THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOZO: 1335

by

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

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

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

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

9. Text of 1397 or 1322 in E. Mazzarese Farrella, I feudi comitali di Sicilia dai Normanni agli Aragonesi (Milan, 1974), 109-116 (discussed ibid., 74-77); the document refers to a rius dohane, to gabelle and so forth, but it is not clear whether the royal iura dohane or other incomes were involved. This important work throws much light on some obscure questions but leaves many documents to discuss and problems to solve.
denanum (10). In 1335, however, the councils or universitates of the two cities complained that the officials on Gozo were proceeding against their merchants trading there on the grounds that the island had become part of a county, the implication being that it was no longer part of the royal denanum and that the royal exemptions had therefore lost their validity in Gozo. On 28 April 1335 Pietro II, who acted as king during his father’s lifetime, sent instructions both to the Iustitiaris, vel capitaneis, ac Procuratoribus Insule Gaudisi, and a’so to the financial officials on Gozo, the dohanneriis, credenceriis, seu gabellotis dohane (11). Pietro affirmed the validity of the exemptions enjoyed by Messina and Siracusa which, his letter stated, had been explicitly safeguarded in the cession of 1330 and were being recognized in Malta, if not on Gozo. He instructed the Iustitiiarii, the Capitanei and the Procuratores to ensure that the dohanneri, the credenceri and the gabelloti should repay whatever they had taken by way of the iura dohane since the previous September. It is not, however, clear either from the text (12) or from general Sicilian practice which, if any, of these officers were royal officials, whether all of them were appointed by the Count, or who controlled the office of the secrezia.

DE NON SOLVENDO IVRE DOHANAE in Insulis Gaudisiij, & Melitae

PETRVS II, Dei gratia Rex Sicilie Serenissimi Domini Domini Friderici Reu-
rendissimi Patris sui Regis elusdem Regni in ipsius administratone generaliter
Locumtenens Iustitiaris, vel captaneis, ac Procuratoribus Insule Gaudisi pro
parde Curie seu (13) Alfonsi Friderici Comitis ipsius Insule, ac Insule Mellueti
Fratris sui, nec non dohanneriis, credenceriis, seu gabellotis dohane elusdem
Insule Gaudisi tam presentibus, quam futurus fidellibus suis gratiam suam,
& bonam voluntatem. Pro parte Vniuersitatum hominum Civitatum Messane,
& Syracusarum nostrorum fidellium fuit nuper cum querela coram nostra expos-
itum Maiestate. Quod cum singuli Messanenses, & Syracusani ex priuligiiis
eis ab olim per Dominos predecessores nostros Clare Memoriae dictum Domi-
num Regem Patrem nostrum, & nos indultis, atque concessis sint, & esse

10. It is not clear to which of numerous royal exemptions the document of 1335 re-
ferred; cf. Agnello and C. Trasatti, I privilegi di Messina e di Trapani: 1160-1355
(Palermo, 1949), with numerous references.

11. On the gabelles of Gozo, including the dohana, in 1372/3, see H. Bresc. “The Secre-
zia and the Royal Patrony in Malta: 1240-1450,” in Medieval Malta: Studies on
Malta before the Knights, ed. A. Luttrell (London, 1975), 130, 134 et passim.


13. Gregorio, Opere, 329 n.2, published the first few lines with a number of changes and
errors, omitting the seu which is in the Siracusa copy although it reads clumsily and
increases doubts as to whether the Iustitiiarii, vel capitanei, ac Procuratores were all
comital rather than royal officials; possibly the original had atque (cf. infra, n.15).
debeant in singulis ciuitatibus, terris, & locis nostri demanij a solutionibus iurium quorumcunque dohanarum, & aliorum dirictuum spectantium ad officium secretie liberi, & immunes, ac huiusmodi immunitate, & libertate ante scilicet concessiom factam dicto Comiti de Insulis supradictis in eas tanquam in terris nostri demanij, & post concessionem eandem in dicta Insula Meleueti usi fuerint, & gauisi, (14) ac gaudeant, & utantur Vos presentes Dohanerij, seu gabelloti dicte dohane tenoribus priuilegiiorum dictorum penitus obauditis dicentes dictam Insulam Gaudisi in Comitatu esse, et properea, & Syracusanos prefatos ac Messanenses in ea predictis libertate, & immunitate gaudere non posse, nonnullo Syracusanos, ac Messanenses accedentes ad dictam Insulam cum diuersis eorum rebus, & mercibus, ac negociantibus ibidem ad soluendum vobis proinde iura dicte dohane, ac aliorum dirictium spectantium ad dictum officium secretie, tanquam rendabiles compulsitis, compellitis, & etiam molestaties ipsos properea pignorando, tam contra tenorem dictorum priuilegiiorum, quam in eorum damnum preudicatur, & grauamen; & nostro Culmini humiliter supplicatam super hoc eis per nostram Curiam opportuno Iusticie remedio proderi, huiusmodi itaque supplicatione utpote iusta per nos benigne admissa quia de tenoribus priuilegiiorum predictorum; quodque dicti Messanenses, & Syracusani in dictis Insulis a solutionibus dictorum iurium, & dirictuum liberi, et exempti tracandii sint itaque libertate a dicta Insula Meleueti gaudeant Curie nostre constat, Volentes in observantia predictorum priuilegiiorum eisdem Messanensibus, & Syracusanis predictam libertatem per uos in predicta Insula gaudisii tenaciter, & inutilabiler obseruari quatenus in illa dicta Insula Meleueti utuntur, & gaudent, & maxime quia sub ipsa conditione, & onere dictus Comitatus predicto Comiti fuit concessus, & de iis in priuilegio sibi comitatu ipso facto expressa mentio facta est fidelitati Vestre sub obtentu nostre gratie firmiter, et expresse mandamus quatenus vos predicti dohaneri credencerii, seu gabelloti dicte dohane predictos Messanenses, & Syracusanos a solutionibus quorumcunque Iurium do hanamur, & aliorum dirictium predictorum pro quibuscunque rebus, & mercibus eorum per eos in dictam Insulam immisiss, & de cetero immittendis 'ab inde extractis, & extrahendis immunes, & exemptos trattare, Vosque predicti Iustitiarii, atque (15) Capitanei ac Procuratores eodem dohanerios, credencerios, seu gabellotos ad premissa inutilabiliter obseruanda ad restituendum cum integritate qualibet dictis Messanensibus, & Syracusanis, si quid contra tenores immunitatum, & libertatum ipsarum a proxime praeteriti mensis Septembris huius III. Inditionis usque nunc per dictos presentes dohanerios, seu gabellotos perceptum furtur fulisse eodem praentes dohanerios, seu gabellotos dicte dohane stricte prout expediens fuerit compellere debeatis in exequione presentium taliter uos gerendo, quod huiusmodi immunitates dictis Messanensibus, & Syracusanis quatenus in dictis eorum Priuilegiis sunt expresse sine difficuitate qualibet in dicta Insula obseruentur, & ad vos propereo iterari alias nostras literas non sit opus sicut nostram gratiam caram habetis. Datum Cathaniae Anno Dominice Incarnationis MCCC XXXV. XXVIII. Aprilis III. Inditionis.

14. Read gauisi.
15. seu is written above atque in the same hand.