

marised thus: Sicilian comes before Italian, which may be followed by (i) Spanish or (ii) French or (iii) English, German etc. Latin sayings normally precede Sicilian ones — possibly because they form the substratum of much common proverb lore, but occasionally Arabic ones are closer in wording and imagery and therefore take pride of place in the list of comparisons. This criterion, though not absolute, is quite logical, and by and large follows the historical pattern of the civilisations and contacts affecting the people of Malta and Gozo. Further work along these lines is bound to provide useful data on the incidence and intensity of paremiological contacts as compared with similar findings regarding folk-tales, riddles, songs and other forms of folk-literature.

Professor Aquilina has already produced two scholarly works on Maltese Linguistics, i.e. *The Structure of Maltese* (1959) and *Papers in Maltese Linguistics* (1961). The monograph under review, which is but a foretaste of what the complete work on Maltese Proverbs will be when completed, is equally important from a folklore point of view. The publication of Aquilina's collection of Maltese Proverbs will bring to all folklore students the fruit of his long years of research in this specialised field of studies.

J.C.P.

MALTA. BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPMENT, by H. Bowen Jones, J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher. Department of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1961. pp. 356. 42/-.

This volume draws upon and presents condensed versions of the findings of research and observation carried out between 1954 and 1960, when members of the Department of Geography in the Durham Colleges, "in part commissioned by the Governments of Britain and Malta, in part conducting an independent academic exercise, carried out a varied programme of research in the Maltese Islands". The geographical survey was conducted on scientific lines and by its very nature most of the contents of this volume are of interest mainly to the specialist.

The authors explain in the introduction (p. 8) that although the project was primarily designed to cover the agricultural sector, "not only is it impossible to consider any element solely from the point of physical production; it becomes necessary to consider the wider and finally often more important factor such as, among others, social status, adaptability to change and mental as well as physical climate". Thus various other topics are considered, some of them closely related to Maltese folklore, though treated from a different angle.

The subject of dying peasant crafts, especially spinning and weaving, which are recorded in some delightful sketches in Maltese by Temi Zammit and others, receives careful attention in the present work (p. 124). We read that in 1861 there still remained almost 9,000 workers occupationally described as spinners and weavers and some 200 beaters and dyers. 96% of the total were women, and male labour was generally used only in the final stages of cloth preparation. "The industry included all processes from the growing of indigenous short staple annual cottons to the manufacture of cloth. The actual operations however were carried out almost entirely by individual workers in their own homes and were linked only by merchants specialising in this trade. In many cases the merchants advanced seed to the farmers on a crop-sharing basis. In all cases they bought the picked lint and then distributed quantities by weight to "out-work" spinners. These would return the yarn, which had been prepared by primitive traditional teasers and spinning wheels, and were paid by weight and fineness of the yarn. The village

merchant would store the yarn until he received an order for cloth and would then make similar contracts with domestic weavers". This type of "out-work" domestic industry survived late into the 19th century and its memory lingers on in the mind of the 'folk'.

The study of legal or juridical folklore, which teems with possibilities, is still in its infancy here. Of particular interest for the interplay between law and custom are the various references we find in this survey to the forms of land tenure (p. 304), division of land (p. 310), the marriage plot and the publication of land tenancy (p. 312). Besides emphyteutical leases, which must be documented and "are legally all such that extend for a term longer than 16 years and have the proper content and conditions", there are other leases generally based on a four-year rotational cycle, which in its turn is based on the duration of the effects of intensive manuring on "dry" land. "Entry is normally on 15th August, in the "dead" period of the year, and the most popular lease is for a duration of eight years with an option for renewal for a further similar term. On expiration the land is usually held on a yearly basis until a new satisfactory settlement is reached. Provisions for repairs usually divide responsibility between tenant and landlord on the basis of the scale of work and capital needed, the tenant being always responsible for wells and cisterns. Water derived from the holding should only be used thereon but in practice this is ignored. Regulation of husbandry is rarely mentioned except in general terms. Unless specifically revoked, legal provision exists for the remission of rents in the event of naturally caused crop-failure, although we have no knowledge of such a claim being made in recent years. After the flood damage of the autumn of 1957, the appeals were solely for Governmental aid".

The authors mention another type of tenure, that of share-cropping. "Between land-owner and occupier, its main incidence seems to be as a working arrangement between aged parents and their children. Between coevals it appears as a temporary form of subletting, known as *bin-nofs*. In the latter case, "share-cropping arrangements are a consequence of the growing tendency of farmers to leave the land for short trial periods to seek other employment or to emigrate. As a form of insurance, leased or owned land is then often let temporarily to relatives or friends on the understanding that should the farmer return, his land reverts to him or in the case of the time-limit (usually five years) elapsing before his return, the share-cropper takes over full rights. Although this is of doubtful legality in the case of rented land, landlords do not seem to object. In the north and west of Malta, over 6 per cent of the cultivated area is held in this way, and the proportion is over 3 per cent in Gozo. In other areas, share-cropping would seem to be of negligible importance... The provision of land, materials and labours and the division of product vary greatly. One case exists of a whole community working the land under a tenant-in-chief who provides land, seed, manure and some machinery and then claims one-fifth of the value of the crops which he buys back in bulk".

According to local usage, division of land to all the children need not take place at the same time; an elder child may even receive its share while a younger brother is still unborn. "In these circumstances 'shares' cannot be precise, though efforts may be made to re-adjust at a later stage. A share of parental land is normally the first which a young farmer begins to work as his own. If, as is usual, his departure from the family farm was occasioned by marriage, he may also obtain land from his father-in-law, but this is never *his* in the same sense and is only effectively consolidated with the land of his own family when his children, born of that wife, come to work it on their own behalf... The mother's land comes into the family essentially for the use of herself and

her children and where there are no children it must be returned eventually to her family".

Vacant land tenancies are sometimes rented to the highest bidder in the open market. Such tenancies are published in the traditional way — at Mass in the parish church.

There are other useful notes on the implements observed in Malta, the traditional types of plough, hoe, sickle and harrow, which are described as being "of the same genera as those to be generally found in the Mediterranean region". Illustrations of these types of cultivation equipment are included (pp. 320-321).

The survey covered also farmers' dress and diet. The findings show that, like so many other facets of life in Malta, these aspects are passing through a period of quick transition. "The familiar working garb of the farmer has been the heavy wollen vest, cotton trousers, waistcoat, and cap. Recently, army-surplus shirts, denims, etc., have replaced the locally made garment, often of home-grown cotton, while the cummerbund is now rare. Sandals are normally worn for walking but not for work. The farmer who works round the clock has never had a "best suit". He attends Mass in his working clothes before going to the fields and, on Sundays and holidays, ventures forth as on any other day with the possible addition of a wollen cardigan or more presentable waistcoat. For women the use of the *faldetta* ribbed hood has declined rapidly in the last 20 years and is now only worn by the older women of the villages and by female members of the M.U.S.E.U.M. Movement. The use of black generally by women is declining but most clothes are still made in the home even if from bought material rather than home-produced cotton or wool. The younger generation are not usually content to venture forth dressed in the manner of their parents but insist on making their own appearance as much like that of the average town-dweller among whom they aim to move socially. The white shirt, smart suit, shoes, socks, and well-oiled hair of the young men and the bright dresses, high-heeled shoes, nylons and cosmetics of the village maidens are regarded as the essential uniform of the seeker after the bright lights of Valletta and the towns".

As regards food we read that "diet in the traditional rural scene depended upon what could be produced by the fields and animals held by any family. The standard soups and stews (such as *minestra* and *brodu*) were consequently largely vegetable; meat was rarer, fish seasonal and small birds might be added to stew depending on the results of the hunting or, more correctly, shooting which was and is a popular Sunday and Holiday pastime in the countryside. The diet was rather less "Italian" than that in Valletta and the towns, with potatoes in place of the various forms of farinaceous paste — spaghetti, macaroni, etc.... Tea and coffee drinking have to some extent replaced local and home-made wines, especially in the many drinking bars and small cafes which have become the leisure-time resorts of the men of the villages between strolls in the squares and streets. Even here change is evidenced; for the traditional guitar-accompanied *ghana* of the Maltese peasants has given way to *Radio e Televisione Italiana* as the basis of cafe entertainment".

One final extract, regarding village housing. "The traditional Maltese rural home was a flat-roofed dwelling built round an enclosed courtyard, from which a stair-case frequently led to an upper floor. The courtyard was the centre of domestic life and much of the regular work of the household was done here. A door, large enough to take a cart, opened on to the street. Windows on outside walls were small and rare. In many of the older parts of the villages, accommodation for animals and stores adjoins the rooms occupied by the family, the whole forming a compact economic and domestic unit.

Water was carried from a village pump... Nowadays much of this survives in the memory of the older people". (p. 348). The subject of rural architecture in Malta, however, merits closer study, possibly on the lines of the monographs produced for the various regions of Italy.

The picture of creeping change and new attitudes among the agricultural sector in these islands emerges clearly from this survey by the Durham team. It is a far cry from the patriarchal system whereby the peasant population consisted of subsistence farmers depending on their holdings for all but very few of their requirements. A far cry indeed, even though, as the authors say (p. 111), the story was heard at Gharb in 1958 of the almost legendary Gozitan farmer of a century ago who spent sixpence per annum — three pence on paraffin and three pence on having his donkey shod". There is much else that is pure folklore in agriculture that falls to be studied by folklorists. Let us hope that the work will be taken up before it is too late!

J.C.P.

~~FOLK-NARRATIVE RESEARCH IN MALTA SINCE THE WAR~~

~~With the outbreak of the Second World War the first of Maltese folk-narrative research, which is closely associated with the names of Prof. L. Bonelli, Prof. H. Stumme, Fr. E. Magri and Bertha Ilg, had all but spent itself. The work of these four scholars was carried out within the short space of 13 years (1895-1907). Stumme and Ilg are best known in scholarly circles abroad, while Magri, who for many years remained largely inaccessible to foreigners unfamiliar with Maltese, rather unexpectedly came into vogue in the 1930's when L. Galea and Margaret Murray published some of his tales in English translation (*Maltese Folktales*, March, 1932), followed in 1934-1936 by Aldo Farini's three delightful volumes of Italian school reading books *Fiabe Leggende Tradizioni Maltesi*, which included various tales by Magri, along with stories culled from the collections by Stumme, Bonelli and other writers such as Dun Xand Cortis.~~

~~By and large, however, the rising generation of Maltese students remained ignorant of its heritage of narrative and legendary lore, and it was precisely this which prompted Aldo Farini to undertake his work. He says: "Quale pena constatare, negli anni della mia esperienza scolastica, come i giovanetti maltesi ignorino tanta parte del loro patrimonio fiabesco e leggendario, e quale soddisfazione nel vederli incantati e trasognati pendere dalle mie labbra quando, come riposo e quasi in ricompensa di una più viva attenzione prestata alle mie parole, narro loro una leggenda maltese! . . ."~~

~~The war brought with it a new sense of spiritual and national values and it was not long before this feeling found expression in a fresh appreciation of the traditional native elements in Maltese culture, side by side with the raising of the Maltese language to a position of dignity in the Administration and at the University. In a stimulating series of articles on *A National Culture* published in the "Sunday Times of Malta" in June-July, 1943, Francis Berry, a poet and at that time master at St. Edward's College, referred in encouraging terms to the first efforts at folktale collection by the editor of this Review and says: "Following the elevation and stabilisation of the vernacular comes the enthusiasm of historians and antiquarians. The~~