"BANDI" OF THE XV CENTURY

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The perusal of medieval texts and documents is today considered indispensable for a thorough understanding of the history of the Middle Ages; in fact such documents are the principal sources from which the history of that period is written.

Various medieval documents relating to Malta have been published (1). The Charters and what are known as "Capitoli" form a corpus of the privileges, grants, immunities, exemptions or other rights regulating the administrative powers of the Universitas, the name by which the local government was known in the late Middle Ages. This corpus is found scattered in various works published by Miege (2), Giambruno and Genuardi (3), Mifsud (4), and Valentini (5).

Besides the Charters and the "Capitoli" there are other less well known but important documents which, to the best of our knowledge, have not yet been published. These are the "Bandi", the proclamations which the Jurats of the City issued from time to time to enforce certain obligations on the citizens and likewise to prohibit certain abuses. Many interesting aspects of the social life and conditions of the inhabitants of the Island can be obtained from a careful study of these "Bandi", and the transcription and publication of the original texts have, we feel, sufficient importance to warrant this work being undertaken. They are also valuable to students of philology and of the history of legislation in Malta.

The population of these Islands in the second half of the 15th Century was

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(2) MIEGE, M. — Histoire de Malte. Paris, 1840.
(5) VALENTINI, R. — Documenti per servire alla storia di Malta, (1432-1458) and (1458-1466) in Archivio Storico di Malta. Roma, Oct. 1937 - Jan. 1938 and Oct. 1938 - Jan. 1939 resp. Besides these Professor Valentini has published various articles and other documents on the period preceding the arrival in Malta of the Order of St. John in the above mentioned Archivio Storico di Malta.
about twenty thousand (6). The capital, called by the people Mdina, officially referred to as Notabile, was the seat of the government. The governing body was formed of the Captain of the City and four Jurats. Besides these principal officials there were others who attended the meetings and together formed the "Consiglio Popolare", or the general assembly.

The Jurats were elected annually on St. John's Day — 24th June — and took office on 1st September. After receiving the ratification of their election from the Viceroy of Sicily.

The "Bandi" are the proclamations which were issued by the Jurats for the good order of the people and were proclaimed by the Town Crier (Banditore) from certain specified places of the City. After the Town Crier had proclaimed the "Bando", the Notary of the Council (Magister Notarius) made an entry of the document in the register of the Universitas, adding the name and surname of the Town Crier responsible for its diffusion. The subjoined transcriptions of 14 "Bandi" have been taken from a register of the Universitas of the 15th Century, preserved in the Royal Library in Valletta where the Archives of the Universitas are kept. The earliest of these registers, covers the second half of the 15th Century, is marked 1450 - 1498, and bears No. 11 in the Inventory. Its chief contents are minutes of the Council, records of the lease of immovable government property, the proclamations known as "Bandi" and other documents. Although earlier registers must have existed of the council meetings, this is presumably the oldest of its kind that has survived the ravages of time.

Some details on the binding and foliation of register No. 11 are worth recording. The volume, bound in parchment, presumably in the 17th century, contains leaves numbered on the recto, or front, from 1 to 600. These are interspersed by a few leaves left blank and unnumbered. There are also some leaves which have a duplicate number. It is interesting to observe the careless manner in which the sewing together of the quires was done when the volume was bound. One of the quires is transposed thus making a confusion in the sequence of foliation. Another gross error of the book-binder was to leave out a quire containing documents of the year 1467 when collating volume No. 11 covering the years 1450 - 1498. This missing quire was included in volume No. 13 which contains documents covering the years 1531 - 1570.

The transcription of these "Bandi" presented considerable difficulty on account of the hand in which they were written, varying from a uniform cursive gothic to an almost illegible scribble.

The 14 "Bandi" transcribed below have been selected as throwing light on various aspects of everyday happenings of the period. These are a first contribution and further transcriptions will follow. Capital letters have been used in the transcription of proper names as is the practice today. Punctuation which is absent in the original texts of the "Bandi" has been introduced where necessary to make the sense clear. All abbreviations have been extended in accordance with the rules of palaeography.

For reference purposes the "Bandi" produced hereunder have been num

(6) In 1530 the estimated population of Malta was just over 20,000. See Insulae Melitae Descriptio by Fr. Joan Quintinus, Lyons, 1536.
bered 1 to 14, and the correct and full date of the documents, whenever possible, has been inserted with the number of the folio whether front or back (recto or verso), in which they are found in Manuscript No. 11. A short precis in English of the proclamation is given below the transcription of the texts, which are written in Medieval Latin and old Sicilian.

1. (1470) Fol. No. 195 verso.

Emissum est bannum sive proclama in locis pugilicis debitis et consuetis per Georgium Galdes: ki nixuna persuna sia ausanti di vindiri pluj di chineu carlini lu rotlu di chira lavurata tantu di Sicilia quantu di Malta et si lu virria vindiri a candila ki rispunda a chentu chinquanta candili sub pena falsi et sub pena carlenorum XV aplicandi acatapanis diete civitatis.

This "Bando" fixes the price of tallow, both of Sicilian and local origin, at 5 carlini per rotolo. It states that from one rotolo of tallow 150 candles should be produced. Infringement of this order was a fine of 15 carlini payable to the Cattapani of the City. "Cattapani" are the officials appointed to supervise in the market that correct weights and measures be used.

2. (18th March, 1471) Fol. No. 208 verso.

Georgius Galdes serviens retuit proconsulasse de mandato dominorum juratorum in locis pugilicis debitis et consuetis in hac forma: videlicet: ki tuci qualli persuni li quali haviisiru assiato visu per luna, tur by acatirannu et dapo lu vindisseuru senza revelariu a li cabilottu, ki sia in pena per omni unu novj more solitu.

Wine cannot be sold except through a licence obtained from the Tax-collector (Cabilottu). Should any person after acquiring wine for his own use decide to sell it without the necessary licence he will be fined nine times the cost of the wine.


Emissum est bannum seu proclama in locis pugilicis debitis et consuetis ipsius civitatis in hac forma: videlicet: bando et commendantura per parti di lu Signuri Re che nixuna persuna, anualque gradus seu condicionis existat, sia ausanti di extrahiri bestiami per via di lu Gozu su pena unciarum decem ponderis regio fisico applicandi, et chirixuna persuna viribil bestiami a li Gaudisani sub eadem pena.

The above "Bando" is unusual for it is issued by command of the King (lu Signuri Re). It prohibits the importation of cattle from Gozo and contamination of same to that Island, the fine for infringement of this order being 100 carlini.

Eodem die

Emissum est bannum per eundem servientem eodem modo: quod nemo uudeat neque presumat vendere carnem in eius domo et quod vendat in loco consueto di la buchiria sub pena carlenorum XV acatapanis predictis applicandi.

This order prohibits the sale of meat in private dwelling places and regulates its sale at the market places, against a fine of 15 carlini.

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XII eiusdem

Bandeeta sive [meta] carnium iactium et aliarum rerum facta et ordinata per nobilis Juratos anni presentis VIe Indictione MCCCLXXII.

Imprimis

La carnii di lu crastatu a dinarii XX

Item la carnii di lu muntuni a dinarii XVI

Item la carnii di la pecura a dinarii XIII

Item la carnii di lu boy a dinarii XII

Item la carnii di la vaecce a dinarii XIII

Item la carnii di ta g'micza a dinarii XIII

Item la carnii di ta vitella a dinarii XVIII

Item la carnii di lu becchu crastatu a dinarii XII

Item la carnii di la crapa a dinarii VIII

Item la carnii di lu porcu orytu a dinarii XX

Item le carnii di lu porcu di la xara a dinarii XIII

Item la troya oryata a dinarii XIII

Item la carnii di la troya di la xara a dinarii VIII

Item la carnii di lu agnello a dinarii VIII

Item chi nixunu poeca vindiri carnii a quartu sub pena carlenorum XV

Li lactum

Imprimis la pisa di lu furmayu friscu a dinarii XXVI

Item lu furmayu muxu la pisa a tari II

Item la pisa di lu furmayu di graitari a grani X

Item ta hubara di lu burru a tari V

Item la hubara di burru di la ricocta a tari III

Item la hubara di lu lacti ad un soidue

Item la hubara di meli a tari V

Item la chira di Malta lavurata a tari XII

Item lu Rotulu di lu finu a dinarii XXI

Item lu Rotulu di li candili di lu finu di Malta a grani X

Item la pisa di li chipulli a dinarii XII

Item la pisa di lana a tari V

Item lu tumienu di favi di Malta a tari V

Item chi nixunu poeca vindiri pixi fora di la piscaria

Item ki nullu tamararu poeca accactari di la piscaria exceptu una resca di pixi et non ultra.
This is the price list of meat, dairy produce and other articles issued by the Jurats once a year. The following is an explanation of terms used in the price list which are now archaic.

*Ginica*, veal, heifer.
*Crapa*, capra, goat flesh.
*Poreu oryatu*, pork from swine fed on oats (good quality, meat).
*Poreu di la zara*, pork from swine that roamed semi wild in search of food. (Xara a waste tract of land).

*Furmaya* friscu, fresh cheese; *furmayu maru*, dry cheese; *furmayu di gractari*, cheese for grating.

*Hubara*, was the measure by which the following articles were sold: butter, ricotta, milk and honey. Professor J. Aquilina has been good enough to contribute the following note on the etymology of this word: "The word *hubara* is not found in either De Soldanis in Vassalli or in later dictionaries. I suspect the word should be spelt *ghubara* or *ghhabara* and in this sense it should mean just a weight obtained by a lead measure, from the verb *ghhabbar*, "mettere dei pesi nella bilancia per equiparare le due parti". Caruana explains *ghubara*, "sorta di misura antica che equivale a dieci keflet moderne". The word *ghubara* occurs also in the saying *Nkar Santa Barbara* "zura' *nikber ghhabara*. *Hubara* in the document must have meant a weight or measure the amount or quantity of which has to be determined by outside comparative criteria, since words of weights and measures in Semitic languages, and also Romance, may indicate different weights or quantities in different places and sometimes also in different times. Cf. in this connection the weight value of *It. modo*, *M. mudd* in different Italian dialects and also with its weight value in *Ar. mudd".

*Chira*, tallow for the making of candles. *Lu finu* probably wax for better quality candles.

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6. (April, 1472) Fol. No. 244 recto.

Pius de Luna serviens emisit bannum punicum sive proclama de mandato dominorum juratorem in locis publicis et consuetis quod nemo cuius gradus existat audiet nec presumat lavare pannos sive foglami oy non aliquid furdiciej intus biviraturas di la Saccaya et di Garhesim, sub pena carlenorum XV marammiali civistatis; et si frunt servus vel serva sint in pena di chinquantä *ezoeti* sive chinglij, et qui denunciaverit tales lavantes intus dictas biviraturas habeat carlenos sexdecim (? pena predicta pro premio suo.

It is prohibited to wash clothes, vegetables or other articles in the fountains of the Saqqajja and Ghariexem against a fine of 15 carini payable for the upkeep of the walls surrounding the City. Should menials transgress the order they will receive 50 lashes. A reward will be given to the informers. "Mammermo" is the official in charge of the building and repairs of the city walls.

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*vicesimo tercio mensis eiusdem*

Gulielmus Buchaiar serviens retuit emississe bannum punicum regia ex parte de mandato dominorum juratorem in locis publicis et consuetis, quod omnes qui solent intervenire in consilio debeant, sub pena unciarium quinquaginta, venire bodie post boram vesperam ad consilium per ipso juratos tenendum pro beneficio punico.

This notifies Members of the Council to attend a meeting to be held that evening. Failure to attend was punished by a fine of 50 uncias (a heavy fine for those days).

Gulliemus Bucha’ar serviens retulit qualiter ipse ut serviens de mandato dominorum Juratorum emisit bannum pupleicum sive proclama in locis publicis debitis et consuetis ipsius civitatis regia ex parte, che nixunu curviseri poza vindiri li cauzari fimmini ultra grana X lu paru, et li masculini a due carilini, sub pena carlenorum XV marammatis.

This lays down the prices of footwear. Shoes or sandals for women (li cauzari fimmini) being 10 grani per pair, whilst footwear for men was 2 carlini a pair. For overcharging the fine was 15 carlini, which sum went towards the funds for the upkeep of the city walls.

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Emissum fuit et est bannum pupleicum sive proclama per Gulliemum Bucha’ar servientem in locis publicis et consuetis ipsius civitatis de mandato nobilium Juratorum, quod nemo audeat nec presumat vendere fructus seu foglia mi extra portam civitatis, videlicet in planicie santi Augustini, sub pena carlenorum XV acathapanis.

It was forbidden to sell fruit and vegetables outside the gates of the City, i.e., the area known as St. Augustine. The fine for infringement was fixed at 15 carlini payable to the Catapans.

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10. (14th October, 1474) Fol. No. 308 recto.

Emissum fuit bannum in locis consuetis dicti civitatis per Lanciam de Lia servientem regia ex parte de mandato dominorum Juratorum, ki tuei persuni di: consigiu a lu matini, seilicet die sabati, digianu vinirj a lu consigiu sub pena unciarum quinquaginta regio fisico.

Members of the Council are hereby notified of a meeting on the following Saturday morning. Members failing to attend will be fined 50 uncias.

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11. (9th September, 1478) Fol. No. 389 verso.

Eodem die

Pinus de Luna serviens emisit bannum de mandato dominorum juratorum in locis publicis et consuetis regia ex parte, ki nixunu di qualsivogla statu e conditionj sia presum a vindiri carni a quartu e ki tuethomu vinda secundu la meta seu bandecta data, a li acatapanj, videlicet: la carni di lu erastatu a la chitati et so Rabhatu a vinti dui, la vitella a vinti, et lu porcu orgiato a vinti dinari, et in li casalj a udi dinarj minu, videlicet: lu erastatu a vinti, lu porcu orgiato a XVIII, et la vitella a XVIII, sub pena carlenorum XV Capitano et carlenorum XV Acatapano, et ki omne unu vinda la dieta carni in pupleicu et non amuchunj sub dieta pena.

This proclamation is for the regulation of prices of meat in Mdina and Rabat, fixing the cost of mutton, veal and first quality pork at 2 dinari more than the cost of same sold in outlying villages.

The meaning of the prohibition of selling meat “a quartu” is obscure.

The fine for breaking the order was fixed at 15 carlini payable to the Captain of
the City — another 15 to the Catapans. It is further stated that all butchers should sell meat only in the market place. (Ammucchuni = di nascosto, underhand).

12. (9th September, 1478) Fol. 389 recto.
VIII Septembris XII Indictione

Emissum fuit et est bannum seu proclama puplicum in locis debitis et consequitis regia ex parte de mandato dominorum juratorum, ki nixuna persuna di qualsivogla statu et conditioni sia ausat: extrahiri mundicza seu fumeli per la porta di li Grechi, ne cum zimbili ne cum sacceu oy altru vasu; sub pena carlenorum XV Capitano et duorum Tumeo Laureri custodi, et si fiunt servus vel serva sit in pena di chinquanta chinglij; quod bannum fuit emissum per Pinum de Luna servientem.

All persons regardless of position or state are forbidden to carry garbage or ashes out of the Greeks' Gate of the City, in a "zembil", sack or any other container. The fine imposed for breaking this order is 15 carlini to be paid to the Captain of the City and a further 2 carlini to be paid to the Custodian Tumeo Laureri. Should menials transgress this order they will receive 50 lashes. Zembil is a Maltese word of Arabic origin, meaning a basket made of interwoven twigs or rushes.

XIII eisdem

Ex provisione et mandato dominorum juratorum fuit emissum bannum puplicum per Pinum de Luna servientem in locis publicis debitis et consequitis regia ex parte: quod nemo audet extrahere mundicza seu fumerium per portam civitatis predicte, videlicet qui exiunt per portam Grecorum et qui perhiciat fumerium seu mundicza in loco deputato per Tumeum Laureri, et non in alio loco, sub pena carlenorum XV Capitano et alia carlenorum duo-rum ipsius Tumeo ut custodi, et si fiunt servus vel serva sia in pena di chin-quanta czocchi.

This Bando followed the previous one in 5 days time. It states that garbage and ashes must not be taken through the Main Gate of the City, but out of Greeks' Gate and deposited in the place denoted by the Custodian Tumeo Laureri. The fine for breaking this order was 15 carlini paid to the Captain of the City and another 2 carlini to the Custodian mentioned above. Should menials be the transgressors they would receive 50 lashes.

XVI Augusti

Emissum fuit et est bannum puplicum bis et tres in una et eadem die ex provisione dominorum juratorum per Paulum Busayle servientem: ki cui si vilissi lamentarij di lu Capitanum et so Judichi ki comparisi in loru presencia ki ipsi li fariam justicia.

This proclamation was read three consecutive times in the usual places. It called upon all those having a grievance to appear before the Captain of the City and his Judges when their complaint would be heard. An interesting propensity of the Notaries of that period was to attempt to latinize surnames. An example of this is the surname of the Town Crier in the proclamation above — Psaila is written Busayle.