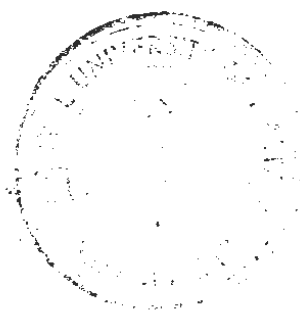


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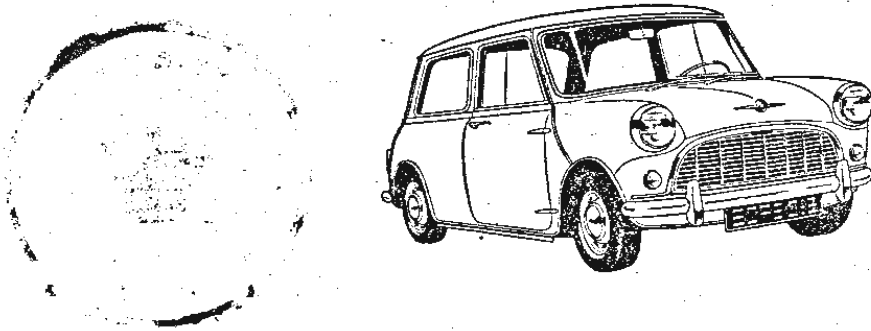
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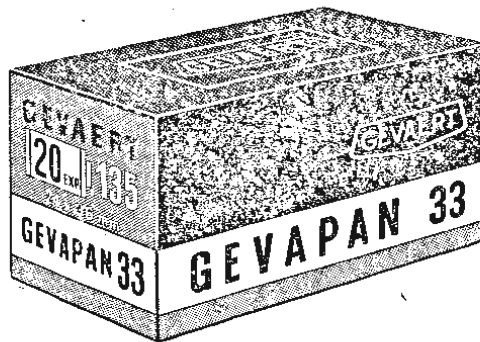
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MALTA AS A PLACE FOR FOLKLORE RESEARCH

The publication of a Review devoted to Maltese Folklore fills a long-felt need. For many years articles and studies on local customs and traditions appeared scattered in various local journals, mainly literary, linguistic, scientific or historical, but publication depended largely on the hospitality provided by friendly editors interested in Maltese studies generally. The advantages of having an *ad hoc* folklore publication are so obvious that they need not be enumerated. The present review will, it is hoped, appeal to all those who have some useful contribution to make to the knowledge of local lore and tradition. Over the years it will also reflect the main trends and development of folklore research in Malta.

Some of the best studies on Maltese folklore were carried out by foreign scholars before and after the turn of the century. They appeared in German and Italian or other periodicals that are now either unobtainable or else not available in local libraries. A few of the more important contributions, such as L. Bonelli's *Saggi del folklore dell'Isola di Malta*, a series of letters, addressed to the great Sicilian folklorist Giuseppe Pitrè, published in *Archivio per lo Studio delle Tradizioni Popolari* in 1895, and some book reviews appearing in ZDMG, will be reproduced in the *Maltese Folklore Review*, which will thus serve as an archive repository for all that is worth preserving for future students of Maltese folklore.

History and Folklore are as closely intertwined in Malta as are Folklore and Language. In the present issue Dr. A. Cremona refers to the theory, first mooted by Fr. Magri, that the Moslem slave population may have contributed considerably towards the dissemination of folk-tales with Semitic motifs. The whole subject of slavery in Malta certainly deserves a close study that is bound to throw light on this question. It cannot be denied that slaves exerted a direct influence on certain practices and beliefs held by Maltese women. This is clearly shown by the following extract regarding cases brought before the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Malta: *Le cause pero' che riguardano più frequentemente lo Tribunale si riducono a sei capi perchè o sono d'Infedeli che fatti schiavi vanno per la Città sotto pretesto di vendere mercantie capaci del loro miserabile stato, disseminando presso le donne e persone semplici superstizioni, incantesimi, rimedii per amare et altre simili vanità; o sono di persone cadute al sacco di questi perversi, hanno concorso nel crederle et sperimentarle, et insegnarle ad altri, . . .*"⁽¹⁾

The Maltese Islands offer a very fertile field of folklore research. Their geographical position half-way on the land ridge once joining Sicily to Africa has influenced the course of Maltese history. We find a succession of dynasties, Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Norman, Sicilian, Angevin, Aragonese, Castilian, the Knights Hospitallers and, nowadays, the British, exercising different cultural and ethnological influences on Maltese life and thought. Maltese

(1) R.M.L. Ms. 23, p. 258. I am indebted for this information to Mr. Godfrey Wettinger, who is writing a thesis on Slaves in Malta.

folklore bears the traces of these various contacts, presenting unmistakable evidence of distinctive cultural influences superimposed upon, or completely merged with the original native lore.

This fertile field, however, has been but imperfectly studied. The bibliographies given in the footnotes to the articles by Professor R. Corso and Dr. A. Cremona, together with the list of studies since the War shown at the end of the present issue, give a good idea of the ground covered so far. Children's lore and games, folk arts and crafts, dress and costume, rural architecture and other aspects of primitive material culture, folk prayers and prayer charms are only just beginning to attract the attention of the folklorist. The whole island of Gozo and some Maltese villages and hamlets, such as Bidnija, Bahrija, Imtahleb, S. Martin and Marsaxlokk, where life still follows a primitive pattern, await the loving care and attention of a devoted band of workers equipped with modern recording and filming apparatus to yield up the treasures of folk memory before they, too, are transformed or obliterated by the far-reaching impact of modern progress. Maltese customs have been described in detail, but the feast of the patron saint, the *festa*, has not been adequately studied yet, nor have its sociological manifestations been thoroughly explored.

Folk-tales, folk-songs, proverbs, legends and nursery rhymes have been diligently collected but much remains to be done in order (a) to bring together in handy form a corpus of such folk-literature, (b) to analyse and classify such material into types and, possibly, to index the motifs of Maltese folk-literature, and (c) to study the material thus classified or indexed on a comparative basis with special reference to the countries of the Mediterranean. In the past the field of comparison has been either limited to the neighbouring island of Sicily with which Malta has had close historical and cultural affinities, or else, as in the writings of Fr. Magri, aimed at proving a Phoenician origin for both Maltese Language and Folklore.

While comparisons with Sicily and the Italian peninsula should definitely be studied more extensively, an excursion further afield would amply repay the trouble. The realm of Spanish folklore is one such possibility; yet so far it has remained virgin soil, unnoticed and unknown, although our historical connection with the Spanish overlords lasted for more than two centuries. The folklore of some of the Mediterranean Islands such as Pantellaria, Sardinia and, among the Greek group, Chios, presents instances of remarkable similarity with that of Malta and Gozo. Some of the writings on Palestinian customs and traditions published by T. Canaan, Stephan H. Stephan and others in "The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society" (1920—) open up a fresh vista of comparative work in this medium. Ethno-linguistic works by English, French and Italian writers on the peoples of the North African coasts — Egypt, Tripolitania, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco — should likewise be consulted for unsuspected comparative material common to the peoples of the Mediterranean.

It has been Malta's fate throughout the centuries to have come in contact with various, and at times conflicting cultures. And it is precisely this that makes the Maltese Islands a unique place for folklore research within the wider framework of Mediterranean folk cultures and traditions.

THE EDITOR

MALTA E LE SUE FESTE

del

Prof. RAFFAELE CORSO

Chi voglia toccare con mano gli elementi che caratterizzano l'impronta latina e neo latina delle odierne tradizioni popolari maltesi, non ha che dare uno sguardo agli usi ed ai costumi dell'isola.

La dimostrazione che ne ha dato, vari anni fa, Antonio Cremona, prendendo in esame i proverbi agricoli maltesi e confrontandoli con altri analoghi della Sicilia e di altre regioni d'Italia, è così perfetta, che non vale la pena di aggiungere parola a quanto egli luminosamente ha scritto ⁽¹⁾.

Gli usi si accordano coi proverbi, a meglio far vedere per quale complesso di consuetudini e di cerimonie la vita, e direi meglio la cultura popolare dell'isola bella si riattacca al patrimonio dell'Italia, che l'avvivò coi continui rapporti fra maltesi e siciliani, calabresi, napoletani, pugliesi, ecc., nel periodo normanno fino all'epoca contemporanea. Ciò s'intende senza risalire indietro, a tempi lontani, per far vedere che il carattere del popolo maltese seguì in tutti i periodi storici della sua vita, un'evoluzione spiritualmente latina, come quella più confacente all'indole della progenie.

Passando a rassegna alcune caratteristiche costumanze maltesi ci pare di essere in Italia, tanto esse sono simili per forma, il sentimento, l'idea a quelle della parte meridionale della penisola, richiamando al pensiero i riti antichi dei comuni padri che vissero sul suolo della grande madre.

Questo carattere meglio si rileva nelle grandi feste sacre, le quali mentre celebrano la ricorrenza dei grandi Patroni, fanno l'apoteosi di magnifici avvenimenti guerreschi, essendo stata Malta il baluardo della Cristianità e della civiltà europea contro il Turco, prima che la vittoria di Lepanto ne fiaccasse l'oltracotanza.

(1) A. Cremona, *Weather and Husbandry Lore in The Isles of Malta*, in "Archivum Melitense", vol. VI (1922) p. 1-32.

Sulle tradizioni popolari di Malta, in generale, è utile la seguente bibliografia: L. Bonelli, *Saggi del folklore dell'isola di Malta*, Palermo, 1895; V. Busuttil, *Holiday customs in Malta*, Malta, 1922. (Contiene la descrizione di feste popolari e un cenno sulle superstizioni e sui giuochi. Il libro non ha carattere scientifico).

E. Magri, *Hrejjef Missirijietna* in "Moghdiġa taż-Żmien", n. 15, 18, 29, 38, 39, 44 (1899-1915); Id., *X'Ighid il Malti jiu il gherf bla mictub tal Maltin*, Ibid, n. 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 24, 60; Id., *Précis de mythologie maltais* in "Actes du XIV Congrès International des Orientalistes" Algeri, 1905 (tratta delle superstizioni e delle deità favolose); L. Galea e M. Murray, *Maltese folktales*, 1932 (Traduzione di alcune favole del Magri con l'aggiunta di alcune varianti); A. Cremona, *Maltese death, mourning and funeral customs*, in "Folklore", vol. XXXIV, 1923, p. 352 seg. (tratta della morte, del lutto e delle costumanze funerarie); Id., *Race, language and myth*, in "Melita", vol. 1, 1921, pp. 394-405; Id., *Maltese funeral customs*, ib., vol. II, 1922 pp. 249-259 (tratta più diffusamente la materia svolta nell'articolo pubblicato nella rivista "Folklore"); Id., *Some Myths and Beliefs in Maltese folklore*, ib., vol. III, 1923, pp. 111-124 (studia miti e credenze, incantesimi, esorcismi e formule per curare alcune malattie); H. Stumme, *Maltesische Märchen, Gedichte u. Rätsel in deutscher Übersetzung*, Lipsia, 1904; B. Ilg e H. Stumme, *Maltesische Volkslieder*, Lipsia, 1909; M.E. Calabritto, *Canti popolari maltesi "Lares"*, I, 1930, n. 2-3, pp. 57-62; E. Rossi, *Scibilia Nobili e la leggenda maltese della Sposa della Mosta*, ib., III, 1932, n. 2, 5-19; A. Cremona, *Is the maid of Mosta a myth?* "Journal of the Malta University Literary Society" 1934, n. 10.

L'uso della strenna, di origine romana, è tuttavia vivo al principio del nuovo anno. Al sorgere del primo gennaio i ragazzi in gruppo sfilano, come in tante altre province del mezzogiorno e del centro d'Italia, davanti alle porte delle case, raccogliendo soldini che ripongono in piccoli salvadanai, e qua e là ad essi seguono comitive di musicisti, che si recano ad augurare il buon anno alle singole famiglie. Il più tipico personaggio di questa solenne ricorrenza s'incontra, o meglio s'incontrava in passato, in Gozo ed in alcuni villaggi di Malta col titolo di Sultano e coll'ufficio di esprimere gli auguri ai casigiani imbiancando la soglia dell'abitazione con della calce, che egli porta in un sacco sulla schiena ⁽²⁾.

Nella festa di Sant'Antonio Abbate, che cade il 17 gennaio, anche in Malta, come a Napoli ed altrove ⁽³⁾, si fa la benedizione dei cavalli, degli asini e dei muli, portandoli in processione, tutti adorni di nastri e ciondoli, sul sagrato della chiesa della Vittoria in Valletta, e di Sant'Agostino alla Notabile. Ai tempi dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano la cerimonia era più imponente, perchè vi prendevano parte i cavalli del Gran Maestro in prima fila, seguiti dai dignitari dell'isola. La festa di questo taumaturgo segna nel calendario popolare italiano, l'inizio del carnevale, che una tradizione del luogo dice introdotta in Malta al tempo del Gran Maestro del Ponte, 1535, ma che, come tutte le feste del ciclo che lo rappresentano, risale ad epoche

(2) Per brevità, mi limito a qualche riscontro. "Il calabrese, in omaggio all'antica tradizione, inaugura con regali agli amici il capodanno..... Accompagna la *strena* (lat. strena) con uno strepito discordante di tamburelli, mortai, coperchi di vasi da cucina, che picchia con strane battute, e del rauco zughì-zughì"; V. Dorsa, *La trad. Greco-latina negli usi e nelle credenze popolari della Calabria citeriore*, Cosenza, 2° ediz, 1884, p. 185. Nell'Abruzzo "la sera della vigilia del capodanno..... ragazzi, ragazze ed anche adulti popolani..... con accompagnamento di cembali, mortai, padelle, palette, molle (in altri luoghi, con chitarre battenti e sistri), vanno a cantare gli auguri innanzi alle case di loro conoscenza". G. Finamore, *Credenze, usi, costumi abruzzesi*, Palermo, 1890, p. 82. Nella penisola sorrentina "la sera dell'anno si suol girare di casa in casa; ed al suono del tammuro bene augurate: La bona sera e buon principio d'anno, cantando alcune parti d'una nota canzone"; G. Amalfi, *Tradizioni ed usi della penisola sorrentina*, Palermo, 1890, p. 197.

Meno noto è l'uso d'imbiancare la soglia dell'abitazione spargendovi della calce. L'uso rientra nei riti del limitare (v. H.C. Trumbull, *The threshold covenant*, New York, 1906) che era sacro alla dea Vesta, secondo Varrone, e custodito da Limentinus al dire dei padri della Chiesa. Comunque la costumanza maltese si presenta come una variante dell'uso di recare sulla soglia, nel giorno del Capodanno, un sasso, accompagnando l'atto con formule augurali; R. Corso, *Rites et symboles du nouvel an en Italie*, UNITI, IV, 1926 p. 29; A. D'Aloi, *Il Natale e il Capodanno nella leggenda e nella tradizione calabrese*, "L'avvenire", 23 dic. 1938. Fa pensare al rapporto tra l'uso calabrese e quello maltesi, l'altro osservato nel territorio sorrentino, secondo cui la pietra deve essere calcarea, cioè bianca, accompagnata dalle parole auspicali: Siate bianco e contento con tutta la famiglia!"; G. Amalfi, op. cit., p. 198.

(3) Ai 17 gennaio si conducono i cavalli ornati di nastri presso la chiesa di Sant'Antonio Abate; ivi si fanno benedire, si attaccano al collo serti di ciambelle, e dopo di averli fatto girare tre volte attorno alla chiesa, si credono preservati da ogni malore. Un simile triplice giro si crede che gli antichi facessero fare attorno al cavallo di bronzo, la testa di cui vedesi nel "Museo Borbonico"; L. Galanti, *Napoli e contorni*, Napoli 1838, p. 220. Nel dì della festa in tutti i comuni che hanno chiese intitolate a S. Antonio, e non sono pochi, menano gli animali equini, ornati di nastri e sonagli, nonché i buoi ed altri animali domestici, innanzi alla chiesa del Santo, per farli benedire"; G. Finamore, Op. cit., p. 98. Per l'uso in Velletri nei sec. XVI e XVII vedi A. Tersenghi, *Costumanze antiche di Velletri*, Velletri 1935, p. 184.

molto lontane fino a confondersi coi Saturnali ⁽⁴⁾. Nonostante ciò, è certo che alcune manifestazioni del carnevale maltese sono connesse con gli avvenimenti storici del luogo. Tale la caratteristica *Parata*, che si fa a commemorare la vittoria riportata nel 1565 sulle orde musulmane.

In che cosa consiste la *Parata*?

Popolani dell'uno e dell'altro sesso, alcuni abbigliati alla turca, altri da cristiani, si schierano su due file, a coppie, ed avanzando incrociano, come in duello, i bastoni che portano in luogo delle spade, battendo alternativamente per simulare lo scontro, su tempo della musica ⁽⁵⁾.

Questa danza, la quale per la sua coreografia richiama alla mente le antiche cerimonie che i veneziani mettevano in opera nel giovedì grasso, e di cui tuttavia si osservano le reviviscenze nell'Adriatico (Lagosta, Curzola), nel Tirreno (Corsica), e sulle Alpi dove è indicata col nome di Moresca ⁽⁶⁾, termina con l'esaltazione della *Gharusa*, una ragazza riccamente vestita con un pugnale in una mano e con l'altra intenta a distribuire baci al pubblico che la festeggia.

Come generalmente in Italia, anche il popolo di Malta nella solennità pasquale prepara per i ragazzi e le ragazze pani rituali detti *figolla* e rappresentanti figure antropomorfe e zoomorfe, uomini, donne, cavalli, aquile, ciascuna con un uovo ficcato nel ventre ⁽⁷⁾.

L'uovo, che oggi è fatto di cioccolata, un tempo era genuino e tinto in rosso alla maniera che usano tuttavia in alcuni paeselli i popolani della Sicilia, della Calabria, della Puglia, dell'Abruzzo e di altre regioni ⁽⁸⁾.

Nella Domenica di Resurrezione ha luogo un abbozzo di rappresentazione ecclesiastica, simile a quelle scene sacre che si vedevano e si vedono tuttora nei borghi delle nostre province, e che esprimono il sentimento della devozione popolare. Fino a pochi anni addietro, ai primi albori del mattino i fedeli di Valletta con a capo il Papas della chiesa greca menavano in processione la vecchia statua del Cristo risorto, affrettando il passo a gran corsa, specialmente là dove la via si presenta erta ed in salita. L'uso dura tuttora nelle città di Vittoriosa e Cospicua.

(4) V.R.C. (R. Corso), Carnevale, in "Enciclopedia Italiana".

(5) Molti i raffronti da fare; eccone uno: "Nell'ultima domenica di Carnevale in Vasto, si fa una mascherata speciale. Tutti in costume da Turchi e alla turchesca bardati i cavalli, la cavalcata è preceduta da un re e da una regina. I cavalieri hanno sciabole lunghe di legno, dipinte, argentate, dorate. G. Finamore, Op. cit. p. 10.

(6) Balli figurati o giuochi con le spade ricorrono nelle rappresentazioni carnevalesche italiane. Nell'isola Lagosta, mentre Carnevale vestito d'Arlecchino traversa la città sopra un asino, un gruppo di uomini con in mano le spade esegue una danza complicata, alla quale prende parte il fantoccio carnevalesco; e nell'ultimo giorno..... il gruppo dei ballerini canta al suono della lirica (strumento musicale). Un altro gioco simile si trova nell'isola di Curzola. Vedi F. Pospisil, *La moresca*, in "Folklore Italiano", IX, 1934, pp. 1-8; A. Bernardy, *Il valore della tradizione a Malta*, "Lares" VI, 1935, p. 86.

(7) R. Corso, *Le arti popolari nelle feste pubbliche italiane*, "Annuario R. Ist. Tecnico di Messina", 1928-1933, p. 184; Catalogo della mostra di etnografia italiana in Piazza d'Armi, Bergamo 1911, p. 127. I pani rituali di Pasqua sono di varie forme (cavallo, uccello, pupattola, ecc.) e a seconda della forma prendono il nome di cavalli, castelli, colombelle, pupe, pigne. Siffatti pani portano un numero più o meno grande di uova incastonate. Vedi G. Finamore, Op. cit. p. 126; La Sorsa, *Usi, costumi e feste del popolo pugliese*, Bari, 1925, p. 240.

(8) R. Corso, Op. cit.

Una magnifica processione votiva, molto sontuosa e clamorosa fino a pochi anni addietro, è quella di San Gregorio, che la tradizione vuole istituita a ricordo di un grande avvenimento: la distruzione della flotta turca, nel 1429, da una prodigiosa tempesta nel porto di Marsascirocco, a breve distanza dalla chiesa di San Gregorio. Da qualche tempo tutte le confraternite delle parrocchie muovono in processione alla chiesa del Santo, iusieme col capitolo della Cattedrale, recitando la litania dei santi e visitando lungo il percorso la chiesa del Tarxien e la chiesa di Santa Caterina. Qui ha luogo la gara dei portastendardi delle diverse parrocchie. Eccitati dalla folla dei devoti, essi sventolano con spavalderia, in segno di saluto, lo stendardo dinanzi all'Altare Maggiore, emuli forse, dei bandierai della Puglia, delle Marche, della Toscana e del Trentino, i quali compiono mirabili evoluzioni impugnando il vessillo in onore del Santo Patrono ⁽⁹⁾.

Il giorno dell'Ascensione, volgarmente detto *Lapsi*, forse dal greco *analepsi*, è festeggiato dal popolo con divertimenti e scampagnate sulla spiaggia, donde alcuni, per una credenza, che è comune alla Calabria e ad altri luoghi ⁽¹⁰⁾, s'immergono nel mare per liberarsi o garantirsi dalle malattie della pelle. Tra i divertimenti non mancano le altalene, specie nei villaggi, ove sono detti *bandli*, con nome derivato probabilmente dal siciliano *pannula* e dal napoletano *pandula* ⁽¹¹⁾. Nella festa di San Giovanni sono in onore i fuochi sacri o falò su cui i ragazzi saltano attraverso le fiamme, come facevano in epoche remote i pastori latini delle feste Palilie. Ai tempi dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano, all'ascensione dei falò dava inizio il Gran Maestro, il quale accompagnato dal Vescovo e da due balii, appiccava il fuoco a 8 barili di pece sulla piazza dinanzi al Sacro Ospedale.

Corse di cavalli, di carri splendidamente ornati di banderuole, di nastri, di fazzoletti di seta e di sonagli hanno luogo nelle ricorrenze dei Santi Pietro e Paolo, di San Rocco, di Santa Maria (15 agosto). Quelle di San Rocco si ritengono istituite nel 1593, in segno di giubilo, dopo la peste che per 18 mesi flagellò l'isola. Caratteristico è il pellegrinaggio dei contadini d'ambo i sessi, a gruppi, che sogliono fare visitando le chiese dei sette villaggi di Malta, il 15 agosto, a devozione della Vergine Assunta. Fra le feste rinomate è quella della Natività di Maria Vergine, che cade il giorno 8 settembre, e che si fa alla Senglea, un promontorio del porto rimpetto alla Valletta, detta anche "la vittoria" per il successo delle armi sui Turchi. In quell'occasione hanno luogo la giostra e le regate; la prima consistente in un premio sospeso in cima ad una antenna unta di sego, alla maniera delle cuccagne calabresi; le seconde nella gara delle barche tra i concorrenti dei quattro porti di Malta (Cospicua, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Marsamuscelto). Tanto

(9) Per i particolari dell'uso in Carivigno (Puglia), in Falerone (Marche) e nel Trentino, v. R. Corso, Op. Cit.

(10) "Nei villaggi di Vaccarizzo, San Giorgio, Spezzano, la notte precedente a questa festa i devoti, per lo più donne, scendono al mare vicino alla Schavonia, dove sorge un santuario dedicato sotto questo titolo alla Vergine. Lì fermati sul lido attendono che spunti l'alba, nel quale momento si tuffano in quelle acque..... Quei di Cervicati vanno a compiere un simile rito nelle acque termali di Guardia Piemontese sul versante del Tirreno, che in quel giorno credono esser miracolose". Dorsa, Op. cit. p. 55.

(11) Anche a Fuscaldo (Calabria) si giuoca l'altalena il giorno dell'Ascensione. Dorsa, Op. cit. l. c.

la giostra, quanto le regate si facevano in passato nel giorno di San Lorenzo, che è la festa titolare della Vittoriosa, dove si completarono con la resa dei Turchi gli avvenimenti del Grande Assedio nel 1565.

A questo memorabile fatto si riferisce la cerimonia che si compie il 7 del mese di settembre nella Concattedrale di San Giovanni, in Valletta, in suffragio dei cavalieri caduti, le cui spoglie si conservano nella cripta. Anticamente seguivano alla cerimonia i fuochi pirotecnici rappresentanti il forte di S. Michele con la bandiera maltese (Croce rossa e bianca) nell'atto di aprire il fuoco contro la flotta musulmana attrezzata con le vele aperte con la mezza luna sventolante in cima. Alcune galere fatte in miniatura scivolavano appena accese, su un apposito filo di ferro, dirigendosi contro il forte dove l'una dopo l'altra venivano divorate dalle fiamme. Anche questa rappresentazione pirotecnica, ispirata dagli avvenimenti locali richiama, per la messa in scena, analoghe rappresentazioni che si eseguono nella penisola italiana in determinate ricorrenze. Ricordo la galera, che si accende per la festa della Croce a Tropea, in Calabria ⁽¹²⁾, la Colombina di Orvieto, lo scoppio del carro nella Pasqua fiorentina, e via dicendo.

In ogni angolo d'Italia il nefasto ricordo dei Turchi ed i successi riportati dalla cristianità suscitarono manifestazioni di gioia, analoghe a quelle che si osservano nella strenua e gloriosa isola dei Cavalieri, che più di ogni altra terra del Mediterraneo, per la sua posizione tra l'Italia e l'Africa, a 60 miglia dalla Sicilia, fu destinata da Dio a sostenere l'urto degli Osmanli e a dimostrare la fierezza e il valore delle sue genti.

L'eco di tali manifestazioni è nelle splendide feste patronali, che sono intese a glorificare la grande epopea maltese.

(12) "Ad un certo momento ecco che appare il fuochista al balcone, sul cui verone sta fissato uno dei capi della funicella, che sorregge la colombina e con una miccia le dà il fuoco. Subito essa si parte veloce, lasciando al suo passaggio una scia di scintille. raggiunge il balcone opposto e, dopo un istante di sosta, fa ritorno al punto di partenza, mentre la galera agitata lievemente dalla brezza serotina, s'incendia". G. Chiappare, *La festa della Croce in Tropea*, "Archivio per la raccolta e lo studio delle tradiz. pop. italiane", XI, 1936, p. 34.

200 MALTESE FOLK-SONGS

Collected by Bertha Koessler-Ilg in 1909-1912 and edited,
with translation and introduction, by J. Cassar Pullicino.

INTRODUCTION

The best collection of Maltese folk-song texts is that published in Leipzig by Bertha Ilg and H. Stumme under the title *Maltesische Volkslieder* (1909). Since then no Maltese songs of any importance have been published¹. It is known from Stumme's scholarly introduction that Ilg collected the songs between 1906 and 1907, after the publication of her two volumes of Maltese folk-tales *Maltesische Märchen und Schwänke* in 1906. We read that "in November, 1907, this collector took her new manuscript with her to Leipzig, where she went over it with Hans Stumme. At that time, after cancelling about 100 not so pleasing numbers, we chose 400 numbers for printing, arranged them according to certain categories and agreed as well upon the orthography of the Maltese to be used..."².

Bertha Ilg left Malta in 1912 and her work, although frequently quoted in scholarly circles, remained largely unknown in Malta where the subject of Maltese folk-songs was generally looked down upon by the educated classes. Between 1950 and 1958 I tried, with the help of Dr. W. Schlums, of Leipzig, to trace Ilg's activities in the folklore field after 1912. In 1959 at the International Congress of Folktale Research held at Kiel and Copenhagen in August of that year, Dr. Kurt Schier, of Munchen, suggested to me that I could contact Ilg through the publisher Eugen Diederichs who had just published a volume of Indian Folktales which she had collected from among the Auracanian Indians of Argentina, where she was living³.

In the course of correspondence exchanged with Frau Bertha Koessler-Ilg, as she now signs her name, I learned that between 1909 and her departure from Malta in 1912, she had collected an appreciable number of Maltese four-line stanzas, besides the 400 songs contained in the 1909 volume. Luckily, Ilg still possessed the original Ms. of the songs in Maltese, together with the Ms of other songs, complete with German translation in Stumme's handwriting, that could not be included in the 1909 collection for lack of space. Frau Koessler-Ilg kindly sent me the Mss. and consented to my publishing the texts in Malta.

A cursory perusal of the Mss. confirmed my view that it was necessary in the first instance to find out which songs had already been published in 1909.

1. Maltese folk-songs formed the theme of two interesting essays, one by Maria Elena Calabritto entitled *Canti Popolari Maltesi* and published in "Lares" (Ott. 1930), of which a Maltese translation by G. Bonnici appeared in *Lehen il-Malti* (July, 1931), and the other by G. Aquilina entitled *Il-Ghana f'Halq il-Malti* which appeared in *Lehen il-Malti* (March-April, 1931). Eric Brockman devoted a few pages of his book *Maltese Memories* (1938) to Maltese songs, and Professor A.J. Arberry included some folk-rhymes, with English translation, in *A Maltese Anthology* (1960).
2. B. ILG und H. STUMME, *Maltesische Volkslieder im Urtext mit Deutscher Übersetzung*, (Leipzig, 1909, Introduction, p. 1). I am indebted to Mr. Konrad Hanske, of St. Julian's, for a translation of this introduction.
3. Bertha KOESSLER-ILG, *Indianermärchen aus den Kordilleren*. Düsseldorf-Köln, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1956 (Die Märchen der Weltliteratur).

For this purpose I prepared an index of first lines, alphabetically arranged, of the 400 published songs, and with the help of this Index I was able to check which songs in the manuscripts had already appeared in print. As the themes and subject matter of the songs were similar in many respects to those of the 1909 collection, I decided to classify the new material according to Stumme's classification, with the only addition of Class V (Food and Drink), and of Class W (Practical Philosophy), formerly shown as a subsection of T (Comments on Nature). Class E (Love in general) and class F (State of Love) have been fused into one Class F (Love). As a result, the 200 additional songs that are published here as a supplement to the original collection are made up as follows:—

A	(1— 10) — Music and Song.
B	(11— 19) — Feasts and Sports.
C	(20—) — Local, National.
D	(21— 36) — Profession, Position.
F	(37—125) — Love.
G	(126—128) — Wishes and Plans.
I	(129—135) — Longing.
K	(136—138) — Travel.
L	(139—152) — Suffering.
M	(153—160) — Refusal, Despair.
O	(161—165) — Consolation, Warning.
P	(166—171) — Abuse.
Q	(172—178) — Scoffing at Appearance.
S	(179—183) — Comic Situation in General.
T	(184—189) — Comments on Nature.
V	(190—197) — Food and Drink.
W	(198—200) — Practical Philosophy.

As regards the orthography of the Maltese texts it was decided to adopt the standard *Għaqda* orthography, used by the Association of Maltese Writers since 1924 and adopted by Government for official Maltese publications and for teaching in schools and public examinations since 1933. This orthography has also formed the basis of linguistic lectures on the subject since the creation of a Chair of Maltese at the Royal University of Malta, and the appointment of Professor J. Aquilina to the post in 1938. For the benefit of non-Maltese readers of this journal, the following note is reproduced from Professor Aquilina's *A Brief Survey of Maltese Semantics*, published in "ORBIS—Bulletin International de Documentation Linguistique" (Tome III, No. 1, 1954). "...readers unacquainted with modern Maltese spelling should note that of the 24 consonants of Maltese only the following call for a phonetic explanation: *ċ* is pronounced like English *ch* in 'church'; *ġ* like English *j* in 'jam'; *j* like English *y* in 'yes'; *w* like English *w* in 'war'; *x* like English *sh* in 'ship'; *ż* like English *z* in 'buzz' and *z* like English 'ts' in 'bits'; *h* is unpronounced except in the villages. When silent it serves merely to lengthen the preceding and/or following vowel; likewise *gh*, now pronounced in limited areas, only when etymologically it corresponds to the voiced 'Velar' fricative of Arabic, serves merely to lengthen and pharyngalise the preceding and/or following vowel — *ie* (an inflection of a long *a*), always stressed, is pronounced approximately

like English *ere* in 'here'. The five Maltese vowels which can be long or short according to position and of which *i* becomes semi-vowel *j* and *u* semi-vowel *w* in diphthongal combinations, with another following or preceding vowel, are pronounced roughly like the corresponding vowels of Italian".

The English translation of the songs follows as closely as possible the Maltese original. These four-line stanzas, however, lose much of their 'clinch' and effect in translation and a reader unacquainted with the Maltese mind and the local scene may well find them devoid of all meaning. However, this is inevitable in translations from any language and it is hoped that readers will find some compensation in the light which the songs throw on the working of the people's mind.

It will be noted that neither the place of origin nor the name of the singer or reciter was given by the collector of these songs. In this connection Stumme's remarks on the 400 songs published in the 1909 volume apply equally here, viz: " . . . the probable place of origin has likewise almost never been noted by the collector, neither in each instance the person who handed down the individual four-liner. Only this can be said as a general rule; that these 4-liners have seldom been recorded there and then when executed by those improvisators, but rather during tranquil singing to by persons who had been specially requested for them, and indeed mostly at La Notabile, the old capital of the main island of Malta, or at La Valletta, the present capital — there as here, in the residence and the office respectively of our esteemed Imperial German Consul, of Mr. Max Freiherrn (Baron) of Tucher-Simmelsdorf, i.e. in his gorgeous Villa Luginsland at La Notabile or in the rooms of the Imperial German Consulate at La Valletta (Strada Mercanti 167). Numerous persons of the lower classes — town or country people — carrying out orders or errands — are going in and out at the home of Mr. Baron (which has always been a real and true home to the collector since she is living in Malta); from these persons come the songs of the present collection, as well as from the "tributary ghosts" (servants?) of this milieu, and last but not least, from people in the neighbourhood of La Notabile or La Valletta because pleasure drives or walks are easily made to the neighbourhood of these towns..."⁴.

Although the above classification formed a satisfactory basis for the arrangement of the songs, the same difficulty confronting Stumme and Ilg in 1909 was encountered here, viz, a single stanza contained the characteristics of several classes, but could only be included under one class depending on the importance given to the motifs making up the stanzas. Thus, in the case of Class A (Music and Song), besides the guitar (Nos. 5, 6), the organ (No. 9), the *pastardin* (No. 6), and the violin (No. 8), under other classes we find the guitar mentioned again (No. 84), the mandoline (No. 186), and the trumpet (No. 114).

In Class B (Feasts and Sports) we find references to the Imnarja Festival on the 29th June (No. 17), *S. Marija*, i.e. the feast of the Assumption on the 15th August (No. 18), the *Gloria* on Easter Saturday (No. 13), the custom of putting up swings on Ascension Day (Nos. 14, 15), Carnival (No. 12), and the Feast of Corpus Christi (No. 16). Outside this class we find the feast of

4. B. ILG und H. STUMME, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

St. Lawrence, at Birgu, mentioned in No. 110, St. Gregory's Feast in No. 172, and the custom of giving New Year's presents (*Strina*) in No. 176. In No. 11 there is a reference to celebrations at Kalkara, on the occasion of the birth of the Emperor's (i.e. the King of England's) son.

Although only one song (No. 20), referring to Zammitello Palace in the outskirts of Mgarr, is listed under Class C (Local, National), there are many other localities mentioned in this collection. Thus Saqqajja Square at Rabat figures in No. 2, Mosta village in No. 18, the Maglio Gardens at Floriana in No. 75, Marsamxett, in Valletta, in Nos. 90, 131; Imdina, the old capital of Malta, in Nos. 111, 112; the Manderaggio — a slum area now happily obliterated from the face of Valletta, in No. 135, the Floriana Arcades in No. 193, Valletta, Vittoriosa (Birgu), and Senglea (L-Isla), in No. 180. Ġirba (No. 191), is practically the only foreign place name mentioned in the songs.

The trades and callings listed under Class D (Profession, Position), provide an interesting sidelight on the social *milieu* of these songs. We come across references to port labourers (No. 26), cartmen (No. 27), weaving (No. 28), the Army (Nos. 30, 31), pedlars (No. 33), bird hunting (No. 34), the building trade (No. 32), stone dressing (No. 29), and soil tilling (No. 29). The sea figures in references to sailors (Nos. 21 and 24), fish (No. 35), sea-urchins and limpets (No. 22), and fishing (No. 23). Of the professions, only one, that of lawyer (No. 36), is mentioned. Outside this class, the Police are mentioned in No. 181; bird hunting again in No. 140, and the rank of Sergeant Major in No. 182.

The 89 songs under Class F (Love) presented the greatest difficulty not only because the majority of the 200 songs in this collection treat the subject of love, either directly or indirectly, but also because some grouping or subdivision by topic was called for to give as far as possible some sort of logical sequence in the treatment of this theme. Starting with romantic setting (moonlight, the sea) in Nos. 37-41, we come to the first expressions of love, the sleepless nights and loss of appetite which it brings in its wake, and the material or monetary considerations that may influence one's choice, (Nos. 42-51). Nos. 52-88 praise the beauty or some other characteristic of the beloved, with special reference to the eyes (Nos. 53-59); assignations and the romance of love-making form the underlying topic of Nos. 89-112, while Nos. 113-125 are miscellaneous compositions ending up with references to the wedding ceremony.

Of particular folkloristic interest are certain motifs, however imperfectly expressed, contained in the texts, e.g. the giving of a handkerchief as a pledge (Nos. 45, 46, 105), the marriage banns (Nos. 118, 120), the old-fashioned head-gear, *ghonnella* or *faldetta* (Nos. 91, 114, 115), and the dowry (No. 123). The belief in the evil eye (No. 57), and the spells or exorcisms used to secure the affections of the beloved (No. 71), also fall in this section.

It is surprising to note that, although the songs were drawn mostly from a rural *milieu*, the range of images and motifs relating to the animal world are rather few. Doves and pigeons (Nos. 9, 39, 80, 198), rabbits (Nos. 15, 196), birds in general (Nos. 34, 184) or, specifically, the canary (No. 68), feathered game (No. 140), and the horse (No. 179), together with a few fish names (Nos. 24, 35, 108, 195) make up the sum total of references to the animal kingdom.

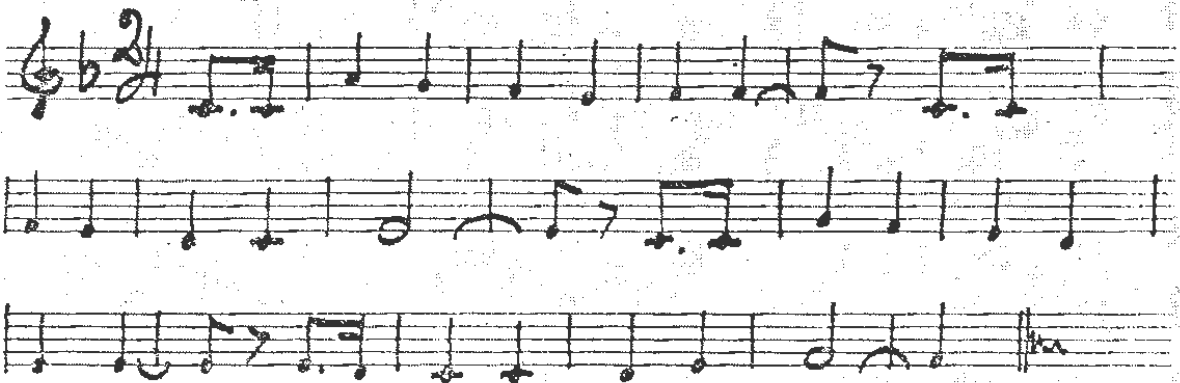
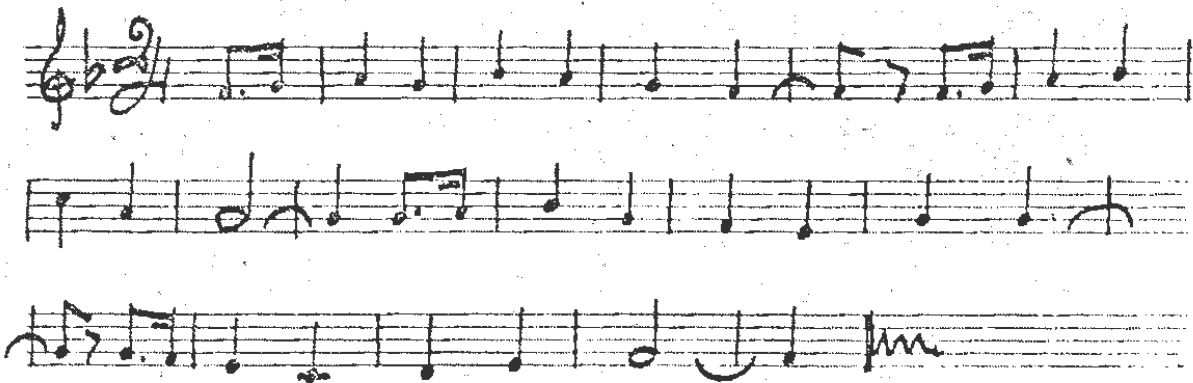
Mention has already been made of the social *milieu* illustrated by various trades and callings. Viewed after more than half a century since they were taken down by Bertha Ilg, the 200 songs that are published here provide internal evidence of various aspects of changing folk-life in Malta since 1909. Let us try to reconstruct the scene. The streets are illuminated by kerosene lamps (Nos. 3, 111), largely replaced by electricity today. Young men still serenaded their loved ones (Nos. 1, 10), passenger boats (*dghajsas*) full of sailors (No. 8), plied between ship and shore, while work at the weaving loom was a common household occupation for girls (No. 28). Fishing boats, then equipped with sails (No. 23), have now been replaced by motor driven craft. By and large, grown-ups generally were opposed to education (No. 159), and for a girl to appear bareheaded (No. 169), was an assertion of feminine emancipation in those days. The grain (M. *habba*), equivalent to 1/12 of a penny was still in common currency (No. 37). Unemployment on a large scale forced many men to enrol as soldiers (No. 31). Relations between employer and employed were strained, due to inadequate wages (No. 27). Ladies' fashion at the time required dresses to be long-bodied and short-sleeved (No. 127), while the ear-rings in vogue were shaped like a mandoline (No. 62). Military dragoons were apparently a common sight (No. 11). As regards love-making, the social code demanded that a man should not speak to a girl in public (No. 113), while shy maidens hid their faces from men's glances behind the folds of the faldetta (No. 91). In summer, village women went out for a picnic near the sea, ate blood-puddings and honeyed sweet, and drank heavily either coffee or wine (No. 19).

What about the melodies of the Maltese songs? This aspect of the subject has not been adequately studied so far. A tune, described as 'real Maltese', was printed by Stumme and Ilg in the Introduction to their work (p. 7). Three variants of the melody commonly used to accompany Maltese folk-songs are here reproduced. They have been transcribed for me by Mro. A. Muscat-Azzopardi, of Hamrun, to whom I extend my grateful thanks for his help.

Frau Bertha Koessler-Ilg deserves well of the people of Malta for her valuable contributions to the study of Maltese Folk-lore. It is significant that her active interest in folk-song collection should have provided the inspiration for much of the present day encouragement of this popular art over the local Rediffusion system and on the occasion of some folk festivals, fairs, etc. The writer of this Introduction considers it an honour to have his name associated with Ilg's and to re-evoke her name and achievement to the present generation of Maltese as well as to the world of scholarship abroad.

J. CASSAR PULLICINO.

Balzan, Malta.
2nd October, 1961.

*Ġsthanja Maltiġja**Qrendi**Qormi**Qormi*

Maltese folk-song tunes from Qrendi and Qormi.

A — MUSIC AND SONG

1.

*Hawn il-lejla ġejt ingħanni
Għax il-ghana kont nixtieq;
Biex il-vuċi insemmagħha
Għal t'apposta ġejt f'dit-triq.*

Here I've come to sing tonight
For I've been longing to sing;
In order to let her hear my voice
On purpose have I come to this street.

2.

*Stednuni biex ingħanni —
Fejn jafu li jien għannajja?
Rawni darba ma' hanini,
L-Imnarja fuq is-Saqqajja!*

They've invited me to sing —
How do they know I am a [woman]
singer?
They saw me once with my lover
On Imnarja Day at Saqqajja Square!

3.

*Hanina, jien ġejt ngħannilek
Fejn it-tieqa tal-fanal;
Taparsi xbejba misthija,
Hażina daqs ix-xitan!*

My dear, I've come to sing to you
Near the street-lamp window;
You seem to be a shy girl,
But you're as cunning as the devil!

4.

*Hanina, jien ġejt ngħannilek,
Għal t'apposta ġejt dal-hin;
Jekk int riegda qum ismagħni,
'K inti mqajma hu pjaċir!*

My dear, I've come to sing to you,
On purpose have I come at this hour;
If you're asleep, wake up and listen,
If you're awake enjoy my song!

5.

*Hanini għandu kitarra
Fiha l-isem u l-kunjom;
Qaluli li hu fraxketta —
Mieghi sibtu galantom!*

My beloved has a guitar,
It bears his name and surname;
They told me he is a rake —
But with me he behaves like a
gentleman!

6.

*Il-kitarra strument helu,
Magħha jixraq pastardin,
It-tfal li kellha ommok
Kbar u żgħar kollha helwin.*

The guitar is a fine instrument,
A pastardin¹ goes well with it;
The children born of your mother
Young and old, they are all beautiful.

7.

*Jien nigi miegħek, sinjura,
Nitolbok stenna mument;
Għax issa ma nistax nigi,
F'idejja għandi strument.*

I will come with you, my lady,
But pray, wait a minute;
For I can't come right now,
In my hands I hold an instrument
[the guitar].

8.

*Gejja dgħajsa bil-fanali,
Ohra ġejja bil-bahrin,
Dak hanini ġewwa nofshom
Bil-kitarra wil-vjolin.*

A boat is coming with lighted lamps,
Another one is coming full of sailors;
In their midst is my beloved
With a guitar and a violin.

1. A stringed musical instrument somewhat similar to a mandoline and a banjo.

9.

How I love organ-playing!?
Even more do I love the person who
 plays it!
I wish I could become a dove,
Like a pigeon I would feed him!

10.

I'll bid you good night now,
My heart goes out with it;
Tonight you've heard my voice,
I doubt whether you'll hear it again.

B — FEASTS, ETC.

11.

What a feast there is at Kalkara,
On the birth of the Emperor's son!
The soldiers are all standing by,
The dragoons are ready on the bastion.

13.

You have driven me mad,
My mind doesn't function any more,
Before I hear the ringing of the *Gloria*
I'll not buy any *figolli*.

12.

Enjoy yourself, my lad,
During the three days of Carnival,
Prepare yourself for the penance,
For after Carnival comes Lent.

14.

My mother made me a swing,
Tied to the branch of the almond tree,
What a shock I felt in my heart,
Because my darling gave me a kiss!

1. V. Busuttill (*Holiday Customs in Malta*, 6th. ed., 1922, pp. 36-37) writes that "the custom of eating and presenting *figolli*... is as prevalent in Malta at Easter as it is in any other town or country of Italy... The *figolla* consists of a bit of flat baked dough, cut in the shape of a woman, a Turk, an eagle, a horse, a star, or a basket, with one or more eggs, having the shell stained red, or some other colour, embedded in its centre and fixed in position by cross bands of paste".

D — PROFESSION, POSITION

21.

*Bastiment tal-fidda nagħmel
U ngerrih a la bahrin;
Allavolja jiena ckejken
L-armu tiegħi kemm hu kbir!*

A silver ship will I build
And will sail her in true sailor fashion;
Although I am still young
My courage is great indeed!

22.

*Tar-rizzi waqa' l-bahar,
Ta' l-imhar qabeż għalih,
Tar-rizzi tala' jigrì,
Ta' l-imhar baqa' fil-qiegh!*

The vendor of sea-urchins fell into
the sea,
The vendor of limpets jumped in to
save him,
The former came up promptly,
The latter remained at the bottom!

23.

*Dik l-ixpruna xi qlugh fethet
Li sejra mwarrba mill-blat?
Nixtieqni fil-poppa tagħha,
Nara 'l hanini jistad.*

What fine sails has that speronara
spread out
As she leaves the rocks behind?
I wish I were sitting at her poop
To watch my beloved fishing.

24.

*Miskina mart il-bahri,
La tara l-bahar titniehed;
Tissamma' l-faraġ joqrob,
Kull ma jmur aktar jitbieghed!*

Poor wife of a sailor,
When she sees the sea she sighs;
She waits hopefully for her comfort
to approach,
But all the time it's going further
away!

25.

*Qajla, qajla, int tad-dghajsa,
M'ghandniex għaġla naslu kmieni;
Il-kumpanija hawn madwarna,
'Il min thobb qalbi hawn quddiemi!*

Go slowly, boatman, slowly,
We're in no hurry to arrive early;
Good company we have here,
My sweetheart is in front of me!

26.

*Ma nistax niġi kull lejla,
Għax qieghed nahdem ix-Xatt;
Ma tistax lili tgawdini
Hlief xi darba nhar ta' Hadd.*

I can't come every night,
For I'm working at the Port;
You can't enjoy my company
Except once a week on Sunday.

27.

*Mishutin tal-karrettuni
Għax jirkbu fuq is-salib;
Jidhku bl-imghallem tagħhom,
Għax paga jaghtihom ftit!*

A curse on the horse-cart drivers
For they ride on the cart's cross-shaft;
They cheat their master
For he gives them a small pay!

28.

*Daka newlek iċ-ċekċuki,
Dak mekkukek il-ġerrej;
Int tkun ġewwa, tohroġ barra
Biex tara min hu għaddej!*

Your weaving loom makes a rattling
noise,
Your shuttle runs in and out;
When you are at home you go outside
To see who is passing by.

29.

*Zappunar jien lè ma rridu
Għax il-qmis kollha hamrija;
Irrid naġġâr il-ġebbla,
Il-qmis tindaf mingħajr lissija!*

A digger I will not have
For his shirt is full of soil;
I want a stone-dresser,
Whose shirt can be cleaned without lye.

30.

*Dik ommi għal fejn rabbietni?
Għal suldat ġewwa l-kwartier!
Għall-ghassa dejjem rieqed,
Għall-paga nersaq quddiem!*

What has mother brought me up for?
To be a soldier stationed at the
barracks!
When on guard duty I always fall
asleep,
But I am the first to go forward to
receive my pay!

31.

*Il-lum it-Tnejn m'għandniex
x'nagħmlu,
It-Tlieta nisbħu qegħdin,
Il-Belt ninkitbu suldati,
Ta' milordi għaddejjin!*

Today, Monday, we have no work
to do,
On Tuesday we find ourselves out
of work,
At Valletta we enlist as soldiers,
This is indeed a milord's life!

32.

*Kemm ili ma niġi għandek
Darek saret dar is-sinjuri;
Haġra deheb u ohra fidda,
U tal-kristall iċ-ċangaturi!*

Since my last visit to you
Your house has become a rich man's
home;
Built with gold and silver stones,
And paved with crystal slabs!

33.

*Jiena hriġt indur mal-hâra
Inbiġh l-imkatar ta' l-idejn;
Jien għadni merkanta ġdida,
Ma nistax inbiġh bid-dejn!*

I've come in this neighbourhood
To sell handkerchiefs;
I am still new as a merchant
And I can't sell on credit!

34.

*Hanini mar il-kaċċa,
Mill-kaċċa ġiebli għasfur;
Jien sajjartu, ġieni tajjeb,
Għedtlu: "Għada erga' mur!"*

My beloved went out to shoot (game)
And he brought me back a bird;
I cooked it and it tasted good,
I told him: "Tomorrow go again!"

35.

*Ghandi toqba f'nofs il-bitha,
Biha nsaqqi l-lumiċell;
Min irid xi huta friska,
Ghandi l-kahli wil-pagell.*

There's a hole in the middle of my
yard,
Through which I water the small
lemon tree;
If anyone wants a fresh fish,
I've got black-tail and rotchet.

36.

*L-ewwel tifel illi jkolli
Avukat naqla' bi xbini;
'K ikolli xi kawża l-Qorti
B'xi kelma jijsfavorini!*

The first son that is born to me,
I'll ask a lawyer to stand godfather;
If I get involved in a law-suit
He will speak in my favour
(i.e. defend me).

F — LOVE

37.

*X'dawl ta' qamar dana?
Minnu tara kruċ ta' habba!
Oħorġu, xebbiet, oħorġu,
Bħala fjur minn ta' l-imħabba!*

What a lovely moonlight!
You can see the coin's cross in it!
Come out, ye maidens, come out,
Like the flowers of love!¹

38.

*Ara x'dawl ta' qamar dana,
Kemm nara ndoqq il-vjolin!
Ix-xebbiet ta' din il-hāra
Kbar u żghar kollha helwin!*

See what a lovely moonlight,
How clearly I can see as I play the
violin!
The girls of this neighbourhood
Young and old are all beautiful!

39.

*Ara x'dawl ta' qamar dana,
U x-xbejbiet kemm jidhru ċari!
Biċċa bojod, w oħrajn ħomor,
Bħal ħamiem tal-barumbari!*

See what a lovely moonlight,
How clearly you can see the girls!
Some are white and some ruddy,
Like pigeons in the pigeon-house!

40.

*X'dawl ta' qamar tala' l-lejla!
Il-kwiekeb kemm huma ċari!
Hanini, insaqsik kelma:
Għadek thobbni bħalma dari?*

What a moonlit night this is!
How bright the stars are shining!
Darling, one thing I ask you:
Do you still love me as of yore?

41.

*O xi ġmiel ta' baħar dana
Li jbewices max-xatt ix-xatt!
Li kont taf jien kemm inħobbok
Minni ma tinfired qatt.*

Oh! what a beautiful sea this is
That hugs and kisses the shore!
If you knew how much I love you
You would never part from me.

42.

*Fejnek? Fejnek? Xejn ma rajtek,
Sa l-ħaġar staqsejt għalik!
Li kienu l-qlub jinqalghu
'Il qalbi naqla' w nagħtik.*

Where are you? I haven't seen you,
Even the stones I've asked for you;
If it were possible to pluck out one's
heart
I would pluck out mine and give it
to you.

43.

*Qalbi nqasmet tliet mitt biċċa,
L-ikbar waħda daqs ġilgliena;
Li kienet qalbek thobb lil qalbi
Daqs in-nofs li nħobbok jiena!*

My heart broke into three hundred
pieces,
The biggest piece the size of sesame
seed;
Would that your heart loved mine
Half as much as I love you!

44.

*Jiena żrajt il-qronfol roża,
U nebitli minn kull kulur;
Qatt ma missek tinsini
Għax ismi tajtek fil-maktur.*

I sowed the pink carnation,
And it grew up in various colours;
You should never have forgotten me
For I gave you my name in the
handkerchief.

1. This rhyme is a variant of the first stanza of an old Maltese song of which twelve stanzas were published under the title *Il Soldato — Frammenti di antica canzone maltese* in the first issue of *L'Amico della Patria* on the 15th March, 1840. The reference to the cross, i.e. the eight-pointed cross of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, on the coin points to the period, probably 17-18th Centuries, when the song was composed originally. The coin mentioned here, i.e. *ħabba*, is equivalent to 1/12 of a penny.

45.

*Il-maktur li tajtek jiena,
Jien tajtulek bil-langas;
Jekk tajtulek ghax inhobbok,
Jiena tieghu ma rridx hlas.*

The handkerchief that I gave you
Was full of pears;
I gave it to you because I love you,
And I don't want anything in return.

46.

*B'makturek zejzint 'il Malta,
B'erba' truf, b'erbat igfien;
Gib sikkina, istah qalbi,
Biex tara 'k inhobbok jien.*

With your handkerchief you've
embellished Malta,
Its four sides like four galleys;
Get a knife and open my heart,
To see whether I love you.

47.

*Habbejtni ghax kont inhobbok,
Habbejtni ghax kont insielek;
Xandartni mar-Rabat kollu —
Mort ghedt 'l ommok u 'l missierek!*

You loved me because I loved you,
You loved me because I allowed you
credit;
You published my name throughout
Rabat —
You've told your mother and father!

48.

*Min ihobb irid ihallas:
Jien habbejt, riedu jhallsuni;
Ma servewx il-flus tal-fidda,
Flus tad-deheb riedu jaghtuni!*

A person in love has to pay something:
I have loved but they wanted to
pay me;
The silver coins weren't enough,
So they offered to pay me in gold.

49.

*Min ihobb irid ihallas,
Ghax inkella jkollu d-dejn;
Ihobb is-sena, ihobb li gejja,
Ikollu jaghti ta' sentejn.*

A person in love has to pay something,
Or else he'll fall in debt;
He loves this year, and he loves
next year,
And he'll be two years in arrears.

50.

*Kont zghir xtrawli l-buttuni,
Issa kbirt xtrawli l-arlogg;
Minn x'hin webbluni bl-gharusa,
Lejli kollha ma norqodx!*

When I was young they bought me
some buttons,
Now I've grown up they gave me
a watch;
Ever since they urged me to find
a girl,
All the nights I do not sleep a wink.

51.

*L-aqwa gwaj li fiha d-dinja,
Meta x-xebba tibda thobb;
Tagħmel granet xejn ma tiekol,
U ljieli shah ma torqodx!*

The worst misfortune in life
Is when a girl first falls in love;
She goes without food for days
And spends whole nights without sleep!

52.

*Fejnek, goja ta' qalbi?
Lilek inhobb, lilek infahhar;
Hanina, kemm inti smajra!
Haditek l-arja tal-bahar!*

Where are you, my heart's delight?
It's you I love and you I praise;
Beloved, how brownish is your
complexion!
The sea air has affected you!

61.

*Xuxtek ghandek safranija,
Mixhuta fuq dawk spallajk,
Jekk iddur id-dinja kollha,
Jien nibqa' nigri warajk.*

Golden [lit. yellow] tresses you have
got,
Thrown over your shoulders;
If you go to the end of the world
I'll continue to run after you.

62.

*Par imsielet mandolina,
Għax hekk l-uzu ta' daż-żmien;
Min ihobb lilek, hanina,
Qalbu toħla u ssir ġnien.*

A pair of ear-rings like a mandoline,
For that's the fashion today;
The man who loves you, beloved,
His heart will sweeten and turn into
a garden.

63.

*Wiċċ ta' warda bajda,
Lewn il-ħawħa l-ħelu wiċċek;
Kull lejla norqod bi ħsiebek,
Bħal mignun inqum infittxek!*

Your face is like a white rose,
Your pretty face is of a peach colour;
Every night I sleep thinking of you,
Like a madman I wake up to look
for you!

64.

*Ajma hej kemm int sabiħa!
Kemm nixtieqni noħlom bik!
Li kont naf x'inhil imħabba
Għewwa qalbi inpingik.*

Oh! how lovely you are!
How I would like to dream of you!
If I but knew what love is
I would paint you in my heart.

65.

*Jiena ġejt inpingi ġmielek
Bil-pinzell u l-karta fina;
Jien pingejtek ġħarkobbtejja,
Gibtek fatta ta' reġina!*

I've come to paint your beauty
With a brush and paper fine;
I have painted you on my knees
And I drew you like a queen!

66.

*Li kienet qalbek tal-ġebel,
Kieku s'issa rattabthielek;
Gib idejk ġewwa jdejja,
Biex l-imħabba nurihielek.*

Were your heart as hard as stone
By now I would have softened it;
Come place your hands in mine
And I'll show you my love.

67.

*Daka fommok bies 'il fommi,
Dak fommok ma jittexid;
U trament li inti ġuvni,
Jien xebba ma nizzewwiġx!*

Your mouth has kissed mine,
Your mouth is not infected;
And so long as you're still a bachelor,
I'll remain a maiden and unmarried!

68.

*Ilsienek kanarin jġħanni
Fuq il-ħabel ta' l-inxir;
Hanina, oqġhod attenta,
Għax lili biss ghandek ilsir.*

Your tongue (sings) like a canary bird,
Singing on the washing line;
Beloved, pray be careful,
For I am your only slave.

77.

*Hanina, kemm int sabiha!
Donnok warda f'nofs ta' gnien;
Qabel habbejtini inti
Kont bil-ħsieb inhobbok jien.*

How lovely you are, my darling!
Like a rose in the middle of a garden;
Before you ever loved me
I had it in mind to love you.

78.

*Il-katina tawni nigbed,
Il-bastiment tawni nvara;
Hanina, kemm inti helwa,
Jien lilek l-isbah li nara!*

They gave me the chain to pull,
They asked me to launch the ship;
How beautiful you are, my darling,
I see no woman as lovely as you!

79.

*Il-katina tawni nigbed,
'Il ġismi x'fatta katnajtu!
Ahjar għaliġa, ġoja ta' qalbi,
'Il helu wiċċek qatt ma rajtu!*

They gave me the chain to pull,
See how I've chained my body!
Far better, joy of my heart,
Had I never seen your sweet face!

80.

*Hanini beċċun bajdani,
Kull fejn imur iżoqquhuli,
Iluwa jagħmel hafna għal żaqqu,
Għad xi darba jehduhuli!*

My beloved is a white pigeon,
Wherever he goes they feed him;
He is a great glutton,
One day they may take him away
from me!

81.

*Hobbni, hanina, hobbni,
'K ma tridx thobbni ma jimpurtax;
Ighaddi żmien u jiġi ieħor,
Tkun trid thobbni w ma tistax!*

Love me, darling, love me,
If you don't want to love me it
doesn't matter;
A time will pass, and a time will
come,
You'll want to love me, but in vain!

82.

*Kemm għandek ġesti w manjeri,
Hanina, fil-mixja tiegħek!
Li kienet thallini ommi
Għomri kollu ntemmu miegħek!*

What fine gestures and manners
you have,
Beloved, when you walk!
Were my mother to give her consent
I would spend my whole life with you!

83.

*Kemm jogħġobni daka tulek,
Iktar jogħġbuni l-ġhajnejn tiegħek;
Li kienet thallini ommi,
Għomri kollu ntemmu miegħek.*

How I like your tall figure!
Even better do I like your eyes;
Were my mother to give her consent
I would spend my whole life with you!

84.

*Hanini jdoqq il-kitterra,
X'grazzja għandi ma' idejha!
Ma jixbax min joqgħod miegħu
Ahseb jien inħares lejha!*

My sweetheart plays the guitar,
How I like to see his hands!
Those who live with him are not
weary of him,
Let alone I who only look at him!

85.

*Hanini daqqâq fil-banda,
Persuntu kemm hi ċivila!
Jidhakli kull fejn jarani,
Kemm għandu għada hażina!*

My beloved is a bandman,
What a fine figure he has!
He smiles at me wherever he sees me,
What a bad habit this is!

86.

*Dak hanini ltim minn ommu,
Hallietu ċkejken jitrabba,
Kiber u sar għawejżeb,
Beda t-trejqa ta' l-imhabba.*

My beloved is an orphan,
His mother left him quite young to be
brought up by others;
He has now grown up into a lad,
And started on the path of love.

87.

*Dak hanini smajjar bħali,
Dawk għajnejh isebbħu 'l tiegħi,
L-aqwa gwaj li fiha d-dinja
Min inhobbu ma jkunx miegħi.*

My beloved is dark like me,
His eyes make mine look beautiful,
The worst misfortune in life is
That the man I love is not with me.

88.

*Smajt tisfira f'nofs il-baħar,
U ħsibtu hanini ġej;
Kienet ferħa ta' bla temma.
Il-vapur baqa' għaddej!*

In mid-ocean I heard a whistling,
And I thought it was my beloved
coming;
But my joy was short-lived
For the ship continued on its way!

89.

*Smajt tisfira f'nofs ta' baħar,
Kien namur ta' żewġ hutiet;
Dina mhijiex haġa kbira
Li nizzewġu ahna x-xebbiet.*

In mid-ocean I heard a whistling,
It was two fishes a-courting;
It is not surprising at all
That we girls get married.

90.

*Il-malizzja tan-namrati:
Iħares lejha, ma tidħaklux,
Tgħaddas rasha go l-ghonnella¹,
Għal taparsi ma ratux!*

See how cunning these lovers are:
He looks at her but she doesn't smile
at him,
She hides her head in the faldetta,
As if she hasn't seen him!

1. *Ghonnella* or *faldetta*, which is the traditional female head-gear, is now going out of use. Sir Harry Luke (*Malta*, 1949, p. 26) describes it as "a voluminous hood of rich silk — black everywhere save in the villages of Zabbar and Żejtun, where it is blue and is called *xurqana* — stiffened inside the top edge by a piece of cardboard about a yard long, one end of which rests on the head, while the other end has to be held. Originally it was really, like the Turkish *charşaf*, a skirt or petticoat (which is what the word *ghonnella* means) thrown up over the head. Later it was curtailed, for which reason it is sometimes called *nofs ghonnella*, a half skirt; but it is still cut to show the placket-hole — in point of fact, half the placket-hole — of the garment from which it has sprung. This striking and picturesque mode of female adornment or, rather, concealment constitutes Malta's one characteristic article of dress and is the local method of shrouding a woman's face and form, a custom common to southern latitudes from as far east as India to as far west as the Azores, although the Maltese form was probably dictated by the need to cover the head when entering a church. Its one drawback is that it takes up a lot of space, more space, unfortunately, than is available in the motor-bus, which is modern Malta's form of land-transport. Let it be hoped that it will survive these disabilities..."

91.

*Krejna dgħajsa, dorna l-gzejjer
U dħalna sa ġewwa nett;
Kemm hallejna qlub miksura
Fuq is-sur ta' Marsamxett!*

We hired a boat and went round the
island,
We went inland as far as we could;
Many a broken heart we left
On the Bastion at Marsamxett!

92.

*In-namuri barra fit-trejqa,
Wis-sengelli¹ fuq il-bejt;
Avolja naf li jien sabiha,
Gvni smajjar jien habbejt!*

One makes love out in the street,
One makes signals on the roof;
Though I know I am beautiful,
A dark-skinned lad have I loved!

93.

*Dik qalbi dahlet go qalbek,
Bħala l-fula ġewwa l-miżwed;
Għandi lilek namrata ġdida,
U l-qodma ma nfittexx iżjed.*

My heart has entered into your heart,
Like a bean in its shell;
You are my new sweetheart,
And I'll not look for the old ones
any more.

94.

*Qalbi habbet ġiex namrati,
Ta' tmintax u tletin żguri,
Ta' tmintax kien gosti tiegħi,
Ta' tletin għalxejn ighiduli.*

My heart fell in love with two girls,
Whose ages were eighteen and thirty;
The 18-year old girl was my own
choice,
But I won't have the 30-year old one.

95.

*Qalbi habbet ġiex namrati,
Bejniethom dahlet il-pika;
Wieħed bukkett il-vjoli,
L-ieħor xitla ta' l-ispika!*

My heart loved two sweethearts,
Between them there grew up keen
rivalry;
One is like a bunch of violets,
The other like a lavender plant!

96.

*Sejra ntik il-bonosira,
Għall-bongornu għadu kmieni,
Tajtu kelma lil ħanini
Fejn għandu joqghod jistennieni.*

I will bid you good night,
It's too early yet to say good morning,
I've given my word to my beloved
Where he is to wait for me.

97.

*Minn dit-triq għaddejt u nġħaddi,
Għax f'dit-triq riedu jżewġuni;
Tifla tajba, bint nies tista' —
X'mankament tridu tagħtuni?*

I've passed through this street and
will do so again,
Here they wanted to see me married;
A good girl of well-to-do parents —
What fault can you find with me?

98.

*Lili għamluli l-piena
Li go das-sqaq ma nidholx;
Hemmhekk għandi n-namrata
U jkolli nidhol bil-fors.*

They've given me this punishment,
Not to enter this alley any more;
But my sweetheart lives there
And I must go there willy-nilly.

1. *Sengelli*. It is doubtful whether this word, which is unrecorded in Maltese dictionaries, has ever been in everyday use as one would conclude from its use in this rhyme. The meaning of "signals" given in the translation is indicated here, as otherwise the lines would not make sense.

99.

*Fuq il-blata gej u sejjer,
Fuq il-blata nerga' mmur;
Għax hemmhekk għandi namrata,
U xxejjirli bil-maktur!*

To the rock I come and go,
To the rock will I go again;
For my sweetheart lives there,
And she waves at me with her
handkerchief!

100.

*Jiena hriġt indur mal-hâra,
Bil-kannestru wil-mizien,
Ix-xebbiet sbieħ indejjinhom,
W' il-koroh bil-flus quddiem!*

I have wandered through the
neighbourhood,
With a basket and a pair of scales;
To the lovely girls I sell on credit
But to the ugly ones cash down!

101.

*Nilmaħ guvni f'gallarija,
Bħala ġenn hassejtu jtini;
X'hin ersaqt, bil-kemm ridt nemmen,
Li kien l-aṅġlu, kien hanini.*

I saw a young man in the balcony,
I felt I was going out of my senses;
When I came near, I could hardly
believe
That it was my angel, my beloved!

102.

*Ix-xebba harget titlob
Wara l-bieb tal-guvintur;
Tawha la kisra w lanqas habba,
Wara l-guvni halli tmur!*

The maiden went out begging
At the young men's door;
Not a slice nor a grain did they
give her,
Let her run after the lad!

103.

*Mel' fejn hu li qalbi thobbu?
Għiduli fejn hu li mar!
Jekk inhu għandkom għalija,
Minghajru ma mmurx id-dar!*

Where is he whom my heart loveth?
Tell me where he is gone!
Since you bear me a grudge,
Without him I won't go home!

104

*Żrajt il-ful nibet fażola,
Ġol-borma sarli l-kafe;
Nghidlek kelma, tghid is-sewwa,
Thobbni iva, inkella lè.*

I sowed beans and french beans shot
up instead,
The coffee is boiling in the pot;
I'll ask you something, tell me truly,
Whether you love me or not.

105

*Hanina, haġa nitolbok,
Tisliġni siegħa maktur,
Dawk in-nies ma jkunux jafu
'L ommok mā nghidilhiex żgur!*

My dear, one favour I ask you,
Lend me your handkerchief for an
hour,
People won't know anything about it,
And I surely won't tell your mother!

106.

*Kull dell li nara naħsbu dellu,
Kull ombra naħsibha tiegħu,
L-ikbar gwaj li fiha d-dinja,
Min tkun thobbu ma tkunx miegħu!*

Every shadow I mistake for his
shadow,
Every ghost I think is his,
The worst misfortune in life
Is when you can't be with the man
you love!

107.

*Kelli warda go kappelli,
Mori infittxha, ma sibthiex!
Dik Rożina bajda w hamra,
Kif triduni ma nhobbhiex!*

I had a rose in my hat.
I looked for it but didn't find it;
My Rosina has a white and ruddy
complexion,
How can I fail to love her!

108.

*Kemm ilek tistedinni,
Sa fl-ahhar tarani ġejtek;
X'behsiebek tillestili
Ta' l-imhabba li habbejtek!*

For a long time you've been
inviting me,
Here I am come at long last;
What do you have in readiness for me
In return for my love for you?

109.

*Mel' tassew li, kif ighidu,
Għajn ma tara qalb ma tuġa';
Qalbi, in-nies ighidu li jridu,
L'inti ta' qalbi mahbuba.*

Then it's true what they say,
Out of sight, out of mind¹;
Darling, let people say what they like
Once you're the beloved of my heart.

110.

*Dak hanini kemm ihobbni,
Hadni darba San Lawrenz;
Tallagħni fuq id-dgħajsa,
Biex jurini n-nies tal-Belt.*

See how much my darling loves me,
He once took me to the feast of
St. Lawrence;
He took me on a passenger boat,
To show me the people of Valletta.

111.

*Kemm hi sabiha l-Imdina,
Kollha mdawra bil-ġanali!
Kemm hija qalbek ingrata,
Kont marid ma ġejtx tarani!*

What a beautiful city Mdina is.
All provided with street-lamps!
What an ungrateful heart you have,
I was ill and you never came to see
me!

112.

*Kemm hi sabiha l-Imdina,
Kollha djar u mezzanini!
Kemm għandi raġun inhobbha
Għax go fiha trabba hanini!*

What a beautiful city Mdina is,
Full of houses and mezzanines!
I have good reason to like Imdina,
For my beloved was brought up there!

113.

*Kemm-il darba jien għedtulek,
Tkellimnix quddiem in-nies;
Għaliex in-nies jiġżawni 'l ommi,
Ommi trid tkun taf għaliex.*

Many times have I told you,
Do not speak to me in public;
For people will tell my mother,
And mother will want to know why.

114.

*Spara t-tir, daqqu t-trumbetti,
Hanini għadu ma ġiex;
Jien bdejtnibki, qbadt l-ghonnella,
Sibtu jisma' l-quddies!*

The signal has been fired and the
trumpets sounded,
My dear one hasn't come yet;
I began to cry, I wore my faldetta,
I found him in church hearing Mass!

1. Lit. When the eye doesn't see the heart does not ache.

115.

*Gib l-ghonnella w ejja mmorru,
Dik 'l ommok la tghidilhiex;
Jekk tghidlek: Binti, fejn sejra?
Ghidilha: Sejra l-quddies!*

Get your faldetta and let's go away,
But do not tell your mother;
If she asks you: "Where are you
going?"
Tell her: "I am going to hear Mass!"

116.

*Marida ma nistax niekol,
Qawwija ma nistax nibla',
Dan il-guvni qatt ma rajtu,
Kif mieghu triduni nidra!*

When I am sick I cau't eat,
When I am healthy I can't swallow;
I've never seen this young man before,
How do you expect me to get used
to him!

117.

*Meta gie l-gharus jarani
Fuq it-taraġ kont inhit;
Inkisritli l-ghajn tal-labra,
U r'gajna lura l-partit.*

When my sweetheart came to see me
I was sewing on the stairs;
The needle's eye broke —
And the match was cancelled.

118.

*Jiena kont gharus keċċewni,
Biċ-ċurkett jien kont marbut;
Mort għall-polza tat-tnedija
Hekk sibt ruhi impedut.*

I was engaged but was sent away,
I was already bound by the engage-
ment ring;
I went to get the certificate for the
banns,
I thus found myself impeded.

119.

*U il-warda, u il-qronfol,
U il-ward wil-gizimin;
Hanina, ej' naghmlu paċi,
Kemmi se ndumu miġġeldin!*

The rose and the carnation,
The roses and the jasmin buds;
Beloved, let us be friends again,
How long is our quarrel to last!

120.

*Iċ-ċurkett ta' sebghi ċ-ċkejken,
Il-fossa tieghu la turkija;
Li ma kienx imhabba ommi
Nhar il-Hadd l-ewwel tnedija!*

The ring on my little finger,
Has a turquoise jewel in it;
Were it not for my mother
Next Sunday would see the first banns
proclaimed!

121.

*Wiċċ ta' warda bajda,
Mhux għalik rabbietni ommi;
Halibha fi snieni għadu,
Il-bews tagħha stampat f'fommi!*

Your face is like a white rose,
My mother has not nursed me for you;
Her milk is still in my teeth,
Her kisses still impressed on my
mouth!

122.

*Ommi w missieri keċċewni,
Jiena qbadt il-bieb u hriġt;
Malli lwejt il-kantuniera
Sibt ix-xbejba u żżewwiġ!*

My mother and father have sent me
away,
I went out of the door and left;
As soon as I turned round the corner
I found the girl (waiting) and married
her.

123.

*Zewwigni, ommi, zewwigni,
Zewwigni fizza l-Ingliż;
Għax il-Malti jrid id-dota,
U jien dota ma għandix!*

Marry me, mother, marry me,
Marry me to an English officer;
For a Maltese will want a dowry,
And I have no dowry.

124.

*Dik ommi żewġitni żgħira,
U mill-ghada bdiet tibkini;
Għidtilha: Ma, dak ilek tafu,
Li haddiehor għandu jgawdini!*

My mother made me marry young,
And from the morrow she missed me
terribly;
I told her: "Mother, you knew for
a long time
That I would spend my life with
someone else!"

125.

*L-gharusa sejra ttejjeg,
Ifthulha l-bieb il-kbir,
Qalbha ttaqtaq sitta sitta
Sakemm tghidlu s-"Sinjor si"¹.*

The bride is leaving for her wedding,
Open the big door for her,
Her heart is beating fast
Until she says [to the priest]
"Yes, Sir".

G — WISHES AND PLANS

126.

*Mahbuba, ja mahbuba,
La tkunx kiefra mieghi,
Dalwaqt, jekk irid Alla,
Mahbuba, int tkun tieghi.*

Beloved, my beloved,
Do not treat me unkindly,
Very shortly, if it pleases God,
Beloved, you'll be mine.

127.

*Jiena libsa l-moda naghmel,
Twil il-qadd, qasira l-komma;
Li kont ghawejzeb jiena
Ma nħallix xebbiet fil-ghomma.*

I'll make me a dress of latest fashion,
Long-bodiced and short-sleeved,
Were I still a bachelor
I would not leave aggrieved girls
sorrowing.

128.

*Wiċċ ta' warda bajda w hamra,
Għidli mnejn gibitek ommok?
Li kont warda ġol-qasrija
Kull filghodu niġi nxommok.*

Your face is like a white and red rose,
Tell me, where did your mother get
you from?
Were you a rose in a flower-pot
Every morning I would come and
smell you.

I — LONGING

129.

*Sebgha mitt sena għandi,
Sa ma idi tkun f'idejk;
Issa jdejjja f'idejn iehor —
Jahasra, kemm jibku ghajnejk!*

How desperately I long
To hold your hand in mine;
Now my hand is holding another's —
Alas! many tears shall your eyes shed!

130.

*Qalbi dejjem banda wahda
Biss fil-ħsieb ta' l-ghaxxa tieghek,
W hekk nixtieq dik il-gurnata
Illi għomri ntemmu mieghek.*

My heart is always in the same place,
Always thinking of your charms,
And so I yearn for that day
When I will end my days with you.

1. In the past the bride and bridegroom used to say *Signor si* (Yes, Sir) before the priest as they were joined in wedlock. The Italian phrase has now gone out of use.

131.

*Dak hanini kwarantina,
Kwarantina Marsamxett;
Min igibli l-ahbar tieghu
Minn sebghi naghtih ċurkett.*

My darling is detained in quarantine,
In quarantine at Marsamxett¹;
Whoever brings me his news
I'll give him one of my finger rings.

132.

*Li jien kont mizzewġa bhalek,
Kont inkun kmanda ta' dari;
Inkun fil-ġid, inkun fil-hena,
Bhala fjur ta' ġewwa l-qsari!*

Were I a married woman like you,
I would rule my own house;
I would be rich and happy,
Like the flowers in the flower-pots!

133.

*Li kien il-baħar isir linka,
Is-shab ta' l-ajru karti fini,
Il-kwiekeb skrivanija tiegħi,
Jiktbuli l-ghomma ta' hanini!*

Would that the sea turned into ink,
The airy clouds into paper fine,
With the stars for my writing desk,
Noting down my beloved's sorrows!

134.

*Tlajt fuq l-oghla muntanja,
Rajt il-baħar qed imewwēġ;
X'xewka dahlet ġo qalbi
Meta smajt li ser tizzewwēġ!*

I climbed the highest mountain,
I saw the sea waves foaming;
What a thorn entered my side
When I learned you were getting
married!

135.

*Is-sigra ta' l-amarena
L-egħruq tagħha fil-Mandraġġ;
Ix-xebbiet għejjun ta' l-ilma,
Il-ġuvintur kollha bil-ġhatx.*

The hard black cherry tree
Has its roots in the Manderaggio;
The girls are like water springs,
And the boys are all athirsting.

K — TRAVEL

136.

*Hanini sejjer isiefer,
Bil-bandiera tal-partenza;
Lilu: il-vjaġġ it-tajjeb,
Lili: is-sabar wil-paċenzja!*

My dear one is going on a long
journey,
There's the departure flag signalling;
To him: a good voyage,
To me: long-suffering patience.

137.

*Doqqu, ja qniepen, doqqu,
Halli jiġu l-imsefrin;
'Il hanini għandi magħhom
Bil-buxakka tal-harir!*

Ring out, you bells, ring out,
That those who sailed away may
return;
My beloved is with them
Wearing a silk striped band.

138.

*Bastimenti ġejja w sejra
Bastimenti ma baqax,
Baq' wieħed, ta' hanini,
Ġej imghobbi bil-langas!*

The ships are coming and going,
There are no more ships left,
Except one, my beloved's,
Coming in laden with pears!

1. The Quarantine Station on Manoel Island, dating from the days of the Knights of St. John, is in Marsamxett Harbour.

L — SUFFERING

139.

*Hanini metitlu ommu,
Hallietu ckejken tarbija;
Jahasra, kemm bata għal ommu!
La thalluhx ibati għaliġa!*

My darling lost his mother,
She left him still a baby;
Alas, how much he suffered without
his mother!
Let him not suffer without me!¹

140.

*Kemm hawn kaċċa ġewwa Malta,
L-ebda wahda ma tinqabad!
Ja xbejba, xortik hażina,
Kien wasallek, raġa' harab!*

Of all the game there is in Malta,
None ever gets caught!
Young girl, you're unlucky,
Yours had almost reached you but
he flew away!

141.

*Min qatt jista' jhobbok iżjed
Jekk hux bħalma nhobbok jiena;
Jekk int tħares daqsxejn lejja,
Dak wiċċi ser iġib hniena!*

How could one love you more
Unless one loved you as much as I do;
If you will but look at me,
My face will surely move you to pity!

142.

*'Il kulhadd xbinu u xbintu,
Il-baħar għoddni xebbintu;
U mindu siefer hanini,
Wiċċi bl-ilma qatt ma ħsiltu.*

To everyone a godfather and a
godmother,
The sea has practically become
my godfather;
Since my beloved sailed away
I've never washed my face with water²

143.

*Ajma qalbi kemm hi sewda,
Donnha ġejja l-mewt għaliġa;
Ġej il-ferħ u ġej il-hena,
Permezz tagħha l-gharusija!*

Oh! my heart is so sorrowful,
As if Death were coming for me;
But joy and happiness are coming
As a result of her engagement!

144.

*Ajma qalbi kemm hi sewda,
Donnha ġejja li tohodni;
U x'ha nwegħdha u x'nagħtiha?
Qalbi tiehu 'l min jobghodni!*

Oh! my heart is so sorrowful,
As if (Death) were coming to take
me away;
What shall I promise to give her?
To carry my heart to him who hates
me!

1. The sporadic use of *għal* in the sense of "without" is still found in some villages in Gozo. The more common meaning "for" or "against" does not fit with the context here, especially in the third line where "he suffered for his mother" would be meaningless, as 'the mother' had died when he was still a baby.

2. The idea here seems to be that the girl in her sorrow washed her face with tears.

145.

*Hanina, la thobbx quddiemi,
Nitolbok tistenna ftit;
Jien ġuvni, hajti qasira —
Int xebba hobb 'il min trid!*

My dear, do not make love in my
presence,
Pray, wait a little;
I'm a bachelor, my life is short —
You're a maiden, love whom you will!

146.

*Ajma żaqqi kemm tuġaghni
Għax kilt l-gheneb mhux misjur;
Ixxabbatt mal-kannizzata
Bħala kelb ta' kaċċatur!*

Oh! how my tummy aches
For I have eaten sour grapes;
I hang to the vine trellis
Like a sportsman's dog.

148.

*F'ġieh l-imħabba li ħabbejtek,
Jien nitolbok li ssabbarni,
Ftakar, ġoja, l'inti tiegħi,
U tkomplix iżjed taħqarni.*

For the love I bore you,
I pray you, comfort me,
Remember, sweetheart, you are mine,
And torment me no more.

149.

*Wiċċ ta' hena ta' l-imħabba,
F'ġieh il-pwieni ftakar fija;
F'ġieh l-imħabba illi nħobbok
Thallinix f'din it-tbatija.*

Your face is happy with love,
For sorrow's sake remember me;
For the sake of the love I bear you
Let me not suffer any longer.

150.

*Ara jien kemm kelli nsofri,
Ġuvni ħabbejt mar u ħallieni;
Biex ninkih jien x'ma nagħmilx
Basta nbikkih daqs kemm bikkieni!*

See how much I had to suffer,
I loved a young man who deserted me;
What shall I leave undone to spite
him,
To make him weep as much as he
made me weep!

151.

*Jien kemm għandi qalbi sewda,
Aktor ġej x'isewwidhieli;
L-ewwel kelli min iħobbni,
W' issa kif mar u ħallieni!*

What a sorrowful heart I have!
More sorrow is yet to come;
First I had someone to love me,
But now he's gone and left me!

152.

*Bonosira, bonosira,
Bonosira sejra mmur;
Sejra mmur qalbi miksura,
Dawk għajnejja mimlijin dmugh.*

Good night, and good night,
Good night, I am going away;
I go away broken hearted,
With my eyes full of tears.

M — REFUSAL, DESPAIR

153.

*Kemm ili ma niġi għandek,
Sa l-bitha hawwiltha dwieli;
Żewwiġha 'l bintek, żewwiġha,
Kont irridha raġa' bdieli!*

Since I last came to see you,
You've planted vines even in your
yard;
Marry your daughter, get her married,
I wanted her once, but I've changed
my mind!

154.

*X'int qieghda fil-gallarija?
X'inti paxxuta fil-frisk?
Għalxejn toqghod thares lejja
Għaliex jiena ma rridikx!*

Why are you up there in the balcony?
Why are you so comfortable enjoying
the breeze?
In vain you keep looking at me
Because I do not want you!

155.

*Sparawli ghala qalbi
Bil-kanal tal-qasab ahdar,
M'ghandekx ghax tigri wrajja,
Ghax imhabba ma nhobbokx aktar.*

They've shot at my heart
With a piece of green reed;
You need not run after me,
For I don't love you any more.

156.

*Xejn la tahseb l'jien inhobbok
Ghax tarani nhares lejki;
Seba' mitt sena jkolli
Biex niskarta fis minn hdejk.*

Think not that I love you
If you see me gazing upon you;
For I'll be on tenterhooks
To run away from you forthwith.

157.

*Ragel armel le ma rridu
Langas jekk narah jiggarraf;
Niehdu guvni minn dar ommu,
L-imhabba ta' hadd ma garrab.*

I will not marry a widower
Not even if I saw him going to ruin;
I'll marry a lad from his mother's
house,
Who has not experienced another's
love.

158.

*Jien grali bhall-Iben Prodgu,
U kull fejn mort keccewni;
Hadd ma dahhalni f'daru,
Go dar missieri bkewni!*

I am like the Prodigal Son,
Wherever I went they turned me away;
Nobody took me into his house,
In my father's house they wept for me.

159.

*Hanini baghtu l-iskola,
L-iskola ma jridx imur,
Is-surmastru jghajjat mieghu —
Ghal daqshekk ghandu ragun!*

They sent my beloved to school,
But he refuses to go,
For the teacher scolds him —
Therefore he's quite right (not to go).

160.

*Issa bdewlek ir-rigali
Tal-gidra u l-qara' twil;
Gej, hanina, naghmlu paci,
Kemmi se ndumu miggeldin!*

Now you've started to receive the
presents
Presents of turnips and long marrow;
I come, dear, to make friends again,
How long is our quarrel to last!

161.

*Nara wiçcek ninsa d-dinja,
Nara 'l ommok ma mort qatt;
Naghmel rasi taht mannara,
Jekk narak f'idejn xi hadd!*

When I see your face I forget the
whole world,
I've never been to see your mother;
I'll lay my head beneath an axe
If I see you in another's arms!

162.

*Kemm-il darba jien ghedthulek:
Minn hanini tintrigax!
Ghax hanini ghandu lili,
Ihobbok darba u ma jargax.*

Many times have I told you:
Leave my beloved alone.
For my beloved is bound to me,
He'll love you once and no more.

O — CONSOLATION, WARNING

163.

*Bid-dghajsa ma tmurx il-Ġenna,
U lanqas bil-karrozzin;
La nilwu dil-kantuniera
Kemm naraw xebbiet helwin!*

You'll not go to Heaven by boat.
Nor will you go by cab;
As soon as we turn round this corner
What lovely girls we'll see!

164.

*Hudu, hudu, 'il-abbati,
Inti mieghu ma tbatix!
Jaqla' xemgha jaghtik nofsha,
Jaqla' rbieghi jtik karlin.*

Take him, take the altar boy,
You won't have a hard time with him;
If he earns a candle he'll give you
half of it,
If he earns a *tari* he'll give you a coin
of ten grains¹.

165.

*Isma', hanina, x'gejt inghidlek,
Ara x'ittra gejt naqralek;
Tibza' xejn 'k inti fil-ghomma,
Għax fil-ghomma jiena bħalek!*

Listen, darling, to what I've come
to tell you,
See what a letter I'll read to you;
Fear not if you're in trouble,
For in trouble I am like you.

P — ABUSE

166.

*Ikser dghajstek, itfi fanalek,
Imhabba tieghek ma baqax;
Girieni kollha qaluli
Li minnek ma nintrigax.*

Turn your boat, put out your lamp,
I've had enough of your love;
All my neighbours warned me
Not to have anything to do with you.

167.

*Kulhadd mistaghgeb kemm hawn
toroq;
Jiena minnhom kemm għaddejt!
Għadekx tiftakar, hanina,
Meta s-soppa lilek sgejt!*

Everyone is surprised at the number
of streets;
Oft have I passed through them!
Do you still remember, my dear,
When I gave you soup to drink?

168.

*Mort il-baħar, ma qbadtx ħuta,
Mort ix-Xatt, qbadt il-pagelli;
Iftakar, hanina, ftakar,
Meta tajtek iċ-ċappetti.*

I went fishing but didn't catch any
fish,
I went to the Wharf and caught
some rotchets,
Remember, beloved, remember
When I gave you the bracelets.

169.

*Kemmi ilek l'armajt l-imsielet
Dejjem xuxa bla maktur;
Inti toqghod fuq l-ghetiebi
Biex jarawk il-ġuvintur.*

Since you've put on your ear-rings
You always go bareheaded, without
a handkerchief;
You sit down on the doorsteps
To be seen by the young men.

170.

*Jien kafè ma nihux iżjed,
Kissirt il-kikkri u l-plattini;
Jekk iddur dawra ma' dwarek,
Għandek biex timbarka xini!*

No more coffee will I drink,
I've broken all the cups and saucers;
If you have a good look around you
You'll find enough (broken pieces)
to fill a galley!

1. 1 *rbieghi* or *tari*=1½d; 1 *karlin*=10 farthings.

S — COMIC SITUATION IN GENERAL

179.

*M'hemmx għalih iż-żwejmle tagħna,
Iċ-ċiċri ma jikolhiex;
Fin-niżla kemm jinżel jigrì,
It-telgħa ma jitlagħhiex.*

Well done, our little horse,
He doesn't eat chickpeas;
Down hill he runs fast,
But is unable to go uphill.

180.

*Bejn il-Belt, il-Birgu u l-Isla,
Sibt sikkina mingħajr manku,
Ix-xebbiet kollha jhobbuni,
Kif triduni nsir kanonku?*

Between Valletta, Birgu and Senglea
I found a knife without a hilt;
All the girls make love to me;
How do you expect me to become
a canon?

181.

*Pulizija ġera wrajja,
Għal daqsxejn ma lahaqnix;
Li lahaqni x'kien jagħmilli?
Kalzrata ma jdahħalnix!*

A policeman ran after me,
He nearly overtook me;
Had he overtaken me, what would
he have done to me?
He wouldn't have sent me to prison!

182.

*Miskina Ċenċolina,
X'għamlilha s-surgent maġġur!
Dawwarha l-kwartier kollu,
Bis-suffara u t-tambur!*

Poor Ċenċolina,
What has the Sergeant Major done
to her!
He made her go round the whole
barracks,
With a whistle and a drum!

183.

*Žigli manda žigli mani,
Għandi tifla tittantani,
Jekk tmutli nehles minnha,
'K inżewwiġha tirvinani!*

Žigli manda žigli mani!¹
I've got a daughter who annoys me;
If she will die I'll be well rid of her,
If I let her get married she'll ruin me!

T — COMMENTS ON NATURE

184.

*Il-ghasfur idur mal-ġonna,
Kemm iħobbha dik il-ħdura!
Saqaġh tal-qasab helwa,
Il-lsien tal-konfettura!*

The bird goes round the gardens,
How he loves that greenery!
His feet are like sugar canes,
His tongue like candied peel.

185.

*Fost ix-xhur tas-sena kollha,
Daka Mejju l-isbah xahar,
Għax il-ward jibda jikkrixxi,
U l-laring johroġ iż-ż'har.*

Of all the months of the year,
May is the most beautiful,
For the roses begin to grow bigger,
And oranges to put out their blossoms.

186.

*Dik laringa Purtigalla,
Qaxxarhieli w tini felli!
Il-mandulina ta' ħanini
Kollha ċoffi w żagarelli!*

That's a Portuguese orange,
Peel it and give me a slice
My dear one's mandoline
Is full of bows and ribbons.

1. A meaningless line included in the rhyme for sound effect.

187.

*X'lejla din, kemm hi sabiha,
Il-qamar kwinta tant sabih;
Dak l-ajru bil-kwiekeb mimli,
X'dija hierga minn go fih!*

What a beautiful night this is,
The full moon is so beautiful!
The air is full of stars,
What radiance is coming out of it!

188.

*Ghandi sigra f'nofs il-baħar,
L-egħruq tagħha ġiżirani;
Ma jservix id-dawl ta' qamar,
Gejja dgħajsa bil-fanali.*

In mid-ocean I have a tree.
With necklaces for its roots;
The light of the moon is not enough.
A hoat is coming with lighted lamps.

189.

*Harist harsa lejn is-sema,
Rajt il-bandieri tal-harir;
Għeditilha: Ma, ixtirili wahda,
Qaltli: Binti, dawk għaljin!*

I looked up at the sky,
I saw the silk flags,
I told her: "Mother, buy me one",
She answered "My child, they are
too dear".

V — FOOD AND DRINK

190.

*Dak il-bajtar lè ma nieklu,
Narah iswed ibażżaghni,
Berquqa ta' Mejju niekol,
Mill-ewwel wahda xxabbaghni.*

I will not eat these figs,
Their black colour frightens me;
A May apricot I'll eat
The first one will be enough for me.

191

*Issa beda l-ful ta' Ġirba,
Għal min għandu snien kbar:
Min irid jiġġieled magħna
Bil-kumbatti u s-sarar?*

Now's the time for Gerba beans.
For those who have strong teeth;
Who wants to fight us
With fisticuffs and wrestling?

192

*Regalawni torta helwa,
Lè-cirku tagħha pannella;
Sur Padre, int żommli fidi,
Għax taqaghli il-ghonnella.*

They gave me a sweet tart for a
present,
Its outer ring covered with tinsel;
Reverend Sir, hold my hand.
For my faldetta will fall off.

193

*Biċċa torta marmorata,
Ġewwa l-ilma tal-fontana;
Dak ħanini fejn ipogġi?
Taht il-logog tal-Furjana!*

A slice of chocolate almond tart
In the winter of the spring;
Where does my darling live?
Under the Arcades at Floriana!

194

*Ommi tatni kisra,
Missieri tani bukkun;
Ommi wiċċ ta' warda,
Missieri wiċċ ta' blanzun!*

My mother gave me a slice of bread,
My father gave me a mouthful;
My mother's face is like a rose,
My father's face is like a rose-bud

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195

*Kemm huwa frisk il-lampuki!
Katarin, kebbes in-nar;
Int istah il-bieb tal-kċina.
Halli johrog id-duhhan.*

How fresh are the coryphenes!
Catherine, light the fire;
Open the kitchen door
So that the smoke may go out.

196

*Hemm il-ġenek u l-patata.
Hemm it-torti u l-inbid;
Int, ħanina, kul u ixrob,
Halli kulhadd jgħid x'irid!*

There's the rabbit and there are
potatoes,
There are tarts and there's wine;
My dear, eat and drink
And let everyone say what he likes.

197

*Meta rajt dal-ikel kollu,
Nghid is-sewwa: hadt ir-ruh!
Meta kont xebba għand onimi,
Ma kellix hliet għaks u ġuħ!*

When I saw all this food
I confess I took courage;
For as a girl in my mother's home
I had nothing but misery and hunger.

198

*Dik is-sigra tinza' u tilbes,
Il-bniedem jaqa' u jqum;
Il-haga mill-lewn id-dinja:
Il-hamiema zzoqq il-beccun.*

That tree sheds and puts on its leaves,
Man falls and gets up again;
It's only natural
That the dove should feed the pigeon.

199

*U hekk id-dinja sejra:
Is-sbejha tmur mas-sbejjah;
L-ikreh jista' jindifen,
Ix-xwejha tbus lix-xwejjah.*

Thus the world goes on:
The lovely girl matches the handsome
man,
The ugly one may bury himself,
The old woman kisses the old man.

200

*Iblah nin itemm fit-tama,
It-tama tqarraq bih;
Bhalli jimla r-rih fil-bomblu,
U jrid isiejer bih¹.*

He's a fool who hopes against hope,
For hope plays him false;
Like one who collects wind in a pitcher
And wants to sail away with it.

1. An older version of this rhyme appeared in Chev. St. Priest's *Malte par un Voyageur Français* (1791).

LAW AND LAWYERS IN MALTESE PROVERBS

By Prof. J. AQUILINA

People everywhere have a poor idea of human justice and, naturally, distrust advocates and the Law Courts. This distrust of human justice is more pronounced among the illiterate and semi-illiterate communities who have to rely on the counsel or expensive patronage of better off people, especially lawyers. This distrust of human justice and the Law Courts is pithily expressed in the sayings *Il-ligi saret għall-banavolja or brikkun* (prov. 26); *'k tidhol il-Qorti int tiekol sardina u l-avukat jiekol gallina* (prov. 47), and *ahjar tiswija hażina minn sentenza tajba* (prov. 51). Of the 55 M. proverbs included in this section, which is taken from my unpublished work *A Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs*, not one extols the virtue of the Law or the majesty of Justice. The people's mind is more full of the fear of injustice than of confidence in justice; is more sensitive to the relativity and unreliability of human judgement than to the majesty of the Law as an expression of the Roman legal maxim *suum cuique dare*.

The distrust of the human laws and the Law Courts and of lawyers in particular is universal as one could easily establish from a comparative study of proverbs on this subject in different languages. Such distrust is so well-founded that it was also expressed by no less a person than St. Francis de Sales himself who, in one of his letters to Persons in Religion, wrote: "To go to law and not be out of one's mind is scarcely granted to the saints". The same distrust of lawyers is expressed by Langland (1325-1400) in the following lines:—

Ye who plead for the poor, and take money at their hands,
Ye lawyers, ye advocates, be sure of this:
When ye draw near to death, and pray for pardon,
Your pardon at your parting hence will be but small.
Saint Matthew bids me tell you this, and if I lie, blame him.

One additional cause of such widespread distrust in the case of Malta, though there is no proverb which refers to it, is the fact that up to 1934 Italian and not the people's language was the official language of the Law Courts. This in practice meant that the illiterate and the semi-illiterate plaintiff and defendant who had to have recourse to the Law Courts to get a just settlement of their real or imaginary rights developed an instinctive distrust of lawyers as a shrewd and tricky jargon-speaking class when these conducted their cases in a language they did not understand. As a matter of fact, a demand for the adoption of Maltese as the language of the Law Courts of Malta came from local popular movements and was very strongly opposed by a large majority of the lawyers. But, of course, the greater fear of Law and lawyers is due to the fact that to poor men everywhere justice is expensive and lawsuits long drawn out.

The major codes of the Laws of Malta are, like the Laws of Italy and France, originally based on Roman Law modified in parts by Canon Law and customs, while Criminal Procedure is largely influenced by British Law.

The legal vocabulary is inevitably of Romance, that is of Sicilian or Italian origin, such being words like *qorti* 'law courts', *avukat*, 'advocate' *magistrat* 'magistrate' etc., the two exceptions being *imhallef* 'judge', and *haqq* 'right' as in *kulhadd jiehli li haqqu* 'everyone gets what he deserves', but Maltese *haqq* indicates a moral and not a legal right, the Maltese word for the latter being *dritt* from Italian *diritto*.

Though the morphology of the language and the basic vocabulary are Semitic, the legal vocabulary shows no influence of Arabic legal origin. The only Maltese word for law is *ligi*, from Italian *legge*, completely unknown being the Ar. *hukm* (pl. *'ahka:m*) and the other words connected with the enactments of Divine Law which betray the overlapping nature of Moslem Law at once religious and civil like Roman law, such being words like *sunna*, *ṣarf*, *farā*, *qa:fida*, *na:mu:s*, *qa:nu:n*¹, *dastu:r*, *ṣada:la*, and *'insa:f*. Similarly unarabic are the Maltese words for lawful, lawfully, lawfulness, legal, legality, legalise, legally, lawgiver, lawmaker, lawsuit and lawyer. The Maltese word *xieraq*, from Ar. *ṣarf* 'to establish the law' in Maltese has no legal connotation, and means simply 'to be suitable or fit', the equivalent of Latin *decet*.

The proverbs which I have included in this article under section B are accompanied with similar and corresponding or similar proverbs in other languages. Strictly speaking, they are not technically juridical proverbs like the Eng. proverb, "He that bulls the cow must keep the calf" or It. *Ceuzi e muntuni*/*Menzi o massaru e menzi o patruni*, or Lat. legal maxims "The act of God does wrong to none; Hear the other side: The law does not concern itself about trifles".

Juridical proverbs have not been considered so far as part of the people's folklore. Prof. Raffaele Corso in his essay *Lo Studio Dei Proverbi Giuridici Italiani* published in his book *Studi di Tradizioni Popolari* (1956), writes: "Comunque, i proverbi giuridici non sono stati nè raccolti, nè curati dai folkloristi; e basta sfogliare qualcuna delle innumerevoli collezioni di proverbi, che le diverse regioni possiedono per rilevare che non esiste una rubrica per il diritto, o è rara. Recentemente, l'americano Archer Taylor ha rimediato alla lacuna, trovando un posto, nel suo libro sui Proverbi, per gli 'adagi legali' di cui ha illustrato esempi interessanti, richiamando su di essi l'attenzione degli studiosi".

Of the proverbs which Prof. Corso gives in his study there is one, again hardly a juridical proverb, which agrees with a similar proverb in Maltese. This is the saying: "*Bisogna fari testamentu e dunazioni/Quannu si mangia sasizzi e maccarruni*". The Maltese say, "*It-testment aghmlu meta tkun ghadek tislaf tiekol l-imqarrun*", 'make your will when you can still eat macaroni'. To understand the historical origin of the Italian saying which seems to be the original source of the Maltese one, according to Professor Corso, "*dobbiamo richiamare alla mente un'antica consuetudine, che prescriveva che il testatore, prima di disporre dei suoi beni, passasse a cavallo, armato di scudo e di lancia, un corso d'acqua. In tale maniera, presso i Germani, egli indicava la sua sanità fisica e morale, prima di spogliarsi degli*

(1) A.E. Caruana in his *Vocabolario Della Lingua Maltese* (Malta 1903), explains disused 'qanun' *regola, norma, imposizione fissa e regolare; volg. ciò che si paga annualmente per il godimento di uno stabile, l'enfiteusi d'un fondo. Hallas il-qanun tar-raba', pagò il canone del campo.*

averi. La giurisprudenza popolare siciliana, invece della bardatura di guerra, ricava il concetto della sanità da un abbondante pasto di salsiccie e di maccheroni" (ibid.).

A comparative study of Maltese paremiology dealing with Law and Lawyers, Justice and Injustice provides the basis of comparative folk-sociology based on what one might describe as the univalence of human experience affected by two quasi-dichotomic complexes — a sense of justice on the one hand, and a sense of injustice on the other hand, one at conflict with the other. Hence the recurrence of these two themes has its verbal by-products in proverbs and sayings which are corresponding or similar, the equivalence being either verbal as in the case of loan-translations (Cf. M. prov. no. 16) or one of mere feeling or reaction expressed through different imagery. Such are sayings and proverbs which convey the same idea or motif by means of different imagery born in different places of similar circumstances, each with its own distinct, social and cultural climate.

Using *M* for Motif and *F* for Form, that is for the verbal arrangement and use of imagery, these and other proverbs fall either under

Formula No. 1: M+F (these being proverbs which agree in motif and form presumably original in one language and loan-translations in one or more other languages, these loan-translations being (i) *strictly literal* or (ii) *freely literal*, the original source being ascertainable in both cases by historical and/or linguistic criteria; or under

Formula No. 2: M-F (these being proverbs inspired by the same feeling but using different imagery — more likely native products).

The following examples are taken from Section B illustrating Formula No. 1.

(i) *Strictly Literal Translations:*

- (1) M. prov. 2 — Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, English, German.
- (2) M. prov. 9 — Sicilian.
- (3) M. prov. 15 — Italian.
- (4) M. prov. 16 — Arabic, Italian, Sicilian, Sardinian, Albanian, German.
- (5) M. prov. 17 — Arabic.
- (6) M. prov. 21 — Latin, German.
- (7) M. prov. 22 — Arabic, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, German, English.
- (8) M. prov. 26 — Latin, Italian.
- (9) M. prov. 28 — Turkish (first part only).
- (10) M. prov. 37 — Latvian.
- (11) M. prov. 41 — Italian.
- (12) M. prov. 51 — Italian, French, Spanish (Latin, Italian, English and German) which seem to be the original replace *hazin* [bad] with 'lean' and *tajjeb* [good] with 'fat'.
- (13) M. prov. 52 — Sicilian.

(ii) *Freely Literal Translations*

- (1) M. prov. 9 — English, Swedish.
- (2) M. prov. 17 — Sicilian.
- (3) M. prov. 49 — Latin, Italian.

- (4) M. prov. 51 — Latin, Italian, English, German (Cp. M. prov. 51 under (i) above).

The following are examples illustrating Formula No. 2. Maltese examples being from Section B, and those non-Maltese from Section A.

- (1) Chinese 2 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 44, 45.
4 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 27, 28, 31.
- (2) Czech. 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.
2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24.
3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25.
4 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 27, 28, 31 (for further cross-reference cp. Chinese 4, above).
- (3) English 1 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 44, 45.
- (4) French 2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51 (cf. German 3 below).
4 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cf. German 2 below).
- (5) German 2 & 3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cf. French 4 above).
5 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51 (cf. French 2 above and Rumanian 3 below).
6 = Cp. M. prov. No. 25.
9 = Cp. M. prov. no. 52.
- (6) Greek 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25 (cf. Czech 3 and German 6 both above, Hungarian 1 and Persian 7 below).
- (7) Hungarian 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25 (cp. Greek 6 above).
- (8) Italian 2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cp. Czech. 2, French 4, and Persian 6).
- (9) Kashmiri; 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.
- (10) Persian 2 & 4 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.
6 = Cp. M. prov. 24 (cf. Italian 2).
7 = Cp. M. prov. 25 (cf. Hungarian 1, Greece 1, Czech 3, German 6).
8 = Cp. M. prov. no. 1 (cf. Polish 1 below and Spanish 6 below).
- (11) Polish 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 1 (cp. Persian 8 above).
- (12) Rumanian 3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51.
- (13) Spanish 6 = Cp. M. prov. 1 (cf. Polish 1 and Persian 8 above).
- (14) Welsh 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 28.

SECTION A

The following list of proverbs and sayings from different countries taken from S.G. Champion's book *Racial Proverbs* (1950) provides the basis for a comparative study of common motifs in international paremiology:

CHINESE: (1) Law makers — Law breakers; (2) A piece of paper blown by the wind into the law-court may in the end only be drawn out again by two oxen; (3) Win your law-suit and lose your money, [the Maltese say: *Min jidhol il-Qorti dejjem tellief*, 'he that goes to Court is always a loser']; (4) It doesn't matter whether you are right or not, if you have no money you are wrong.

CHUANA (Bantu): Forensic arguments are all acceptable.

CZECH: (1) One often goes to the judge in the right and comes away in the wrong; (2) The law has a nose of wax; (3) The law is like a cobweb:

a beetle breaks through, but a fly is caught; (4) A pocketful of right needs a pocketful of gold.

DANISH: (1) Where law lacks, honour should eke it out; (2) With law must the land be built; (3) One goes to law with one case and returns home with two.

DUTCH: (1) A lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit; (2) 'Mine' and 'thine' is the source of all lawsuits; (3) The better lawyer, the worse Christian.

ENGLISH: (1) Kick an attorney downstairs and he'll stick to you for life; (2) A friend in the court is as good as a penny in the purse. [This corresponds to M. proverb which replaces 'court' with 'market' (*suq*)] (3) It is at courts as it is in ponds, some fish, some frogs; (4) Law cannot persuade where it cannot punish; (5) A penny-weight of love is worth a pound of law; (6) The mill stands that wants water (said of lawyers who work only for payment); (7) A man who keeps a wife is like a man who keeps a monkey, he is responsible for her mischief (*legal proverb*); (8) He that bulls the cow must keep the calf, i.e. illegitimate child (*legal proverb*, dating from Henry IVth's time).

ESTONIAN: (1) Law is three days older than the world; (2) The law on the table, justice under the table; (3) A lawyer's ink writes nothing until you have thrown silver into it.

FINNISH: (1) The law is as it is read (i.e. it is read in nine ways and always right). [The Maltese say: *Il-liġi kulhadd jifhimha kif irid*, 'everybody understands the law as he wants to (as it suits him)'].

FRENCH: (1) If you have a good case, try to compromise, if a bad one, take it into court; (2) Who goes to law should have three bags, one of papers, one of money and one of patience; (3) Nothing is so damaging to laws as their numbers; (4) Laws have wax noses; (5) A good lawyer is a bad neighbour; (6) One may steal nothing save a lawyer's purse; (7) Liberty is the right to do whatever the law permits.

GERMAN: (1) Two words to a bargain (*legal proverb*); (2) Justice has a waxen nose; (3) He that goes to law for a sheep loses his cow; (4) The law has a nose of wax, one may turn it as one pleases; (5) Law separates, compromise conciliates; (6) Laws are like spiders' webs, bumble-bees fly through them but flies are caught; (7) A lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit; (8) Who will win in a lawsuit must have three sacks: one with briefs, one with gold, and one with luck; (9) A lawyer and a cart-wheel must be well greased; (10) Lawyers are bad Christians; (11) One must not knock on the lawyer's door with an iron hammer; (12) The lawyers purge the purse, the doctors the stomach, the parsons the soul; (13) Ambition and the belly are the two worst law-givers.

GREEK: (1) Laws are like cobwebs, the small flies are caught and the great ones break through; (2) A lawsuit does not accept an excuse, nor does friendship.

HEBREW: Make a fence round the law.

HINDI: A meagre agreement is better than a fat lawsuit.

HUNGARIAN: (1) Law is a spider's web; big flies break through but the little ones are caught; (2) The law moves on golden wheels.

IRISH: (1) If you go to the court, leave your soul at home; (2) A good denial — the best point in law (*Farney*); (3) Neither break a law nor make one.

ITALIAN: (1) Better a lean agreement than a fat judgement (lawsuit); (2) Justice is made like the nose which goes whichever way to will it; (3) A lawsuit is a fair tree in a lawyer's garden, that takes root and never dies; (4) The robes of lawyers are lined with the obstinacy of suitors.

KASHMIRI: (1) For quarrelling, a heap of money, plenty of friends, and abundance of food are required (i.e. money to bribe and pay court fees, friends to swear falsely and to back you up, and food to nourish and strengthen in these troublous times).

LATIN: *Jurists' law maxims* (1) Things adjudicated are considered true; (2) Concealment is one thing, silence is another; (3) The act of God does wrong to none; (4) Hear the other side; (5) Consent makes law; (6) The law does not concern itself about trifles; (7) Where the law is uncertain there is no law; (8) When the reason for the law no longer exists, the law ceases to exist; (9) Bad custom makes good law; (10) Good laws spring from bad morals; (11) Rights are forfeited by disuse.

[N.B. — Latin proverbs, or more correctly 'maxims', reflect more the mind of the jurist than the reaction of the ordinary people to the laws of Rome]

MALAGASY: Love and law lose money.

MONTENEGRIN: Better a meagre settlement than full justice in the court.

NEGRO: (1) First word, go to law (Creole); (2) Good lawyer, bad neighbour (Jamaican); (3) Lawyer look upon nigger with one eye, but he look upon his pocket with two (Jamaican); (4) Lawyer-house built upon fool head (Jamaican).

NORWEGIAN: "Virtue in the middle", said the devil as he sat between two lawyers.

NZIMA: Those who do not honour the law praise those who break it.

POLISH: (1) A good advocate is a bad neighbour; (2) He who goes to law over a hen will have to be content with an egg.

ROUMANIAN: (1) Justice is as the rulers make it; (2) The man who goes to law often loses an ox to win a cat; (3) Thieves increase with the making of new laws.

RUSSIAN: (1) Set foot into court and your hand goes into your pocket; (2) The court is straight but the judge is crooked; (3) Harsh law creates guilt; (4) Law is a flag, and gold is the wind that makes it wave; (5) The law is like the shaft of a carriage — you can turn it wherever you please; (6) Laws are spiders' webs; hornets pass through them, but flies are caught; (7) God wanted to chastise mankind so He sent lawyers; (8) A woman is no witness against her husband; (9) Fear not the law, but the judge.

SARDINIAN: When two are in a lawsuit, one remains in his shirt and the other naked. (cf. Serbian).

SCOTTISH: (1) Show me the man and I'll show you the law (i.e. to show the want of impartiality in Scotch judges at that time; (2) Abundance of law breaks no law (i.e. those who know the law best are least likely to break it; (3) All law is not justice; (4) Law licks up all; (5) In a thousand pounds of law there's not an ounce of love; (6) Law's costly; take a pint and agree; (7) One lawsuit breeds twenty.

SERBIAN: (1) Oh! that I was as wise when going to law as I was when coming away; (2) The more laws, the less justice; (3) After the lawsuit one party is naked and the other in his shirt (cf. Sardinian; S. Croatian).

SLOVAKIAN: Custom and law are sisters.

SPANISH: (1) At the end of the year the deceased eats more than the living (i.e. fees paid for lawyers, etc.); (2) God grant that disputes may arise that I may live (Legal proverb); (3) A pennyworth of lawsuit costs half-a-crown worth of paper; (4) May you have a lawsuit in which you know that you are in the right (Gipsy curse); (5) A good lawyer is a bad neighbour.

SWISS: A lawyer devours a horse for breakfast.

TAMIL: Litigation is a pole planted in mud.

TUMBUKA: A lawsuit is like the wax of the bees's hive (no one can hope to escape trouble just as there is no honey without the waxcomb).

UKRAINIAN: The goat sued the wolf, and all that was left of him was his beard and horns.

WELSH: (1) The forlorn one is common in Court; (2) The houses of lawyers are roofed with the skins of litigants.

SECTION B

The above list throws light also on the psychological context of the following Maltese proverbs and sayings for which I have provided the general literally corresponding proverbs and sayings in other languages such as by their nature fall under formula No. 1.

Explanation of abbreviations in brackets: --

STRAFF = Strafforello, G., *La Sapienza del Popolo, ovvero Dizionario universale dei Proverbi di tutti i Popoli*, 3v. Torino, 1883.

VASS. = Vassalli, M.A., *Motti, Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi*, Malta, 1828.

MBCH. = Mohammed Ben Cheneb, *Proverbes Arabes de l'Algerie et du Maghreb...* 3v. Paris, 1905-6.

AGIUS. = Agius de Soldanis, G.F., *Damma tal Kliem Kartaginis mscerred fel fomm tal Maltin u Ghaucin*, 4v. Royal Malta Library Ms. 143.

CHAMP. = Champion, S.G., *Racial Proverbs: a Selection of the World's Proverbs arranged linguistically*, London, 1950.

TEZ. = Tewfik E. Zureik, *Select English and Arabic Proverbs and Sayings*. Acre, Palestine, 1939.

RASSIM. = Ahmed Rassim, *Chez le Marchand de Musc (Proverbes populaires arabes)* (s.l., s.d.).

1. **AVUKAT 'k ma jehdux Alla jiehdu x-xitan**, "If God doesn't take the lawyer away the devil will."
Cp. Matthew, "Woe unto you, lawyers!, for ye have stolen away the key of knowledge"; Fr. "Si l'enfèr n'est plein, jamais il n'y aura d'avocat sauvé"; Eng. "Fair and slowly as lawyers go to heaven".
2. **IL-BŻONN m'ghandux liġi**, "Necessity has no law"; Var. **Il-bżonn ma tafx x'igaghlek tagħmel**, "You never know what necessity may drive you to do".
Cp. L. "Necessitas non habet legem"; Gr. "Deinies anagkes ouden ischucin peon"; It. "Necessità non ha legge"; "La fame non conosce legge"; Sard. "Lu fame non hat lege"; Fr. "Nécessité n'a point de loi"; Sp. "La necesidad carece de ley"; Eng. "Necessity has no law"; Germ. "Not kennt kein Gebot".
3. **IL-ĊOMB ighum u t-tiben (ir-rix) jeghreq**, "Lead floats and straw (feathers) sink". The idea is that worthless or undeserving people are favoured at the expense of others possessing better qualities.
4. **ID-DINJA mxattru**, "The world is lop-sided", i.e. there is no justice in this world. VASS. gives the following fuller version: **Id dinja mxattru, il-ghajnejn tibri; din l-art hamra u l-firien tigri**, "This world is uneven, eyes are prying; this earth is red and rats scurry about".
5. **ID-DRITT m'hemmx isbah minnu**, "There is nothing better (*lit.* more beautiful) than straightforwardness".
Cp. It. "La via diritta è la più breve".
6. **Aghmel id-DRITT u tibza' minn hadd**, "Be straight and fear none". Cf. prov. No. 49.
7. **Tal-ĠLEKK jekk jerfghu jaqla', u jekk ma jerfghux jaqla' wkoll**, "The man in the jacket story gets beaten whether he picks it up or leaves it on the floor." Var. **Jekk tigbor il-ġlekk taqlaghha, jekk ma tigbrux ukoll**, "If you pick up the jacket you get beaten, if you don't, you get it all the same". This proverbial saying seems to have a story behind it in which a man gets beaten both when he sees a jacket on the floor and picks it up and when he leaves it there. The idea is that you can never please an unreasonable man, whatever you do for him. In Maltese there is also the proverbial phrase *bhal tal-horġ*, "like the man with a knapsack", with the same meaning as the proverb under review.
8. **Min IDDARRIH irabbi l-ġost**, "Let a man get used to something, and he will claim it as of right".
Cp. L. "Consuetudo facit legem"; It. "L'uso fa legge"; Rom. "L'us e fă lez"; Gen. "Uzo fa legge".
9. **IL-ĠUSTIZZJA sabiha, imma hadd ma jridha f'daru (wara bieb)**, "Justice is a good thing, but no one wants it in his own house". Var. **Il-Haqq (Pulizija) kulhadd wara bieb haddiohor iridu (iridha)**, "Justice (the Police) is always wanted at other people's door".

Sic. "A nuddu piaci la giustizia davanti la so porta"; "E' bedda la giustizia ma non davanti la nostra porta"; "Tutti vulemu la giustizia a casa d'autri". Cp. It. "Giustizia, giustizia, ma non per casa mia"; "Ognuno ama la giustizia a casa altrui; a nessuno piace a casa sua"; Sp. "Justicia, mas (or) y no, per mi casa"; Eng. "Justice pleaseth few in their own house"; Swedish "Everyone prizes justice but shuts the door when it comes" — (Champ.).

10. **IL-ĠUSTIZZJA fis-sema**, "Justice is found in Heaven only".
11. **IL-HAQQ ghand Alla**, "Only God is just" (lit. "Justice is with God").
12. **IL-HAQQ wis-sewwa hargu minn fomm Alla**, "Justice and truth issued from the mouth of God". VASS's briefer version (No. 765) is *Is-sewwa harget minn fomm Alla*, "Truth issued from the mouth of God".
13. **IL-HAQQ Alla jghaddih 'il quddiem u jharisna minnu** (AGIUS: *Damma*), "May God promote justice but keep us away from it".
14. **Alla jzomm il-HAQQ imma jehlisna minnu**, "May God preserve justice but keep us away from it". Variant of No. 14.
15. **IL-HMAR il-maghqur (maghkus) idur ghalih id-dubbien**, "Flies attack the ulcerous donkey (the sorely oppressed donkey)". Misfortune falls to the lot of those already sorely oppressed.
Cp. It. "A caval magro vanno le mosche"; "Ai cani e ai cavalli magri vanno addosso le mosche".
16. **Ma setâx mal-HMAR, dar għall-berdgħa**, "Because he couldn't overcome the donkey, he attacked the pack saddle." This proverb is said of a person who, unable to avenge himself on his enemy, etc., torments a member or friend of his enemy's family.
Cp. Ar. "Ne pouvant maîtriser l'âne, il se vengea sur la selle"; "Ne pouvant rien contre sa belle-mère, il s'en prit à sa femme" (RASSIM, Nos. 326, 238); It. and various dialects: "Chi non può battere il cavallo, batte la sella; "Si batte la sella per non battere il cavallo"; "Chi non può dare all'asino dà al basto"; Sic. "Cui nun po' all'asinu e dunnu a la vardedda"; Sard. "Qui non podet iscuder ad su caddu, iscudet ad se sedda" Alb. "Because he cannot beat the ass, he strikes his saddle (CHAMP)"; Germ. "Chi non può batter l'asino batte il basto (STRAFF)".
17. **La l-HMAR tieghi m'ghandix nirkeb wara**, "Once the donkey is mine I must not ride in the rear". Var. *Il-hmar tieghi u nirkeb wara*, also *fuq denbu!*, "The donkey is mine and I ride behind!"
Cp. Ar. "L'âne est le mien et je monte en croupe"; i.e. je suis le maître et les honneurs me sont dus (MBCH, No. 673); Sic. "Cu' havi l'asinu e va a pedi è un gran sumeri"; "Ed hai l'asinu a vai a piedi?"
18. **Tghabbix il-HMAR iktar milli jiflah**, "Do not load the ass more than it can carry".

19. **IL-ĦNIENA kienet u tkun, inkella m'hemmx iżjed dinja**, "There always was and there must always be mercy, otherwise the world will not continue to exist".
20. **Kulhadd irid il-ĦNIENA, u l-Ħniena fit-Triq tar-Rabat**, "Everyone expects mercy, and there is mercy only in the Rabat Road". In Xewkija, Gozo, on the way to Rabat there is a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy (*Tal-Ħniena*). The proverb means that it is quite useless to expect mercy from man.
21. **IL-ĦUTA minn rasha tinten**, "The fish starts stinking from its head".
Cp. L. "Piscis primum a capite foetet"; It. "Il pesce comincia a putir dal capo"; Germ. "Der Fisch stinkt am Kopf zuerst."
22. **IL-ĦUTA l-kbira tiekol iż-żghira**, "The big fish eats the small one". Var. *Imhabba l-ħuta l-kbira tbatì ż-żghira* (AGIUS: *Damma*), "On account of the big fish the small fish suffer".
Cp. Ar. "The large fish will eat the small" (TEZ., No. 20); "Comme les poissons de la mer: les grands mangent les petits" L. "Pisces magni parvulos comedunt"; *Pisces vorat maior minorem*; It. "Il pesce grosso mangia il minuto"; "I pesci grossi mangiano i piccini", with many variants in the It. dialects; Fr. "Les gros poissons mangent les petits"; Sp. "Los peces mayores se tragan los menores"; Germ. "Grosse Fische fressen die kleinen"; Eng. "Men live like fish: the great ones devour the small".
23. **Min JAHDEM l-iżjed, jiekol l-inqas**, "He that works most eats least". This is the idea expressed also by the Dutch proverb: "He who plants the tree rarely tastes the fruit" (CHAMP).
24. **IL-LIĠI tigġebbed (tal-lastiku)**, "Laws can be stretched (are made of rubber, i.e. are elastic)".
Cp. It. "La giustizia è fatta come il naso, che dove tu lo tiri viene"; Fr. and Swiss "Tutte le leggi hanno il naso di cera".
25. **IL-LIĠI taqbad il-ħuta ż-żghira**, "The law catches the small fish".
Cp. Turk. "La legge piglia le mosche e lascia pescare i mosconi" (STRAFF).
26. **IL-LIĠI saret għall-banavolja (brikkun)**, "Laws have been made for scoundrels".
Cp. L. "Lex justo non est posita, sed injustis"; Gr. "Laws are not made for the good" (DAV); It. "Le leggi sono fatte per i tristi"; "Da' mali costumi nascono le buone leggi"; "La legge nasce dal peccato"; Sp. "La ley es hecha para los transgresores".
27. **IL-LIĠI mhix għas-sinjur**, "The law is not made for the rich".
28. **IL-LIĠI għall-fqar qiegħda**, "The law is made for the poor only".
Cp. Turk. "La legge è soltanto per i poveri, il diritto soltanto per i ricchi" (STRAFF).

29. **IL-LIĠI** jew għal kulhadd jew għal hadd, "The law must apply to all or to none".
30. **IL-LIĠI** għal kulhadd xorta, "The law must be equal to all".
31. **IL-LIĠI** mhux għal kulhadd xorta, "The law is not equal to all".
Cp. Eng. "One law for the rich, and another for the poor".
32. **Min jikkmanda jagħmel il-LIĠI**, "He that commands lays down the law".
33. **Issa ghamilti, hej, MAKKUWA,**
Jekk ninzel 'l isfel ticolni żabrija,
U jekk nitla' 'l fuq tiġi għaliya l-gawwija.
"Now you have made a little fish of me! If I go down the black-tail fish eats me; if I go up the gull swoops down on me".
34. **L-aktar MAGHFUS** imur minn taħt, "The person worst hit suffers most".
35. **Min ikun man-NIES** jew bla saħħa jew bla ġieh, "He (she) that works for other people either loses his (her) health or his (her) honour." The reference is usually to maid-servants who perform domestic duties in other people's houses.
36. **Min ma jridx ibusek (ma jhobbokx) iġhid li fommok JINTEN**, "He that does not want to kiss you (does not love you) says that your mouth stinks".
Var. *Min ma jahmlekx iġhid li tinten*. "He that does not like you says you stink".
37. **Min toqogħdlu JĠHABBIK**, "He to whom you submit will load you".
i.e., if you take it lying down you'll have to expect worse treatment. Also, if you encourage people to take advantage of your generosity they will not hesitate to do so without any regard for you.
Cp. Latvian "The ready back gets all the loads".
38. **Alla jerfa' u n-nies TĠHAMMES**, "God uplifts and man oppresses".
39. **Li tagħmel daqqa ta' PINNA** ma tħassrux daqqa ta' fies, "A stroke of the pen will not be undone by the stroke of a pickaxe". This is a reference to the binding force of a legal document.
40. **Bla QADDISIN** ma titlax il-Ġenna (is-Sema), "You can't go to Heaven without saints". The idea is that you can't get what you want (whether you deserve it or not) without the help of influential persons. Var. (i) *Bla xaham ma tvarax*. "You can't launch a ship without grease", (ii) *Bla mġietah ma jinġethux bwieb* (VASS, No. 113), "Without keys no doors are opened".
Sp. "El que no tiene padrino no se bautiza"; Eng. "When it pleaseth God, saints can do little. Sic. "La varca senza sivu nun camina"; "Lu sivu fa varari la varca".
41. **Għan-niżla ('l isfel) kull QADDIS** iġhin, "In going down every saint helps".
Cp. It. "Al venir giù ogni santo aiuta".

42. **IL-QATTUS ahrax isib il-qattus dgħajjef**, "The fierce cat looks for (attacks) the weak cat". This is said of bullies who vent their anger on persons unable to stand up to them.
43. **IL-QORTI habib tal-brikkun (halliel)**, "The Law Courts are friendly to scoundrels (thieves)". This proverb generally expresses the discontent of those who are not satisfied with the judgment of the Courts against them.
44. **IL-QORTI fiha bieb mnejn tidhol u le mnejn toħroġ**, "A Law Court has got an entrance but no exit". This is a reference to the protracted Court cases which sometimes drag on for years.
45. **IL-QORTI għatba taż-żift: tmidd sieqek fuqha tehel**, "The Law Courts have got its threshold smeared with pitch: you get stuck as soon as you place your foot on it". Var. *IL-Qorti għatba taż-żift: kull ma jidhol go fiha jehel*, "The Law Courts are like a threshold smeared with pitch: whoever enters gets stuck".
46. **IL-QORTI l-għatba ta' l-Infern**, "The Law Courts (are like) Hell's threshold".
47. **'K tidhol il-QORTI int tiekol sardina u l-avukat jiekol gallina**, "If you go to Court you'll eat a sardine and your lawyer a woodcock", i.e., your lawyer will fleece you.
48. **Min għandu SEBGHU dritt (subghajh shah) m'għandux mniex jibza'**, "He that has got a straight finger (all his fingers) need have no fear". For the use of *sebgħu dritt* (straight finger) in the sense of "right, just, honest", cp. It. "Man diritta e bocca monda può andar per tutto il mondo"; L. "Manus recta, osque rotundum transire faciunt loca quaecumque remota"; Fr. "Main droite et bouche ronde fait aller par tout le monde"; Germ. "Treue Hand, Geht durch's ganze Land".
49. **Min jagħmel is-SEWWA jsib is-sewwa**, "He that acts righteously shall find justice". Cf. prov. No. 6.
 Cp. L. "Viro bono, bona dat Deus"; "Qualia quisque geret, talia quisque feret"; It. "Come farai, così avrai"; "Chi fa bene, bene aspetta" (STRAFF); Fr. "Comme à autrui fait tu auras, d'autrui enfin tu recevras"; Sp. "Donde las dan, las toman". Eng. "You shall have as good, as you bring"; Germ. "Wie man's treibt, so geht's".
50. **Min ma jridx bis-SEWWA jeħtieġlu jrid bid-dnewwa**, "He that won't submit (or do something) willingly will have to do so. unwillingly (willynilly)".
51. **Aħjar TISWIJA hażina, minn sentenza tajba**, "Better a bad settlement than a good sentence", i.e., you had better reach an agreement, for the law is costly.

Cp. L. "Melior tutiorque est certa pax, quam sperata victoria"; It. "Meglio un magro accordo, che una grassa sentenza"; Fr. "Mauvais accommodement vaut mieux que bon procès"; Sp. "Más vale mala avenencia,

- que buena sentencia"; Eng. "Lean compromise better than fat lawsuit"; Germ. "Besser ein magrer Verleich, als ein fetter Prozess".
52. **IX-XEBGHAN** *ma jaghdirx lill-gewhan*, (AGIUS: *Damma*), "The sated man does not pity a man who is hungry".
53. **L-IZBALJI** *tal-kbar ibatuhom iz-zghar*, "The mistakes of the superiors recoil on their subordinates".
54. **IZ-ZGHIR** *qatt ma jahseb tajjeb fil-kbir*, "The little man never trusts the big one", i.e. the people (subordinates) generally distrust their leaders or superiors. Cp. Proverb No. 22 above.
55. **INT TIZRA'** *u haddiehor jahsad*, "You sow and someone else reaps".
Cp. L. "Alii sementem faciunt, alii metunt"; It. "Uno semina, e un altro raccoglie"; Fr. "Tel sème, qui ne recueille pas"; Sp. "Uno siembra, otro coge"; Eng. "One sows, another mows"; Germ. "Einer sät, der andere emtet".

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LE RELAZIONI ETNOGRAFICHE DEL FOLKLORE NARRATIVO E LEGGENDARIO DELLE ISOLE DI MALTA

di
A. CREMONA

Preambolo

Uno studio comparativo del folklore narrativo e leggendario Maltese ha un valore speciale per le relazioni che vi si riscontrano nel campo storico, etnologico e sociale.

Prima dello scorcio del secolo scorso un tale studio non mi risulta che sia stato fatto su basi della scienza folklorica odierna, neanche fino ad un certo punto su alcun principio della vecchia scuola che attribuiva a fonti mitiche le tradizioni narrative e leggendarie maltesi. Padre Emanuele Magri fu l'unico che verso il 1899-1907 si era impegnato a commentare sulle fonti fenicie o puniche delle fiabe e leggende maltesi di cui aveva fatto una buona raccolta pubblicata negli opuscoli in maltese *Mogh'dija taż-Zmien* (Passatempo di letture amene), di cui il Comm. sigr. Alfonso Maria Galea era l'editore — una intrapresa di letteratura tradizionale che procacciò al Magri il nome di *Padre del Folklore Maltese*.

Per i primi ragguagli sulle tradizioni maltesi, per ciò che riguarda costumi, meritano di essere menzionati, il Can. Gian Pier Francesco Agius De Soldanis (1712-1770) che nei suoi manoscritti, da dei cenni sugli Usi e Costumi Religiosi e Civili degli Antichi Maltesi (Abiti, Costumi, Sponsali, Matrimoni e Funerali Maltesi), di cui si ha una relazione più dettagliata in *Malta Illustrata* (1772) del Conte G.A. Ciantar, come aggiunta all'opera di G.F. Abela (1647). Altri cenni su indumenti, costumi antichi, usanze nuziali, funerei e passatempi si hanno nei libri di storia, fra cui giova menzionare *Malte Ancienne et Moderne* (1805) di Louis de Boïsgelin, e *l'Histoire de Malte* (1841) di M. Miège. In quest'ultimo libro si ha i medesimi cenni del Boïsgelin sulle costumanze ed usi, come anche una riproduzione di due strofe di una canzone popolare maltese tolta da *Malte par un voyageur François* (1791) del Cavaliere St. Priest (Parte Seconda p. 64) comunicata all'autore dal Rev. Gioacchino Navarro, Cappellano Conventuale dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano. Questa sarebbe un'esiguo esemplare delle antiche canzoni maltesi in cui del resto si ha una traccia di versi con concetto, linguaggio e ritmo puramente nativo, scevri dall'influenza di susseguenti infiltramenti del linguaggio siculo-italiano, come si manifesta nei canti popolari dall'inizio del secolo decimo nono riscontrabili in altri esemplari nelle memorie e descrizioni storiche di autori maltesi e stranieri². Giova menzionare fra questi George Percy

(1) Ms. Nro. 142. Vol. 5. Regia Biblioteca di Malta.

(2) Un esemplare più completo di una vecchia canzone in cui si ammira la purezza della lingua e la semplicità stilistica del sentimento e del ritmo della canzone tradizionale maltese si ha nella canzone della Sposa della Mosta (*L-Gharusa tal-Mosta*), di cui l'argomento, per tradizione, è il ratto di una novella sposa dai corsari di Barberia verso la metà del secolo XV, di cui si ha un riscontro in una leggenda sicula trattata da M. Barbi ed Ettore Rossi (M. Barbi. *Scibilia Nobili e la raccolta dei canti popolari*, etc., in "Pallante", 1929, ed Ettore Rossi, *Scibilia Nobili e la leggenda*

Badger che nel suo libro *Description of Malta and Gozo* (1838), oltre brevi cenni sui costumi, indumenti contadineschi, dialoghi, ecc., da qualche esemplare di canzoni dell'epoca in cui l'autore dimorava nell'isola, sua seconda patria. Altri scrittori di storia e del folklore maltese fanno menzione e commentano sulle costumanze ed usi, superstizioni, credenze, ecc., fra cui il Castagna: *Malta bil Gzhejjer Tahha* (1869), e susseguentemente qualche scrittore quà e là, che capitò a far sosta nell'isola o vi dimorò nelle sue elucubrazioni storiche, saggi folkloristici o linguistici: il Bonelli nei suoi *Saggi del Folklore dell'Isola di Malta* (1895), R.N. Bradley nel suo libro di storia ed etnologia del popolo Maltese *Malta and the Mediterranean Race* (1912), come anche B. Ilg e H. Stumme, che per ciò che riguarda i canti popolari d'impronta moderna fecero una buona raccolta di canzoni maltesi pubblicate in un opuscolo col titolo *Maltesische Volkslieder Im Urtext Mit Deutscher Übersetzung* (Leipzig, 1909), oltre, per scopi linguistici, una pregevole raccolta di fiabe, canzoni, ed indovinelli, raccolte da H. Stumme in *Maltesische Studien* (Leipzig, 1904)³.

Tracce di vecchie espressioni sintetiche che rispecchiano la mentalità filosofica del volgo maltese — specie nel contado — sarebbero i proverbi maltesi, in ispecial modo i detti ed aforismi agricoli. Una prima raccolta di proverbi maltesi, con traduzione e commenti, è quella del Can. Gian Pier Francesco Agius De Soldanis: *Apoftegmi e Proverbi Maltesi*⁴. Una seconda raccolta di *Motti, Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi*, interpretati e corredati con note esplicative, ecc., fu pubblicata nel 1828 dal grammatico e lessicografo Michelantonio Vassalli. Motti e proverbi, assieme alla prosa narrativa, fiabesca e leggendaria, sarebbero gli elementi per un'analisi comparativo per stabilire, se non l'origine, la paternità etnica della paremiologia e tradizione narrativa e leggendaria maltese. Lingua e tradizione folkloristica sono state da diversi studiosi europei di etnologia e folklore fin dal secolo scorso oggetto di studio filologico ed etnografico.

Fra quelli che si attenevano alla teoria dell'origine fenicia o cananea del linguaggio maltese sarebbero da menzionare il Professore Maius di Giessen (1718), il De Soldanis nelle sue dissertazioni e grammatica della lingua maltese (1750), il Bellermand dell'università di Berlino (1809), il Preca nella sua *Malta Cananea*, pubblicata come opera postuma nel 1904, che farebbe seguito al suo *Saggio intorno alla Lingua Maltese come affine dell'Ebraico* (1880), ed il Caruana

maltese della Sposa della Mosta in "Lares". N.S. 1932). Cfr. anche A. Cremona. *Is the Maid of Mosta a Myth?* in "Journal of the Malta University Literary Society" No. 10, March, 1934, e "La canzone dell Sposa rapita dai pirati barbareschi" di R. Corso in "Rivista d'Oriente", 10 ottobre, 1935.

Il testo maltese della canzone si legge nell'opera di A. Preca: "Malta Cananea" (1904), come anche nella contribuzione sul "Dialecto Maltese" di L. Bonelli nello "Archivio Glottologico Italiano" (Sup. I, 1895).

- (3) Oltre i suddetti lavori, in collaborazione con l'arabista Stumme, B. Ilg ha anche pubblicato una copiosa ed esauriente raccolta di fiabe e novelle maltesi dal titolo: "*Maltesische Märchen und Schwänke*," Leipzig, 1906, che secondo Bradley, non differiscono molto da quelle del Magri, in ispecial modo quelle con argomento moderno e colore cosmopolito di cui abbonda la raccolta dell'autrice. Spiacemi che fino ad oggi non mi fu data l'opportunità di consultare quest'opera.
- (4) Ms. No. 142, Vol. 1. Regia Biblioteca di Malta. Manoscritto pubblicato a puntate in *Malta Letteraria*, Anno IV. No. 5 — 12, 1928, da Dr. Giovanni Curmi. Ms. mancante dei proverbi sotto lettera A.

nella sua opera *Sull'Origine della Lingua Maltese* (1896). Ed a questi si univa Padre Magri che, alla luce della vecchia scuola, riallacciava la stessa origine dei proverbi agricoli e metereologici, delle fiabe e leggende maltesi.

A prescindere dalle teorie storiche delle trasmissioni tradizionali da una generazione ad un'altra, e da un ambiente ad un altro si dovrebbe ammettere che le credenze, le superstizioni, motti e frasi proverbiali, le favole, le leggende e le novelline non sono in fondo che i detriti di un edificio colossale primitivo, gli avanzi di tutto il monumento rustico che ha perduto ogni traccia del suo carattere primordiale. Come in altri studi comparativi del folklore di altre parti del continente europeo poco riuscirebbe a riannodare i rapporti intimi del folklore, puranche medioevali, con gli avanzi della scuola mitica, così non riuscirebbe facilmente a riallacciare gli elementi individuali, gli episodi e le vicende leggendarie e fiabesche maltesi, anche le più vecchie, con quelle della mitologia greco-fenicia in cui nè la linguistica nè la storia possono giovare a stabilire una parantela diretta.

Nel mio studio "Weather and Husbandry Lore in the Isles of Malta" (*Folklore Meteorologico ed Agricolo nelle Isole di Malta*) in *Atti dell'Archivum Melitense* (Bollettino della Società Storico-Scientifica Maltese. Vol. VI. No. 2, 1922), io avevo rilevato che quantunque i caratteri lessicali ed organici potevano ben attribuirsi ad una predominante influenza araba in un periodo storico della dominazione araba di oltre due secoli che precedette il periodo normanno medioevale nelle isole di Malta, il folklore maltese non sembrava di aver subito una parallela influenza della lingua semitica, ed alcunchè, per conseguenza, di infiltramenti di elementi predominanti folklorici di natura semitica, onde il contrasto etnologico tra lingua e folklore nel quadro demopsicologico del popolo maltese dal medio evò fino all'epoca d'oggi.

Un tale mio primo studio comparativo della paremiologia metereologica ed agricola maltese, che assieme agli usi e costumi tradizionali ed al linguaggio formano gli elementi primordiali della demopsicologia del popolo maltese come mi lusingavo, avrebbe offerto un incentivo e suggerito anche da parte di altri studiosi di etnologia, ed occorrendo anche di linguistica, di fare ulteriori indagini per determinare lo sviluppo di vecchie tradizioni dall'epoca dell'influenza delle lingue romanze e di nuovi elementi etnici europei, sullo strato organico di una lingua semitica. Godo, del resto, che da pochi anni in qua le mie speranze ed il mio augurio ha avuto il miglior responso nelle monografie di altri studiosi di proverbi meteorologici ed agricoli, oltre di altri adagi ed aforismi locali nei raffronti di altri estranei, come anche negli studi sulle tradizioni maltesi, ed in ispecial modo recentemente sulle fiabe di Padre Magri nel loro aspetto linguistico in cui vi si riflette sostanzialmente la mia medesima tesi dei miei studi precedenti per riguardo lingua e folklore⁵.

Padre Magri nei suoi studi *X'Jghid il Malti jeu l'Gherf bla mictub tal Maltin* (Detti e proverbi maltesi o la Dottrina popolare dei Maltesi) ed in altre pubbli-

(5) Gioverebbe su ciò consultare e confrontare i lavori recenti di studi linguistici sui proverbi meteorologici ed agricoli: *Maltese Meteorological and Agricultural Proverbs* di J. Aquilina in "Journal of Maltese Studies" Royal University of Malta, No. 1., 1961; e sul lessico e linguaggio delle fiabe di P. Magri: *Linguistic Analysis of Fr. Magri's Folk-tales* di J. Cassar Pullicino in "Journal of Maltese Studies", Royal University of Malta, No. 1, 1961.

cazioni narrative, attribuisce nei suoi commenti l'origine dei detti e proverbi meteorologici ed agricoli, come delle fiabe e leggende maltesi, ad una fonte fenicia, ciò che nella mia opinione è contrastato da un esame comparativo tra i detti e credenze e superstizioni maltesi e quelli in Sicilia ed altre provincie d'Italia, nonchè in altri paesi europei. I rapporti comparativi basterebbero a dimostrare che i metodi adottati dal Magri sono puramente basati su vecchie teorie della mitologia pescata da tradizioni di scrittori greci o dalle tracce di epigrafi puniche dell'epoca dei colonizzatori fenici o punici delle isole di Malta.

E' da assumere che, come le credenze relative alla meteorologia ed agricoltura costituiscono dei caratteristici predominanti fin dai primordi del medio evo nel folklore maltese, come analogicamente in altri ambienti del vicino continente con cui Malta ha avuto rapporti di vita economica e commerciale, così i costumi ed altre credenze e superstizioni maltesi sono piuttosto da attribuirsi al folklore medioevale e progressivamente moderno dei paesi europei, particolarmente della Sicilia e province d'Italia. Non si esclude, del resto, il fatto che in tempi non ricordati dalla storia vigevano altre credenze e superstizioni di una mitologia primitiva di natura leggendaria basata piuttosto sui principi della scuola naturista che dai primordi della storia si confusero, ed in parte si assorbirono, con nuove credenze di colonizzatori immigratori e popoli dominatori in tal modo che il vecchio folklore mitico e leggendario si adattò alle nuove condizioni della vita economica e politica, ciò che si deve presumere ebbe luogo dagli albori della epoca medievale fino all'epoca d'oggi tanto da rendere insormontabile ai folkloristi ogni tentativo di rintracciare nelle tradizioni maltesi, puranche meteorologiche ed agricole, fiabesche o leggendarie, un anello di congiunzione con quelle almeno della mitologia greco-fenicia come si osserva nei commenti del Magri, talvolta pel tramite della linguistica.

Si deve perciò ammettere che il folklore maltese nei suoi raffronti con quello del continente europeo, particolarmente siculo ed italiano, fornisce migliori dati di etnologia correlativa piuttostochè i resti mitici ed archeologici, come anche i rapporti della stessa lingua, quando si consideri il fatto che la civiltà neolatina o romanza che subentrò sullo strato di una lingua di fondo semitico con un lessico di natura organicamente tenace, non riuscendo ad assorbire il linguaggio popolare, prevalse sulla vecchia demopsicologia del popolo tanto da indurlo con le nuove credenze profane e religiose ad adottarne finanche gran parte del lessico siculo-italiano con le sue espressioni fraseologiche e terminologia tecnicamente nuova rispecchiante nel popolo maltese uno sviluppo progressivo nella sua vita economica e sociale di carattere puramente europea⁶.

La teoria del Magri esposta nelle sue elucubrazioni sull'origine dei nostri detti ed aforismi riflettenti usi e costumi stagionali, meteorologici ed agricoli è facilmente contraddetta da molti paralleli della paremiologia siculo-italiana di cui ne avevo accennato diversi esemplari nel mio studio su citato sul folklore

(6) E da ammettersi d'altronde che nelle fiabe e leggende maltesi vi occorrono delle espressioni formulari ed idiomatiche, come anche delle frasi dialettali della parlata che sarebbero comuni in qualche parte coll'arabo dell'Africa Settentrionale, dell'Egitto e della Siria, Cfr. con *Weather and Husbandry Lore in the Isles of Malta*, A. Cremona (opus. cit); "X'inhil-Malti Safi" (studio linguistico sul maltese) in "Il-Malti" (Sup.) 1925, *Maltese Meteorological and Agricultural Proverbs* di J. Aquilina, (opus. cit); *Linguistic Analysis of Fr. Magri's Folk-tales* di J. Cassar Pullicino (opus. cit).

meteorologico ed agricolo nelle isole di Malta. In questi il Magri ha preteso di trovarne delle reliquie da fonti bibliche, fenicie o siro-palestinesi, dando a questi una vetustà che contrastava con le tradizioni proverbiali che portano il timbro caratteristico d'una civiltà medioevale. Diversi di questi proverbi maltesi sono una versione letterale della corrispondente sicula, ciò che dimostra ad evidenza la parentela diretta di una fonte particolare; è da osservare inoltre che in alcuni di questi proverbi incontrasi il nome del santo la di cui data denota una ricorrenza di un fenomeno metereologico od un costume od uso agricolo nella coltivazione camprestre, seminagione, aratura, mietitura.

Riuscirebbe alquanto difficile il rintracciare il periodo storico della introduzione di tali proverbi che hanno una così stretta analogia con le occorrenze agiologiche del calendario religioso. Essi trovano il loro riscontro, oltre direttamente da fonte sicula, con quelli dei paesi europei Cristiani che dall'epoca normanna avrebbero assorbito la maggior parte del folklore primitivo maltese. E' certo però che i nomi di tali santi indicanti il giorno della ricorrenza festiva non è opera di una inserzione artificiale dei neofiti dell'isola durante il periodo bizantino, come argomenterebbe il Magri, in sostituzione di altre parole arcaiche aventi accento o rima corrispondente nel verso proverbiale.

Nella stretta analogia di proverbi metereologici maltesi ove si cita la ricorrenza festiva del santo in relazione a fenomeni stagionali atmosferici si desume che la data di tale ricorrenza è basata sul calendario Gregoriano che probabilmente fu adottato nell'isola verso il 1605 contemporaneamente con l'uso introdotto in Sicilia per ordine del Vicerè della Sicilia, il Duca di Feria⁷. Tali proverbi si potrebbero perciò considerare come appartenenti ad un'epoca posteriore a quella del calendario Giuliano di cui, peraltro, si ha qualche esemplare con una diversità di data della relativa ricorrenza festiva dello stesso santo o santa a cui si riferisce l'identico proverbio posteriore.

In un mio studio *Folklore u L-Lsien Malti* (Folklore e Lingua Maltese) letto in un incontro con membri della Società Letteraria Maltese dell'Università degli Studi di Malta, il 24 aprile, 1940 e pubblicato in *Lehen Il-Malti* (organo della stessa Società) nel 1944, io cercai di mostrare i rapporti tra il folklore e la lingua popolare maltese nelle espressioni folkloristiche, fraseologiche e proverbiali, e come queste rispecchiano la psicologia e mentalità del popolo maltese d'oggi e ritraggono fedelmente l'espressione, l'anima ed il pensiero evolutivo del volgo maltese. La mia tesi fu corroborata, con saggi proverbiali e fraseologici, quasi *verbatim* e sostanzialmente, con la frase siculo-italiana, talvolta anche con quella di altre lingue europee.

Al pari della paremiologia e fraseologia maltese si potrebbe dire delle favole a fiabe maltesi, come anche di usi e costumi.

Quando, nel 1905, Padre Magri lesse il suo saggio sul folklore maltese *Précis de Mythologie Maltais* nel XIV Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti in Algeria, egli si limitò a far comprendere che la fonte del suo studio folklorico maltese è la tradizione viva, e che non aveva ricorso nè alla storia, nè alla archeologia, nè alla toponimia e patronimia maltese, e che nella miniera inesauribile dei tesori folkloristici maltesi restava ancora da esplorare. Egli aggiunge che gli elementi stranieri che hanno invaso il paese, la diffusione della

(7) Cfr. Alessi. — Notizie Sicilia, 36, 109.

stampa e della letteratura europea, i cambiamenti che vi subentrarono negli usi e nelle abitudini sociali hanno bandito in molti luoghi le tradizioni fiabesche ed i proverbi nazionali. Si deve del resto ammettere, secondo la mia opinione, che il folklore odierno maltese non rappresenta che il complesso demopsicologico e la vita sociale del popolo maltese, ciò che è il risultato di una rigenerazione etnografica formatasi dalle relazioni politiche ed economiche con la vicina penisola di circa sette secoli dopo la dominazione araba, assorbendo quasi completamente ogni altre vestigia delle credenze, usi, superstizioni, leggende e detti proverbiali del periodo che precedette la civiltà neolatina.

Padre Magri osserva inoltre nelle fiabe e leggende maltesi un elemento duplice, facilmente rintracciabile, che è l'elemento maltese e l'elemento arabo. La distinzione caratteristica di questi due elementi, secondo il Magri, sarebbe nella tessitura del racconto.

Quanto ci sia di arabo, almeno nella sua raccolta di fiabe novelline e leggende maltesi, non mi riesce di intravedere, quantunque si ha da supporre che la narrazione, nella sua raccolta novellistica, non rappresenterebbe fedelmente l'espressione *verbatim* tolta dalla bocca del narratore o narratrice. Nè egli stesso vi accenna il minimo esempio della distinzione tra un episodio maltese e quello arabo. Il Magri osserva che l'elemento narrativo nelle favole arabe è distinguibile da quello maltese nelle esagerazioni di concetti, insipidezza di motivi, scarsezza di vicende allettive, con trama tutta condita di magie e dettagli inverosimili. Al contrario l'elemento narrativo maltese, secondo lui, è grave, sobrio, di una ispirazione elevata, sempre morale, le allusioni alle antiche idee semitiche abbondanti, il dialogo vivace, il *dénouement* improvvisato, naturale, gradevole. Aggiunge che l'infiltramento dell'elemento arabo nelle favole popolari maltesi sarebbe dovuto alla presenza di prigionieri e schiavi maomettani in Malta durante i tre secoli dal decimo sesto al decimo ottavo, il cui numero durante il magistero del G. M. Pinto ammontava a circa 11,000, la maggior parte di questi essendo adibiti al servizio domestico presso le migliori famiglie. Sotto un'analoga influenza, che del resto avrà lasciato più profonde impronte, si potrebbe citare il caso delle domestiche od aie siciliane di cui per tutto il periodo di circa otto secoli si faceva uso dalle più abbienti od agiate famiglie maltesi, quando nei divaghi fanciulleschi raccontavano delle fiabe e leggenducce siciliane, che giungevano financo, sebbene con limitata diffusione, per contratto indiretto nei casolari del popolino.

Esaminando il tema delle fiabe e leggende maltesi accanto a quelle siciliane, come anche accanto a quelle di molte parti dell'Italia, Francia, Spagna, e financo le zone germaniche, vi si scorge una affinità narrativa solamente nei motivi di rilievo, cioè negli episodi che formano i punti più salienti dell'organismo tematico. Si direbbe che fra la fiaba o novellina o leggenda maltese, e quella siciliana, in modo particolare, c'è una distinzione negli elementi irrilevanti od accessori. Ogni fatto od avvenimento in un racconto possiede una facoltà di riproduzione. Nei trasferimenti orali di racconti da un individuo all'altro, l'avvenimento con gli elementi di persone o cose che vi figurano possono essere di poco o di nessuna entità per la costruzione sostanziale del tema, o normalmente di una certa entità o di una assoluta entità, cosicchè la loro riproduzione, benchè dipendente dalla mentalità dell'individuo, è relativa. Psicologicamente la loro riproduzione dipende dall'ambiente sociale, come anche dal temperamento ed intelletto dell'individuo. Generalmente la mente tralascia molti dei punti che non costituiscono

i motivi caratteristici del tema, che per se stessi formerebbero il filo principale del racconto. Ciò dà luogo a delle varianti tra una fiaba ed un'altra nel passaggio da una zona ad un'altra, nella medesima od estranea regione.

Nell'esaminare il racconto attinto da una fonte estranea il testo maltese della narrazione rivela dei fenomeni di assorbimento di certi elementi secondari e di sostituzione con altri, delle volte da altre narrazioni, un certo ibridismo di caratteri ed episodi, come anche un adattamento di cose ed ambienti locali in sostituzione di altri estranei.

Come esemplari di tali ricostruzioni e rifacimenti varrebbe riportare il sunto di alcuni testi delle due fiabe o leggende, l'una maltese e l'altra siciliana, italiana, ed occorrendo inglese, tedesca od altra lingua di confronto per affinità con riferimento ad altre fiabe o leggende da fonti del continente europeo di una somiglianza narrativa.

SAGGI DI COMPARAZIONE

Come primo saggio di comparazione diamo qui sotto il sunto di una fiaba maltese di P. Em. Magri, S.J., tolta da "Hrejjeġ Missirijietna" (*Storielle dei nostri antenati*). (Libro II in *Mogħdija taż-Zmien*, op. cit) dal titolo: "Dak li jagħmel il-gid fid-Dinja jehles Xebba mill-Għaġeb tal-Ilma" (*Quello che fece del bene nel mondo salva una giovane dal mostro marino*), Favola No. X (i) pp. 23-26.

Fiaba Maltese:

C'era un serpente grosso con sette teste che avvicinavasi verso una città, e per non infettare il fiume, una volta all'anno gli si offriva una giovine donna per divorarla. Toccò alla figlia del re di offrirsi al serpente, ed il re offrì la mano della figlia a chi uccidesse il mostro marino, ma nessuno si accinse all'impresa, onde la figlia del re, accompagnata dal moro (schiavo nella casa reale), andò verso la riva del fiume per farsi divorare dal mostro. Sopraggiunse un uomo che cavalcava un cavallo. Questi appena sceso da cavallo fu avvertito dalla giovine del pericolo del mostro, ma questi non ci badò, e si sdraiò per dormire, pregando la giovine di svegliarlo appena comparirebbe il mostro. Il serpente sopraggiunse dopo poco avvicinandosi alla riva, e l'uomo, colpito dall'spruzzo dell'acqua sulla faccia, si svegliò, e subito montato sul cavallo, con la sua spada ferì a morte una dopo l'altra le sette teste del mostro. Tolse anche le lingue dalle teste, avvolgendole in un fagotto, e partì. La giovine donna ritornò dal padre, ed il moro gli disse che fu lui che uccise il mostro, e chiese la mano di sua figlia, ma questa, chiesta dal padre se ciò fosse vero, essa negò. Il moro andò a tagliar le teste del mostro, e le mostrò al re. Così la figlia dovette a suo malincuore accondiscendere a sposare il moro. Durante il pranzo imbandito per le nozze, intervenne l'uomo che realmente aveva ucciso il mostro marino, e rivelò al re che le teste mostrategli dal moro erano senza lingue. Il re verificò che realmente era così. Chiese chi fu l'uccisore del serpente, e quegli rispose che era lui stesso, e gli mostrò li per li le lingue delle teste del mostro che lui aveva tagliate per confermare la verità. Così il re diede in isposa la figlia a questi che le aveva salvata la vita. Il moro fu punito per il suo inganno. Quando gli sposi andarono in casa, lo sposo sfoderò la sua spada, la pose in terra ed ammonì la sposa a non avvicinarsene. L'indomani disse alla sposa: "Tu va, e dedica la tua anima a Dio, poichè a me incombe di partire per fare del bene al mondo." E si separarono.

Il Magri vi aggiunge una nota in cui osserva che tale fiaba è confusa con la leggenda di San Giorgio e con quella del Cavaliere di Rodi che come si crede uccise un mostro marino che minacciava quell'isola. Attribuisce, inoltre, la *fonte originale maltese* di questa novella dall'astuzia del cavaliere che prevede il mezzo d'identificarsi come l'uccisore del mostro marino nell'aver tagliato preventiva-

mente e conservate le lingue dalla testa della sua vittima; una qualità, caratteristica, osserva il Magri, dei nostri antenati.

Di questa fiaba vi sarebbero da notare questi riscontri e varianti: (i) *Heracles* che salva *Hesione* dal mostro marino. Cfr. P. E. Magri in *Hrejjeſ Missirijetna* (Libro Secondo) sotto il titolo di *Il-Hrafa tal-Griegi* intorno alle fiabe del Mostro Marino.; (ii) *Li Tri Cani* in *Fiabe e Leggende*, Vol. Unico, 1888, Palermo, di G. Pitre; (iii) *I Due Fratelli*, come anche *L'Omiciattolo della Terra*, nella *Fiabe e Novelle dei Fratelli Grimm* (*Kinderund Hausmarchen*. Cfr. *The Two Brothers* e *The Earth Manikin*, in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* di B. Marshall), oltre altre novelle nelle province d'Italia ed in altre parti del continente europeo.

Un riscontro molto affine a questa fiaba in *Li Tri Cani* è nell'ultimo brano a pagina 28, paragrafo 2, delle *Fiabe e Leggende* del Pitre, su citate, la parte che incomincia con le seguenti parole "Camina, camina, arriva 'nta 'n àutru paìsi; e senti un chiantu, etc.," di cui diamo il seguente sunto:—

Fiaba Siciliana:

Si racconta di un giovine di nome Peppi, che licenziatosi dal padre, lasciò la casa assieme alla sorella per cercar fortuna, girando attorno al mondo con tre cani acquistati da un gigante che lo esortò a tenerli con se, e per mezzo di un fischietto ordinare a questi quanto gli occorrebbe. Dopo varie avventure, arrivando in un paese, sentì il pianto di alcune persone. Chiedendone la ragione, gli si dice che essendovi un animale (serpente) che doveva divorare una vittima cristiana al giorno, quel giorno spettava alla figlia del re di essere divorata. Onde chiese dove e quando doveva comparire quest'animale, e gli s'indicò il luogo del suo arrivo da lontano. Egli ci va, e lì trova la figlia del re che lo esorta ad allontanarsi. Ma lui, appena visto il mostro, comandò ai tre cani (Spezzamuntagni, Spezza-ferru, e Passa-tuttu) di ucciderlo. Dopochè i cani ebbero sbranato il mostro, tolse dalle teste le loro lingue e le avvolse in un pezzo di carta, lasciando per terra le sette teste. Poi disse alla figlia del re di alzarsi, e non aver più paura perchè l'animale era morto. Essa lo pregò di essere suo marito, ma Peppi ricusò dicendo che doveva partire per girare il mondo in adempimento di un voto. Essa si cavò dal dito l'anello di diamante con il suo nome e cognome, e ce lo mise nell'indice di Peppi, e questi, alla sua volta, si cavò il suo, con il suo nome e cognome e ce lo mise nel dito della reginuzza. "Se tu vuoi aspettarmi", le disse, "aspettami un anno, un mese ed un giorno". Essa acconsentì, ed accompagnandola per un pezzo di strada, Peppi si licenziò e continuò il suo viaggio. Di fronte c'era un carbonaro (un moro) che aveva visto tutto, e dopo che Peppi partì, raccolse le teste del mostro, le mise in un sacco, raggiunse la reginuzza e la fece giurare sulla corona del padre di dire al re che il serpente mostro l'aveva ucciso lui, altrimenti l'avrebbe uccisa. Al suo ritorno con il moro, il re volle sapere chi aveva ucciso il mostro, e la figlia, a malincuore disse che l'uccisore del serpente mostro era il moro. Il re stava per levarsi la corona da testa e metterla nella testa del moro, ma la figlia intervenne, dicendogli che essa aveva fatto voto di non maritarsi prima di un anno, un mese ed un giorno. Peppi arrivò nel paese e prese alloggio dirimpetto al palazzo reale. Prima delle nozze della figlia del re con il moro ebbero luogo dei festini per tre giorni consecutivi con mensa imbandita dal re. Peppi avutone informazione, comandò ai suoi tre cani di trasportargli, uno dopo l'altro, le vivande della reginuzza, e finalmente anche la tavola da pranzo, onde il re, volendo sapere la ragione di tali incantesimi, gli fu riferito che tutto ciò era l'opera di un forastiero nell'alloggio dirimpetto al palazzo. Ordinò ai suoi soldati di portargli dinanzi il forastiero, con i suoi cani ma Peppi li mandò via, onde il re ordinò il suo arresto ma Peppi fece ammazzare i soldati. Il re, meravigliatosi di tanto valore, si portò da Peppi e lo invitò amichevolmente a pranzo. Peppi vestitosi ben pulito, si portò assieme al re al palazzo reale e vi sedette a tavola a fianco della reginuzza con i suoi cani accanto. Durante il pranzo, dietro proposta di Peppi, di dire dei racconti, il moro raccontò per il primo agli invitati di aver lui ammazzato il serpente mostro e salvato la reginuzza; ma Peppi gli chiese di presentare le teste del mostro, e quegli avendole presentate, fu chiesto dinuovo da Peppi di mostrare le lingue nella bocca delle teste, ciò che il moro non riuscì di provare. Peppi allora raccontò

tutto l'accaduto, e rivelò l'inganno del moro per acquistarsi la mano della figlia del re, dichiarando di essere stato lui l'uccisore del serpente mostro. Dopochè, Peppi cavò dal fazzoletto le lingue che lui aveva tagliate dalle sette teste del mostro. La *reginuzza* da parte sua confermò quanto raccontò Peppi, mostrò l'anello offertole da Peppi, e Peppi, dal canto suo, mostrò quello che prima gli aveva offerto la *reginuzza* in pegno di una futura unione matrimoniale. Come pena della sua impostura, il moro fu gettato in una caldaia di pece bollito, mentre Peppi e la *reginuzza* si sposarono (*si maritaru*). La fiaba si conclude con la solita formula: — *Iddu arrestaru felici e cuntenti/ E io senza nenti*.

Esaminando il tema delle due favole è facile notare che i motivi principali su cui si costituisce la favola maltese combina in gran parte con quella del racconto siciliano tratto dall'ultimo brano della favola "Li Tri Cani" del Pitre. Gli elementi più rilevanti nelle due favole sarebbero: (i) la vittima da sacrificarsi dandola in pasto al mostro marino (serpente od altro animale carnivoro) avente sette teste, la vittima essendo sempre la figlia del re; (ii) il giovine eroe, uccisore del mostro marino; (iii) il moro o schiavo, nella favola maltese, ed il *carbunaru*, nella favola siciliana; (iv) le teste e le lingue del mostro marino tagliate dal giovine eroe, salvatore della vittima.

La favola maltese nella sua semplicità narrativa tace di certi dettagli secondari, come nel caso dei cani, riscontrabili in altre novelle del continente europeo, e dell'anello offerto reciprocamente dalla figlia del re, vittima del mostro marino, e dal suo salvatore, con incisivi il nome e cognome dei due offerenti, che dà l'idea di una veste più recente al racconto, ed in ciò la fiaba maltese si distacca da altre novelle affini, fra cui sarebbero da menzionare "I Tre Caci di Siena" nelle *Novelle Popolari Toscane* del Pitre, "Le Favulette de ie Trè Cane" di Chieti, N. LIX delle *Tradizioni Popolari Abruzzesi*, etc., di Finamore, "I Tre Cani Meravigliosi", N. 15 delle *Fiabe Mantovane* del Visentini, la favola 3 della X delle *Tredici piacevoli Notti* dello Straparola, ove invece di tre cani, vi si tratta di un leone e di un lupo; "La bestia delle Sette Teste", n. X delle *Fiabe Popolari Veneziane* del Bernoni, ed altri riscontrabili nelle province d'Italia, della Sicilia e Corsica, di cui il Pitre ne dà una lista alquanto numerosa di varianti e riscontri in appendice alla novella siciliana.

Il mostro marino è riscontrabile nella mitologia greca, su cui, come si è già notato prima, il Magri fa dei commenti nei suoi *Hrejjef Missirijetna* (Libro secondo) No. 18 in *Moghdiġa taż-Żmien* (Heracles che salva Hesione dal mostro marino). Una tale leggenda fu col tempo cristianizzata nella leggenda di San Giorgio e del cavaliere di Rodi che uccise per mezzo di due cani ammaestrati da lui il mostro marino che trovavasi in quell'isola.

Un particolare riscontro, che gioverebbe segnalare sarebbe quello sul combattimento e l'uccisione del mostro divoratore di una figlia del re che trovasi in una favola di Grimm sotto il titolo "I Due Fratelli", che è molto affine in certi dettagli con la favola siciliana, con un argomento narrativo ben differente nella maggior parte dalla favola maltese.

Altri varianti e riscontri di fiabe e leggende maltesi del Magri e di altri autori (alcune delle quali presentano una vetustà locale non contaminata dalla vernice di altre favole cosmopolite) sono rintracciabili quà e là, e sarebbe utile accennare e farne dei confronti.

(segue)

AN ARAB'S VIEW OF XIX C. MALTA

SHIDYÂQ'S 'AL-WASITAH FI MA'RIFAT AHWAL MALITAH'

By Dr. PIERRE CACHIA

Introduction

I.

Fâris ibn Yûsuf ibn Mansûr ash-Shidyâq¹ was born in 'Ashqût in the Lebanon in 1804, of a Maronite family. In 1809 his parents moved to al-Hadath near Bayrût, and he received his first schooling in the Maronite school of 'Ayn Waraqah.

When the American Presbyterian Mission became active in the Lebanon, his brother As'ad became a Protestant. The Maronite community did not take kindly to this defection, and As'ad is said to have been "worried to his death." Faris reacted by becoming a Protestant himself.

The Mission sent him to Egypt to complete his education; he then joined the editorial staff of Egypt's official gazette, "al-Waqâ'i' al-Misriyyah," the forerunner of all Arab journalism.

In 1834, he was appointed Director of the American Missionary Press in Malta. While in Malta, he secured in 1838 the office of Preceptor in Arabic, and conducted classes both in the Lyceum and in the Valletta Primary school. He also claims to have taught in the University (Ch. 3), but of this there appears to be no corroboration in the University records. At that time, however, the Maltese showed little interest in the study of Arabic, and Shidyâq appears to have found it easy to obtain leave of absence fairly frequently. Indeed, although he finally left Malta in 1848, it was not until two years later that he intimated his decision not to return, and thus vacated the office.

His travels next took him to France and England where, under the auspices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, he collaborated in the translation of the Bible into Arabic.

While in Paris in 1855, he met and eulogised the Bey of Tunis. As a result, he was invited to enter the service of the Tunisian government. He did so, and in Tunisia edited the newspaper *ar-Râ'id at-Tûnisi*. There he also became a Muslim, and thereafter was known as Ahmad Fâris ash-Shidyâq.

In 1857, he was appointed Corrector of the Government Press in Istanbul. Still in Istanbul, he founded in July 1860 a very successful weekly, *al-Jawâ'ib*, which in collaboration with his son Salîm he continued to edit until 1884. He died in 1887.

Father Cheikho names a relative and a friend of Shidyâq's as affirming that before his death he confessed his sins to an Armenian Catholic priest, and died a Christian; such an account, however, is obviously suspect.

1. See Brockelmann, *Geschichte*; A. Cremona, *L'Antica Fondazione della Scuola di Lingua Araba in Malta*, Malta, 1955; Louis Cheikho, *al-Adâb al-'Arabiyyah fî 'l-Qarn at-Tâsi' 'ashar*, v. 2, Bayrût, 1926.

II

Shidyâq's earliest known work is *Khabariyyât As'ad ash-Shidyâq* (Malta, 1833), an account of his brother's "martyrdom".

As a teacher, he produced a number of manuals: *Kitâb al-Muhâwarah* (Malta, 1840), consisting of Arabic and English grammatical exercises and dialogues; a *Practical Arabic Grammar* (2nd ed.: London, 1866); an English grammar, *al-Bâkûrât ash-Shahiyyah* (Malta, 1836; Istanbul, 1300 A.H.), and a French one, *as-Sanad ar-Râwî* (Paris, 1854), both for the use of Arabs; and even a translation of W.F. Maier's *Natural History for the use of Schools* under the title of *Sharh Tabâ'i' al-Hayawân* (Malta, 1841). He is also credited with a "philosophy of education" entitled *Falsafat at-Tarbiyah wa 'l-Adab* (Alexandria).

His highest attainments as a scholar were displayed in his linguistic studies: *Kanz al-Lughât* (Bayrût, 1876), a Persian-Turkish-Arabic dictionary; *Sirr al-Layâl fi 'l-Qalb wa 'l-Ibdâl* (Istanbul, 1284), on etymology; *Ghunyat at-Tâlib wa Munyat ar-Râghib* (Istanbul, 1288, 1306), on grammar; and *al-Jâsûs 'alâ 'l-Qâmûs* (Istanbul, 1299), consisting of critical notes on Fîrûzâbâdî's famous dictionary. Cheikho also mentions a work entitled *Muntahâ 'l-Ajab fi Khasa is Lughat al-'Arab*, the MS of which was damaged by fire before it could be printed.

Like most Arab men of letters of his time, Shidyâq wrote poetry — panegyrics and occasional pieces of no great inspiration. One of the seven volumes of selections from the *Jawâ'ib* which have appeared under the title of *Kanz ar-Raghâ'ib fi Muntakhabât al Jawâ'ib* consists entirely of such poems.

He also had a reputation as a prose writer, his main vehicle being, as it was for most of his Arab contemporaries, the short prose piece — article, essay, or simple narrative — which more often than not appeared in a periodical, but sometimes also in book form as in *al-Lafîf fi Kull Ma'nâ Zarîf* (Malta, 1839; Istanbul, 1299, 1306) and *al-Maqâmah al-Bakhshîshiyah* (Algiers, 1893). Indeed it was through his impressions and reactions to European life, and consequently his criticisms of Arab life, that he made his most distinctive mark on the Arab Renaissance. The record of these impressions and reactions we find in countless articles, in his twin travel books *al-Wâsitah fi Ma'rifat Ahwâl Mâlitah* (The Means to the Knowledge of Malta's Conditions) and *Kashf al-Mukhabbâ 'an Funûn Urûbbâ* (The Unveiling of what was Hidden regarding the Arts of Europe) published together in I volume (Tunis, 1855; Istanbul, 1299), and in *as-Sâq 'alâ 's-Sâq fîma huwa 'l-Fâryâq* (Paris, 1855), in which he related the adventures of Fâryâq (his own name telescoped) in various countries, interspersing his narrative with criticisms of various social institutions. Superficial and ephemeral as these works are in themselves, they were nevertheless one channel through which Europe and its culture became known to the Arabs, and a current of fresh ideas was stirred up which eventually produced Modernism.

Until the end of the 18th century, Arab letters had been stunted by rigid conventionalism both in subject matter and modes of expression, and "fine

writing" had become largely a display of wordy ingenuity, echoes of which we find in the clumsy rhyming titles of Shidyâq's books. The style which Shidyâq and other journalists and writers now adopted, direct and functional, was in itself a new departure and pointed the way to future practice. Shidyâq further enlivened his style with touches of humour all too rare in Arabic writing, although precisely because of a lack of tradition of fine humour his sallies tend to be coarse and crude.

III.

In Shidyâq's books on Malta, the bias against the Maltese is so patent that no one need be warned against it. Unsubtle reasons for this bias are not far to seek. As a one-time Catholic turned Protestant, he could scarcely have felt altogether at ease while in Malta, and his observations — although presumably jotted down at various times — were not published until after he had entered the service of a Muslim prince and became a Muslim himself. But there is more to it than this.

Beginning with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, Europe had burst upon the Arab world in a sudden and none too friendly fashion. Its superior techniques not only gave it political ascendancy, but also shattered ways of living and ways of thinking that the Near East had for centuries accepted without question. Not surprisingly, many Arabs simply recoiled from the ways of the West in bewilderment and horror. They were the reactionaries. But those who were in time to determine the course of the Arab Renaissance looked upon the West with a mixture of admiration and resentment: they admired its success, they resented the position of inferiority in which it placed them. And in time, Arab Modernism was to make use of both these sentiments, seeking in the West itself the sources of strength that would enable it to assert itself against the West.

Shidyâq was one of the precursors of this Modernism. His admiration of the West is clearly expressed — he is surprised to find what he takes to be a deficiency in the music of Europeans (Ch. 6) for "I considered that all sciences had come into their hands, and all arts were theirs alone." And so is the resentment: He lashes out against European travellers who criticize Arab cities (Ch. 3), and he confesses candidly — confident that his Arab readers would approve — that rather than admit that at home there were no such splendid public occasions as the Governor's fancy-dress ball, he gave enquirers a misleading answer (Ch. 3).

But in Shidyâq these raw materials of Arab modernism as yet serve no militant purpose, form no coherent pattern. London and Paris overwhelm him. They are centres of palpable might and undeniable achievement, they belong almost to a different world. But to find anything comparable in tiny Malta, standing as it does on the doorstep of the Arab world and displaying some points of kinship with it, irks him beyond endurance, and he pours out his gall upon it. Its cultural life he can regard only as the refuse of what is to be found in Europe (Ch. 2); he finds it necessary to inveigh even against its God-given features, its climate and its geography; and it clearly assuages his wounded pride to assert that the Muslims once reduced the Maltese to subjection by brute force rather than entertain the view that their penetration was unopposed. Even when he changes his tone, as when he praises Maltese

women for their thrift (Ch. 4), one suspects that he is actuated not so much by a sense of justice as by a desire to preach to his own folk.

When this massive bias has been discounted, it remains curious to observe how this man, who was open-minded enough to favour social practices regarding engagements and marriages (see Ch. 4) which conflicted with prejudices most deeply entrenched in his own society, yet balked at minor differences of convention in matters of dress or etiquette. It is as though he had burst into a room where the lighting arrangements were so unexpected that his sense of perspective was upset.

Shidyâq's work suffers from other defects which reflect in part the cultural stagnation from which the Arabs were then emerging, in part the inadequacies of the man himself. For all that he had broken the stiff formalism of literary convention and injected some life into his book, his writing remains so disgressive and unintegrated that several of his chapters appear to derive their titles merely from the contents of the first paragraph. He also betrays his scholastic background in the way he sets up one authority against another to decide questions of History (Ch. 1) — and in what other 19th century writer would one find an appeal to Aristotle to explain the salinity of Malta's water? He has no qualms about reporting on hearsay — although he lived in Malta for 14 years — that some Maltese eat mice or frogs to counter a fright. Indeed some of his own observations are not only suspect, but patently absurd, as when he asserts that vegetables even if grown abroad lose their savour when they are brought to Malta. Above all nowhere in Shidyâq's book does one find a glimmer of analytical insight, of appreciation of cause and effect, relationship at any but the most superficial level, or of understanding of the forces that mould society. To this shallow — although by no means brief — acquaintance with the object of his study, we must ascribe Shidyâq's ludicrous misreadings of history (Ch. 1), such naive conclusions as that the finest musical instrument in the West is the concertina (Ch. 6), and such misguided pronouncements as his condemnation of judges who treat the low-born and the respectable alike (Ch. 3).

In fact, in its expressed opinions, in its stresses and omissions, the book is more revealing of the mental processes of a 19th century Arab in his contacts with a foreign culture than it is of conditions in Malta. This is why — in Ch. 4 in particular — notes have been added which attempt to define the starting point of Shidyâq's observations. The book contains, nevertheless, a wealth of details which it is possible to rescue from the author's mis-handling. It is an eye-witness account, and even though the eye be a jaundiced one it will, if cautiously approached, repay study by those who are interested in things Maltese.

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Chapter I, which deals with "The Topography of Malta" consists of a selection of passages from a source of which Shidyâq says no more than that it is "a short book composed by Micallef on the history of Malta", and into which he occasionally interjects some comment or observation of his own.

Despite its heading, the chapter touches not only on the topography, but also on the climate, produce, population, and history of Malta. Unfortunately, Shidyâq was ill-equipped to deal with most of these subjects: he chose his material without discrimination, and sometimes ludicrously misconstrued it. His excursions into Arabic etymology, however, take him onto somewhat

firmer ground, and what he has to say of early 19th century Malta or of Malta's connection with the Arabs — whether the observations be Micallef's or his own — is not devoid of interest either. The chapter ends with the following reference to Gozo:—

“Let me add that I have seen the island of Ghawdex more than once. Its name I believe to be corrupted from the word *hawdaj* [the camel-borne palanquin in which Arab women used to be carried], and that the Muslims gave it this name because it looked like one, even as they called the other two islands *kamunah* (cummin seed), and *filfilah* [Filfla: pepper grain], because they are small. An objection to this derivation is that its own inhabitants pronounce it with a *ghayn*, not a *'ayn* as do the Maltese, and I know of no other word in their language in which the ‘h’ has been changed to *ghayn*; the substitution of ‘sh’ for ‘j’, on the other hand, is frequent.

Its land is fairer than that of Malta, especially as its fields are open to view — like those of France and England, but unlike those of Malta, as will be mentioned later. Its fruits and plants are better [than Malta's], and its people more open-hearted. Its donkeys and mules are sturdy, but not lively. A donkey there may be sold for [as much as] forty pounds. As for trees, its apples are scarcely any bigger than the brambles of Syria, its fig-trees spread out on the ground, and it has only one walnut; there is also a palm-tree there, but it bears no fruit.

The names of all its villages and topographical features are pure Arabic.

One manifestation of the stupidity of its people which made me laugh is that they have their wheat threshed by their farm animals without the help of a threshing machine: thus they may tie every two [animals] together and make them tread on the ears of corn until one part is forced to this side and the other to that. The same is true in Malta.

A curious feature of the soil of Ghawdex is that every part of it is planted and ploughed except the one that faces Malta; it is as though it was a matter of maintaining equivalence!

As for Comino, there is nothing in it except one house and a church. Its soil is of little use.”

* * * *

In Chapter 2 “On the Climate of Malta, its Recreational Spots and Other Such Matters”, Shidyâq touches on the derivation of Malta's name, which, “if it is of Arabic origin, is from the root m-l-t. Most derivatives from this root denote nakedness and emptiness, or denuding and voiding; it would follow that it was so called because it is devoid of groves, mountains, rivers, and the like.”

The following extracts from this chapter are of interest:—

“On the whole, Malta deserves to be called “a chest of winds” for it is never without wind, either cold or hot. Its commonest wind in the summer is the *Sâfiyâ'* which brings dust and pulverised matter, blowing it into the faces of people and causing it to penetrate houses through the interstices of window panes.

Strangely enough, the East wind which in winter it bitterly cold is in summer oppressively hot. It causes the timbers of houses to crack even if they are stained. It makes the rafters of the roof creak. It dries up glass and makes it brittle so that it breaks at the slightest touch. It wrinkles skin and paper. Even iron and brass and bone and the like are affected by it.

Tallow is made to rot so that a candle in the house will smell like a corpse. The temperature may reach over 100°. During the night the heat will then dictate that one should wear light linen clothing and sleep without a blanket. Most of the Maltese sleep on the roof because the roofs of their houses, unlike those of Europe, are not sloping.

In summer, if a man walk but a few steps he finds himself swimming in perspiration, and before long he is scorched by a gust of hot wind; one must therefore be more wary than a crow. Moreover, because the land is without woods or groves, without hills or rivers — it is in fact just a dish in the middle of the sea — when the sun shines upon it it covers it all uniformly; there is no shelter on it from anything. It may also be that its heat is increased by the fire which comes out of the mountain of Sicily.

[Incidentally], in spite of its proximity to Italy its houses — unlike those of Tunis — have no marble in them; nor have they any running water as Syrian houses have.

One of the reasons which make winter there harsh and unpleasant is that its buildings are of a humid stone. Indeed if it is kept in a shaded place for a number of years it is covered with greenery. When it is first quarried it is green and watery, and does not turn white until it has been exposed to the air and the sun for a number of years. One of its properties is that it is easily carved, so that one can see various holy images made of it in the houses and the churches. Some of this stone may even be sent as trade to other countries

Sometimes the drugs and aromatics which are stored for long in Malta deteriorate altogether and lose what property they have. Tobacco and snuff and wine if kept there long lose their aroma altogether; this is because its floors and walls and roofs are, as I have said, of moist stone, so that if, for example, salt is placed in a box it soon becomes as moist as if it had been mixed with water. Foodstuffs and liquids similarly turn putrid if placed in a pantry of stained wood, for humidity communicates itself to the stain . . .

One thing recommended by the doctors here is the use of the woollen vests known at "flannels", both in summer and in winter — in winter for warmth, and in summer for the absorption of perspiration and for protection against the harmfulness of the wind which penetrates the pores. [So harmful indeed is this] that the Maltese fear the effect of the wind on their animals, and if they halt a horse turn its face away from the wind. This is the standard by which to measure.

Malta's ground is bald, a bare rock poor in soil or trees or plants, and the whole of its perimeter is rocky, with nothing growing on it. Yet by dint of its people's efforts and excessive toil most kinds of vegetables and fruits grow in it. Nevertheless their crops suffice them only four months [in the year]. The remainder [of their needs] has to be brought in from the lands which produce them. Thus wheat and cotton garments are imported from Egypt, Turkey and Greece; fruit and wine from Sicily; cattle and sheep and oil from Africa, and so on. Some even assert that the soil was originally brought in from Sicily.

Carob trees and cacti which require but little soil are there more precious than walnuts in Syria. The carob trees stick close to the ground like buttons, and the cacti are surrounded with high walls as if they formed a fruit-garden, and each [prickly pear] is wrapped in a garlic leaf to protect it from the

evil eye, although it is something which the eye tries to avoid. And if you ask one of the Maltese why they have so few groves, he says, "We Europeans concern ourselves only with the cultivation of the soil." How graceless and unjust they are!

If you should wander off into the countryside you will find between every two fields a wall so high as to prevent you from seeing what there is beyond. How ill does this compare with the plains of France or England which are open to the eye in all their freshness and luxuriance, with their heaps of grain or herbage unguarded by any watchman and unprotected by any wall.

Most kinds of fruit trees and edible vegetables — except sweet lemons, sugar-cane, and gherkins — are to be found in Malta, and the fruit is, on the whole, good. Prickly pears, however, are mostly pips, and so are pomegranates. Most fruits are sold unripe; they are seldom allowed to ripen for fear that thieves might steal them. They are all cheaper than in Egypt. Figs are of many varieties. Grapes do not last more than three months, but oranges are in season for some seven months, and some are sent as delicacies to England and other countries. Such fruit as is imported from Sicily is meant only to supplement the deficiency [in local production].

There are also kinds of fruits which are not to be found in our lands. One kind is called *farâwlî* (It. fragole: strawberries); it consists of small red berries of the same size as brambles; they are sour, but are improved by sugar. Another is called *nisbulî* (It. nespole; medlars); it is like the apricot or the ox-eye, and has a large stone. Another is called *żorbî* (It. sorbe: sorb-apples); it resembles the azarole and is very sour; it is kept in clusters, which resemble racemes of dates: a few of the fruits ripen every day, and the whole cluster lasts for months.

The Maltese do not know how to preserve fruit for use in winter, as is done in European countries — in France and England, apples and grapes are never unobtainable.

Their vegetables, however, are not good, being too watery: when you see them in the market place, you are delighted by their freshness, but once cooked they turn out to be tasteless. Onions and radishes and the like, which are biting by nature, are tasteless there, and even if imported from other countries they alter their taste. The same is true of cabbages, aubergines, and the like; scarcely does any one of these appear [in the local market] but it turns gross and tough.

Strange to say, although Malta's vegetation is as has been described, its honey is extremely good.

Among the vegetables not to be found there are marrows, cucumbers, and Jew's mallow; similarly deficient are milk, cream, and melted butter; of this last the mere off-scourings are sometimes imported from Tripoli [in Libya], but the Maltese all loathe it, and cook their food with lard

Of its gardens, the most famous is that of San Antonio, the summer residence of the Governor. It is there that the Amir Bashir Shihab² resided with his family, the Governor having given it up in his favour, in order to do honour to his position. [This garden] is bright and well set out, but it is in

2. A powerful man in the Lebanon, the Amîr Bashîr sympathised with Muhammad 'Alî of Egypt and welcomed the weakening of the Ottoman hold on the Arabs. When in 1840 the Egyptian forces had to withdraw from Syria and Ottoman authority was re-asserted, the Amîr had to leave the country.

a hollow, and has no seats or suitable places in which the stroller might eat or drink. It is not the custom of the Maltese to take food to such places of recreation on feast days or at other times; they follow in this the custom of the English, for they can sit only on chairs. The use they make of them is therefore limited to walking, or strutting conceitedly arm in arm with a friend, or ambling alone whistling and chirping. Even if they had a water-side parade or a fine garden, they would not know how to enjoy themselves except by strolling³. I know of a promenade known as *Biyâtâ* (Pietà) which is very elegant, but there is no place there in which one may have coffee or an iced drink, no restaurant, no music, no chair to sit on. If there were such a place in Paris or Egypt or Syria you would see it stacked with chairs and seats from beginning to end, and equipped with everything that delights the soul. On the whole, the English and the Maltese alike have no taste in such matters.

Then there is the *Bûskit* (Buskett), which means the Grove. It is three hours distant from Valletta. It is of unpleasantly steep approach and of little reward, for it consists of a few trees and dishevelled flowers, planted without art. In it however is a grotto within which is an abundant spring, with a table and stone seats around it, where those who wish to eat may sit. This spot is the best in the whole island for recreation, and this water the most limpid to be found. Near it is a tower which of old was a prison in which those who contravened the Church were punished, as was the practice also in Spain and elsewhere.

Then there is *al-Mutahlab* (Mtahleb) which is more verdant than the Buskett, and also farther [from Valletta], being at the extremity, lengthwise, of Malta. There is a pond there the water of which is covered with green moss (Ar.: *tahlub* or *tihlib*). It would seem that the place was named after this.

Malta's water-wheels are similar to those of Egypt and Syria. The Tunisians and Tripolitarians use the word *sâniyah* [another word for water wheel], which according to lexicographic works means a she-camel upon which water is drawn⁴.

(To be continued).

3. Cf. C.S. Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, London, 1800: "The Orientals who are not obliged to work, remain almost always seated, with their legs crossed under them; they never walk without occasion, but only to go from one place to another, when anything calls them. If they have a mind to enjoy the coolness of an orchard, or of the vicinity of the water, as soon as they get there they sit down. They know not what exercise is, except on horseback, for they are very fond of riding. It is a curious thing to see them survey an European that is walking in a room, or in the open air, and continually turning about. They cannot comprehend the motive of this going and coming, without any apparent object, and which they consider as an act of madness. The most rational among them think it is by the advice of our physicians that we walk about in this manner, as an exercise necessary for the cure of some disease".

4. Lane elaborates as follows: "A she-camel upon which water is drawn from a [deep] well [by a man riding or leading it away from the well, it having the two extremities of a long rope tied to the saddle, and the upper end of the well-rope being tied to the middle of the former rope].

"TAGLIA" AND "TACCA"

THE MARKETING OF FARM PRODUCE IN THE PAST

By Prof. J. GALEA

The Maltese farmer is a hardworking, industrious soul who toils from early morning to night; he is frugal in his habits and thrifty by nature; with patience and perseverance he ekes a modest living from the poorest of soils. He is generous and simple in his ways and he is generally happy with his lot; he is attached to his fields and he is a lover of animals. Like their kin in other lands, the Maltese farmers are well versed in the lore of nature and they are very conservative in their outlook. Some of them spurn modern machinery and prefer archaic implements of biblical times.

A curious aspect of the farmer's life in Malta was the way in which he marketed the produce of his fields; it was both odd and primitive. Fruits and vegetables were gathered in the afternoon, the fruit being collected in wicker baskets of two sizes: the *mezza* or *qoffa* measuring about 18 x 14 inches and the *qartalla* about 24 x 18 inches. In the *mezza* small size fruits were placed, such as plums, peaches, tomatoes, whilst the *qartalla* contained the larger produce: melons, cabbage, lettuce. Strawberries and blackberries were carried in small narrow baskets called *qāleb* (pl. *qwieleb*) about 12 x 3 inches in size. Certain vegetables, such as turnips, celery, spinach were tied into sheafs or bundles and dipped in the water of the cistern to keep them cool and fresh. Late in the afternoon the produce was loaded on a horse-cart and prepared for carrying to market.

Before the War there were four main markets established at B'Kara, Cospicua, Marsa and Rabat, and two smaller ones at Mosta and at Zebbug. Each market was owned and managed by a person known as *Pitkal* (It. *bottegale*); he acted as adviser and broker to the farmers who entrusted him with the sale of their crops. He usually rendered account once or twice a year about *Santa Marija* (the Feast of the Assumption) in mid-August and at Christmas-tide when farm rents usually became due.

In season the farmers drove their carts loaded with fruit and vegetables to market. Some came from nearby villages, others drove from outlying hamlets and isolated farmsteads, such as Għirgenti, Dingli, Imtāleb, Bahrija, Għajn Tuffieha and Mellieha which lie miles away from the nearest market. It took the farmer six, sometimes even eight hours to drive his slow-going horse or mule to market and return back home.

Farmers started early after midnight to escape the broiling heat of the summer days. Those living in distant areas left their farm about one or two in the morning and either perched on the left shaft of the cart or, trudging by the side of the horse, drove at a leisurely pace to Rabat, Marsa, Cospicua or Birkirkara; on the way they met other farmers and together they joined in convoys of four or more carts. Each cart had an oil or candle lamp fixed to the right shaft which in the darkness of the night gave to the convoy an eerie sight when seen from a distance. Residents living in the main streets of towns or villages on the route to markets, were accustomed to hear in the stillness

of the night the creaking of the big cartwheels, the clattering of the hoofs on the hard macadam surface of the roads and the tinkling of the bells hung round the neck of the beasts of burden, which sounds were not altogether unpleasant. Those nocturnal drives were such a characteristic feature of life in old Malta that they earned a descriptive reference in an old manuscript history of this island. The author wrote: "*...Malta fornisce grande abbondanza di vegetabili e frutti. Infatti ella sarebbe una vista sorprendente per un forestiere lo star fuori di Porta Bombe la mattina prima della levata del sole nella stagione dei frutti, come pure in tempo d'Inverno, e vedere i numerosi carri carichi dei menzionati articoli che aspettano l'apertura della Porta per entrare in città.* Il mercato in tali tempi è ben provveduto di fragole, fichi, pomegranati, uva, mele, peri, persiche, nocipresche, albicocchi, prune, meloni e fichi d'India . . .*"

Most of the farmers arrived about four in the morning when business at the market was liveliest, hundreds of buyers vying with each other to bid for the pick of the crops; there were yells and shouts and other noises creating wild confusion and an amazing din. The market and its surroundings were closely covered with baskets of luscious fruits and bundles of fresh vegetables filling the air with that pleasant sight and smell of the yield of the good earth.

Bidding was brisk; it was done in whispers in the ear of the *pitkal* who said nothing but simply bended his head forward or backward in accordance with whether the price offered was accepted or not.

1. 	2. 	3. 
4. 	5. 	6. 
7. 	1. 1 SCUDO 5. 1 RBIEGHI 2. 5 SCUDI 6. 1 RBIEGHI 3. 10 SCUDI 7. CARLINO 4. 1 SCUDO	

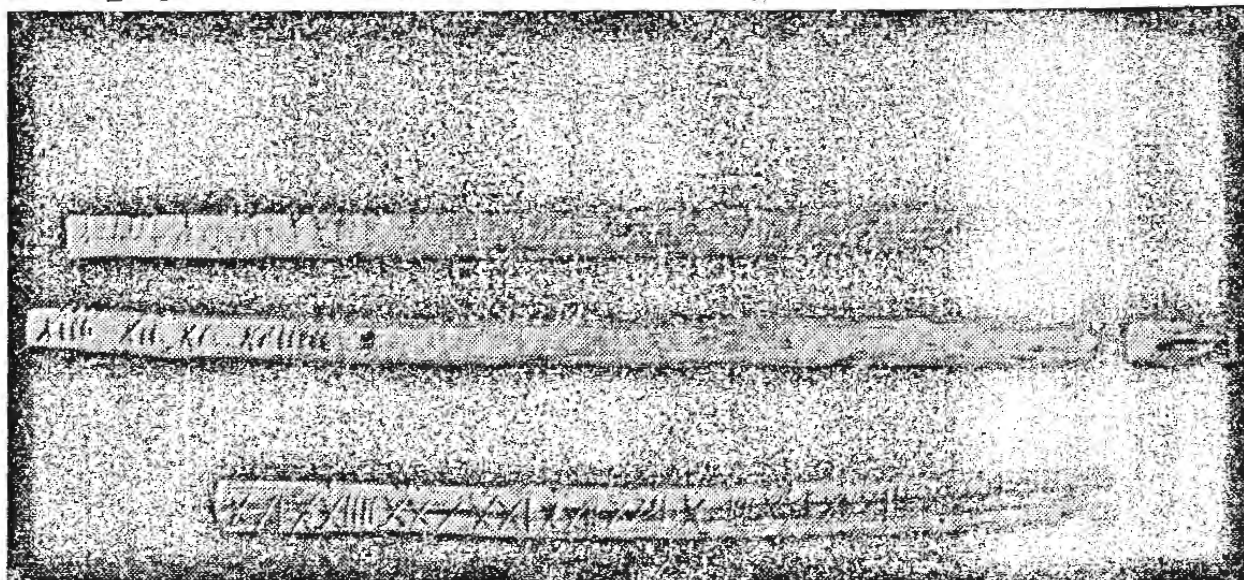
System of notches recording sales of farm produce.

After unloading his cart each farmer repaired to the clerk's desk to record the various items brought by him to the market and to receive account

* When this manuscript history was written about a hundred years ago, the gates of the city used to be closed during the night and farmers arriving early in the morning had to wait until the gates were opened at dawn to take their produce to the market which then existed in Valletta.

of the sale of the last delivery. This transaction was the most quaint and characteristic of the whole business. Accounts were rendered in *skudi* (one *scudo*=20 pence), *rbghajja* (three *rbghajja*=5 pence) and *karlini* (one *karlin*=10 farthings). All these were currencies during the rule of the Grand Masters in Malta.

Sales were recorded on the *taglia*, which was made from a species of cane called *virga* belonging to the *Juncaceae* family. The cane, which has a soft texture, was cut into pieces, each piece being split into two halves; each half, between fifteen and twenty inches in length, had a smooth surface on one side and a convex one on the other forming a thin edge where both surfaces met. Sales were entered by a system of notches cut on both surfaces and edges of the *taglia*. Notches were of different shapes and sizes each representing a particular amount. The *skudi* were notched on the surfaces; the *rbghajja* and *karlini* were cut on the edges. A vertical notch on the



Sales recorded on the 'Taglia'.

surface was equivalent to one *skud*, a notch cut slantwise was equivalent to five *skudi*; two notches cut crosswise were equivalent to ten *skudi*; an unnotched cut represented half a *skud*. A vertical notch cut on the edge of the *taglia* meant one *rbieghi*; if cut slantwise it represented half an *rbieghi* whilst an unnotched cut on the edge was equivalent to one *karlin*. A line on the surface separated the sale of one whole lot from another.

Rarely sales were recorded on the *tacca* instead of the *taglia*, in which the various values instead of being cut on the surface of one *taglia* were notched on the surfaces of two *taglias* placed side by side. One *taglia* was kept by the farmer, the other was retained by the *pitkal* and both *taglias* had to be produced to determine the amount. The *tacca* system was meant to prevent tampering with figures on one *taglia*.

When both surfaces were covered with notches, the *taglias* were stowed in the old chest at the farm and left there to accumulate until Easter, St. Mary's Day or Christmas when all the *taglias* were collected and taken by the farmer to the *Pitkal*, who added the notches on all the *taglias*, checked with his ledgers, converted the total into English money and paid the account in sterling. That was a happy day for the farmer who after finishing his business with the *pitkal* proceeded to town to buy some trinket for the family.

The *taglia* and *tacca* systems of reckoning sales were recognised by the Law as legal documents of business transaction, their validity being confirmed by many pertinent sentences delivered in the Commercial section of Her Majesty's Courts of Law. The system lingered on up to a few years ago. It was prevalent at the Pitkali market before the First World War, but then, in between the wars, with the spread of education, many a farmer's son and daughter were able to read and write and they preferred to have written accounts of the sale of their products. Such accounts were rendered on sheets of paper called *kunter*; each sheet was like a leaf of a ledger, only it was narrower, 14 x 4½ inches, and was divided into three columns. In the left hand column were indicated the month and the days of the month when deliveries were made, in the middle column the number of items of each delivery was recorded, whilst on the right hand column the sale of each delivery was entered in *skudi*, *rbghajja* and farthings, ten farthings making one *karlin*.

The *pitkal*, after notching the sale of the previous day on the *taglia* or writing it on the *kunter*, used to give to the farmer two pence which were afterwards deducted from the day's sale. The farmer then loaded the empty baskets on his cart, placed some fodder in a basket before his horse or mule and afterwards he repaired to the nearest shop for a cup of black coffee or a glass of tea with lemon; there he spent a little while exchanging gossip with his cronies and discussing prices and crops. He then joined other farmers from the same area and together they started to return home. Those who had a long way to drive never forgot to water their animals at the public water troughs which at that time were scattered on the high roads; and when they were away from towns and villages driving in convoys, sometimes the driver of the first cart led whilst the others took a nap on their cart leaving the animals to follow the leader. This leading was taken in turn so as to give all farmers a chance to relax and rest a little on their way back, such relaxation being most welcome during the whole journey sometimes lasting for well over eight hours.

The farmers arrived back at the farm when the sun had already risen and the day's work had begun. Each farmer unharnessed his tired animal and led it to the stable, he then washed in the cool water of the spring, took a frugal meal and was ready for another fruitful day.

Today both the *taglia* and the *kunter* systems are no more. Their end came when the Farmers' Cooperatives and Government-controlled Pitkali Markets were established. Now farmers are given vouchers of sales or cheques which may be cashed at any time. Gone also are the long night drives, the mule carts, the tinkling bells. Farmers nowadays take their produce to market during daytime and the colourful old horse carts have been replaced by motor vehicles running at breakneck speed.

AN OLD MALTESE RHYME AND SOME PARALLELS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

By J. BEZZINA

It is well known that everywhere such lore as has survived has in the course of centuries been polished by the passing of time. The aim of this article is to show some parallels between a Maltese rhyme and two Arabic versions, one from Iraq and one from Sana'â', in Yemen. The Iraqi version is here reproduced as it appeared in E.S. Stevens's *Folktales of Iraq*, published in 1931. I am indebted to Mr. J. Cassar Pullicino who has kindly furnished me with the text of the Sana'â' version published by E. Rossi in *L'Arabo parlato a Sana'â'* (Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1939, p. 122). Dr. Luigi Bonelli published the first variant of the Maltese rhyme, with an Italian translation, in *Saggi del Folklore dell'Isola di Malta*, in 1895. He stated that in his time this balderdash or, as he calls it, "filastrocca", was recited both in the country and in the towns by parents to young children who were willing to listen to a 'Storia' (story). To this day nearly all Maltese children know this rhyme or a variant of it.

A second version from Tarxien was published by J. Cassar Pullicino in *Lehen il-Malti* (April/June 1948). Since then, I heard four variants of the same rhyme, the first three from Rabat and the other from Hal Dwin, one of the oldest Maltese villages, close to Żebbuġ. The first one, which I heard from the late Giuseppa Falzon, a 68-year old Rabat woman, is made up of 19 lines, like the Iraqi version published by Stevens. In the variants it is marked *Rabat* (a) and the two extra lines it contains are shown as 10a and 15a. I heard the second one *Rabat* (b) from 10-year-old Joyce Sammut, and the third one *Rabat* (c) from 11-year-old Rita Vella, both of them from Rabat but living in different streets. The fourth variant (shown as *Hal Dwin* in the chart) was forwarded to me by Mr. Luret Cutajar, born at Żebbuġ, in Malta, of which the hamlet of Hal Dwin forms part.

My *Rabat* (c) is identical with that published by Bonelli, except for lines 13 and 14, which may be compared with lines 14 and 15 in the Iraqi version, with which they are identical except for the last word in my fourteenth *is-satal* which in the 15th line of the Iraqi version is *fattal*. One must note that in Maltese *fattal* means also to twist. The Hal Dwin version is also composed of 19 lines, with the addition of lines 8a and 8b. Both the first Maltese variants and *Rabat* (b) and (c) are composed of 17 lines, like the Sana'â' version. Lines 1-15 in all Maltese variants are nearly identical with those published by Bonelli fifty three years ago. The only differences are found in line 1 from Tarxien, line 2 from Tarxien and Rabat (a), line 6 from Tarxien, line 7 from Tarxien and Hal Dwin, line 9 from Hal Dwin, line 11 from Rabat (a), line 13 in all versions except that from Tarxien, line 14 in all Rabat versions differing from the others as well as from each other. On the other hand the last line differs in all Maltese variants, although the last two lines in the Rabat (b) and Hal Dwin versions may be compared with the last two lines published by Bonelli.

In comparing them one must keep in mind Bonelli's note to the effect that the name *qattusa* is often replaced by proper names, especially those of the story-teller and his listener. Comparing these three versions with Mr. J. Cassar Pullicino's version and the Rabat (a) version, one can trace not only the movement of the story from one place to another but also how and why new variants crop up, i.e., if you hear it from an educated person it is probably a purged version.

E.S. Stevens probably heard the Iraqi version from Lili, a Baghdad woman. In comparing the Iraqi version with any of the Maltese variants the difference of ideas between the first eight lines is conspicuous, but then the lines start to convey to us the same story.

E. Rossi says of the Sana'â' version that the rhyme, which he calls a *canto*, is a song to the sun when hidden behind the clouds. Here also the ideas expressed in the first few lines are quite different from the Maltese ones, but as the story goes on, one becomes conscious of the same message and moral. For all versions have the same fundamental *motif*, namely to teach children that life in the form of "MA" or water originated from God.

BONELLI'S VERSION

1. Darba kien hemm sultan,
There once lived a sultan,
2. Habat tintu mat-tigan,
*Knocked his buttocks against
a pan,*
3. It-tigan irid il-bajd,
The pan needs eggs,
4. Il-bajd ghand it-tigieġa,
Eggs are laid by the hen,
5. It-tigieġa trid in-nuhhala,
The hen wants bran,
6. In-nuhhala ghand il-furnar,
The bran is at the baker's,
7. Il-furnar irid il-flus,
The baker wants money,
8. Il-flus ghand l-istampier,
The money is at the mint-man,
9. L-istampier irid il-ward,
The mint-man wants roses,

OTHER MALTESE VARIANTS

Tarxien:

1. Darba kien hawn sultan,
Here once lived a sultan,

Tarxien:

2. U habat mat-tigan,
*And knocked himself against
a pan,*

Rabat (a):

2. Habat siequ mat-tigan,
Knocked his foot against a pan,

Tarxien and Hal Dwin:

6. In-nuhhala ghand it-tahhana,
*The bran is at the (she)
miller's*

Tarxien and Hal Dwin:

7. It-tahhana trid il-flus,
The (she) miller wants money.

Hal Dwin:

- 8a. L-istampier irid ir-ram,
The mint-man needs copper,
- 8b. Ir-ram ghand Mastru Ġwann,
Copper is at Master John's,
9. Mastru Ġwann irid il-ward,
Master John wants roses,

10. Il-ward ġewwa l-qasrija,
Roses are in the flower-pot,
11. Il-qasrija trid l-ilma,
The flower-pot needs water,
12. L-ilma ġewwa l-bir,
Water is in the well,
13. Il-bir irid il-qannata,
The well needs a pitcher,
14. Il-qannata trid il-habel,
The pitcher needs a rope,
15. Il-habel ta' l-istoppa,
The rope is made from oakum,
16. Il-qattusa tkakki,
The cat relieves itself,
17. U int timbokka.
And you swallow it.
- Rabat (a):
10a. Il-qasrija trid il-hamrija,
The flower-pot needs soil,
11. Il-hamrija trid l-ilma,
The soil needs water,
- Rabat (a):
13. Il-bir irid is-satal,
The well needs a pail,
- Rabat (b):
13. Il-bir irid il-barmil,
The well needs a bucket,
- Rabat (c):
13. Il-bir irid il-habel,
The well needs a rope,
- Rabat (a):
14. Is-satal irid il-habel,
The pail needs a rope,
- Rabat (b):
14. Il-barmil irid il-habel,
The bucket needs a rope,
- Rabat (c):
14. Il-habel irid is-satal,
The rope needs a pail,
- Rabat (a):
15a. L-istoppa tikber fl-ghalqa,
Oakum grows in the field,
- 15b. L-ghalqa trid ix-xita,
The field needs rain,
- Tarxien:
16. Appa,
Appa,
- Rabat (b):
16. Tona tpixxi,
Tona relieves herself,
- Hal Dwin:
16. Il-kelba tahra,
The bitch shits.
- Rabat (a):
17. U x-xita Alla jaf meta.
And God knows when it rains.
- Tarxien:
17. Il-habel skappa.
The rope slipped.
- Rabat (b):
17. U Ġanni jixxotta.
And John cleans the floor.
- Hal Dwin:
17. U l-kelb jillokka.
And the dog licks it.

IRAQI VERSION*

MALTESE EQUIVALENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Khashabati nu:di nu:di,
<i>My little piece of wood nod,</i>
<i>nod,</i> | 1. Qasbati perper, perper,
<i>My cane nod, nod,</i> |
| 2. Salami:li 'al jidu:di,
<i>Salute my grandad and his</i>
<i>dame,</i> | 2. Sellili għall-ġidd tiegħi,
<i>Salute my relations,</i> |
| 3. Al jidu:d sa:faru 'l-Makka,
<i>To Mecca they have travelled,</i> | 3. Il-ġidd siefru 'l-Mekka,
<i>My relations have travelled</i>
<i>to Mecca,</i> |
| 4. Labbasûni tîb u ka'ka',
<i>And gave me dress and thread</i>
<i>so gay,</i> | 4. Libbsuni libsa u (tawni)
<i>kobba,</i>
<i>They dressed me, and gave me</i>
<i>a thread ball,</i> |
| 5. Wal ka'ka' wein adhumha?
<i>Ball of thread where shall</i>
<i>I keep it?</i> | 5. Wil-kobba fejn se nżommha?
<i>And where shall I keep the</i>
<i>ball of thread?</i> |
| 6. Adhumha batn es sandu:q,
<i>I will put it in the box,</i> | 6. Inżommha ġewwa s-senduq,
<i>I will keep it in the chest,</i> |
| 7. As sandu:q yari:d miftah,
<i>And the box will need a key,</i> | 7. Is-senduq irid muftieh,
<i>The chest will need a key,</i> |
| 8. Wal-miftah yari:d hadda:d,
<i>And the key will need a smith,</i> | 8. Wil-muftieh irid haddied,
<i>And the key will need a smith,</i> |
| 9. Wal hadda:d yari:d fulu:s,
<i>And the locksmith wants</i>
<i>some pay,</i> | 9. Wil-haddied irid il-flus,
<i>And the locksmith wants</i>
<i>money,</i> |
| 10. Wal fulu:s 'and al'aru:s,
<i>Who will pay it? The bride</i>
<i>may!</i> | 10. Wil-flus għand il-gharus,
<i>And the money is with the</i>
<i>bridegroom,</i> |
| 11. Wal 'aru:s batn el Hamma:m,
<i>But the bride is in the bath,</i> | 11. Wil-gharus qieghed jitham-
<i>mam,</i>
<i>And the bridegroom is having</i>
<i>a bath,</i> |
| 12. Wal hamma:m yari:d qandi:l,
<i>And the bath must have a</i>
<i>light,</i> | 12. Wil-banju jrid il-qandil,
<i>And the bath needs a pitcher,</i> |
| 13. Wal qandil ta:mus bil-bîr,
<i>And the candle is in the well,</i> | 13. Wil-qandil imma fil-bir,
<i>And the pitcher is in the well,</i> |
| 14. Wal bîr yari:d habl,
<i>And the well needs a rope,</i> | 14. Wil-bir irid habel,
<i>And the well needs a rope,</i> |
| 15. Wal habl yari:d fatta:l,
<i>And the rope must first be</i>
<i>twisted,</i> | 15. Wil-habel irid jitfattal,
<i>And the rope must be twisted,</i> |

* We regret use of non-phonetic types and some diacritical signs. As far as possible the transcription given follows that of the original published text. Note that colon (:) after vowels indicates long vowels and that symbol x in the Sana'â version stands for Ar. *shin*. [Editor's note].

16. Wal fatta:l yari:d ja:mu:s,
A buffalo the twister's
needing,
17. Wal ja:mu:s yari:d hashi:sh,
The buffalo needs grass,
18. Wal hashi:sh yari:d matar,
And the grass needs water,
19. Wal matar 'and Allah!
And the rain comes from Allah!

SANA'A' VERSION

1. Ya: xamx, fiddi: fiddi:,
O sun, shine, shine,
2. Gad gata':na: ra's al Hindi:,
We cut the head of Al Hindi,
3. Wal-Hindi: yixti ka'keh,
And Al Hindi needs a
rounded cake,
4. Wal-ka'keh min al-mahzan,
And the rounded cake (comes)
from the store,
5. Wal-mahzan yixti miftâh,
And the store needs a key,
6. Wal-miftâh min an-naġġar,
And the key from the
carpenter,
7. Wan-naġġar yixti laban,
And the carpenter wants milk,
8. Wal-laban min al-bugri:
And the milk comes from
the cow,
9. Wal-bugri yixti haxix,
And the cow needs grass,
10. Wal-haxix min al-ġabal,
And the grass comes from
the hill,
11. Wal-ġabal yixti matar,
And the hill needs rain,
12. Wal-matar minn Allah,
And rain comes from Allah,
13. Ya: si:di 'Abdallâh,
My lord Abdallah,
14. Gum, salli:!
Arise, salute (pray)!
15. Ga:l: Ma minnaha xi?
Said: What serves me?
16. Ga:l: Gum, kaddid al-birmeh,
Said: Arise and clean the pot,
17. Ga:l: Ha:dir.
Said: Here I am.

16. Wil-fattal irid il-mus(?),
And the twister needs a
pen-knife(?),
17. Wil-mus(?) irid haxix,
The pen-knife (?) needs
grass,
18. Wil-haxix irid l-ilma,
And the grass needs water,
19. U l-ilma minn ghand Alla.
And water comes from God.

MALTESE EQUIVALENT

1. Ja xenix, iddi iddi,
Oh sun, shine, shine,
2. Qtajna r-ras ta' Al-Hindi,
We cut the head of Al Hindi,
3. Wil-Hindi jixtieq kaghka,
And Hindi needs a ring cake,
4. Wil-kaghka mill-mahzen,
And the ring cake comes
from the store,
5. Wil-mahzen jixtieq muftieh,
And the store needs a key,
6. Wil-muftieh minn ghand
in-naġġâr,
And the key from the
stone-dresser,
7. Win-naġġâr jixtieq il-halib,
And the stone-dresser needs
milk,
8. Wil-halib mill-baqra,
And the milk comes from
the cow,
9. Wil-baqra tixtieq il-haxix,
And the cow needs grass,
10. Wil-haxix mill-ġebel (ġholja),
And the grass comes from
the hill,
11. Wil-ġebel jixtieq ix-xita,
And the hill needs rain,
12. U x-xita minn Alla,
And rain comes from God,
13. Ja sidi Abdallah,
My lord Abdallah,
14. Qum, salli!
Arise pray!
15. Qal: X'jafhuli?
Said: What serves me?
16. Qal: Qum, naddaf il-borma,
Said: Arise and clean the pot,
17. Qal: Hawn jien.
Said: Here I am.

BOOK REVIEW

G. CASSAR PULLICINO, *Canti sulla Passione nelle Isole di Malta*. Estratto da "Lares" Anno XX Fasc. III-IV Luglio-Dicembre 1954 pp. 138-158. Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore.

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G. Cassar-Pullicino, uno dei membri anziani della *Ghaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti* (Società di Scrittori Maltesi) fra i suoi colleghi universitari, è noto oggi per gli studi e lavori intorno al folklore maltese, come anche per ricerche storiche. Questa sua tendenza ed amore per questi studi si manifestarono in lui quando, ancora studente sulle panche liceali, nel 1939 il suo maestro di lingua maltese scelse il suo studio intorno ai *Costumi Maltesi* per essere pubblicato nel giornale universitario *Lehen il-Malti*, in un concorso tra gli studenti della sua classe. Da quel giorno il suo ardore e la sua perseveranza in tali studi crebbero col tempo in tal modo tanto che oggi si è acquistato, tra i pochi studiosi del folklore maltese, una reputazione di un certo valore da distinguere per ciò che è volume e varietà di materie nel campo folkloristico maltese. I suoi studi hanno meritato anche l'approvazione d'insigni maestri di folklore, italiani ed altri, fra cui il Professore Raffaele Corso il quale mi scrisse a proposito il 28 Dicembre 1954, "... Ho letto, in questi giorni, vari suoi lavori, e sono divenuto un suo ammiratore. Con la solerzia che mostra, con la cultura e l'intelligenza che possiede, il Cassar Pullicino potrà coltivare profondamente il folklore maltese, e valorizzarlo e farlo conoscere agli scienziati nei suoi diversi aspetti."

Quest'ultimo suo studio è un estratto da "Larés", organo della *Società di Etnografia Italiana*, un lavoro di valore non meno di altri suoi studi pubblicati nello stesso organo, ed in altre riviste, fra cui *Scientia*, *Lehen il-Malti*, *Rivista della storia delle Scienze Mediche e Naturali* e nel settimanale *Sunday Times of Malta*.

Cassar Pullicino, nella sua raccolta di tradizioni Maltesi, non si limitò soltanto a far delle ricerche rinuziose negli archivi e librerie, ma anche (cosa che ben pochi degli studiosi si presero la briga di fare) cercò di ottenere e raccogliere dalla bocca dei vecchi del contado delle isole di Malta e Gozo i ricordi di antiche costumanze, usi e canti maltesi che Padre Magri ed altri studiosi non riuscirono ad ottenere o non ebbero l'opportunità di ottenere, e così riempì un vuoto nelle tradizioni leggendarie, novellistiche, credenze, superstizioni e canti profani e religiosi.

Questa è una delle pubblicazioni in cui l'autore dimostrò una certa capacità di studio comparativo tra i canti, le preghiere e i versi maltesi intorno alla Passione e quelli in Italia, e Sicilia, e financo Spagna, con cui noi abbiamo avuto dei legami d'idee, credenze e superstizioni religiose dal medio evo sino la fine del secolo decimo ottavo. Nell'esame dei canti e delle preghiere in versi i motivi più rilevanti sono: (i) la separazione di Gesù da sua Madre Maria, (ii) il sacrificio dell'Uomo-Dio, (iii) il Dolore della Madonna, (iv) il presentimento della Passione e Morte di suo Figlio, e (v) le preghiere della Madonna a suo Figlio Gesù a favore dei peccatori, dove la Madonna è sempre il carattere più rilevante nella trama del canto nel dramma della Passione. Nelle scene dove la Madonna è chiamata *Regina dei*

Dolori, Regina dei Martiri, Madre dei Dolori, soprattutto *Madre della Misericordia*, domina la figura della Madonna che guarda il piccolo figliolo, mentre che sogna e presentisce i suoi Sette Dolori, dal momento in cui Cristo suo figlio è schiaffeggiato, e gli vien circondata la testa di una corona di spine, fino alla Sua deposizione dalla croce; se lo vede in grembo come quando l'aveva, bambino, stretto al suo seno: la Madonna sotto la croce, la Madonna che va dietro il cadavere di suo figlio, ed assiste alla sua sepoltura mentre sulle sue gote scendono le lacrime segrete del suo dolore.

Lo studio comparativo tra i canti e le preghiere in versi e altri affini in altre parti dell'Italia, Sicilia e Spagna è fatto con sottile senso critico; fra questi canti vanno menzionati: *La ninna nanna Maltese* (dormi, bimbo, dormi — *orqod, ibni, orqod*), *Il-Brajbu* o *Trajbu* (i.e. Il Verbo) e quello dal titolo *Is-Seba' Duluri* (I Sette Dolori), pareggiati con alcuni versi del canto *Il Sogno di Maria* (Toschi, Umbria, Secolo XII); il dialogo della Madonna (Passione Malta II) con il sarto, il fabbro ferraio, ad il falegname, con idee e versi di cui si ha un riscontro in altri in Umbria ed Abruzzo; di più il canto del *Brajbu* o *Trajbu* (nel villaggio di San Lawrenz, in Gozo) che si riscontra anche in alcuni versioni dei versi del Toschi sulla *Passione* (Italia Centrale IV) e la *Lauda del Anticristo e del Giudizio Finale* in cui troviamo la formula, che conbacia con gli ultimi versi del *Brajbu*, che promette la buona morte a chi dice quella preghiera tre volte al giorno (paragonati anche con altri menzionati in poemetti italiani dei secoli xiii e xiv, in preghiere del Venerdi Santo, ecc.).

Finalmente l'A., dopo aver dato un'idea della forma metrica con sillabazione mista che si distacca da quella del ritmo tradizionale, con arte talvolta di qualche mano esperta, osserva soprattutto che i versi di questi canti rivelano la loro sorgente di vecchia data nelle loro espressioni pure, tolta, di qua e di là, qualche espressione siculo-italiana. Come del resto opina l'A., la loro somiglianza a quelli di alcune parti della alta Italia sarebbe da attribuirsi alla venuta in Malta di una colonia da Celano (città degli Abruzzi) nel secolo decimo terzo, che rimase nell'isola dopo la loro espulsione dalla loro città nativa da Federico Secondo. Il ritorno in Malta di esuli, vecchi e minorenni, dopo la loro emigrazione in Sicilia nei primi tempi dell'Ordine Gerosolomitano, durante le frequenti incursioni di Barbareschi, sarebbe un altro motivo che avrebbe influito sulla assimilazione estranea di questi canti maltesi. Un'altro motivo, come crede anche piuttosto l'A., di tale affinità ritmica con quella di tali canti nella vicina penisola sarebbe da attribuirsi alla venuta in Malta di elementi del clero maltese dalla Sicilia dove vi dimorarono per perfezionarsi nei loro studi, e che dopo il loro ritorno in patria insegnarono questi canti sotto forma di preci in maltese, ciò che da a supporre come parte di alcuni versi hanno una struttura letteraria.

Come seguita ad asserire l'A., queste preghiere si propagarono particolarmente dalle donne che come sesso si occuparono più della educazione e della formazione dei sentimenti religioni dei loro bimbi.

Nella nostra opinione fra i canti o preghiere che rivelano la più vecchia forma in ciò che è espressione e costruzione è la preghiera intitolata *It-Trajbu* (Il Verbo).

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF J. CASSAR PULLICINO'S CONTRIBUTIONS

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- 1942 — *Zewġ Hrejjef Maltin* (Two Maltese Folk-Tales), in "Lehen il-Malti", Vol. 12, pp. 19-23.
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- 1943 — *Christmas Maltese Folklore*, in "The Sundial", Vol. 3, Nos. 9-12, pp. 256-261.
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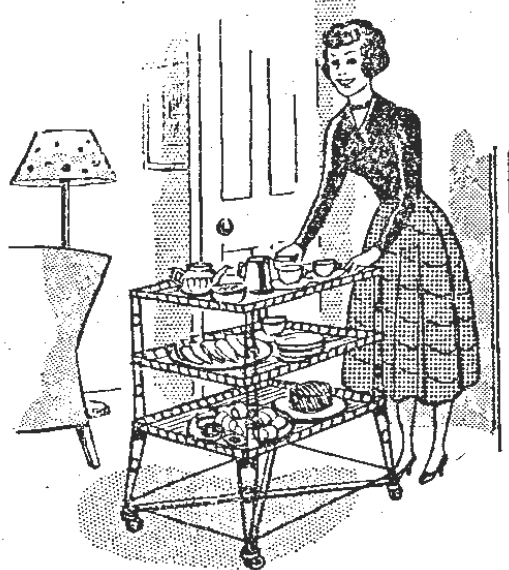
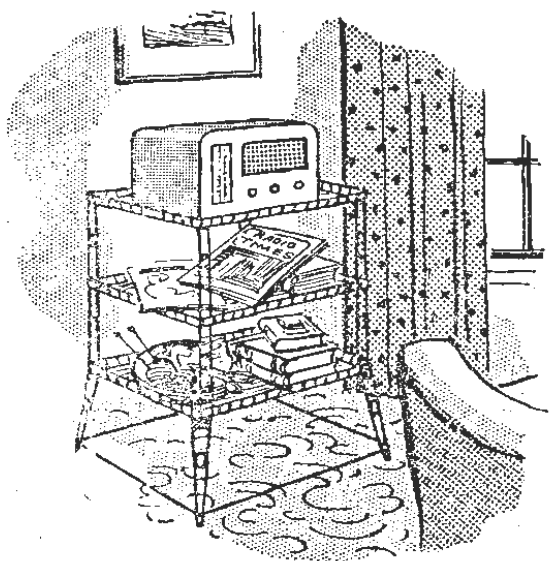
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR FOLK NARRATIVE RESEARCH

The International Congress for Folktale Research was held in Kiel and Copenhagen from the 19th to the 29th August, 1959. At the invitation of Professor Kurt Ranke, Chairman of the organising committee, Mr. J. Cassar Pullicino represented Malta at the Congress. His paper *The Study of Maltese Folktales* has since been published in the Proceedings of the Congress.

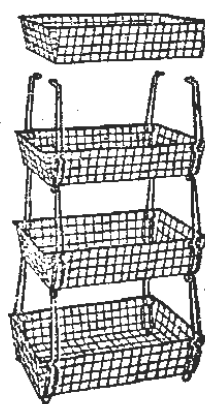
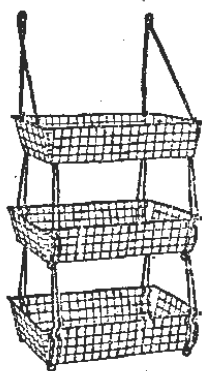
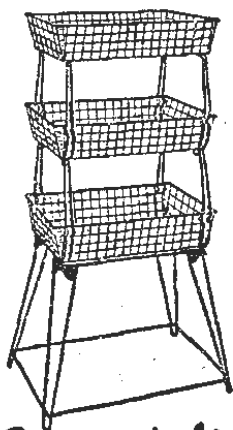
On the 29th August, 1959 the Congress set up a Commission to deliberate about the foundation of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. This Commission met in Paris in August, 1960 and certain preliminary resolutions were adopted, pending final approval by the first General Assembly. The Headquarters of the Society will be in Paris.

Mr. Cassar Pullicino is one of 94 scholars who have been appointed by the Commission to be Foundation Members of the Society. The official foundation meeting will take place in Antwerp (Belgium) from Sept. 6-8, 1962. Besides the affairs of the Society, the problem of an International Catalogue of Folk Legends will be discussed.

The next International Congress for Folk Narrative Research will take place in Athens in 1964 or 1965.



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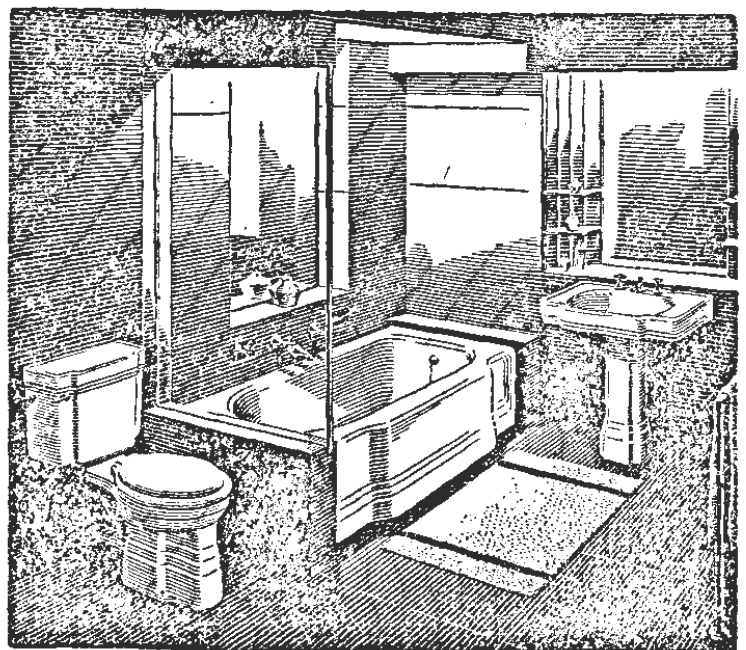
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