxtermann was wrong to take it in the passive voice with passive meaning since no dative case rendered as 'by' is given in the text, but the prepositional phrase δεξιᾶς πρὸς with the preposition following rather than preceding the noun.

πρὸς + genitive case means ‘from’, and not ‘by’ as in Lauxtermann’s translation. δεξιὰ means ‘right hand’; ‘sign of assurance, pledge or treaty’. It does not mean ‘hand’ as in Lauxtermann’s translation. The present editors have opted for the secondary meaning of the word because of our interpretation of κινηθεῖς. ἄνω as an adverb can mean the following: ‘upwards, up’; ‘aloft, on high’; ‘on earth’; ‘in heaven, above’; ‘in the upper quarter, i.e., the Pnyx, above on the roofs’; ‘on the upper side, i.e., on the North’; ‘inward from the coast, upper (road), inner (road), upper country’; ‘turning-post’; ‘upper parts (of the body)’; ‘formerly, of old, upwards or backwards (of generations), of olden time, lineal ancestors’; ‘above’ (in a passage); ‘proudly’; ‘higher, more general’; ‘up and down, to and fro, backwards and forwards’; ‘pant, gasp’. Although it may mean ‘heaven’, τῆς ἄνω agrees with δεξιᾶς in the same case, and so it must not be interpreted as a partitive genitive (‘of’) as in Lauxtermann’s translation.

οἷς is dative plural of ὅς, which can be either a possessive pronoun meaning ‘his, her’; ‘thy, thine’; ‘my, mine, a man’s own’; a demonstrative pronoun, meaning ‘this, that, he, she, it’; ‘such and such a person’ or a relative pronoun as used here, meaning ‘who, which’; ‘what’; in the genitive case singular, it can mean ‘where, in some places, in some places ... in others, in what part’; in the dative feminine singular, it can mean ‘where’; in the old locative case οἶ, it means ‘whither’; in the old ablative case ὦ in the Doric dialect, it means ‘whence’; in the accusative singular neuter, it means ‘that, how that, because’; ‘for which reason’ (in the accusative plural neuter, it also means ‘for which reason’); ‘whereas’. But in the dative plural, οἷς does not mean ‘where’ as in Lauxtermann’s translation.

μυσαρωτάτ(ων) is abbreviated in the original text, unlike in Lauxtermann who has not gone to Madrid to see it.<sup>28</sup> The end of f. 84 and the beginning of f. 84v. are occupied by two verbs: μετατίθησιν and ἔστησε, both verbs situated in the same position in necessary enjambement. Both verbs have the same subject, Roger II, as explained above. The object of μετατίθησιν is τὰ μὲν μισητὰ, while the object of ἔστησε is θεῖους ἱερεῖς καὶ χρησίμους, thus forming the

28 M.D. Lauxtermann (2014), 159: ‘lacks its beginning, including the title and, presumably, the name of the author’.

chiasmus formed by the inverse position of object / verb // verb / object. The particle μὲν in the first *membrum* is balanced by δὲ in the second, which construction also expects a balance of cases, τὰ μισητὰ and θείους ἱερεῖς καὶ χρησίμους. Therefore, τόπους is not the object of ἔστησε, but the apposition of ναοῦς θεωτάτους governed by the preposition εἰς. It was for this interpretation that the present writers emended τόποις into τόπους. τόπος means ‘place, region, district, geographical position, site, building’; ‘position, space, room’; ‘place or part (of the body)’; ‘passage (in an author)’; ‘burial-place, grave’; ‘department’; ‘room (in a house)’; ‘position (on the zodiac), region’; ‘topic’; ‘common-place, element (in Rhetoric)’; ‘sphere’; ‘opening, occasion, opportunity’. τόποις does not signify ‘in place of’ as in Lauxtermann’s translation, but only τόπω (only in the singular) + genitive case can mean ‘in place of, instead of’.

πατρόθεν can mean the following: ‘from a father, after a father, of one’s father’; ‘coming from one’s father, sent by one’s father’; ‘from the time of one’s fathers’. As such, Lauxtermann’s translation ‘in the way of the Fathers (with a capital F referring to the *Patres* of the Church)’ is a departure from the true sense of the original text.

ὅς, ἐξ ἔθους ἅπασαν ἰάσας νόσον, f. 85v.9  
 νήσου τυράννου Ποπλίου φυτοσπόρον,  
 δυσεντερίαις πυρετοῖς κεκαυμένον.

‘who, having healed all sorts of disease, as he was wont to, [he also healed] the father of Publius, the chief of the island, who was burning with fever caused by dysentery.’

Πῶς ἰάσ[ατ]ο τὸν π[ατ]τέρα τοῦ Π[οπλίου] [τοῦ] δεσπ[ότου] τῆς  
**Μελιτηγαύδου** (f. 85v.9-12m.)

‘How he healed the father of Publius, the governor of Melitēgaídos.’

## Malta

ἐνθάδε φησὶ ὁ ποιητὴς περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ ὄντος εἰς φυλακὴν  
 εἰς ἕτερον τόπον (f. 14v.2-5m.)

‘Here the poet speaks about his own brother who was under custody at the other place.’

μένων ὁ τλήμων τοῖς τόποις **Βαρβαρίας**, f. 35v.15  
ὡς αἰχμάλωτος,<sup>29</sup> δέσμιος καθειργμένος,

‘I, wretched man, confined as a captive, prisoner, tarrying in the lands of Barbary,’

δηλονότι εἰς **τὴν Μάλταν** (f. 35v.15m.)

‘That is, at Malta.’

ἐγὼ δ’ ὁ τλήμων, οὐκ ἔραστής κρειπτόνων, f. 54.8  
ἵνα τί - ῥῆμα καὶ γελωδες ἐννέπω  
μὴ τῶν ὑπὲρ μὲ τί φρονήσας εἰκέως -  
μέσον ῥέριμμαί τῶν θαλαττῶν ἀβάτων  
οἰκοῦσιν ἔνθα παῖδες Ἕ**Αγαρ**<sup>30</sup> ἀθέου,

‘But I, wretched me, not a lover of greater things, - I sing of an even ridiculous word, not having thought likely anything beyond me – to what end have I been flung in the midst of trackless seas where the children of godless Hagar live, ... ?’

[τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν εἰς **τὴν Μάλ[ταν]** νῆσο[ν εἰς] Βαρβα[ρίαν ὅπου] ὑπάρχ[ει εἰς] π[ατ]ρίδα τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν (f. 54.7-10m.)

‘This concerns Malta, an island in the direction of Barbary, where he lives in the country of the Agarenes.’

## Melítē

ὡς οὖν ἐώρων οἱ συναχθέντες τόπω f. 85.9  
νῆσου **Μελίτης** τοῦτον ἡματωμένον

29 αἰχμάλωτος MS.

30 ἝΑγαρ MS.

‘When, accordingly, those who had flocked to [that] place of the island of Melítē were seeing this man stained with blood,’

οἱ γοῦν ἔποικοι τῆς **Μελίτης** τῶ τότε, f. 85v.3  
 δῆγματι θηρὸς εἰκάσαντες τεθνάναι,  
 ἐπεὶπερ ἄνευ καθ’ ἐώρων ἐλπίδος,  
 πύλας τελευτῆς ἀποδράντα τὸν μέγαν,  
 εἶναι θεὸν φάσκουσιν ἀναμφιβόλως,

‘Accordingly, the inhabitants of Melíte of that time, having expected [him] to die from the bite of the beast, when they were seeing without hope that the great man escaped the gates of Death, said that he was doubtlessly a god,’.

## Conclusion

In all this, particularly in his treatment of ff. 84rv, Lauxtermann has manipulated the meaning of the true sense of the words, permitting Johns to give fodder to a local ‘school’, whose knowledge of the Greek language is next to nothing, but with a precise pre-set agenda, and whose assertions Johns claimed to have vindicated, gratuitously asserting that ‘the problem has now been settled once and for all’. Can an honest academic debate in search of the truth ever be claimed to be ‘settled once and for all’? Consequently, the time has come for the truth itself to be vindicated, namely, that the island of Gozo was the island the poet was exiled on, that Roger II was the liberator of the Gozitan Christians, and that the Maltese Islands could return to practise the Christian faith of their forefathers. This is a reaffirmation of the traditional belief that Christianity in Malta goes back to the times of St Paul, saved thanks to the Gozitans who kept it alive throughout a difficult period of the islands’ history.

Horatio Caesar Roger Vella is Professor of Classics at the University of Malta.

Stanley Fiorini is Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, University of Malta and chief researcher in Medieval Maltese History.



## REFERENCES

- Aquilina, G. and S. Fiorini eds (2005). *Documentary sources of Maltese history. Part IV: Documents at the Vatican. No. 2: Archivio Segreto Vaticano: Cancellaria Apostolica and Camera Apostolica and related sources at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 416-1479*. Malta, Malta University Press.
- Busuttill, J. and S. Fiorini (eds) (2006). *Documentary sources of Maltese history. Part V: Documents in the Curia of the Archbishop of Malta. No. 1: The Registrum foundationum beneficiorum Insulae Gaudisii 1435-1545*. Malta, Malta University Press.
- Busuttill, J., S. Fiorini and H.C.R. Vella (eds) (2010). *Tristia ex Melitogaudo: lament in Greek verse of a XIIIth-century exile on Gozo*. Malta, The Farsons Foundation.
- Ferres, A. (1866). *Descrizione storica delle chiese di Malta e Gozo*. Malta.
- Fiorini, S. (2010). *Tristia ex Melitogaudo revisited: objections, clarifications, confirmations*. Malta, Best Print.
- Fiorini, S. (2016). "The Medieval Collegiate of Gozo", *Melita Theologica* (forthcoming).
- Fiorini, S. and H.C.R. Vella (2006). *New XIIIth-Century evidence for the Pauline Tradition and Christianity in the Maltese Islands*. In J. Azzopardi (ed.), *The cult of St Paul in the Christian Churches and in the Maltese tradition*, Malta, 161-172.
- Herde, P. (2002). *The Papacy and the Greek Church in Southern Italy between the eleventh and the thirteenth century*. In G.A. Loud and A. Metcalfe (eds), *The society of Norman Italy*. Leiden, Brill, 213-251.
- Johns, J. (2002). *Arabic administration in Norman Sicily*. Cambridge, University Press.
- Lauxtermann, M.D. (2014). 'Tomi, Mljet, Malta', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 64.155-176.
- Loud, G.A. and A. Metcalfe eds (2002). *The society of Norman Italy*. Leiden, Brill.
- Pontani, F.M. (1965). *Grammatica Greca*. Firenze, La Nuova Italia Editrice.
- Tsolakis, Th. (1973). "Ἀγνωστα ἔργα Ἰταλοβυζαντινοῦ ποιητῆ τοῦ 12<sup>οῦ</sup> αἰῶνα. Ἑλληνικά 26, 33-70.
- Vella, H.C.R. (1995a). *Gozo in Classical literature*. In L. Briguglio and J. Bezzina (eds), *Gozo and its culture*, Malta, 13-48.
- Vella, H.C.R. (1995b). *The Island of Gozo in Classical Texts. Occasional Papers on Islands and Small States*. Valetta, Malta, Foundation for International Studies: Islands and Small States Institute, University of Malta, no.13.

- Vella, H.C.R. (2002). *Malta u Ghawdex fl-era Klassika. Kullana Kulturali* (eds M.J. Schiavone and Ch. Briffa), no.38, Malta, Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza.
- Vella, H.C.R. (2010). 'Gaudos', *Gozo observer* (University of Malta, Gozo Campus) 23, 9-16.
- Vella, H.C.R. (2012). 'The origin of the name of Gozo', *Gozo observer* (University of Malta, Gozo Campus) 27, 3-20.
- Zagklas, N. (2012). 'Besprechungen', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 62.281-340.