“BANDI” &c., OF THE XV CENTURY

By E. R. LEOPARDI

To continue the series of “Bandi” published last year (1), we have transcribed a further collection of these interesting documents of the XV century from Manuscript No. 11 of the Universitas, kept in the Royal Malta Library.

These “Bandi”, with their quaint wording, giving instructions to the people for the maintenance of law and order and the general well being and good government of the population, give us an insight into life in Malta during the late Middle Ages. Some of the present “Bandi” are near repetitions of a few published last year, yet on account of the wording they deserve attention if only because of their linguistic interest.

Besides the “Bandi”, other records are published which have been transcribed from MS No. 11. The history of the late Middle Ages in Malta is unfortunately obscure on account of the scarcity of documents relating to the period. It is only when we realize this fact that the importance of those few remaining documents becomes really evident as the sole means of forming a clear view of the history of these Islands.

To return to the point mentioned above, that these documents have a value for the student of linguistics, it is a fact that many expressions and terms used today in Maltese were in common parlance in the XV Century.

In the “Bandi” under review there is a reference to a parlamentu generali, the calling together of the people to air their complaints. This is an interesting event from two points of view: the first being the liberal, or as we say today the democratic outlook of the rulers of these Islands as far as back as the fifteenth century; the second point is that Malta, in spite of its distance from the mainland of Europe, was not far behind in its mode of government.

The method followed in the transcription and publication of these documents is identical to that used last year, and the same procedure has been followed as regards capital letters, punctuation, and the extension of abbreviations. A precis in English is added after each document which is written in Mediaeval Latin and Old Sicilian.

1. (4th October, 1469) Fol. No. 574 verso.
   Eodem

Emissum fuit et est proclama et bannum punicum in locis punicis debitis et consuetis civitatibus Melitae, regis ex parte de mandato nobilem juratorum, per Gulielmum Buchayar, servientem, ki nixunu piscaturj et vinditurj di pixj oy di canna sia oy di xabica, oy perqualsivogla maynera si pigli lu pixj et

purta si a vindirj digia vindiri li pixj a lu locu solitu di la piscaria et vindi est solitu semper vindirj li pixj et non di fora a lu Rabbatu, ne ali taverni ne ancora ad altra parte exceptu lu locu solitu sub pena di carlini quindichi da applicarj a la maramma di la chitati et aliorum chinqui a lu Capitaneu.

This proclamation forbids vendors to sell fish outside the customary market place, whether the fish be caught by rod, net or any other way. Both fishermen, piscaturi, and fishmongers, vindiutri di pixi, were cautioned to bring their fish to the fish market, piscaria, and not to take their goods to Rabat or to the taverns, or to any other place except the fish market. The fine for infringement of the order was fixed at 20 carlini, 15 to be applied to the building of the city walls and 5 to be paid to the Captain of the City.

It is interesting to note the wording of the order, which leaves no room for doubt as regards the manner the fish was caught, nor excuse for evasion.


Carlino=10 grana; 60 carlini=one uncia.

A common form of fine mentioned in our "Bandii" was a sum of money which went towards the maintenance of the city walls. It is interesting to compare this to the fact that a similar form of taxation in England at this period was known as murage (Fr. murage, from L. murus, a wall), and was the money paid for keeping the walls of a town in repair.

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2. (8th October, 1469) Fol. No. 575 recto.

Ihesus Christus

VIII Octobris III Indictione lu factu di la cauchina, videlicet, cuj vulissej vindirj cauchina per minu prezu ad opu di la maramma di li mura di la chitati misu ad incantu pupleum cum la candila a la piazza di la dieta chitati, rimasi a lu Nobili Lanche Vacciuru et Antonij Cagege, comu ultimi dichiturj et quilli li quali per minu prezu si offeriru in questu modo, videlicet: ki li dieti Nobili Lanche et Antonij vindiru a lu Juratu predictu comu ultimi dichiturj et per nomu di vindirj, durj et assignarj ad opu di la maramma predicta praeentis anni III Indictione, salmi di cauchina chinquanta ad raxuni di tari II et grana VII boni la salma portati per finu a la chitati oy maramma predicta ad requisicioni di li Nobili Jurati et Supermaramerj presente in queste et suplicant li Nobili Notaru Perj Caxaru, Jufrè Desguanes at Petrus Vacciru, tri di li Jurati huju praeentis anni in defecctu di la absencia di Optavianu de Ravellu loru compagnu.

The above entry in the records of the Universitas refers to the supply of lime to the government for the preparation of mortar for building and repairing the walls of the city. The manner in which the prospective suppliers competed for the contract was the following.
At a given date and time they assembled in the square of the city. An official lit
a taper and the would be suppliers bid their prices, the time allowed for this public
auction ceasing as the taper burned out. This procedure was known by the term
a candilla accisa. Without loss of time the contract was awarded to the most advantageous
offer.

On this particular occasion the contract to supply lime was given jointly to Lancela
Vaccaru and Antonio Cagge. These partners had offered the best terms, which were
that 50 salmi of lime would be supplied at the rate of 2 tari and 7 grana per salma. It
appears from the text that the transport of lime from the kiln to the city was to be
undertaken by the suppliers at their own expense, who bound themselves to do so when-
ever a demand was issued by the Jurats or by the Supermarammero.

The Jurats present at the above adjudication were: Peri Cassar, Jufre Desguanes
and Petrus Vaccaru who acted together in the absence of their fellow Jurat Optaviano de
Ravella.

Cauchina, calcina, lime for mixing mortar needed for the city walls.
Candila, sometimes found as candilla accisa, a taper the burning of which denoted a
period in which bids were called.
Plaza, the square of the city.
Dichiturj, bidders.
Salma, a measure for grain, lime, etc.
Tari, a silver coin of the value of the thirtieth part of an uncia. Grana a bronze
coin of the value of the twentieth part of a tari.
Supermarammero, or marammero, the official responsible for keeping the city walls,
castles, etc., in good repair or building same.

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8. (15th August, 1470) Fol. No. 597 recto.

Xvo Agusti IIIe Indictione

Nobilis Tristaynus de Guivara, Capitaneus, deposuit baeculus (sic) officij
capitanie in manu di Nobilis Franciscus Gact de Sguanes, et ipsum
Nobiliem Franciscum constituit suum locumtenentem et possuit se, more solito
et consuetu, in sindicatu.

This entry dated August 15, registers the handing over of the insignia of the Captain
of the Rod. It notifies that the Noble Tristaynus de Guivara, Captain of the City,
consigned his staff to Francesco Gact de Sguanes and thereupon his term of office fell
under revision or scrutiny by the Jurats.

The term of appointment of the Captain of the Rod was one year from September 1
to August 31. Since, in this case, the handing over took place in mid-August, we take
it that de Guivara resigned before his time and by consigning the staff to de Sguanes he
made him lieutenant to the vacant post.

Sindicatu, from sindicare, to inspect, verify, or audit. The word sindicatu, and its
meaning, may be the source of the phrase used in Maltese: jisindikawk il-ġirien jew
in-nicc. A close as possible interpretation of this phrase might be: “the neighbours
or people spy on you” or “the neighbours scrutinize one’s every action”. The Maltese phrase
is used only to denote an unpleasant form of inquisitiveness on the part of others. See

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4. (2nd September, 1471) Fol. No. 212 recto
IIo Septembris V Indictione

Johannes de Armanino retulit preconizasse de mandato dominorum jura-
torun ex parte regia sub pena carlenorum XV Capitaneo dictae civitatis et
aliorum carlenorum XV marammati inspiss civitatis applicandi, quod nemo
audieat lavari aliquod neque pannos in bivizaturijis Saccaya et Garheximi, sub
pena predicta, et si fuerint servilis condicionjs quod sint in pena di cinquanta
zoeti ki li siaqu dati per dominum Capitaneum predictum in planta dictae
civitatis.

The above "Bando" was read at the usual places by the Town Crier Giovanni de
Armanino. Prohibition to wash clothes or anything else in the fountains of the Ssqqajja
and Gharixem was proclaimed, and those transgressing this order would be liable to a
fine of 15 carlini payable to the Captain of the City and a further 15 carlini to go towards
the maintenance of the City walls.

Should menials be caught transgressing they would receive 50 lashes which, the
"Bando" stipulates, would be given in the square by the Captain of the City.

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Quisti sunnu li persuni li quali divino anno quolibet darj a la maramma
jornati trj per esserj exemptj di la guardia.

Mastru Randinu Actard III
Mastru Julianu Butigeg III
Baptista Butigeg III
manfr Butigeg III
Mastru Pasqualinu Vella III
Mastru Agustin Manyun III
Mastru Micheli Cassar III
Mastru Jacopu Dumah III
Mastru Micheli Dumah III
Mastru Cola Dumah III
Mastru Manfre III
Mastru Angelu Vassald III
Mastru Frankinu Vassald III
Andria Mardigan Balzan III
Mastru Julianu Farruge Balzan III
Mastru Blasi Skenbri III
Grigori Skenbri III
Antonj Busayle III
Mastru Blasi Tard III
Lucas Actard III
Mastru Nicolau Muscat III
Mastru Petru Seybe III
Mastru Nicolosiu Sint III
Mastru Jacobu Azzopard III
Mastru Nicola Frendu III
Li pirriaturj

Dominie Frendu III
Julianu Curmi III
Franciscu Curmi III
Johanni Grima III
Salvaturj Frendu III
Luca Buras III
Nicolaou Frendu III
Benedictu Frendu III
Benedictu Grima III
Fanzi Grima III
Bartolomu Burg III
Luca Frendu III
Micheli Frendu III
Martin Grima III
Nicolaou Mule III

The above is a list of persons who had obtained exemption from military service through binding themselves to work without payment on the city walls for three days a year.

The second list is that of stone-cutters pirriaturj who likewise had obtained exemption from military service through binding themselves to work without payment on the city walls for three days a year.

In these lists there are instances of a different form in spelling surnames to that in use today. There are also surnames which no longer exist on the Island. In the above document it will be observed that Balzan appears twice as a double surname. From the character of the hand it appears that in both cases Balzan was added by a later scribe.

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XVI Agusti

Emissum est bannum per Gullielmum Buchaiaiar de mandato dominorum juratorum de capitaneo ac judice sindicandi et cetera in hunc modum, videficet: cuij si vulissi lamentarj di lu Capitaneu et so judichli li qualj su in sindicatu vegna a li jurati et ipsi li farannu justitia.

This proclamation dated August 16, was issued fifteen days before the close of appointment of the Captain of the City and the Judges, who on expiration of their term of office were subjected to a close inspection on the manner in which they had governed during the year they were in office. This proclamation calls on all persons having a grievance against the outgoing Captain and Judges, to lodge their complaint with the Jurats, when the necessary action would be taken.

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XVII eiusdem

Emissum fuit et est simile bannum per eundem servientem sedentibus Juratis pro tribunali di judice et capitaneo sindicandi, et cetera.
This proclamation is similar to No. 6. It was issued to notify the public that the Jurats had constituted themselves as an extraordinary tribunal to deal with cases concerning the outgoing Captain and his Judges at the termination of their year of office.

8. (11th September, 1472) Fol. No. 225 recto
Eodem

Guglielmus Buchaiar serviens curie predicte retulit preconizasse de mandato dominorum juratorum regia ex parte, in locis consuetis sub pena XV carlenorum applicandi acatapanis quod hine per totum diem martis proxime venturum unusquisque vendens aliquod pondere aut mensura accedat ad acatapanos predictos per aiustari li vasi et pisu cum quibus vendit.

This proclamation was issued on September 11, 1472, and read by Guglielmo Buchaiar. It ordered all vendors of goods who used weights and measures to bring their scales to the Catapans of the City for inspection and to have them adjusted and standardized. The time given was from the date of publication of the order until the following Tuesday. The penalty for disobeying this order was a fine of 15 carlini to be paid to the Catapans.

9. (16th September, 1472) Fol. No. 226 recto
XVI eiusdem

Guglielmus Buchaiar serviens retulit emisses bannum seu proclama publicum regia ex parte de mandato dominorum juratorum in locis consuetis et publicis in hunc modum: chi tueti mercanti seu mircherj tantu iudej quanto cristiynj hayanu a tinirj lj loru pisu sive balancj perchati a la asta et quod ceteri videlicet li bucheri e quili chi pisau a la grossa digianu tiniri li dieti loru pisu sive balanci pertusati a lu pernu sub pena carlenorum XV acatapanis applicandi.

The above proclamation was read from the usual places by Guglielmo Buchaiar, the Town Crier, by order of the Jurats. It was an order relating to weights and measures and called upon all traders, whether Jew or Christian, to have their scales regulated. Traders such as Butchers and wholesalers were warned to ascertain their weights were stamped to the perno, against a fine of 15 carlini payable to the Catapans.

Perno or perno, pivot, hinge or support in modern parlance.

The wording in some parts of the bando is obscure and for this reason it is difficult to give a correct interpretation of the order, possibly perno, in this case, meant some part of the scales which unless marked might have served to give short weight.

10. (20th September, 1472) Fol. No. 226 recto
Eodem

Retulit Guglielmus Buchaiar serviens preconizasse in locis publicis et consuetis de mandato nobilium juratorum regia ex parte chi nixunu cuiuscumque condicionis existat sia ausanti nexiri seu gictari mundicza di la
porta di li grechi sub pena ammissionis zembili et carlenorum duorum applicandi
guardiano ipsius mundicie et casu quo sit servus seu serva di aucharj chinquanta
choeti.

The above proclamation was read at the usual places by Guglielmo Buchair, Town
Crier of Notabile. It was an order forbidding the disposal of garbage through the Greeks' 
Gate of the City.

Those caught transgressing this order would forfeit the offending rubbish container,
and, further, would be fined 2 carlini to be paid to the watchman. Menúals were to be 
punished by 50 lashes.

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11. (19th March, 1473) Fol. No. 237 verso
Eodem
Gullielmus Buchair retulit emississe bannum publicum sive proclama in
locis publicis et consuetudis (sic) de mandato Juratorum, chi tueti persunj
chi havissiru quartari di misuraj vinu in tempu di octu jormi vegna a li
acatapanj per aiustarj li dictj quartarj sub pena carlenorum XV acatapanis
et aliorum carlenorum XV marammati civitatis.

The above registers a report of Guglielmo Buchair who declares that in accordance
with the orders he had received from the Jurats he had read a proclamation ordering all
persons in possession of wine measures known as quartari, to take them within 8 days to
the Catapan to be adjusted and standardised. Those failing to obey this order would
be fined 15 carlini to be paid to the Catapan and a further 15 carlini for the maintenance
of the city walls.

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12. (23rd May, 1473) Fol. No. 246 recto
XXIIIo madij VI Indictione. Nui Per Johannj de Mazara, Capitaneus de
Malte, Georgi de la Chabica, Antonj Gact de Sguanes et Petrus Vaccaru, juratis,
peroche quists jornj passati Agustinu Xebirras et Saycu Xerri essendu di noeti
a Salamanj a la guardia superviniuna una fusta di Mori et misi agenti in terra
e fora a li manu cum li dieti Mori taliter che lu dictu Agustinu fu per li dieti
Mori furutu in facie et lu dictu Saycu etiam ligatu in putiri di ipsi Mori et deinde
ipso Agustinu et Saycu viriliter et audacter si difisiru di li dieti Mori scapulan-
dusi di li manu perfidi di ipsi Mori, per tanto attentis premisis et per dari
marcha deinceps qua causa evenerit chasquidunu si habia a farj lu debitu
contra ipsi Mori, pro premio et graciose fachimu exempti et frankj a li dicti
Agustinu et Saycu di la guardia che de certo non pozcano esserj ingariatj seu
costricti affarj guardia alcuena et a cautela loru et nostra li fichimu farj la
presente scriptura per manu di Andria Fauzenj notariu judichi et sub scriptura
di nostri proprij manj a bene plaeitu di li nostri superijur et presente valitura
perpetu.
† Ego Georgius de la Chabica juratus confirmo suprascriptos.
† Ego Petrus Vaccaru juratu confirmo.
† Ego Antonius Gact de Sguanes juratus confirmo suprascriptos.
The above document is a warrant issued by the Jurats to Agostino Sceberras and Saycu Xerri. By this deed Sceberras and Xerri were to be exempted from future military service in recognition of bravery shown by them while on patrol. This document records how Sceberras and Xerri, while patrolling the north-western part of the Island at Selmun, encountered and had a skirmish with Moorish troops who were landed at night time from an enemy schooner. Sceberras sustained facial wounds and both were overcome, tied and about to become prisoners. However, they gained enough strength to fight desperately, free themselves, and escape to raise the alarm.

In recognition of their bravery it was decided to free both from all further military duties and to ensure that this would be carried out, the present document was drawn up by Notary Andrea Fauczuni and signed by Giorgio de la Chabica, Pietro Vacearu and Antonio Gaet de Sguanes, three Jurats of the City.

13. (4th September, 1474) Fol. No. 302 recto

III Septembris VIII Indictione

Fuerunt misse licterae ex parte Nobilium Juratorum per Pinum de Luna et Johanneau Cauki servientes, venerabilibus Cappillanis infrascriptis videlicet: Domino Lemmo Fauczuni, Domino Micaeli Fauczono, Domino Gilo, Domino Johanne Vella, Domino Gallo, Domino Rinaldo, Domino Antonio, Domino Csulio, tenoris infrascripti, videlicet:

Nui Antonius Falca, Barthu de Bernardu, Pinu de li Nasi et Franciscus de Lauerio, Jurati di la Isula di Malta, preganu a Vui Venerabili Capellani ki per serviciu di lu Signuri Vice Re regiditi ac tueti Vostri parrochiani ki ogi die dominica si digeanu presentari annuj et arrecondarilj ki per ommem modum vegnanu altrimenu ki exeigiremu lu pena di lu bandu lu quali fachimu preconcicari ac tueti quissi Vostri capelli per ki lu Illustrissimu Signuri Vice Re voli haviri informacioni comu si passau cum li chitatini et habitaturi di la ysula lu Nobili Tristaynu de Guivara in lu tempu ki fu Capitanu. Datum ut supra Juratis ut supra.

The above entry registers the delivery of a circular notice to the Parish Priests of the villages by the Town Criers Pinu de Luna and Giovanni Cauki. It will be noticed that eight names of Parish Priests are mentioned. They were the Parish Priests of the parishes existing in the villages of Malta at the time.

The notice was issued by the four Jurats of the city Antonio Falca, Bartolomeo de Bernardo, Pino de li Nasi and Francesco de Lauerio. It informed Parish Priests that upon an order from the Viceroy all parisioners were to come before the Jurats that day, the Sunday on which the Parish Priests read out the order. The Viceroy was seeking information as to how Tristan de Guivara had acted towards the citizens of the Island during his term of office as Captain of the City.

Those failing to obey this order by not attending the meeting would incur the penalties already specified in the bando. See Docs. Nos. 8 & 14.

14. (4th September, 1474) Fol. No. 302 recto

Emissum fuit bannum sive proclama per Cappellas, Rabatum et Civitatem, in locis debitibus et consuetis regia ex parte de mandato dominorum Juratorum
per Pinum de Luna et Johannis Caukj servientes quod omnes et singulae
personae diete Insole cuiuscuique gradus, status et condicionis exsistant debeat
presentare coram predictos Nobiles Juratos in ecclesia majori Santi Pauli,
civitatis et Insole Melivetanae pro regiri parlamentu generali super certi infor-
macioni i qui li dicti Jurati divinu fari a lu Signi Vice Re, videlicet: come
si passau et regu lu Nobili Tristiaynu de Guivara cum li habitaturi di la Isula
in lu annu ki fu Capitanu in la dicta Insola sub pena oncie X regio fisco
aplicanda, ogi die dominica IIII Septembris, VII Indictione.

The above proclamation was read in the villages, at Rabat and in the city of Notabile
by the Town Criera Piniu de Luna and Giovanni Cauki.

Citizens of all social ranks were to assemble at the Cathedral Church at Notabile
before the Jurats to take part in a parlamentu generali.

This general assembly of the citizens was convened to enable the Jurats to obtain
information regarding Tristiaynu de Guivara during the period he was Captain of the City.
Those failing to attend the assembly would be fined 10 uncias.

While working on research of XV Century documents, this is the first instance that
the term parlamentu generali has been encountered. See Doci. Nos. 3 & 13.

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15. (2nd September, 1476) Fol. No. 353 verso
II Septembris X Indictione

Laurenceus Fantinu serviens retulit emisisse bannum sive proclama de
mandato dominorum juratorum in locis publicis debitis et consuetis, quod
nemo audeat exire cum mundicia da porta grecorum et debeat prohicerre
mundicia a lu canali solituu sub pena si est francu di pagari XV carlini a
la maramma et si est seavu oy scava ki perdi lu simbilj et haja chentu zoci et
kj nixuna digia laverj a la biviratura tantu di Garxivem quantu a la Saceija,
et si sara francu sia in pena di XV carlini a la maramma et si sara seavu oy
scava haia chentu zoci.

There are two separate orders in the above proclamation, both relating to the hygiene
of the population.

The first forbids the conveying of refuse through the Greeks’ Gate of the City and
states that it should be disposed of at the customary place. The fine for neglecting
this order was fixed at 15 carlini payable towards the maintenance of the city walls.
Should the culprit be a slave he would forfeit the refuse container and receive 100 lashes.

The second order prohibits the washing of clothes at the public fountains of Garixem
and Saquqia, the fine for infringement of this order being the same as in the first
instance.

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16. (1st October, 1476) Fol. No. 356 recto
Primo Octobris X Indictione

Emissum est bannum sive proclama in locis publicis debitis et consuetis
ex parte regia de mandato dominorum juratorum per Laurencium Fantinu
servientem, quod nemo cuiuscuique gradus et condicionis existat tam videlicet
gentilomu quam autru qualsivogla chitatimu ne qualsivogla fimina audeat vendere furmentum, oleum, mel, suini, burru, carnii, ne qualsivogla autra cosa exceptu secundu la meta ordinata per li dicti Nobilis Jurati, sub pena unciarum quinquaginta ponderis regio fisco applicanda et carlenorum quindecim acatapanjs.

This bando, proclaimed by order of the Jurats, was read from the customary places by the Town Crier Lorenzo Fantinu. It prohibited the sale of wheat, oil, honey, wine, butter and meat and any other comestible, except at the price fixed in the list issued by the Jurats.

This order forbids persons of all social conditions: gentlemen, citizens or women to sell articles or goods at a price above those shown in the tariff, and makes the penalty for infringement 50 uncias, to be paid to the royal revenue, and 15 carlini to be paid to the Catapans.

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XI Agusti X Indictione

Fuit emisum bannum per Laurencium Fantinu servientem de mandato dominorum juratorum regia ex parte sub pena unciarum quinquaginta ponderis regio fisco applicanda, ki tucti quillii kj su di consiglu kj digianu vinirj in consiglu questa matina super lu factu di la collecta seu donativu.

The above proclamation was issued by order of the Jurats and read by Lorenzo Fantinu, the Town Crier. All members of the Council were called upon to attend an important meeting being convened that morning. Those evading their duty through non attendance would be fined 50 uncias — a comparatively high penalty.

The subject of the debate was to be the collecta or donativu.

The collecta was a sum of money exacted periodically by the king as his due. Subsequently this was termed donativu instead of collecta, the purpose behind the change being to give this taxation, hitherto looked on as an extortion, the form of a gift. Actually this stratagem worked both ways for accompanying the payment of the voluntary donation to the king, the Council sent a petition humbly begging privileges from His Majesty, who, under the circumstances, could not but grant them to the Maltese. These privileges were known as capitoli and were jealously guarded by the Jurats and citizens as well won rights. (Cfr. Francesco De Stefano: STORIA DELLA SICILIA DAL SECOLO XI AL XIX, Bari, 1948, pag. 95; E quando in luogo della colletta, si introdusse, con mutamento significativo di termine, l’uso del donativo, questo fu considerato come erogazione volontaria per scopi definiti di necessità generale, e fu il corrispettivo di ciò che il parlamento domandava per il regno, cioè dei capitoli, la cui redazione doveva essere fatta da giuristi regnicoli, eletti dal braccio del parlamento.)