

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 Luginland 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.

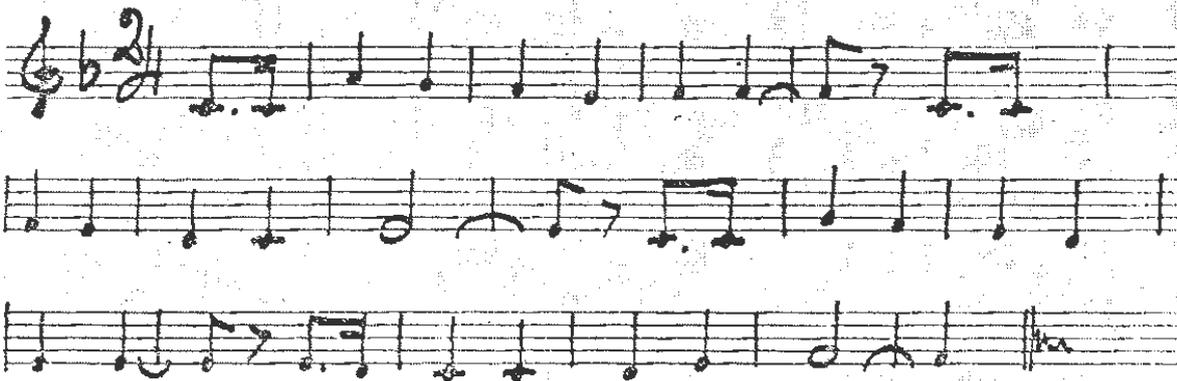
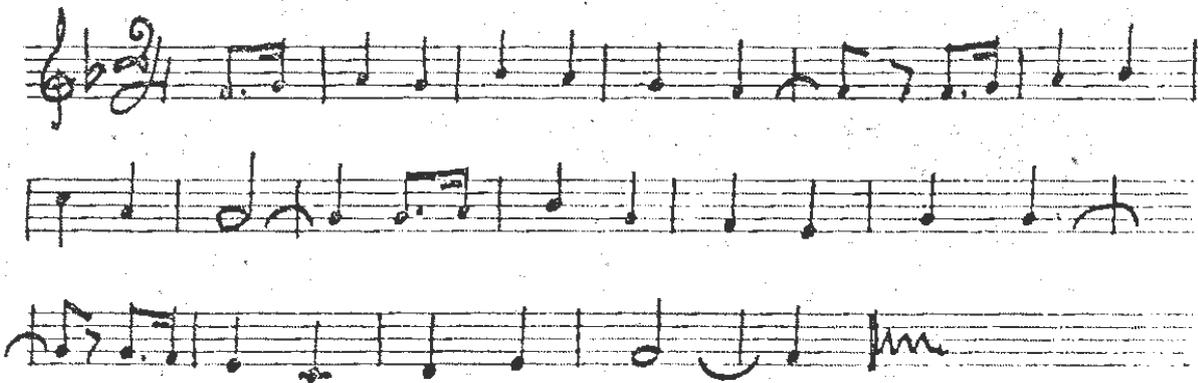
Mention has already been made of the social *milieu* illustrated by various trades and callings. Viewed after more than half a century since they were taken down by Bertha Ilg, the 200 songs that are published here provide internal evidence of various aspects of changing folk-life in Malta since 1909. 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.

*Ġhanja Maltiġa**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 nghannilek
Fejn it-tieqa tal-fanal;
Taparsi xbejba misthija,
Hazina 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 nghannilek,
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 zghar kollha helwin.*

The guitar is a fine instrument,
A *pastardin*¹ goes well with it;
The children horn of your mother
Young and old, they are all beautiful.

7.

*Jien niġi miegħek, sinjura,
Nitolbok stenna mument;
Għax issa ma nistax niġi,
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.

*Ġejja dghajsa 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.

D — PROFESSION, POSITION

21.

*Bastiment tal-fidda naghmel
U ngerrih a la bahrin;
Allavolja jiena ckejken
L-armu tieghi 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 qabez ghalih,
Tar-rizzi tala' jigri,
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 taghha,
Nara 'l hanini jistad.*

What fine sails has that spononara
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 taghhom,
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-gerrej;
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.

F — LOVE

37.

*X'dawl ta' qamar dana?
Minnu tara kruċ ta' habba!
Ohorġu, xebbiet, ohorġu,
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 žghar 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 ohrajn homor,
Bħal hamiem 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 jbewwes 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 jinqalġhu
'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;
Taghmel 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!

53.

*Minn ċkuniti nhobb is-somor,
Speċjalment t'ghajnejhom sbieħ;
Dak hanini wieħed minnhom,
Kemm jiena kuntenta bih!*

From childhood I've loved dark-
skinned men,
Especially when they have beautiful
eyes;
My beloved is one of them,
How pleased I am with him!

54.

*Fejn ġebuni kapriċċija?
Fejn ġebuni s-sbieħ ghajnejk?
Donnok tfaġtli l-ankri f'qalbi,
Kull ma mmur ningibed lej.*

Where have my caprices landed me?
Where have your lovely eyes brought
me?
You seem to have cast anchor in
my heart,
And I feel more and more drawn
towards you.

55.

*Ghajnek fossa tad-djamanti,
Wiċċek fossa taċ-ċurkett;
Ilsienek imqass tal-fidda,
Halqek ponta ta' stallett!*

Your eye is like a diamond stone,
And your face like a ring jewel;
Your tongue is a silver scissors,
Your mouth a fine dagger's point!

56.

*Dawk ghajnejk fosos rubini,
Fil-kxiexet ta' l-argentieri;
Dawk xufftejk tal-passolina
W' ilsienek tal-kannamieli.*

Your eyes are like ruby jewels,
Set in the jewellers' caskets;
Your lips are (as sweet as) raisins
And your tongue tastes like sugar
canes.

57.

*Zewġ ghajnejn ghandu hanini,
Harishomlu minn kull ghajn!
Il-ġuwni noqtol b'idejja
Jekk narah f'hoġor l-oħrajn.*

Two eyes has my beloved,
Protect them from the evil eye!
With my own hands I'll kill the man
If I catch him in other girls' arms.

58.

*Dawk ghajnejk iharsu lejja,
Dak jommok irid jitlobni;
Inti thobb 'il min jidhirlek,
Jien inhobb lil min jogħġobni!*

Your eyes gaze fondly upon me,
Your mouth wants to ask me
something;
You love whomsoever you like,
I love whomsoever I fancy.

59.

*Dawk ghajnejk iharsu lejja,
Dawk ghajnejja jharsu lej;*
*Dik qalbek nixtieq ġo jdejja,
Dik qalbi tixtieq ġo jdejk!*

Your eyes gaze fondly upon me,
My eyes gaze fondly upon you;
I wish I had your heart in my hands,
You wish you could hold my heart
in yours!

60.

*Jiena hriġt indur mal-hâra
Bil-kannestru ġewwa jdejja;
Jew inti sabiħa minnek,
Inkella jarawk ghajnejja!*

I have wandered through the
neighbourhood
With a basket in my hands;
Either you are beautiful by nature,
Or else my eyes behold you so!

61.

*Xuxtek għandek 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 infittzek!*

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
Gewwa 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 għarkobbtejja,
Gibtek fatta ta' regina!*

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 gewwa 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 jitteħidx;
U trament li inti ġuvni,
Jien xebba ma nizzewwigx!*

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 għandek 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 habbejtni inti
Kont bil-ħsieb inħobbok 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 niġbed,
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 niġbed,
'Il ġismi x'fatta katnajtu!
Aħjar ħhalija, 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 joghġobni daka tulek,
Iktar joghġbuni 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-kiterra,
X'grazzja għandi ma' idejh!
Ma jixbax min joqġhod miegħu
Aħseb jien inħares lejh!*

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 ghawejżeb,
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 bhali,
Dawk ghajnejh isebbhu 'l tieghi,
L-aqwa gwaj li fiha d-dinja
Min inhobbu ma jkunx mieghi.*

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-bahar,
U hsibtu hanini ġej;
Kienet ferha 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' bahar,
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:
Ihares lejha, ma tidhaklux,
Tghaddas 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 *charshaf*, 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 mikšura
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-mizwed;
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 žguri,
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 ngħaddi,
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 ġej u sejjer,
Fuq il-blata nerġa' 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 hrigt indur mal-hâra,
Bil-kannestru wil-mizien,
Ix-xebbiet sbieh 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 ġuvni f'gallarija,
Bħala ġenn hassejtu jtini;
X'hin ersaqt, bil-kemm ridt nemmen,
Li kien l-anġlu, 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 harġet titlob
Wara l-bieb tal-ġuvintur;
Tawha la kisra w lanqas habba,
Wara l-ġuvni 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,
Mingħajru 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-kafè;
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 jaġu
'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 ikunx 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 Rozina 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 gejtej;
X'behsiebek tillestili
Ta' l-imhabba li habbejtej!*

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,
Ghajj ma tara qalb ma tuqa';
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;
Tallaghni fuq id-dghajja,
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-fanali!
Kemm hija qalbek ingrata,
Kont marid ma gejtix 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 ghandi ragun inhobbha
Ghax 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 ghedtulek,
Tkellimnix quddiem in-nies;
Ghaliex in-nies jigzawni 'l ommi,
Ommi trid tkun taf ghaliex.*

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 ghadu ma giex;
Jien bdejt nibki, 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.

*Ġib l-ghonnella w ejja mmorru,
Dik 'l ommok la tghidilhiex;
Jekk tghidlek: Binti, fejn sejra?
Chidilha: 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-ġuwni qatt ma rajtu,
Kif miegħu 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 ġie l-ġharus jarani
Fuq it-taraġ kont inħit;
Inkisritli l-ġhajn tal-labra,
U r'ġajna 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 ġharus keċċewni,
Biċ-ċurkett jien kont marbut;
Mort għall-polza tat-tnedija
Hekk sibt ruħi 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-ġizimin;
Hanina, ej' nagħmlu paċi,
Kemm 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' sebġhi ċ-ċkejken,
Il-fossa tiegħu 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 ħriġt;
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 zewgiti zghira,
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,
Istħulha 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 kiesra 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-bodied 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 ghandi,
Sa ma idi tkun f'idejk;
Issa jdejja f'idejn ieħor —
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 tiegħek,
W hekk nixtieq dik il-gurnata
Illi għomri ntemmu miegħek.*

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.

L — SUFFERING

139.

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

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 waħda 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 għalija;
Ġej il-ferħ u ġej il-hena,
Permezz tagħha l-għarusija!*

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.

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 lejck;
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
Lanqas jekk narah jiggarraf;
Niehdu givni 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,
Kem 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 bhalek!*

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;
Ġirieni 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 tistakar, 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 huta,
Mort ix-Xatt, qbadt il-pagelli;
Istakar, 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.

*Kemm 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* = 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ d; 1 *karlin* = 10 farthings.

S — COMIC SITUATION IN GENERAL

179.

*M'hemmx ghalih iż-żwejm el taghna,
Iċ-ċiċri ma jikolhiex;
Fin-niżla kemm jinżel jigri,
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.

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

Żigli manda żigli 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-gonna,
Kemmi hobbha dik il-hdura!
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 johrog 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 ġizirani;
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, ixrili 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 u kbar:
Min irid jiggieled 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

*Regalauni torta helwa,
Iċ-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

*Bieċa torta marmorata,
Għewwa 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

W — PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

195

*Kemm huwa frisk il-lampuki!
Katarin, kebbes in-nar;
Int istak il-bieb tal-keina.
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-fenek u l-patata.
Hemm it-torti u l-inbid;
Int, hanina, kul u ixrob,
Halli kulhadd jghid 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 ghand onni,
Ma kellix hliet ghaks u gh!*

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 min itemm fit-tama,
It-tama tqarraq bih;
Bhalli jinla r-rih fil-bomblu,
U jrid isiejer bih!*

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).