

MALTESE METEOROLOGICAL AND AGRICULTURAL PROVERBS

By J. AQUILINA

Professor of Maltese in the Royal University of Malta

CONTENTS

	Page
THE SUN, THE MOON AND THE STARS	13
The sun	13
The moon	16
The stars	17
WINDS	17
CLOUDS, LIGHTNING, THUNDER AND RAIN	19
Clouds	19
Lightning and Thunder	20
Rain	21
THE SEA	24
LAND CULTIVATION, PLANTS AND FIELDS	25
ANIMALS	32
THE SEASONS	37
Spring	38
Summer	38
Autumn	39
Winter	40
THE MONTHS	41
January	41
February	47
March	51
April	56
May	59
June	61
July	64
August	65
September	67
October	70
November	72
December	75
ADDENDA	79

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

I. PROVERBS AND CUSTOMS

- Agius, Thos., *Weather Forecasting*, Malta, 1922.
- Arthaber, A., *Dizionario comparato di Proverbi e Modi Proverbiali Italiani, Latini, Francesi, Spagnoli, Tedeschi, Inglesi e Greci Antichi*, Milano, 1929.
- Bassal, I., *Libro De Agricultura*, Tetuan, 1955.
- Bonelli, L., 'Il Dialetto Maltese', in *Supplementi Periodici all' Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, Dispensa III, VI, VII, VIII. Torino, 1897-1907.
- Brunot, L., *La Mer dans les Traditions et les Industries Indigènes à Rabat & Salé*, Paris, 1921.
- Notes: *Lexicologiques sur le Vocabulaire maritime de Rabat & Salé*, Paris, 1920.
- Calyпсо* Nos. 1-10 (Jan-May, 1847). A Maltese journal published weekly in Italian.
- Calendario dell' Agricoltore*, Malta, 1850.
- Champion, S.G. (CHAMP), *Racial Proverbs: a selection of the World's Proverbs arranged linguistically*, London, 1950.
- Cremona, A., *Weather and Husbandry Lore in the Isles of Malta*, Malta, 1922; *Folklore Malti (Fdal u Qwiel Qodma Fil-Hrafa ta' Jannar, Frar u Marzu)* in *Il-Malti*, Marzu 1950, pp. 13-17.
- Crowfoot, G.M. and Baldensperger, L., *From Cedar to Hyssop; A Study in the Folklore of Plants in Palestine*, London, 1932.
- Feghali, Mons. M. (FEGH), *Proverbs et Dictons Syro-Libanais*, Paris, 1938.
- Frayha, Anis, *Modern Lebanese Proverbs*, Beirut, 1953.
- Gazzetta Agraria Maltese* Nos. 1-16 (April 1855-Oct. 1856), the monthly organ of the *Società Economico Agraria*.
- Herbert, George, 'Jacula Prudentum', in *The Works of George Herbert*, London, n.d.
- Hulme, F.E., *Proverb Lore; many sayings... gleaned from many sources*, London, 1903.
- Inwards, R., *Weather Lore*, 4th ed. London, 1950.

- Lean, V.S., *Lean's Collectanea – Proverbs, Folk-Lore, Superstitions etc.*, London, 1902. (5 vols.)
- Magri, E., *X' Jghid il Malti, jeu l Gherf bla Mictub tal Maltin*, Malta, 1925.
X' Jghid il Malti fuq id Dinja ta Tabt u fuq ir Rjiegħ, Malta, 1905.
- Mohammed Ben Cheneb (MBCH), *Proverbes Arabes de l'Algerie et du Maghreb...* 3v. Paris, 1905-6.
- Mifsud Bonnici, V., *Dammet ix-Xhur* (Mogh'dija taz-Żmien, No. 70, 1908).
- Nieves de Hoyos Sancho, *Refranero agricola Español*, Madrid, 1954.
- The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1948.
- Pitrè, G., *Usi e costumi del popolo siciliano*, Vol. III, Firenze, 1944.
Proverbi siciliani raccolti e confrontati con quelli degli altri dialetti d'Italia, Palermo, 1880.
- Pliny, *Natural History*, Books I and II. Translated by H. Racham. Loeb. 1949.
- Radford, E. and M.A., *Encyclopoedia of Superstitions*, London, 1947.
- Sbarbi, J.M., *Gran Diccionario de Refranes de la Lengua Española*, Buenos Aires, 1943.
- Si Ahmed Sbihi (SAS), *Proverbes Inédits des vieilles femmes marocaines*. Traduits et commentés par A. Benchehida, n.d.
- Strafforello, G. (STRAFF), *La Sapienza del Popolo, ovvero Dizionario universale dei Proverbi di tutti i Popoli*, 3v. Torino, 1883.
- Tassoni, G., *Proverbi e Indovinelli*, Firenze, 1955.
- Theophrastus, *Concerning Weather Signs*, Translated by Sir Arthur Hort. Loeb. London, 1949.
- Tresse, R., *Usages Saisonniers et Dictons sur Le Temps*, Paris, 1937.
- Vassalli, M.A. (Vass), *Mötti, Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi*, Malta, 1828.
- Westermarck, E. (West), *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco*, London, 1930.
- Tebner, Franz, *Deutsches Sprichwörterbuch*, Leipzig, n.d.

II. LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES

- Agius de Soldanis, G.F. (Agius), *Damma tal Kliem Kartaginis mscerred /el fom tal Maltin u Ghaucin*. 4v. Royal Malta Library Ms. 143.
- Beaussier, M. (BEAUSS), *Dictionnaire Pratique Arabe-Français*, Algiers, 1931.
- Bedevian, A.K., *Illustrated Polyglottic Dictionary of Plant Names*, Cairo, 1936.

- Caruana, A.E. (CAR), *Vocabolario della lingua maltese*, Malta, 1903.
- Dizionario Etimologico Italiano* (Diz. Et. It.) by Carlo Battisti and G. Alessio, Florence, 1950-57.
- Destaing, E., *Textes Berbères en parler des Chleubs du Sous (Maroc) ... Premier Partie*, Paris, 1940.
- (DEST) *Vocabulaire Français-Berber*, Paris, 1920.
- Dessoulavy, C.L., *A Maltese-Arabic Word-List*, London, 1938.
- Dozy, R., *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes*, Leyde, 1881.
- Elias' *Modern Dictionary, Arabic-English*, Cairo. 10th ed. 1956.
- Falzon, G. B. (FAL), *Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese*, Malta, 1845. 2nd ed. 1882.
- Hava, J.G., *Arabic English Dictionary*, Beirut, 1915.
- Kazimirski de Biberstein (KAZ), *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 1860.
- Magri, Domenico, *Hierolexicon sive Sacri Dictionarii Editio Octava*, Venice, 1788.
- Marçais, W., *Testex Arabes de Tanger*, Paris, 1911.
- Marzano, G.B., *Dizionario etimologico del dialetto calabrese*, Laureana di Borrello, 1928.
- Mortillaro, V. (MORT), *Nuovo Dizionario Siciliano-Italiano*, Palermo, 1853.
- Rossi, E., *L'Arabo parlato a San'â*, Rome, 1939.
- Schiaparelli, C., *Vocabulista in Arabico*, Florence, 1871.
- Zingarelli N. (ZING), *Vocabolario della lingua Italiana*, Bologna, 1953.

MALTESE METEOROLOGICAL AND AGRICULTURAL PROVERBS

MALTA and Gozo are still predominantly agricultural. It is only lately, especially since the last war, that urban industrial occupations are more than rivalling the earliest and most primitive occupation of the inhabitants of Malta and Gozo (Ghawdex). The Maltese *bidwi* (peasant, farmer) in the course of centuries recorded his experiences in pithy proverbial sayings whereby he transmitted to his children his practical knowledge of weather-lore and landcraft collected from personal observation, by no means infallible though still a good guidance especially to the tillers of the land. The list of such proverbial sayings which I have grouped under various headings is the first of the kind collected from various authentic sources and from the living language – direct from the *bdiewa*. Classified under various headings they form the corpus of Maltese and Gozitan husbandry and weather-lore. Some of them, perhaps the larger portion, stand the test of scientific proof, while others are only approximate prognostications subject to the unpredictable variations of weather changes from one year to another. The Latin saying *annus fructum fert non tellus* is applicable to Maltese weather and husbandry lore, for the general experience is that the success, or failure, of the year's crops depends on the various elements that affect and differentiate one year from the other, the seasons being to the *bidwi* as like and as unlike as the brothers of the same family (*Is-snin bħall-aħwa ma jixxibhux*).

I have grouped the agricultural and weather-sayings under eleven headings, namely (1) the Sun, (2) the Moon, (3) the Stars (these three could be considered as one meteorological group), (4) Winds, (5) Clouds, (6) Rain (another meteorological group), (7) the Sea, (8) Land Cultivation, plants and fields, (9) Animals, (10) the Seasons, and (11) the Months – the last two divisions forming really one group. Together, as grouped and classified, they give us a set of guiding principles which govern Maltese agriculture – the wisdom of the centuries, very helpful in most cases but a stumbling block to further progress when tradition and scientific data clash. For the traditional *bidwi* has greater belief and confidence in

ancestral experience than in what sounds to him the theoretical knowledge of people that read and write books but never handle a spade or a plough. I have not merely listed the sayings and grouped them but, as far as possible, I have compared the sayings with equivalents or approximate versions in other countries in order to throw light on the beginnings and earliest contacts of Maltese agriculture.

The first group is formed of sayings that fall under the heading Sun. There is no recorded folk story connected with this heavenly body except a suggestion of a fanciful belief that when the sun shines while it is raining (Cp. Proverb No. 62) -- a rare event -- it is a sure sign that a Turk, i.e. an unbeliever, is born or a Jew is being baptized. Children merrily recite the following doggerel:

*Ixxita u x-xituta,
In-nanna tabt il-tuta*

(It's raining, it's showering/grandmother under the mulberry tree)
or:

*Ixxita u x-xemx,
In-nanna tabt Lawrenz;
Tlabtha bicca buta,
Taini daqqa ta' lembuba.*

(It's raining, it's shining/grandmother under Lawrence/I asked her for a piece of fish/She struck me with her rolling pin.)

According to a version recorded from Tarrien (Malta) by Mr J. Cassar Pullicino, the rhyme runs as follows:

*Ixxita u x-xemx,
In-nanna u San Lawrenz,
In-nannu jilghab il-bocci,
In-nanna tilghab il-lewż.*

(It's raining, it's shining/grandmother and St. Lawrence/grandfather playing bowls/grandmother playing at almonds).

Mr A. Cremona in his essay *Weather and Husbandry Lore in the Isles of Malta* (1922, p. 13) thinks that this doggerel 'reflects some faint common idea of the English saying: "If it rains whilst the sun is shining, the devil is beating his grandmother, he is laughing and she is crying"'. Mr. Cremona adds: 'Curiously enough, the name of the grandmother, which is the Siculo-Maltese *nanna*, comes under this strange phenomenon to be the pet subject humourously spoken of in the choral mirth. The sporting theme characters cannot perhaps be better explained, but by some universally suggested belief which still predominates in the following Italian proverb.

*Quando piove e luce il sole
tutte le vecchie vanno in amore*

Grandmother's love affair is by Maltese children innocently changed into the funny sport of an old woman playing at bowls or beating the children with her rolling-pin.

The moon even more than the sun plays a great part in Maltese weather-lore. It is popularly associated with fertility both human and vegetational. Comparative remarks culled from Theophrastus (*Concerning Weather Signs*, Loeb, 1949) and Pliny (*Natural History*, Books I and II, Loeb, 1948) bring into relief common ancient observations and beliefs anent the influence of this planet on human life and his plantations. On p. 349 of his book Pliny (23-79 A.D.) describes the moon as 'the star of breath that saturates the earth and fills bodies by its approach and empties them by its departure; and that consequently shells increase in size as the moon waxes'. Some sayings under this group agree with Theophrastus's belief (op. cit. p. 393) that 'most important of all are the signs taken from the sun and moon: for the moon is as it were a nocturnal sun... Wherefore anyone who desires to forecast the weather must pay especial heed to the character of the risings and settings of these luminaries'.

Stars no less are believed to influence human life and work. As pointed out by Pliny in the same book (p. 249) 'as the nature of the sun is understood to control the year's seasons, so each of the other stars also has a force of its own that creates effects corresponding to its particular nature'. The Maltese names for the various stars are: *Kewkbet is-Safar* (lit. 'Travellers' Star'), the Polar Star; *Kewkba ta' filghodu*, the Morning Star; *Kewkba Fegġa*, wandering star (cp. L. *stella errans*); *Kewkba ta' filghaxija*, also *Żabrija*, the Evening Star (in Morocco *azzubra* is the polar star); *Kewkba bix-xuxa* or *bid-darb*, also recent loan-word *kometa*, comet (cp. It. *stella caudata* or *crinita*; Sic. *la stridda cu la cuda*; L. *stella comans*); *Triq ta' S. Anna* (lit. St. Anne's Way), the Milky Way. *Trajjja* (Ar. تَرْيَا) Sic. *lu triali*), three star group which appears in the East about 2 a.m. and *Imħalla* a more numerous group of the Pleiades.

The designation *bix-xuxa*, long-haired or long-maned, goes back to the ancient Greeks who called stars that 'suddenly come to birth in the heaven itself' ... 'comets', ... 'long-haired stars' because they have a blood-red shock of what looks like shaggy hair at the top. The Greeks also gave the name of 'bearded stars' to those from whose lower part spreads a mane resembling a long beard' (Pliny, op. cit. p. 233)

A Maltese saying warns the people that when they see a shooting star they must turn their faces away and say: *Nistrok biex tistorni, sakemm tigi l-mewt tiġborni*, I'll keep your secret so that you may keep mine till

death take me away'. Those that revealed the secret of the shooting star (the mere fact that they saw it fly by) suffered some supernatural punishment. According to Pliny, shooting stars 'portend the rise of a fierce hurricane from the same quarter' (p. 245). 'The old Dorians regarded 'a meteor' as a portent of so ominous and threatening a kind that its appearance under certain circumstances justified and even required the deposition of their king. This exaggerated dread of so simple a natural phenomenon is shared by many savages at the present day'. (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 2nd ed. p. 19, Vol. II). A belief common to Sicily and Malta is that stars shooting through the heavens are human souls in flight. A. Cremona (op. cit. p. 12) writes: 'An old superstition still clinging to the mind of the Maltese regards the shooting star as the substance of an erring soul (*ruh mitlufa*)'. Also in Sicily shooting stars, which in Morocco (Brunot: *La Mer dans les Traditions et les Industries Indigènes a Rabat & Salé*, Paris, 1920, p. 47) indicate the death of someone, are believed to be the souls of the dead, an ancient belief we find mentioned in Pliny, who writes that such stars 'do not each rise with their own human being, nor indicate by their fall that some one's life is being extinguished' (p. 189). 'A widespread superstition associates meteors or falling stars with the souls of the dead. Often they are believed to be the spirits of the departed on their way to the other world... In classical antiquity there was a popular notion that every human being had his own star in the sky, which shone bright or dim according to his good or evil fortune, and fell in the form of a meteor when he died. Ideas of the same sort are still commonly to be met with in Europe.' (Frazer, *ibid.*, pp. 19 & 22, Vol. II).

The names of the main and secondary winds constitute a detailed description of their possible movements and veerings carefully noted by our peasants (*bdiewa*), fishermen (*sajjieda*) and sportsmen (*kacçaturi*). Pliny in Book Two (chap. xivi) of his *Natural History* (Loeb, 1949) says that while 'the ancients noticed four winds in all, corresponding to the four quarters of the world (this is the reason why even Homer mentions no more)'... the following age added eight - this system on the other hand was too subtle and meticulous '*nimis subtili atque concisa*' (p. 261). Maltese wind-names, with the exception of *riħ fuq* (upper wind) for 'the West-wind' or 'the North-west-wind' and *riħ isfel* (the lower wind) for 'the East-wind' or 'the South-East-wind', evidently post-Arabic loans, are more carefully detailed and subdivided.

The four main wind-names (*l-irjieh maġġuri*) are: *Tramontana*, North (It. *Tramontana*); *Nofs-inbar*, South (lit. *Midday*, translation of It. *Mezzo giorno*); *Punent*, West (It. *Ponente*) and *Lvant*, East (It. *Levante*). The secondary winds (*nofs irjieh*) are: *Grigal*, North East (It. *Grecale*);

Majjistral, North West (It. Maestrale); *Lbič*, South West (It. Libeccio); and *Ix-Xlokk*, Scirocco, South East (Sic. Sciloccu, Ar. شَلُوق). From these derive other secondary winds: *Tramontana Majjistral*, N.N.W.; *Majjistral it-Tramontana*, N.W.N.; *Majjistral Punent*, N.W.W.; *Punent Majjistral*, W.N.W.; *Punent il-Lbič*, W.S.W.; *Il-Lbič Punent*, S.W.W.; *Il-Lbič Nofsinbar*, S.W.S.; *Nofsinbar il-Lbič*, S.S.W.; *Nofsinbar ix-Xlokk*, S.S.E.; *Ix-Xlokk Nofsinbar*, S.E.S.; *Ix-Xlokk Ilvant*, S.E.E.; *Ilvant ix-Xlokk*, E.S.E.; *Ilvant Grigal*, E.N.E.; *Grieg il-Lvant*, N.E.E.; *Grieg it-Tramontana*, N.E.N. and *Tramuntana bil-Grigal*, N.N.E.

Other terms describing the intensity, etc. of winds are: *riefnu*, a gale (Sic. *rufuliuni*); *buffura*, a gust of wind (It. *bufera*); *burraxxa*, a storm (Sic. *burrasca*); *tempesta*, storm (It. and Sic. *tempesta*); *ziffa*, breeze (Ar. زُفَّة *coup de vent violent*; *refale* — Beauss); *ehtrieq*, burning wind (Ar. احتراف *'Combustion'* — Beauss.); *riħ furan*, sea breeze lasting all the day (It. *foraneo*); *riħ tal-art*, land breeze lasting all the night; *rwieħ*, shade (Ar. رُوح *air, vent*; L. *aura* — Dozy); *riħ gibli*, hot wind (Ar. رِيحُ غِبْلِي, South Wind), rarely used, describing a special hot wind, even hotter than the scirocco; *riħ provenz*, with which cp. Sic. *Pruvinzata: nome dato alla spruzzaglia, che entra nelle abitazioni quando il vento vi caccia la pioggia, o quando senza vento la pioggia percuote le parti sporgenti degli edifizii* (Mort.).

The winds which prevail most in Malta are the North East (*Il-Grigal*) and the South East (*Ix-Xlokk*). The strongest winds throughout the year are the North East (*Il-Grigal*) and the North (*It-Tamuntana*) in winter, the North West (*Il-Majjistral*) and the South East (*Ix-Xlokk*) in summer. The suffix *-ata* is added to the names of secondary winds, excepting *Lbič* to indicate unchanging prevalence of the wind, e.g. *grigalata*, *majjistralata* and *xlokkata*.

There are no folk beliefs connected with the winds. The blessing of the winds on the Rogation Days (the 25th April and the three days preceding Ascension Day) is a universal practice found in Roman Catholic countries.

Weather-changes provide a set of rules on which our peasants, like other peasants elsewhere, base their weather forecasts. These rules are known as *rwiegel*, lit. rules, the word being the broken plural of *riegla*, rule (Sic. *regula*, It. *regola*) or, less commonly, *egħwejjed*, (Ar. عَوْد *plural of weghda*, presage (Ar. عَوْدَة)). These *rwiegel* are weather-forecasts based mainly on directions of prevailing winds and observation of the weather (cloudy, rainy, clear, etc.) between the 13th and the 24th of December, i.e. the ten days before the winter solstice and two days after. Each day, carefully observed morning, noon and evening, is considered by our peasants a safe indication of the kind of weather to be expected in the cor-

responding month of the ensuing year (13th December corresponds to January; 14th December to February, etc.) Our peasants calculate that a 24 hour day corresponds roughly to the monthly period, so that fair weather during the first two hours of December 13 would indicate the kind of fair weather to be expected roughly in the first three days of January. When the weather rules go wrong as in the case of heat or cold out of season, our peasants say *Għalitna fix-xhur*, 'We have miscalculated the months'.

This usage is known also in Sicily. (Pitrè, *Usi e Costumi*, Vol. III, 1944, p. 103) gives the following saying: *Di li caremuli si cunusci l'annata — Li dudici misi di l'annu novu si cumincianu di li dudici jorna prima di Natali*. In Normandy it is believed that 'the temperature of the forthcoming year may be accurately gauged by noting that of the twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany' (W. Branch Johnson, *Folktales of Normandy*). E. and M. A. Radford in their *Encyclopaedia of Superstitions* (1947, p. 252) write that 'in the Border Counties and the North it was held that the first twelve days of the new year epitomized the weather for the next twelve months'. It is said in Chios (prov. No. 22):

Τοῦ Φλεβάρη ἂν οἱ τρεῖς του καλές, ὅλες τοῦ κακές,
κι' ἂν οἱ τρεῖς του κακές, ὅλες τοῦ καλές.

If February's three days are good, all are bad; and if three are bad, all are good. (Argenti — Rose, Vol. II, p. 1059).

Months' names are all of Sicilian or Italian origin. While Arabic month names, with exceptions like شَبَّاط for February and آدَار for March, tend to show rather an indefinite season than a month of days, the Maltese months, like those of the Latin calendar, indicate definite calendar months, and the crop rotation, tillage, manuring, digging etc., briefly all work connected with the fields, are related to specific months of the year. In Malta and Gozo, among the peasants the months are better known by the Saints' names associated with them, and not a few of our peasants do not know the calendar names. The following is the alternative list: *Janna* (January) — *ix-xabar tal-Istirina*, (The month of New Year gifts); *Frar* (February) — *ix-xabar ta' San Pawl* (St Paul's Month); *Marzu* (March) — *ix-xabar ta' San Guzepp* (St Joseph's month); *April* (April) — *ix-xabar ta' San Ġorġ* (St George's month); *Mejju* (May) — *ix-xabar tal-Madonna* (Our Lady's month); *Ġunju* (June) — *ix-xabar ta' San Ġwann* (St John's month); *Lulju* (July) — *ix-xabar tal-Karmnu* (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel month); *Awwissu* (August) — *ix-xabar ta' Santa Marija* (Our Lady's month); *Settembru* (September) — *ix-xabar tal-Vitorja* (Our Lady of Victory month); or *ix-xabar tas-Salib* (Holy Rood month); *Ottubru* (October) — *ix-xabar tar-Rużarju* (Our Lady of Rosary month); *Novembru* (November) — *ix-xabar tal-Qaddisin Kollha* (All Saints'

month) or *ix-xabar tal-Erwieħ* (All Souls' month) and *Diċembru* (December) – *ix-xabar tal-Milied* (Christmas month). A similar usage occurs also among the Christian Arabs. Thus Crowfoot and Baldensperger in their book *From Cedar to Hyssop* (1932, p. 11) write that 'the name *Shahr el Salib*, Month of the Cross, comes from the Feast of the Cross on September 15th (Old Style), the day when the wood of the True Cross was placed in the Martyrium of Constantine at Jerusalem in the year 336 A.D.'

Some of the proverbs grouped under the twelve months are associated with a folk story or custom and in some cases with a riddle (*ħaġa moħ-ħaġa*). The first of January introduces the new year to a world of sanguine expectations. According to a folk belief on that day the *sultan* whitewashes the threshold of the house for us to welcome the new year. The *sultan*, impersonated for the purpose by some needy person, asks for a favour in return – money or alms of some sort – to feed his children. The full folk-rhyme uttered by him while smearing the threshold with lime runs thus:

*L-ghatba mbajjda,
Bajjadbielek is-Sultan;*

Tib xi ħaġa karità

Halli jitma' l dawk it-tfal.

Flok tiġieġa tib dundjan.

The threshold is whitewashed!

The Sultan whitewashed it for you;

Give him something of your charity

So that he may feed his children.

Instead of a hen give him a turkey.

This custom is now discontinued but the Maltese author A. Cremona tells me that he remembers how, when he was still a boy, a man in Victoria (Rabat), Gozo (*Għawdex*), called *is-Sultan*, used to carry a sack of lime which he smeared on the thresholds of the houses while he asked for some goodwill offer on the occasion of the New Year. The *Sultan* used to start his round early in the morning. The custom survives in some parts of Malta. Why the whitewashing? The white colour of the lime is pleasant to the eyes; it suggests happiness and joy to come. It is significant that in San'ā to wish a man a happy journey, you tell him *tarig bayda* – *triq bajda*, as one would say in Maltese (See Ettore Rossi, *L'Arabo parlato a San'ā*, Rome, 1939, p. 51).

The folk story connected with February is given under the Proverb No. 200. The value of rain at the end of March and the beginning of April is compared to two chariots, one full of gold and another of silk (see Proverb No. 256). Fr. Magri traced the origin of this proverb to a folk-tale which tells how Solomon, anxious to find his brother who had run away from home because of some crime he had committed, devised a riddle and invited the people to explain it. The riddle wanted to know the worth of a chariot laden with silk and another laden with gold without weighing

their contents. Under this condition the people could not name the right price. An old man, however, said the two chariots were worth the value of rain at the end of March and the beginning of April. The man that gave the right answer was an old man who had got it from a lad who was no other than Solomon's run-away brother. The story is recorded by Justin (Liber XVIII of his *Trogi Pompei Fragmenta*)

It will be noted that some of the proverbs are the summing-up or synthesis or the moral of a story with a purpose. It may also be that such a background story, lost in Maltese, as in the case of Proverb No. 303, may have survived in its place of origin, as one can see from the relevant folk-tale reported by Feghali under Proverb No. 2416 of his collection.

In my comparative study, I have followed the threefold method of (i) translation of text, with clarifications where necessary, (ii) comparisons, and (iii) etymological notes on words which belong generally to dialectal Arabic. In the comparisons one notes that a proverb may refer to different months in different places for obvious reasons of climate, but the main point is that such proverbs retain the basic structure and imagery. Every proverb has got its chief word printed in **bold capitals**. Strictly speaking, it is not so much the subject-matter of the proverb as the word least subject to replacement or variation. Such words could be described as key-words because in the compilation they enabled me to bring together a number of proverbs of a kindred nature that would otherwise be scattered at odd places.

I have given the proverbs in the standard spelling of Maltese as written today. Those unacquainted with the written language should know 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'; *z* like English *z* in 'buzz', *ż* like English *ts* in 'bits', and *ħ* like Ar. *ح*; *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; *ġ* serves merely to lengthen and pharyngealise slightly the preceding and/or following vowel - *ie* (an inflection of a long *a*), always stressed, is pronounced approximately like English *eye* in 'here'. It should also be noted that Maltese *q* is a glottal stop and that Maltese has lost all the emphatics of Classical Arabic. 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.

I thank Mr J. Cassar Pullicino A.L.A., the ex-Librarian of the Royal University of Malta, for the assistance he gave me in the compilation and classification of the proverbs.

THE SUN, THE MOON AND THE STARS

(*lx-Xemx, il-Qamar wil-Kwiekeb*)

THE SUN (*lx-Xemx*)

1. *IL-ĦMURA ta' il-ghaxija, gib żwieniek għat-tigrija:*

Il-ħmura ta' filghodu, gib żwieniek minn għor-rob.

'When the evening sky is red, get your horses ready for the race; when the morning sky is red, bring your horses from the field'.

Variants:

(a) *Il-ħmura ta' filghaxija, lesti d-debba għat-tigrija; il-ħmura ta' filghodu, halli l-bbejjem joqogħdu* (or *lesti l-bbejjem fejn joqogħdu*). 'When the evening sky is red, get your mare ready for the race; when the morning sky is red, let the beasts remain (in their fold)', i.e. don't take them out, the weather will be foul.

(b) *Ħmura ta' filghaxija, lesti d-dwieb għat-tigrija; ħmura ta' binhar, hu ħwejġek u mur id-dar*. 'When the evening sky is red, get the mares ready for the race; when the sky is red during the day, take your clothes and get you home'.

(c) *Ħmura ta' binhar, igbor ħwejġek u mur id-dar; ħmura ta' filghaxija libbes id-debba għat-tigrija*. 'When the morning sky is red, collect your things and go home (i.e. bad weather); when the evening sky is red, equip the mare for the race (i.e. fair weather)'.

(d) *Ħmura ta' filghaxija, lesti l-bbejjem għat-tigrija*. 'When the evening sky is red, prepare the beasts for the race'.

(e) *Il-ħmura ta' filghodu, lesti l-banju wil-lissija*. 'When the evening sky is red, prepare the bath and the soap', i.e. it will be a good day for washing.

(f) *Fil-ħmura ta' filghodu, dabbhal il-bbejjem w erga' lura*. 'When the morning sky is red, get the beasts in and go back'.

(g) *Il-ħmura ta' filghodu, igbor ħwejġek min-rob*. 'When the morning sky is red, collect your things from the fields'.

(h) *Il-ħmura ta' filghodu, aghles il-baqar halli jorqdu*. 'When the morning sky is red, feed the cows and let them sleep'.

(i) *Jekk filghodu tkun il-ħmura, minn fuq bejtek neħhi l-ħbula*. 'If the sky is red in the morning, take away the ropes from your roof', i.e. the

ropes on which washed clothes hang to dry, lest strong winds blow them away.

Theophrastus (*On Weather Signs*, Loeb. p. 397, par. 10) says: 'Now the signs of rain appear to be as follows: most unmistakeable is that which occurs at dawn, when the sky has a reddish appearance before sunrise; for this usually indicates rain within three days, if not on that very day. Other signs point the same way: thus a red sky at sunset indicates rain within three days, if not before, though less certainly than a red sky at dawn'; St. Matthew (xvi. 2, 3) writes: 'But he answered and said to them (Pharisees): "When it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning: Today there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering"'.^{٢٠}

إذا احمرَّتْ مع العشيّة اربط حمارك للمشية

وإذا احمرَّتْ مع الصباح اطلق حمارك يستراح

'Lorsque le ciel devient rouge le soir, attache ton âne pour (la marche) partir (c'est-à-dire qu'il fera beau temps); et lorsqu'il devient rouge le matin, lâche ton âne pour qu'il se repose (il fera mauvais temps)' (MBCH. No. 34):

العشي وجدّ عودك للمشية ومين تشوف الحمورة فى الصباح دخل عودك للمراح

Quand, le soir, tu vois du rouge dans le ciel, prépare ton cheval pour le marche; mai si, le matin, tu vois du rouge dans le ciel, rentre ton cheval dans le douar" (*ibid.*); L. 'Nocte rubens coelum cras indicat esse serenum'; Sic. 'Aria russu, o acqua o ventu; se non chiovi fa bon tempu: acqua o ventu cu russura, celu russu signal di ventu'; It. 'Aria rossa di sera, buon tempo mena'; 'Rosso di sera, bel tempo si spera: rosso di mattina, la pioggia s'avvicina'; 'Sera rossa e nero mattino, rallegra il pellegrino'; 'Aria rossa, o piscia o soffia'; *Abruzz.* 'Rosso di sera, buon tempo mena: rosso di mattina, riempie la tina'; Eng. 'An evening red and morning grey, will set the traveller on his way'; 'Evening red and morning grey, tokens of a bonny day'; 'An evening red and a morning grey are the two signs of a fine day'; 'If the sun in red should set, the next day surely will be wet'. Hulme (*Proverb Lore*, p. 267) says: The two statements appear to directly contradict each other. On the other hand we are told that when the reverse happens: 'The evening grey and morning red make the shepherd hang his head', and 'If the sun should set in grey the next will be a rainy day'; Fr. 'Rouge au soir, blanc au matin, c'est le jour du pèlerin'; Sp. 'Arreboles de la mañana, a la noche son agua, y arreboles de la noche a la mañana son soles'; Ger. 'Abendrot, gut Wetter bot, Morgenrot bringt Wind und Kot'. Chios (prov. No. 21):

"Αν τὰ Φῶτα φαιτέρῳ,
ἢ Λαμπρὴ μὲ τὰ νεφῶ.

If Epiphany is bright,
Easter day will be wet.

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1059)

Robu, m.n., now used only in the sense of 'a fourth part of a cow's carcass, etc.; a big joint' (M. *robbu laham*), in the context seems to mean 'a field, a ¼measure (Ar. رُبْع)'. But cp. also, رُبْع 'water-spring' and, in Syria, 'farmer, partner' (Hava).

2. **In-nhar jidher minn GHODU**, 'The day appears from the morning', i.e. from the morning you can judge the rest of the day (Cp. prov. No. 1). This proverb is also figuratively applied to early trends of events or a man's character which shows its first traits in early life.

Ca. It. 'Il buon giorno si conosce da la mattina'; Ger. 'Ein guter Tag fängt des Morgens an'.

3. **XEMX bajda tigbed ix-xita**, 'A white (pale) sun draws the rain'.

Cp. Sic. 'Quannu la luna è pàlita, havi a chioviri, e quannu è russa li gran venti gridanu'.

4. **Ix-XEMX ghandha l-ghalqa tahdimhha**, 'The sun has got its field and works it'. 'The field is the halo round the sun which indicates coming rain or wind. Cp. Proverb No. 13.

'When the sun is in his house (halo) it will rain soon' (Zuni Indians - Inwards, p. 86)

Cp. 'A dark halo round the sun indicates rain, especially if it occurs in the afternoon' (Theophrastus, 23); Sic. 'La luna (sole) col circu (tunnu) tuornu (Not.): da indizio di pioggia e di prossimo vento il quale sarà furioso da quella parte dove il circolo è spezzato' (Pitrè: *Usi e Costumi*, Vol. III, p. 32).

5. **XEMX u xita Alla jaf meta**, 'God only knows when the sun will shine or when it will rain'. The weather is unpredictable; so also are certain future hopes or events.

Cp. Eng. 'When God wills no wind but brings rain'. Chile 'When God wills it rains with every wind' (Champion).

6. **Ix-XEMX issaħħan imma l-ebda borma ma tghallf**, 'The sun heats but it does not make any pot boil! One cannot earn one's living if one does not work'.

7. **Bix-xita u x-XEMX, il-muna bil-giri ma tintemmx**, 'Thanks to the rain and the sun, the year's provision will not be easily finished'.

bil-giri, shortened into *bi ġiri*, adv. and *i ġiri*, adv., 'shortly, soon', used mainly in optative sentences, is made up of *bi* (ب), 'with', + *ġiri*, v.n. 'running' (Ar. جَرَى).

8. **Nhar ta' Hamis, meta x-xemx tinzel go' XKORA, it tenna l-maltemp**, 'On Thursday, when the sun goes down in a sack, expect bad (stormy) weather'.

Cp. Theophrastus (*ibid.*, § 11) 'If the sun sets in a cloud in winter or spring, this generally indicates rain within three days... Again, if, as the sun sinks, a cloud forms below it and this breaks up its rays, it is a sign of stormy weather'. Mantova: cp. 'Quand s'intabàra giove (giovedì) la domenica piove. (G. Tass., p. 54). Sic. 'Quannu lu sulì si curca 'nsaccatu ('nta lu saccu), s'aspettanu li ventidì punenti' (Pitrè, op.cit., p. 16); Eng. (S. Devon) 'On Thursday at three/Look out, and you'll see/What Friday will be'; Scot. (St. Andrews) 'Sun set in a clear/Easterly wind's near/Sun set in a bank/Westerly will not lack' (Inwards).

THE MOON (*Il-Qamar*)

10. Meta d-dinja tmiegħkek fl-ahħar il-qamar IZIEGHDEK. 'When the world ill-treats you (lit. drags you along on the ground) at last the moon will give you abundance'. Though your business may be bad, one day the moon at the right time will redress the balance.

Miegħek for *magħħek* (Ar. ^{مغ}) replaced by the third form because medial *ع* is phonetically incapable of reduplication in Maltese.

11. Il-QAMAR jiekol (jibla') kollox. 'The moon eats up (swallows) everything', i.e. when it shines full the clouds disappear.

Cp. Fr. 'La lune mange les nuages'; Eng. 'The full moon eats clouds' (nautical); 'The moon grows fat on clouds'. Inwards (p. 97) says: 'The normal eventide evaporations of clouds formed by diurnal heating is most noticeable during the first and second quarters of the moon, when the lunar disk is apparently growing larger night by night. Hence, probably, the primitive notion that the moon feeds on clouds'.

12. Min għall-mulett ixammar, jifdallu x'IQAMMAR, 'He that wants to fish (lit. rolls up his trousers) for mullet has to wait for many moons'. A fisherman's saying, based on close observation of the habits of mullets, which appear with the moon.

13. Meta l-qamar ikollu l-GHALQA, lesti biex tisma' xi għarqa, 'When the moon has a halo round it, be prepared for news of someone drowned'. Cp. Proverb No. 4.

Theophrastus (*ibid.*, § 31) writes: 'A halo about the moon signifies wind more certainly than a halo about the sun (Cp. Proverb No. 4) but in either case, if there is a break in the halo, it indicates wind, which will come from the quarter in which the break is'. Cp. also Ar. proverb ^{يَوَالِي} ^{الْقَمَرِ} ^{دَائِرَةُ} ^{الْبَرْقِ} ^{قَطَارَةٌ}. 'There is a circle (halo) around the moon. Rain is coming' (Frayha, No. 1486); Eng. 'When round the moon there is a bright, the weather will be cold and rough (Lean).

14. **Jekk thares lejn il-qamar u tmiss il-FLUŞ, tul ghomrok dejjem tbus,** 'If you look at the moon while touching money, you'll be kissing all your life'. According to an old belief, a girl that would marry a rich man is advised to stare at the moon holding a coin in her hand.

15. **Tishetx il-qamar fi-art, ghax itik niket u MARD,** 'Don't curse the moon on earth lest you be affected with grief (melancholy) and disease'. Regard the moon with great awe and don't provoke her malefic influences by your curses.

16. **Tghoddx il-granet tal-qamar, ghax ma jhallikx TISTABAR,** 'Don't count the lunar days, or you'll be restless'. Advice to a married woman not to worry about her menses.

17. **Dak li ġġib fil-qamar, fi-ebda kwart ma jkollu SABAR,** 'What you conceive in moonlight will find no rest during any quarter of the moon', i.e. the offspring of an intercourse which took place in moonlight will be subject to epilepsy.

THE STARS (*il-Kwiekeb*)

18. **Il-KWIEKEB teghmeż, ghandna r-rih,** 'When the stars wink, expect wind'.

Inwards (p. 98) says: 'Excessive twinkling of stars indicates heavy dews, rain and snow, or stormy weather in the near future... When stars flicker in a dark background, rain or snow follows soon'.

19. **Il-qamar, il-KEWKBA win-newba, fuq ir-raba' ma fihomx hliet sewba,** 'The moon, the star(s) and their alternations cannot but produce a good harvest'.

Sewba, f.n. In the context the lost M. meaning seems to be that of N. Afr. *مأبة* *abondance de productions de la terre. Récolte abondante. Moisson*. Cp. *عام مأبة* 'année fertile' and *قمح مأبة* 'Blé fertile et bien fourni' (Beauss).

WINDS

(*Rjeh*)

20. **Ir-RIH imexxi l-bastiment, imma hu jgharraqhom,** 'The wind drives ships but it also sinks them'. Said of something that can be both good and bad.

21. **Ir-RIH mhux tġieb,** 'The wind is not fair weather'. Said of wind which blows when sunshine was expected to ripen the fruits.

tġieb, v.n., 'fair weather; right time for cultivation'. Cp. Ar. *طيبة* 'the

choicest of herbage', طَيِّب 'North Wind' (Egypt).

22. **MILL-KSIEH u r-RIH jīgul-ghelejjeġ:** *mix-xemxu x-xitajsiru l-ghelejjeġ*, 'From cold and wind come diseases; from sun and rain come harvests'. Note play on rhyme-word *ghelejjeġ*, pl. of *għalla*, 'disease' (Ar. عِلَّة) and of *għalla*, 'crops' (Ar. غَلَّة).

23. **RIH FUQ itajjar l-ghakur**, 'The N.W. Wind dispels clamminess'. One feels brisker and livelier when this wind blows.

għakur, v.n. 'oppression, clamminess' characteristic of *Riħ Isfel*, fr. Ar. عَقُور 'wounding, biting (beast of prey)', and عَقِيب 'wounded, stabbed, hooked, terror-stricken' but, perhaps, more likely from عَكَر 'to disturb, to grieve' (Hava)

24. **TRAMUNTANA mara tnixxef il-miżwed u tghaqqad il-qara**: 'The North wind is a woman who dries the peascod and forms the pumpkin'.

25. **TRAMUNTANA mara sewwa, imma fuqha ma torbotx**, 'The North wind is a good woman but you can't rely on her'. Var. *Tramuntana isem ta' mara; meta tagħmilha tagħmilha*, 'The North Wind is a woman's name; when it is cold (stormy) it is very cold (stormy)'. For the personification of the wind cp. the Orkney proverb 'The West Wind is a gentleman and goes to bed early' (Lean), and the wind-tales collected by Fr. Magri in *X'Jgħid il-Malti fuq id-Dinja ta' Taħt u fuq ir-Rjieħ* (1905). Cp. also Maltese expression *Tramuntana Dar il-Bard* (Vass), 'The North Wind is the home of Cold'. Cp. also Chios (prov. No. 7).

Ὅταν βρέχει βορεινά,
τότες βρέχει ἀληθινά.

When the rain comes from the North
Then in truth it rains.

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II; p. 1057).

26. **RIH ISFEL, meta tniggeż il-ħmar kemm jiżfen**, 'When the wind blows in the South East, and you prick the donkey, how it will dance! i.e. everybody feels irritable when the 'riħ isfel' blows.

27. **IL-PUNENT italla' u jniżżeġ kull mument**, 'The West wind raises (clouds) and lowers them all the time'. When the wind blows in the West, rain clouds keep rising all the time from that direction. Var. *Il-Punent jiksriġna għajma kull mument*, 'The West wind pesters us all the time'.

28. **IL-PUNENT iwiegħed u jagħti**, 'The West wind promises and gives'. A wind blowing in the West brings rain with it.

29. **IL-LVANT jimla l-vagant**, 'The East wind fills the vacant spaces (with clouds)'.

Cp. Sic. 'U livanti, inci 'i vacanti. (Noto - Pitre, *op.cit.* p. 44) *wagant*, m.adj., 'empty, vacant', from Sic. *vacanti*.

30. **II-LBIČ** *rih jew xita żgur iġib*, 'The South West wind is sure to bring either wind or rain'.

31. **Rih II-LBIČ** *jiehu w ma jġib*, 'The South West wind takes but does not bring back'. When this wind blows the Gozo 'dghajsas' (boats) manage to set off from the harbour, but will then be unable to return on account of the rough sea. Var. *Rih il-Lbič, jiddi, ma jġib*, 'The South West wind gives but does not bring (i.e. prevents ships, boats etc. from returning to harbour). According to Vass (No. 742) this refers to the harbour of Malta, but it is likewise applied by the Gozitans to their own harbour of Imġarr. (Ar. *مجر* 'torrent, courant d'eau: Alcalá quoted by Dozy).

32. **II-LBIČ** *jehel u l-Punent II-Lbič jilghab*, 'The South West wind sticks and the West South West plays about'. - The S.W. wind is clammy while the W.S.W. is always changing.

33. **Kull GHASFUR** *imur mar-rih, biss il-bies imur kontrieh*, 'Every bird flies with the wind, only the hawk flies against it'.

34. **IX-XLOKK** *wil-Lbič l-agħar żewġ irjeh*, 'The South East wind and the South West wind are the worst winds'.

Cp. Sic. 'Di lu Sciroccu e di lu Libbici, lu marinaru beni nu nni dici'.

The words *rih* and *xita* appear together in the common expression *ghal riħ bla xita* meaning 'uselessly', 'unprofitably'.

CLOUDS, LIGHTNING, THUNDER AND RAIN

(*Shab, Beraq, Ragħad u Xita*)

CLOUDS (*Is-Shab*)

35. **SHAB** *mill-LBIČ ilma żgur iġib*, 'Clouds in the South West will certainly bring rain'.

36. **L-ISWED** *ibazža' u l-abjad ixabba'*, 'Black clouds frighten; white clouds satiate (the soil)'. Var. *L-iswed idejjaq u le jxabba'*; *l-abjad ixabba u le jdejjaq*, 'Black clouds oppress and do not slake (the thirst of the fields); white clouds satiate (the fields with rain) and do not oppress'. White clouds are believed to bring rain but not so black clouds.

Cp. Ar. 'A black cloud threatens, but a white cloud gives rain' (Champion).

37. RAFF bir-rjus, ragħad u beraq ikollna (stenna), 'When you see a cloud rack, expect thunder and lightning'.

Cp. It. 'Quando il cielo è a falde di lana, anche l'acqua è poco lontana'; Eng. 'A round-topped cloud with flattened base carries rainfall in its face';

38. Sema NAQXET IL-FEKRUNA (manqax il-fekruna), jew xita bil-qliel jew rih fortuna, 'A tortoise-scaled sky (portends) either heavy rain or a gale'.

Cp. Ar. *سَمَاهَا قَرِيبٌ مِّمَّاهَا* 'Feathery clouds in the sky mean imminent rain' (Frayha, No. 1609); Sic. *Celu picurinu, acqua e ventu vicinu*; 'Celu (arju) picurinu, s'un chiovi oj, chiovi a lu mattinu'; It. 'Cielo a pecorelle, acqua a catinelle' Mantova. Cp. 'Quando al ciell l'è in lana, s'an piof incò, piof dentar la stmana. (G. Tass. p. 54) Eng. 'Mackerel sky and mares' tails/make lofty ships carry low sails'; 'Mackerel scales, furl your sails'; 'A mackerel sky, not twenty-four hours dry' (Inwards).

fekruna f.n. 'tortoise'. Cp. Ar. *أَفْكَرُ* and *أَفْكَرُ* 'tortue' *أَفْكَرُ الْمَاءِ* 'tortue d'eau' (M. *Fekruna tal-baħar* 'turtle') and *أَفْكَرُ الصُّحْرِ* 'tortue de la terre' (M. *fekruna tal-art* 'tortoise') *mot d'origine berbère* (Dozy).

LIGHTNING (Beraq) AND THUNDER (Ragħad)

39. Meta fis-sajf tara tberraq il-TRAMUNTANA, jew xita qawwija itten-na jew kbira shana, 'When in summer you see lightning in the North, expect either heavy rain or a great heat'. Var. *Meta tberraq il-Tramuntana jkun gej il-maltemp*, 'When lightning is in the North expect bad weather'.

Cp. Eng. 'Lightning in the North in summer is a sign of heat' (Inwards p. 169); It. 'Quando lampeggia di tramontana, è segno di caldana'; Ger. and Eng. 'The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow'.

40. Ma' l-ewwel BERQA, in-nannu jofqos il-mizwed u n-nanna tlesti l-imserka, 'With the first lightning grandpa shells the peasecod and grandma prepares the quill'. In the month of March when the first signs of lightning begin beans are prepared for sowing and reel quills for winding the weaver's thread.

41. Meta jberraq il-PUNENT ahsibliu biex tkun lest, 'When it lightens in the West, get prepared for it'.

42. Il-beraq fil-L BIC, ix-xita jgib, 'Lightning in the South West will bring rain'.

Inwards refers to a similar husbandmen's practice in England: 'If in a clear and starry night it lightens in the South East (M. *Xlokk*), it foretelleth great store of wind and rain to come from those parts: If from the South (M. *Nofs inhar*) or the West (M. *Punent*) it lightens expect both

South (M. *No/s inbar*) or the West (M. *Punent*) it lightens expect both wind and rain from these parts' (p. 168)

43. **Il-BERAQ dukkar tax-xita**, 'Lightning is the producer (lit. 'the cap-rificator') of rain'.

44. **Il-BERAQ mhux hobż**, 'Lightning is not bread', i.e. it brings no good; is useless without rain.

45. **Meta tara l-BERAQ, illesti l-gima fejn tintebaq**, 'When you see lightning, get the cottage ready where to shut yourself'.

Illesti, imperative of *lesta*, v.t., 'to prepare, get ready', from It. *allestire*.

46. **Wara l-BERAQ jiġi l-meraq**, 'After lightning comes the juice (rain)'. In a derived sense it refers to the formation of juice in the pips of pomegranates, which occurs about September, when the first rains usually come.

Cp. L. 'After the clap there follows a heavy and abundant shower of rain' (C.E. Empson's translation of Lucretius, quoted by Inwards); 'Rain and wind increase after a thunderclap' (ibid, p. 169); It. 'Quando ha tuonato bisogna che piova'; Fr. 'After much thunder, much rain' (Inwards p. 169) Sp. 'Después de muchos truenos, viene una gran gran lluvia'.

47. **Jekk ma JBERRAQX ma jmerraqx**, 'No rain without lightning', Var. *Mnejn iberraq imerraq*, 'Where it lightens it rains'.

48. **Wara r-RAGHAD tiġi x-xita**, 'After thunder, rain'. Cp. Proverb No. 46.

RAIN (*Xita*)

49. **Ix-xita l-BIKRIJA tnebbet il-gargir**, 'Early rain makes Spanish mustard sprout'. *Gargir*, cp. جرجير names of various cresses.

50. **Meta x-xita taghmel BIKRI, u tibqa' sal-imwahhar, ikollu x'jitma' l-bidwi, u x'jahzen sal-ahhar**, 'When it rains early and continues raining till late in the season, the peasant will have enough food to give and store till the last'.

51. **Meta Alla jtina l-BQIJA tax-xita (or ix-xita tal-kumplament) l-ibbies tas-sbul jitwal 'il fuq mill-komma**, 'When God gives us the rest of the rain (the remaining part of the rainy season) the dress of the ear-corns grows higher than the elbow'. The last rain of the season helps the wheat harvest to grow.

52. **Meta TIBTELL l-ghetejba, tibda tehla l-bwejba**, 'When the threshold gets wet, bread begins to taste sweet'. After the first rains the temperature gets cool and one's appetite becomes sharper – one begins to relish

food much more. The following is Vass's explanation (No. 554): *Qui v'è ambfologia nel diminutivo Bwejba, che può significare l'imposta dell'uscio e la midolla del pane, che viene da Lbiba, essendo detto 'il-bwejba' invece di il-lbwejba, ove il Lam radicale manca. Il ritmo denota che dopo la prima pioggia la temperatura si rinfresca, e bagnata che sia la soglia, l'appetito, che il gran calore della state avrà diminuito, rimettesi colla frescura'.*

bwejba, f.n., dim. of *bieb* (door) (Ar. باب) by suffixing a (cf. *buta*, 'small pocket', from *but*) and of *lbieba*, 'crumb (soft, inner part of bread)', of which initial *l* is generally dropped in pronunciation (Ar. لبابة, 'fine flour' — (Hava); *mie. de pain* (Beauss, Dozy). Beauss explains لبابة 'coeur, intérieure d'une graine'; 'core, pulp of a fruit' (Hava).

53. IX-xita bil-BOQQQ xita dewwiema, 'Rain in bubbles is lasting rain', i.e. rain that falls in bubbles penetrates the soil.

boqqa, f.n., 'a mouthful of water; wine, etc.; bubble'; Cp. Ar. بوق (It. *bocca*, *bouche*) (Dozy); 'morsel, draught' (Hillelson). With M. *baqqa*, 'to irrigate', and *xita tal-boqqa*, 'heavy rain which breaks into bubbles when it hits the ground', cp. Ar. بوق 'to pour an abundant rain (cloud)'.

54. In-NAMAR Alla jbazza, 'God's acts inspire fear'. *Namar Alla*, as when it rains so heavily that you think the place is going to be inundated, etc. When there is a thunderstorm church bells are rung, as if to scare evil spirits away, and the people utter the prayer: '*Santa Barbara, la deni u lanqas hsara*', 'St. Barbara, (let there be) neither evil nor harm!'. St. Nicholas in Malta, as in Sicily, is believed to ward off thunder and lightning. *Hobz ta' San Nikola* (St. Nicholas's Loaves), which are like small rolls, are reputed to protect the Saints' devotees from the dangers of storms.

namar, m.n., 'abundance; large quantity of', with which cp. Ar. ثَمَر pl. of ثَمَرَة 'number' (Hava). Cp. It. *numero*.

55. In-NAR u l-ilma jbazza, 'Fire and water (lightning and floods) frighten'. These two elements of Nature cause great damage.

56. Meta tqattar ix-xita, is-SAJDA tkun f'waqqitha, 'With the first drops of rain coincides the right season for fishing'.

57. SENA tax-xita, sena tal-maltemp, 'A rainy year, a year of storms'.

58. Tal-WIED tal-wied, 'What belongs to the valley is carried away by rainwater', i.e. do not cultivate land that may be washed away by the rains. Note play on the two meanings of *wied*, (i) valley and (ii) heavy rainwater.

59. Meta jsaffru l-iġġien, ikunu fgaw il-WIDIEN, 'By the time the galleys blow their tritons (shell trumpets) the valleys will have overflowed (with rainwater)'. There is in this proverb an obscure historical allusion which I am unable to relate to the context. We know that galleys blew tritons as mist warnings, but I could not establish the relation with rainfall.

faga, int.v., 'to choke', from It. *affogare*, formed by analogy with *verba tertiae radicalis* (ق) (Cp. M. *gara*, 'to happen' Ar. جَرَى).

giġfen, m.n., 'battleship', from Ar. جَنْفَن (pl. اَجْنَان M. *ġfen*) *grand navire* (Beauss).

60. L-ewwel XITA tkun ghar-raba' u għall-bjar/Jekk tissokta bil-ġid tim-la r-rziezet u d-djar, 'The first rain will be for the fields and the wells; if it continues it will fill farms and houses with abundance'.

issokta, int.v., 'to continue; carry on', fr. Sic. *assicutari* (also *siquitari*), from L. *secutus*, pp. of *sequi*.

rzezet, m.n., pl. of *razzett*, 'cattle shed'. cp. Sic. *ricettu*, It. *ricetto*, from L. *receptus*, 'refuge, shelter'.

61. Ix-XITA hdiet; kull tajra mxiet, 'The rain has stopped; every fowl has moved away'.

beda, int.v. 'To cease' fr. Ar. هَدَا 'to be still, motionless; wind, storm (Hava).

62. Ix-XITA wix-xemx qed jitghammed Lhudi (tweiled Tork); 'When it rains and the sun shines, a Jew is being baptized (a Turk is born)'. Rain and sunshine as simultaneous weather phenomena have been considered curious and unusual by several peoples.

Cp. It. 'Quando piove e luce il sole, tutte le vecchie vanno in amore'; 'Quando è sole e piove, il diavolo mena moglie'. Sp. Cuando llueve y hace sol, sale el arco del Señor; also, Cuando llueve y hace sol se ríe Nuestro Señor; cuando llueve y hace luna, se ríe la Virgen pura. Ger. Quando piove e splende il sole si fa nozze all'infemo (Straff).

**63. Il-qamar idamdandam,
Il-kewkba goffa,
Ix-xemx dennija
U dix-XITA mnejn hi ġejja?**

'The moon rumbles, / The star is a basket, / The sun is harmful, / And where is the rain coming from?'. Said of rain that falls out of season.

denni, tr.v., 'to cause (a cut finger, etc.) to suppurate'. Cp. Ar. مَنِي 'to be sickly'. For M. 2nd form cp. Ar. اَمَاغِرِ *amaġrir* (Dozy).

64. XUXA mxewwxa titlob ix-xita, 'Ruffled hair asks for rain'. Fr. Magri

(X'Jghid il-Malti, 1925, p. 158) suggests that the practice of going out with ruffled hair and uncovered might have had a propitiatory effect at periods of great drought. Vass (No. 797) gives it a literal non-agricultural meaning.

xuxa, f.n., 'shock of hair'; as an adv. 'bareheaded'. Cp. Ar. شَوْشَة 'lock of the scalp, crest' (Hava); 'top-knot, crest, tuft of hair (Elias); 'cheveux tombant sur le front des femmes mauresques' (Beauss).

65. Infetah il-VIT: issa għalf u ġid, 'The tap has been unplugged, now (we'll have) fodder and wealth'. A spell of long bad weather is not good for the crop; but when it begins to rain heavily crops flourish.

THE SEA

(*Il-Baħar*)

66. Il-BAHAR 'sinjur, 'The sea is wealthy'. There are many treasures buried in it.

67.

Baħar FIERAGH għal Rih Isfel,

Baħar mimli għal Rih Fuq;

B'rīha ta' dolliegh

Il-baħar maltemp stenna minnufih.

'Sea at a low ebb, wind in the South East; / full sea, wind in the North West; / when there is a flavour of water melons, / expect the sea to get stormy immediately.

Theophrastus says that 'receding of the sea indicates a North wind; but its influx a South wind. This is written of Greece' (J.G. Wood's translation, quoted by Inwards, p. 153).

68. Meta l-blat jibjad, il-MELLIEHA jew jitle' l-baħar għaliha jew tiġi x-xita, 'When the rock becomes white, expect either the sea to spread over the salt pan or that it will rain.'

69. QAMAR rieqed, baħar imqajjem, 'When the moon is asleep, the sea is awake'. Var. (i) *Qamar wieqaf, baħar bnazzi*, 'Standing moon, calm sea'; (ii) *Qamar rieqed, baħrin imqajma; qamar imqajjem, baħrin rieqda*, 'Moon asleep, sailors awake; Moon awake, sailors asleep'; (iii) *Il-qamar rieqed u l-kaptan imqajjem*, 'The moon is asleep and the captain is awake'; (iv) *Qamar wieqaf, baħrin rieqda*, 'Standing moon, sailors asleep'.

Cp. Sic. 'Luna a l'addritta, marinaru curcatu'; 'Luna curcata, marinaru a l'addritta'; Ven. 'Luna in piè e mariner sentà'; 'Luna sentada e mariner in piè' (Straff); Sp. 'Luna acostada, marinero en piè', i.e. enseña que cuando la luna se oculta es cuando el marinero debe tener más cuidado en el gobierno del buque' (Sbarbi I). In Chios: (prov. No. 3):

Δίπλα Φεγγάρι, δλόρθος γεμιτζής, Moon lies down, sailor stands up;
 δλόρθο Φεγγάρι, δίπλα γεμιτζής. Moon stands up, sailor lies down.
 (Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1056).

70. Meta l-bahar juri QIEGHU, l-ajru (il-maltemp) jagħmel tiegħu (jerfa⁸ driegħu), 'When the sea shows its bottom, the weather gives vent to a storm (raises its arm)'.

71. Il-bahar fis-sajf XIX u fix-xitwa ġuvni, 'The sea in summer is an old man and in winter a young man'. A sea-storm in summer does not last long; not so in winter.

bahar xiħ, 'an old sea'. Cp. Sic. *mar vecchiu* (It. *mare vecchio*), 'mareta, residuo di tempesta' (Mortillaro).

72. Il-bahar ZAQQU ratba u rasu iebsa bħal stanga (hatba), 'The sea has a soft tummy and a head as hard as a staff'.

bħal (followed by a noun or pronominal suffixes) means 'like' 'as', for ex. *bħal-i*, -ek, etc., 'like me, like you, etc.'; *bħal kelb*, 'like a dog', lit. 'in the state or condition of'. Cp. Ar. بحال or في حال 'dans un état de' (Beauss.),. With adv. *bħalma*, 'as', made up of *bi*, 'with', *bal-tma* cp. Ar. حالما 'as soon as'.

LAND CULTIVATION, PLANTS AND FIELDS

(Xogħol ta-Raba', Xitel u Għelieqi)

73. ALLA jrid jagħti, mhux l-art (Agius De Soldanis: Damma), 'It is God and not the earth that gives'. Crops do not prosper without God's blessing.

Cp. Sp. El cielo manda en el suelo; cp. also Ar. (Alegto) ħayr ʕl ard mən ħayr ʕs sama. 'Les biens de la terre viennent des biens du ciel' (R. T. p. 22).

74. L-ART tagħti (taġħmel) kemm taġħmel magħha:
 Gid, hena, u fuq kollox is-saħħa.

'The land yields as much as you do for it: / wealth, happiness and above all good health'.

hena, m.n. (sometimes used as fem.), 'joy, happiness, well-being', from Ar. هنا 'enjoyment, good health' (dialect of Syria). With M. *henna*, 'to make happy' cp. هنيئاً 'to greet, to congratulate' and with M. *thenna*, 'to be happy' cp. Ar. تهنيئاً 'to be glad, happy' (Hava).

75. Jekk l-ART kienet tagħti dejjem, il-bidwi qatt ma jfalli;

Meta l-art tonqos, il-bidwi dejn iħalli.

'If the earth yielded always a good harvest, the peasant would never become bankrupt; / when the earth fails (him) the peasant runs into debts'.

jekke, conj., 'if', short form. (Ar. **إِنْ يَكُنْ**)

falla, int.v., 'to go bankrupt', from Sic. *falliri*, whence *fallitu*, 'bankrupt', M. *fallut*. Maltese has also *falla*, int.v., 'to err', from It. *fallare*, whence M. *falla*, 'error of judgment; an indiscretion' as in *ghamel xi falla*, 'he committed some indiscretion'.

76. **Kullma tara b'ghajnejk kollu ġej mill-ART.**

Min lilha jahdem tajjeb la jbatu għu u la bard.

'All that you see with your eyes comes from the soil. / He that tills it well will suffer neither hunger nor cold'.

Cp. L. 'Et sata cum multo foenore reddit ager' (Ovid); Sic. 'La terra dici: dunami ca ti dugnu'; It. 'Avaro agricoltor non fu mai ricco'; Sard. 'Qui trabagliat sa terra, tenet pane; qui laxat reposare, morit miseru'; Lomb. 'Tèra laorada, racòlta sperada', Milan 'Damen, la dfo la tèra, e ten darò; Sp. 'Los panes el prado aumenta, come el ganado sustenta'.

77. **Il-borma ma ssirx minghajr nar; lanqas l-ART tagħti minghajr bżar,**
'The pot does not cook without fire; so earth (the soil) does not give (a good crop) without manure'.

78. **Fajn tniibbet il-BAGHLA ma tifraxh żahra,** 'Where the orange shoot sprouts, no blossoms appear'. Baghla (pl. bghula) 'offshoot or sprout' cp. بَقْل 'unwatered plant or plant that is only watered by rain'.

79. **Min ikollu għalqa mal-BAHAR irid oħra r-raħal,** 'He that has a field near the sea wants another in the village'. Fields near the sea are practically useless because they don't yield a good harvest.

80. **In-nwar tal-BAJTAR jimla l-qolla bl-aħjar għasel,** 'The blossoms of prickly pears fill the pitchers with honey'.

81. **Il-BIDWI sormu jikwi,** 'The peasant's backside burns hot'. As he is always bending over the spade digging, etc., the sun burns his back — a hard life!

82. **Mill-BIDWI w mir-raqħaj l-ewwel għana tad-dinja,** 'The first wealth of the world comes from the peasant and the shepherd'.

83. **Min jixtri l-BIKRIJA jkollu jżen il-hamrija,** 'He that buys early produce (i.e. potatoes, etc.) will have to weigh the soil with it'. Early produce costs more on account of the additional weight of the soil sticking to it.

84. **Meta jispiċċa l-BITTIEH**

Is-senduq jimla' li fih

Għax il-bajd bil-ghali jinbiegh.

'When the melon season is over, the chest gets filled up because

the cost of the eggs goes up'.

85. **BRINGIELA** fi **zmienha**, **ghas-suq qatt ma tkun wisq ghammiela**, 'An egg-plant in its season will never be in abundance for the market'. The first five or six egg-plants of the season are fine and big; when the number increases the quality decreases, and so does the market value'.

86. **Meta d-DIELJA tistahba, in-nies thoss il-bard hafna**, 'When the vine conceals itself (i.e. sheds all its leaves), people begin to feel the cold very much'.

87. **Meta d-DIELJA tohog is-rimja, tfakkama fil-Wirja**, 'When the vine begins to sprout, it reminds us of the Show'. The proverb can't be very old, as the Agricultural Show referred to, held at Buskett on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul on the 29th June, was first held in 1854.

88. **Aktar ma jkun IKKULTIVAT aktar ikun indannat**, The better cultivated (i.e. well watered) it is, the more damned it is. Said of vines that grow better on rock than in irrigated soil. Figuratively, said of a person, well-fed, looked after, but ungrateful to those that love him.

89. **FARDGHALLA, gholl b'xoghju**, 'Fields which yield one crop a year only, are too expensive to till' (i.e. leave no profit. Cp. prov. No. 110).
[*fardghalla*, m.n., 'field that produces one crop a year only', made up of '*fard*', single' (Ar. فرد), '*ghalla*', 'crop' (Ar. غلة. For syntactic usage of فرد cp. فرد زوجة 'une épouse', فرد طريق 'une seule fois' فرد عين 'borgne']

90. **Fejn tbill ir-rigel jobrom il-FIGEL**, 'Where your foot gets wet, radishes grow round'. Radishes grow in valleys where there is much water. Var. **Ir-raba' għan-niżel ihaxxen il-fiġel**, 'Down-sloping fields thicken the radishes'.

91. **IL-FUL iżirghu fit-tajn sa rkubtejk, u onqxu fit-trab idur għal ghajnejk**, 'Sow broad beans when the wet soil (lit. mud) reaches as high as your knees, and trim them when the dust flies to your eyes'. Sow beans when it rains heavily and trim them when it is very dry.

Cp. L. 'Triticum durum, hordeo pulverem conferito'; It. 'Semina la fava nel polveruccio, e il grano nel fanguccio'; Eng. 'Sow beans in the mud'; 'Sow beans in the wind', 'Sow or set beans in Candlemas waddle'; Sp. 'Si quieres coger habas muchas, las sembrarás por San Lucas; y si bien, por San Miguel'.

92. **IL-FULA bnina taghmel il-fatra tqila**, 'Good beans make a heavy dinner'.

93. **Meta l-FULA tibda tnawwar, il-berghuda tfawwar**, 'When the bean

plant begins to blossom, the flea increases'.

Folk-Belief: Many of our peasants believe that beans grow in their shells in opposite direction from year to year – from left to right in one year and vice-versa in the following year and so on.

94. **Meta tobrom il-ĠIZIMINA, l-Gharbija ghan-namra fina**, 'When the jasmine plant begins to form its buds, the Arab girl begins to feel the urge of love'. It is believed that the jasmine plant was introduced into Malta from Tunis, hence the allusion to the Arab girl. It blooms between June and November.

95. **ĠNIEN genn** (Agius De Soldanis: *Damma*), 'A garden (orchard) is madness', i.e. its work leaves no profit. One cultivates a garden for pleasure not for business'. Cp. prov. No. 118.

96. **Min ikollu jqabbel ĠNIEN iqabblu lil min hu haddiem**, 'He that has an orchard to lease should lease it to a (diligent) workman. A lazy man would neglect it.

97. **il-GABILLOTT duttur mill-bhajra dejjem żgur**, 'The farmer that takes pride in his work is always sure of his crop of melons and water-melons'. This crop needs great attention.

duttur, m.n. and adj., 'doctor, scholar'; fig. 'one who takes pride in his work or is easily offended', from It. *dottore*.

gabillott, m.n., 'farmer', from Sic. *gabillottu* (Med. L. *gabellarius*, *gabellu*, from Ar. *قبالة*).

98. **L-ilma tal-HABEL imur mal-habel**, 'The water of the rope goes with the rope'. There is an untranslatable play on words in this proverb: *habel* in the sense of 'field' (Ar. *حبل*) *corde: mesure pour les terres* (Beauss.) and *habel* in the sense of 'rope' (Ar. *حَبْل*). As explained by V. Mifsud Bonnici, from whom I took the proverb, it is used by land cultivators to indicate how expensive and hardly worth while is irrigation of land by paid labour as compared with irrigation of land by spring water.

99. **Fejn hemm il-HDURA ssib l-ilma**, 'Where there is greenery there is (lit. you'll find) water'.

Sab (isib) t.v. 'To find' fr. Ar. *صَبَّحَ*, *يَصِيبُ*, *trouver* (Beaus.).

100. **Drabi s-sisija ahjar mill-ĦRIT biż-żewġ fil-Hemsija**, 'Sometimes begging is better (more profitable) than ploughing by a pair of oxen at Hemsija'. *Hemsija* lies in the Rabat area Malta.

101. **Lsien il-MOHRIET fih il-ghasel ghar-raba**, 'The tip (lit. the tongue) of the plough contains honey for the fields'. No other agricultural imple-

ment does so much good to the fields as the plough.

Cp. It. (also Sic.) 'La vanga ha la punta d'oro, la zappa d'argento, lo aratro di ferro'.

102. II-KROMB *bla widek bhal widna bla widah*, 'Cole wort without fat (meat) is like an ear without wax'. You can't have a good *kawlata* ('a soup of vegetables', made up of It. *cavolata*) without fat meat in it.

widek, m.n., 'pus; any greasy substance', from Ar. *وَدَح* 'grease, gravy' (Hava).

wideh, m.n., 'grease of wool' (Hava). Cp. Ar. *وَدَح* *suint de la laine*, *وَدَح* *Désuinter la laine* (Beauss). Cp. also *وَدَح* 'to become fat (camel)' (Hava).

103. Ahjar KROMBA *baghlija minn mija saqwija*, 'Better a cabbage that grows in dry (*lit.* wild) soil than a hundred that grow in irrigated soil'.

baghlija, fem. pf *baghli*, m.adj., 'bastard' (in botany, nearly resembling another species). It. describes also plants which grow in unwatered soil as opposed to *saqui*, 'irrigated land'. Cp. *بَعْل* 'unwatered land or plant; or land, plant that is only watered by rain' (Hava), and *بَعْلِي* adj., *qui rapporte, produit sans irrigation en été, qui n'est pas irrigable; terrain frais* (Beauss).

saqui, m.adj., 'watered soil' (Ar. *سَقَى* 'watered land', from *سَقَى* adj., *terrain irrigable et qui ne reproduit de cultures d'été qu'avec irrigation* (Beauss)).

104. Ghadu I-MASRI *fil-biedja u mp'issa tithajjar ghalih in-nfssiġa*, 'The cotton is still in the fields and the weaver already has her eye on it'. A reference to the great demand for cotton when the weaving industry was more flourishing than it is now.

masri, m.adj., 'Egyptian' (Ar. *مَصْرِيّ*), in modern Maltese replaced by *Egizzjan* (It. *Egiziano*). It occurs as an adj. qualifying *kittien*, 'flax' (Ar. *كُتْنَان* used in a general sense for any lint or flax. In this context it obviously means 'cotton' *قطن مصري* *Gossypium Barbadense* L. Bedevian).

thajjar, int.v., 'to be induced to accept; have a liking for', Vth form of obs. *ħar*, used transitively in the 2nd form *ħajjar*, 'to induce; attract'. Cp. Ar. *خَبَّرَ* 'to give one an option between', and *تَخَيَّرَ* 'to choose, to elect' (Hava).

105. In-NASPLA *saret u t-tawla taret*, 'The medlar fruit is ripe and the crow flew away'.

Cp. Sic. 'A San Simuni (25 Oct.)/Li nespuli a munzidduni/E l'acqua a li vadduni'.

106. PATATA *taht il-hamrija taghmel id-dar mimlija*, 'Potato underground

fills the house'. A harvest of sown potatoes is usually abundant.

107. Mill-Fiddien il-QAMH johrog bil-kejjiel u l- qoton johrog bil-wizzien 'From Fiddien the wheat is collected (*lit.* comes out) in huge quantities and the cotton in great weights'. Var. *Fidden, ja Fiddien / Daka qamhek il-kejjiel / Daka qotnok il-wizzien*, 'Fiddien, o Fiddien! / Your wheat in great measure / And your cotton in great weights'.

Fiddien, place-name of fertile fields in the outskirts of Rabat. Cp. Ar. فدان 'sown field' (Hava); *champ surtout de fèves; champ*: Tunis (Beauss). *kejjiel*, m.adj., 'grain-producing; producing a large quantity of grain'. Cp. Ar. كَيْيَال 'grain-measurer' (Hava), *celui qui achète le blé* (Dozy). *wizzien*, adj.n., 'weighty'. Ar. adj. وَزِين 'weighty' for Ar. وَزَان

108. QOTNA tal-mohriet ahjar minn ghaxra tal-bejtiet, 'A cotton sown in a plough's furrow is better than ten set in holes (in the soil)'.

bejta, f.n., 'a bird's nest; fig. a small hole dug into the soil in which beans, potato and other seedlings are placed, then covered up', a fem. dim. form of *bejt*, 'roof', originally 'house, room' (Ar. بَيْت cp. M. place-name in Tarxien *Wara l-Bjut*. For a similar fem. dim. form cp. بَيْتُونَة (*pl. chambrette, cellule* (Beauss). Ar. عَشْ 'nest' occurs in place-name *Ghoxx il-Hida*, 'Falcon's Nest'.

109. Il-QOTON ma jibżax mix-xemx il-qawwiġa; jibża miċ-ċpar bosta u mit-tniddija, 'Cotton does not fear a very strong sun; / It fears thick mist and dampness'.

ċpar, coll. m.n., 'thick mist', cp. Ar. شَبُورَة with *b* unvoiced by preceding voiceless consonant, contrary to the general rule which operates in opposite direction. The denominative quadrilateral *ċappar* 'to obfuscate', instead of regular hypothetical *ċappar* suggests a non-Arabic origin (cp. Sp. chaparron, 'downpour, rain').

110. RABA' li ma jrabbix ma jiswiex xogħlu, 'Unproductive land is not worth its work'. Cp. prov. No. 89.

111. RABA' xagħri u niġġiem fitt weraq jibqaghlek għall-ghabur, 'Land full of rocks and dog-grass leaves you few leaves for the ewes'.

niġġiem, m.adj., 'abounding in couch grass (field)' (L. *Triticum repens*), fr. Ar. نَعِيم (M. *niġem*).

ghabur, coll. m.n., 'ewes', obsolete. Cp. Ar. عَبُور (pl. عَبَائِر whence M. surname Ebejer. The current M. form is *ghabura*, 'a one year old goat', with which cp. Ar. عَبُورَة 'mouton', given by Schiaparelli in his *Vocabulista in Arabico* (Florence, 1871) and recorded by Dozy.

112. Ir-RABA' rrtiq jixba' mill-ilma u jinxef bid-dawl tal-qamar, 'Fields

having thin soil are cloyed with water and get dry with moonlight', i.e. rain-water easily saturates thin soil and moonlight dries it up.

nixef, int.v., 'to dry up'. Cp. Ar. نَشَفَ 'to absorb' water-tank (Hava). But for M. meaning cp. Ar. نَشِبَ *sécher* (Beauss.).

113. Ir-RABA' ta' l-ixtut bhall-lehja ta' l-utut, 'Fields situated near the seaside are like the beards of billy-goats', i.e. they are practically useless. Var. *lx-xaghri wix-xtut lehjet l-utut*, 'Rocky and seaside soil is like the beards of billy-goats.'

utut, pl. of *wott*, beard of billy-goats, an onomatopoeic formation with which cp. Ar. وَتَّ, also وَتَّ (Kaz.), 'coo of the male dove', وَتَّ 'to creak (load); to cry out (child); to screech (bat)', and وَطَّط 'to speak quickly (cp. M. *x'int twatwat?* 'What are you blabbing about?'), وَطَّاط 'large bat' (Hava), *hirondelle* (Kaz.).

114. L-ISFIQA fil-but tajba, 'Fulness is good only in one's pocket'. This is one of the sayings difficult to translate into English. There is a play on the word *sfiqa* which is the key word. It can mean 'denseness', that is, of very close planting or sowing; and 'fulness' in the sense of abundance', i.e. a lot of money in one's pocket.

115. Is-SILLA kibret, wil-hmar tieghi ma jsibx jirgha, 'The sulla has grown but my donkey finds nothing to graze'. A figurative application. Dearth or privation amidst plenty.

116. It-TOMNIJA ta' disat ijiem ahjar mill-ohra bix-xita fit-tmien, 'The nine days' late sowing is better than the other with rain at the end'. A Cremona in his *Weather and Husbandry Lore in the Isles of Malta* (1922, p. 23) says that this Maltese adage 'teaches that sowing spring wheat during the nine days between Xmas Eve and the end of December is better than sowing it in the last days of Winter (March). Sowing depends on local climatic conditions and therefore is performed during the time best suited to guarantee a good harvest'.

tomnija, f.n., 'wheat sown in March', explained by A.E. Caruana 'prodotto che si può conservare sotterra; nell'uso, il grano seminato in Marzo perchè secco e forte riesce più d'altra qualità adattò ad essere riposto e conservato sotterra, nelle fosse e nei granai. *Qamb tat-tomnija*, grano di Marzo, buono per conservarsi'. For Sic. meaning of *tomnija* cp. the following: 'Tumminia rara e tardia, fora di la mia'. Pitrè says that 'Il frumento tumminia è marzuolo'.

117. Fix-XAGHRA xejn ma jehxien u kollox xaghar johroġ, 'Where the soil is rocky nothing grows thicker than hair – Where there is not enough soil you can't have good products.'

118. **Gnien taż ŻAHAR** ahjar minn miḥwāh tal-waḥd, 'Better an orchard of orange blossoms than a garden of fragrant flowers'. Cp. prov. No. 95.

miḥwāh, m.n., 'redolent place, garden', local mimated form from *ʔāh*, 'to be fragrant', Ar. فَاخ.

119. **Iż-ŻAHAR** fil-berwieq u t-tewm bla taḥsir,
Tama qawwiġa li l-biedja tkun bla ebda titkir.

'When asphodels are in blossom and garlic free of rot, there is good cause for hope that the year's harvest will suffer no blight'.

tama, f.n., 'hope', from Ar. طَمَاعَة 'covetousness, ambition'.

berwieq, m.n., 'asphodel' Ar. بَرْوَق.

titkir, v.n., 'damage, blight, plant disease'. Word of dubious origin. Magri, who gives it, queries the reading. For possible connection of common roots تَكَر cp. تَكْوَر s.m. *Chamvre, Hachish, chamvre indien, can-nabis indica* (Beauss.).

120. **IŻRA** fit-tieb (tajjeb) u fil-waqt biex ma jibdielek qatt, 'Sow when the weather is fair and in time, and you'll never regret it'.

Cp. It. 'Chi semina nella mota, raccolta vuota; chi semina a buon ora qualche volta falla; e chi semina tardi, falla quasi sempre'.

ANIMALS (*Bhejjem*)

121. **ALWETT** bil-gżież, xita bla qies. 'Larks in abundance, abundance of rain'. Larks appear mostly at the height of a rainy season.

122. **BAJDA** tas-serduk

Nagra nagra lehinha jsir mahnuq.

'The voice of the hatching egg little by little gets hoarse'. The egg placed under a brooding hen gradually loses its original sound as it changes into a chicken.

123. **BAJDA** bit-tebgha hamra tkun ghaddiet mill-wied tan-namra, 'An egg with a red spot has passed through the valley of love'. The blood spot in the yolk of an egg is believed to indicate fertilization of the hen by the cock.

124. **Qabil li-BAGHAL**

Jidher meta hu ta' debba jew ta' hmar.

'Of the equine species you can always tell whether it is the offspring of a mare or of a she-donkey'. The qualities of good breeding are easily noticed.

125. **li-BAQRA** tfaqqas (tneħhi) li-madmad minn ghonqha ghax ma tridx

tahrat, 'The cow shakes the yoke off her neck because she does not want to plough'. The cow is not a suitable animal for ploughing'; figuratively the saying may apply to a person that does not brook tyranny. Cp. 141.

126. **II-BHEJJEM** ta' filghodu tih om tibna ha joqoghdu, 'Give the animals straw in the morning and that will be enough'.

127. **II-BHIMA** tar-refgha hija nofs il-merhla, 'The stud bull is half the flock (herd)'.

128. **Meta tisma** l-BUKAGHWAR ighajjat saffar lis-summiena, 'When you hear the black beetle, whistle for the quail'.

129. **II-FART** li simen jew biġhu jew oqtlu, 'When the bull has grown fat sell it or kill it'. Var. *II-fart, la jismen oqtlu*, 'When the bull gets fat, kill it', i.e. after that it will be sheer waste of money to feed it.

[*fart*, m.n. 'bull'; 'ox'. Cp. Ar. *فرس* *boeuf*; *animal*, *brute*, *butor*, *bête* (Beauss.).]

130. **FART** meżmieżi, jew aqgħu jew jaqtgħek, 'If the bull does not eat with an appetite, kill it or it will kill you', i.e. such animals do not grow fat and therefore will not leave you enough profit for your trouble. Var. *Fart li jitmeżmeż ma jiżmenx*, 'A bull which does not eat with a good appetite will not grow fat'. Figuratively said of a person who does not eat what you give him.

tmeżmeż, int.v., 'to feel squeamish about something; to resent'. Cp. Ar. *تَمَزَزَ* 'to be shaken' (Hava).

131. **II-FART** li jiekol il-widna jagħmel il-laham bil-wiżna, 'Cattle which feed on prickly caterpillar will put on flesh by the *wiżna* (5 rotoli)', i.e. will grow fat in a short time.

widna, f.n., 'an ear'. Cp. Ar. *أذن* corresponding to M. *widen*. For sing. fem. form, cp. *أذنية* *nom d'unité de أذن*. With M. *widna*, 'prickly caterpillar' cp. Ar. *أذنية* *au Maghreb, le nom de sempervivum maius* (Dozy) *ودنة* 'caterpillar, scorpion grass'; *Scorpiurus sulcata* L. (Bedevian).

wiżna, f.n. 'a Maltese weight consisting of five rotolos (8 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.), from Ar. *وزنة* 'weight, gold or silver talent equal to 396 English pounds'. (Hava)

132. **Meta l-FART** jiekol ix-xnien u n-nifel
Il-mohriet urajh erhilu jindifen.

'When the bull eats trefoil and lucern medic, let the plough behind him bury itself deep'. The best time for ploughing is when these plants flourish.

133. **FENKA** mghammra tagħtik għal fuq il-ġamra, 'A pregnant rabbit will provide (rabbits) for the roaster.'

134. Biex trabbi l-FLIELES trid it-tlieles, 'To rear chickens you need sacks (of chicken feed)'.

flieles, pl. of *fellus*, 'chicken', from L. *pullus*. Cp. Berber *afullus*, 'cock' (Dest.).

tlieles, pl. of *telliesq*, 'sack'. Cp. تلالسن ام تليس 'grand sac double en tissu de laine et poil pour mettre les grains' (Beauss.).

135. Meta l-FELLUS jonqob qabel iż-żmien

Hajtu ma fihlex tmien.

'When a chick hatches before its time, its life has no end'. The prematurely hatched chicken does not live long.

136. GENDUS rasu sewda, zomm mieghu, 'If the ox has its head black, consider it of good breed'.

gendus, m.n., 'ox', from Berber *ayenduz*, *veau* (Dest.).

137. Meta l-GRU jghaddi fil-gholi jkun ġej il-maltemp, 'When the crane flies high, expect bad weather'.

Cp. Sic. 'Quannu passa lu groi, acqua o prima o poi'.

gru, m.n., 'crane', from It. *gru*.

138. Dar u HAMIEH, farag bla tmien, 'One's home and pigeons are endless consolation'. So they were to the village peasant before a higher cost of living destroyed such simple pleasures.

139. HANŻIR Ghawdx, bagħal Malti, (Agius De Soldanis: *Damma*) 'A (good) pig from Gozo, and a (good) mule from Malta'.

Cp. L. 'Aut porcus Umber, aut obesus Etruscus' (given by Agius).

140. Il-HMAR jingabar meta ġej it-temp, 'When the weather is going to be foul, the donkey returns to its stall'.

For proverbs referring to the donkey's sensitiveness to atmospheric changes Cp. Eng. 'If asses hang their ears downwards and forward, and rub against walls, rain is approaching'; 'Young asses rolling and rubbing their backs on the ground indicate heavy showers'; Switzerland (1543) 'If asses bray more frequently than usual, it foreshadows rain' (Inwards p. 180).

141. Hrit il-HMAR ma jagħtix sandar. hrit il-baqar jimla l-andar, 'Ploughing by donkey is profitless; ploughing by cows fills the threshing floor (with sheaves of corn)'. Var. *Min jaħrat bil-ħmir ma jibux qoton* (or *ma jaħsadx furraina*) 'He who ploughs by donkeys will not have any cotton (or won't reap animal fodder)'.

Cp. Sp. 'Burros para la arada no valen nada'; 'Quien con burros ara, la terra araña'; 'Ara con bueyes si quieres enriquecer'.

sandar, m.n., occurring in the expression *qata' sandar*, 'he made a good bargain (ironical)', from Ar. صَنْدَل 'sandalwood, bois de sandal (Beaus).

142. **Meta tara l-HUTTAF tkun ġejja x-xita**, 'When you see swallows, expect rain'. 'If swallows touch the water as they fly, rain approaches' (Inwards p. 195).

143. **Meta jitkagħbru l-KLIEB ikun ġej il-maltemp**, 'When dogs roll on the ground, expect bad weather'.

tkagħbar, int. v., 'to be ill-used; handled roughly'. 2nd form of *kagħbar*, tr. v., 'to oppress, ill-treat'. Cp. Ar. كَغَبَّر 'to trench off (with a sword)' (Hava); *abattre, couper avec le sabre la tête d'un os ou quelque nodosité.* (Kaz).

144. **Meta l-KELB jitmieghek u l-hmar jimrah, Jew ir-rwiefen ittenna, jew bix-xita ghandek tifrah.**

'When the dog rolls on the ground and the donkey runs about, expect either high winds (gales), or rain to gladden you.'

merah, int. v., 'to wander about; frisk, gambol'. Cp. Ar. مَرَح 'to be lively, cheerful' (Hava).

rwiefen, pl. of *riefnu*, m.n., 'gale', from Calabrian *rèfulu*, whence M. surname Refalo *colpo di vento breve ma impetuoso* (Marzano).

145. **LAMPUKA mixwija tfakkrek fi-ikla xitwija** (Bormla) 'A grilled *lampuka* reminds you of a good meal in Winter.' *Lampuki* abound in October and that is the time when you can buy them cheap. The *lampuka* is a Mediterranean fish, *Coryphaena hippurus*, Linn.

146. **Fejn tqarram il-MOGHZA, jishet**, 'Where the goat crops destruction follows'. Goats eat away grass and plants.

147. **NAGHGA biż-żghar, naddaf it-turtiera u qabbad in-nar**, 'When you have a ewe with lambs, clean the dish and light the fire'. Cooked lambs make a very good dish. The favourite dish of the Maltese is *ħaruf il-fora*.

148. **NAGHGA li ma taqtax bi snienha ma tahlebx**, 'A sheep that does not cut with its teeth (i.e. does not eat grass, etc.) does not yield milk'. Figuratively said of a person who does not make an effort to get things done; to improve his condition, etc.

149. **NAGHGA li ma ddux ma tirghax**, 'A sheep that does not wander about does not graze'. Figuratively said of a person who stays at home, therefore misses good opportunities.

150. **Meta johroġ in-NEMEL tal-ġwienah tkun ġejja x-xita**, 'When emmets (*lit.* winged ants) come out it is going to rain'.

151. Meta jġu l-PLUVIERI jġi l-maltemp, 'When plovers come bad weather comes too'.

pluviera, f.n. pl. *pluvieri*, 'plovers', from archaic It. *pluviero* (Fl. *pluvier*, O.Fr. *pluvier*, from L.L. *plovarius*, derivatives of *pluvia* 'rain').

152. Meta QATTUS ikun jitmieghek, mur għall-kabozza għax tkun ġejja xita kbira, u hudha mieghek, 'When the cat rolls about go and fetch the cloak for it is going to rain very heavily and take it with you'.

Cp. 'When the cat in February lies in the sun, she will creep behind the stove in March'. 'When the North Wind does not blow in February, it will surely come in March'. (Inwards p. 41).

153. Meta QATTUS tara f'xi gallarija, għid li hierġa, x-xemx, 'When you see a cat on a balcony, say that the sun is coming out'.

154. Ġej il-maltemp jew mill-poppa jew mill-pruwa meta jisgħol (jaġtas) il-QATTUS, 'When the cat coughs (sneezes), bad weather is coming either from the stern or from the prow', i.e. from the direction of its tail or head.

Cp. It. 'Quando il tempo si muta, la bestia stamuta'. Mantova. Cp. Quand al gat pasa l'orècia co la sanfa, a vòl piövr in abundansa. (G. Tass., p. 55)

155. Il-QATTUS jahsel wiċċu lejn fejn ikun ġej ir-rih, 'The cat washes its face in the direction of the wind'.

Cp. Sic. 'Quannu la gatta si lava la facci, signu ch'havi a chioviri (o d'acqua)'; 'Quannu la gatta trippia, malu rempu', with variants in Sardegna, Bergamo, Venice. Pitrè (*op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 458) writes: 'Vari presagi si traggono da' gatti. Quando essi fanno la fusa, cioè si bagnano la faccia con lo zampino, prenunziano ordinariamente pioggia; ma qualche volta anche regalo ai padroni di casa'.

Quando hanno il ruzzo (lu trippu) e saltellano, prossima tempesta'.

In Greece 'they say that if a cat licks herself with her face turned towards the north, the wind will soon blow from that dangerous quarter' (Lean).

156. Ir-RAGHA fil-ġbiż ma jsemminx, 'Grazing in fallow land does not fatten (the cattle)'.

ġbiż, coll.n. 'stubble', Cp. Ar. جَبْرَج 'to become dry (bread)' (Hava), whence جَبِين, 'pain sec; pain azyne' (Kaz).

157. Ikun se jdur ir-rih, meta jiddu s-SRIEDAQ, 'When cocks crow expect the wind to change'.

158. Meta tisma' jghajjat il-WERZIEQ, tista' tmur għall-gheneb u t-tiniet, 'When you hear the cricket chirping you can go and pluck grapes and figs'; Var. *Il-werzieq isajjar it-tin*, 'The cricket ripens figs'.

Cp. Chios (prov. 47).

Ζίζικας ἐλάλησε,
μαύρη ρώγα ῥάλισε.

Grasshopper chirped,
The black grape shone.

ἄν δὲν κακήσῃ τζίτζικας, If the grasshopper does not chirp [lit. talk],
δὲν εἶναι καλοκαίρι. It is not summer.

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1063)

werzieq, m.n., grasshopper, cricket, from *werzaq*, 'to scream; toutter shrill cries', seemingly made up of base *wer* (cp. first base of Ar. *وَكَلَ* 'to wail' + *zaq*, (cp. *زَعَقَ* 'to shriek'). Therefore *werzaq* (whence *werzieq*). *وَكَلَ + زَعَقَ*

159. **It-trill (or il-majjal) ixtarih fix-XHUR ta' l-erre**, 'Buy red mullets (or pork) in the months containing the letter R'. In the other hot months red mullets and pork begin to stink. Cp. Lat. *Mensis cum habet R, noli comedere cancer.* German has also this proverb.

160. **Tfajla li titwieled nhar ta' ĠIMGHA**
Fl-istess jum il-kelb jigdimha,

'A girl that is born on a Friday on that same day shall be bitten by a dog. Friday is a day of ill-omen.'

Folk-Belief: Animals. A. Cremona (op.cit., p. 18) says that 'it is a common belief in Malta that when pigeons are chirping in the pigeon-house or the peacock calling loudly a storm will soon follow'. Cp. It. 'Quando il gatto canta a pollaio aspetta l'acqua sotto il grondajo' and Eng. 'When the peacock loudly calls / Soon we'll have both rain and squalls'.

THE SEASONS

(*L-istaguni, L-Erbat, L-izmna*)

161. **SENA ghammiela thallas il-qbiela**, 'A fruitful year pays the rent'. When the harvest is good the peasants can afford to pay the rent.

162. **Is-SNIN bhall-ahwa, ma jixxibhux**, 'Years like brothers are not alike', The weather in one year (season) is not usually like that in another; hence all meteorological proverbs are often no more than plausible guesses.

Cp. Lettish 'No year is the next year's brother'; Silesian 'All days are brothers, but one seldom resembles the other'; Swiss German 'One day can be compared with the day that has gone by'. (Champion)

163. Ir-REBBIEGħA *hija s-sebh tas-sena, is-Sajf nofsinħar, il-Harifa l-gharb w ix-Xitwa l-lejl*, 'Spring is the dawn of the year, Summer its noon, Autumn its sunset (lit. West) and Winter its night'.

164. Għar-REBBIEGħA n-naħla tkun lesta għall-gharusija, 'In Spring, the bee is ready for courting'.

165. Ix-xemx tar-REBBIEGħA tibra' bħal belliegħa, 'The sun of Spring swallows like a whirlpool'. Generally in the months of March and April the sun is so pleasant that one does not notice its harmful effects and, basking in the sunshine, one easily gets a sunstroke.

Cp. Sp. 'Sol de marzo hiere con mazo'.

Rebbiegħa, f.n., 'Spring', from Ar. ربيع pl. ربيعَة and ربيع 'Spring, Autumn', and ربيعَة Beaus— Cp. M. *Rebbiegħat*).

belliegħa, f.n., 'a vortex, whirlpool' fr. Ar. بَلْعَة 'drain; sewer (Hava) *Tourbillion dans une rivière, gouffre* (Beauss.). In a figurative sense *belliegħa* means also sudden ill-luck; misfortune after a spell of good luck.

166. Il-BNAZZI jikxef il-kaxxi, 'Fine weather uncovers the flower-boxes'. I am not quite sure of the meaning which may possibly be that fine weather brings out the flowers from the wooden boxes used as flower-pots.

167. Kif tibda l-ħdura n-nies tibda ssebbah il-BHURA, 'As soon as verdure appears, people begin to embellish the sea-coasts', i.e. soon after Spring people begin to swim or go picknicking near the sea side.

bħura, obs. pl. form of *baħar* (Ar. بَحْر 'sea', pl. بَحُور. For similar pl. pattern cp. *ħbula*, 'ropes', (Ar. حَبُول pl. of *ħabel* (Ar. حَبْل)

168. Is-sajf il-maħruq jinqala' l-HRUĠ, 'Burning summer is time for going out'. When it is hot people go to the seaside or for a holiday abroad.

SUMMER (*Sajf*)

169. Is-SAJF kabozza (kapott) tal-fqir, 'Summer is (comparable to) a cloak for the poor man'.

Cp. Ar. Bsāt el šef wasic. 'The carpet of summer is wide' (Crowfoot – Bald., p. 1).

'Le tapis de l'été est large' (Fegh., No. 2347 and R.P. p. 33); It. 'L'estate è la madre de' poveri'.

kabozza, f.n., 'capote', from It. *cappoccia*. For change of It. *p* to *b* in Maltese cp. M. *kaboċċa*, 'a cabbage', from Sic. *cappuccio* (It. *cappuccio*) *epiteto di cavolo di color bianco, che fa il suo cesto sodo e raccolto*

come una palla (Mort). Barbera gives Sic. *capozza*.

kapott, m.n., 'capote', from Sic. *cappottu*, *il mantello dei marinai e dei soldati per lo più, che copre loro la vita e la testa* (Mort.), or It. *cap-potto*, sec. XVI *mantello invernale; prima del Novecento era avvolto a più giri e prima ancora era un tipico indumento militare*. (Diz. Et. It.). Cp. also Fr. *capote*.

170. SAJF imniddi, hargà mimlija, 'A wet summer, a full window sill'.

171. Is-SAJF jagħmel tiegħu: imsejken min ma jkollox frott minn tiegħu'. 'When summer is at its worst, woe to him that has no fruit of his own'.

172. Meta s-SHANA tagħmel bina, in-nagħga ttina pilha, 'When the heat becomes unbearable, the sheep gives us her wool'. Sheep are shorn about the month of June.

173. Ix-XEMX bdiet kiefra, wil-gavott ma jdoqqu iżjed fiffra, 'The sun began to blaze cruelly, and the gavotte-man will not play his fife', i.e. there will be no reason to fear storms or very bad weather. My informant tells me that in the old days the ugliest sailor on board a ship as soon as he noticed the first signs of coming bad weather, was required to go ashore in the Three Cities (Bormla, L-Isla and Birgu) and play the fife as a warning against the coming storm. This sailor was known as the *gavott*, which corresponds to Eng. *gavotte* the name of a minuet dance.

gavott, m.n., 'gavotte', from Fr. *gavotte*, name of a dance from Provençal *gavoto* (*Gavot*, native of Alps).

AUTUMN (*Harifa*)

174. Fil-HARIFA l-mara tlesti l-qaleb bil-gbejna u thawwad il-brejma binnejna, 'In Autumn the wife fills the cheese-form with curdled milk and stirs (the baby's or child's) soup in the little pot'.

175. Il-HARIFA tbiddel l-arja, u l-halib jitla' fi-ajru, 'Autumn changes the air, and the (price of milk) soars in the air'. As milk gets scarcer in Autumn it gets also dearer.

176. Ghomma l-HARIFA, bard fix-xitwa, 'Heat in Autumn, cold in Winter'.

177. Kif titbiddel in-NATURA inti tilbes xi karkura, 'As soon the weather (*lit.* Nature) changes, you'll put on your slippers'. When it begins to get cold, it is advisable not to go about barefoot.

178. Is-SAHRA twila għax spiċċat il-qargħa twila, 'The working night is long because the long pumpkins (trumpet gourds) have come to an end',

i.e. trumpet gourds (long pumpkins) grow in summer when the nights are at their shortest.

179. Meta tibda taqa' l-WERQA, ix-xemx taraha bis-serqa, 'When leaves (*lit.* the leaf – sing.) begin to fall, you'll see the sun stealthily (very rarely)', i.e. when Autumn begins the sky is generally overcast.

180. Kif jibda jaqa' l-WERAQ jisreġ il-beraq, 'Once leaves begin to fall, lightning begins to flash', i.e. when Autumn sets in, lightning begins to flash.

sireġ, int.v., 'to blaze – sun'. Cp. Ar. سَرَج 'briller, lancer des éclairs' (Kaz).

181. Meta jibda jaqa' l-WERAQ nistennew ir-raghad u l-beraq, 'When leaves begin to fall, we expect thunder and lightning'.

WINTER (*Xitwa*)

182. Bnazzi tax-XITWA, trott ta' baghla xiha u kappell ta' mignun, qatt iżzomm magghom, 'Never trust fair weather in winter, the trotting of an old she-mule and the hat of a lunatic', i.e. you can no more rely on fair weather in winter than you can rely on an old she-mule keeping up her canter and the madman his hat on. Cp. Fr. 'Il n'y a d'assurance au temps non plus qu'à la femme'.

183. Fix-XITWA minn nofs inhar 'il quddiem ir-raġel jagħmel imtira wil-mara tagħmel ftira, 'In Winter from noon onwards the husband makes a furrow in the ground, and the wife a cheese-bun'. The husband ploughs his field and his wife bakes him a cheese or anchovy flat bun with rolled edges called *ftira* (Ar. فطيرة) generally, unlike Italian *pizza*, made of unleavened bread.

imtira, f.n., 'a furrow or other mark made in the ground, to regulate the sowing to make sure that no space is left unsprinkled with seed; it is said likewise of the interval between furrows' (Falzon) Cp. Ar. مطبيرة. مطابير.

Petit morceau de terrain. Carreau tracé pour labourer. Carreau, espace de terre carré planté de légumes' (Beauss.).

184. Ix-XITWA mara sewwa, is-sajf raġel xalatur, 'Winter is a good woman, Summer is a spendthrift'.

xalatur, m.n., 'a roisterer', from It. 'scialatore'.

185. Mulejja, fix-XITWA aġhtina xitwina u fis-sajf aġhtina sajjitna, 'O Lord, in Winter time give us our winter and in summer time give us our

summer', We must thank God for the right weather at the right time.

186. Ix-XITWA taghmel taghha: imsejken min ma jkollux biex jilqaghha, 'When winter is very severe; alas for him that is not well-provided against it'.

THE MONTHS

(Ix-Xhur)

JANUARY

187. Il-BARD ta' Jannar iqaxxaar gild (dahar) ta' hmar, 'The cold of January nips the hide (the back) of the donkey'. It is so cold that even a donkey feels it.

188. Meta Jannar tarah lewwiemi (lewliemi), ma tarax il-BIDWI tant hieni, 'When you see that January is raining frequently you won't see the peasant (farmer) so happy'.

lewliemi, adj. m., 'watery, rainy', a local formation from *ilma*, 'water', (Ar. ماء + ال).

lewwiemi, adj. m., local variant of *lewliemi*. In the sense of 'one who is fond of quarreling', from *liem* (Ar. ليم) cp. Ar. لواء 'censor, criticiser'.

Cp. Ger. 'Se piovè molto di gennaio, non fa bene ai frutti' (Straff.).

189. Jannar xott, il-BIDWI ghani, 'A dry January, a rich peasant'. Cp. Proverb No. 204.

Cp. Sic. 'Ginnàru siccu, burgisi (massaru) riccu'; Tusc. 'Gennaro secco, lo villan ricco' with variants at Lecce and Venice; Sard. 'Martu siccu, massaju riccu'.

190. Jannar dahhal lilek u lil ghajrek gewwa d-DAR, 'January drove you and your neighbour into the house'. Var. *Jannar igezzizna gewwa d-dar*, 'January keeps us cosy at home'.

191. DEHXA ta' Jannar, fawra mill-lewn in-nar, 'Measles in January, a rush of spots of the colour of fire'.

Dehxa, literally 'a shock' or 'bewilderment' (Ar. ذهشة) was also a name for 'measles' (M. *ho zba*, Ar. حبة 'scarlet fever') perhaps because the disease was believed to be the result of a shock. Chicken-pox (*gidri r-rifh*) was called *dehxa ta' l-ilma*, because the spots take the form of raised pimples, which develop a watery head.

192. F'Jannar il-gidra aghtiha 'I-HMAR, 'In January give the kohi-rabi

(turnips) to the donkey(. Var. *il-gidra ta' Jannar u l-kaboċċi aghħithom il-ħmar*, 'In January give turnips and cabbages to the donkey', i.e. in January they are so fibrous that they are good only as animal fodder. Cp. Proverb No. 244.)

Cp. Sic. 'Cavuli di jinnaru, jettali, a lu munnizzaru'.

193. *Wara l-HAMIEM ibza' ghali-art, ghax it-tagħnig ġibilha bosta mard*, 'After Epiphany spare the land; pounding (with feet) causes it many a disease'.

Hamie short for '*Għid il-Hamie*', 'Epiphany' literally 'The Feast of Pigeons' so called because our Lady offered her gift of pigeons to the Temple after the birth of her Son.

194. *Min ma JAHRATX f'Jannar, f'it qoton idahhal id-dar*, 'He who does not plough in January will gather little cotton'.

195. *JANNAR għandu minn kollox*, 'January has something of everything', i.e. in January we often witness alternations of fine and bad weather.

196. *JANNAR, il-bajtar għajnejn il-far*, 'In January, prickly pears are (the size of) a rat's eye'.

197. *Ħzra l-KEMMUN f'Jannar u biġhu bil-qantar*, 'Sow cumin in January and (you'll) sell it in cantars' (1 qantar = 100 rotoli).

198. *Jannar jekk isib il-gżira (l-art) LIEBSA jnezzagħha, jekk isibha mnezzgħa jlibbisha*, 'January if he finds the island (soil) clothed will undress it; if he finds it unclad will clothe it'. January weather destroys existing vegetation but its rainfall may also produce a growth of new vegetation.

199. *Jannar idahhlek fil-GHAR*, 'January drives you into the cave'. Cp. Proverb. No. 190 above. Var. *Jannar idahhal ġol-għa*, 'January drives (the cattle) into the cave'. Said of a cold or rainy January when we have to remain indoors.

Cp. Ar. 'Fi kanūn kinn 'and 'ahlak ya majnūn'. 'In January stay at home, mad one!' (Crowfoot-Bald. p. 5).

200. *Jannar għarraġ (għalaq) in-nagħaġ fil-GHAR*, 'January drowned (shut) the sheep in the cave'.

Cp. Ar. مرس بوزرح خلى البقر في المراعي. 'Mars, the master of shak-ing, leaves the cattle in their pens' (it is also a rainy month - Westermarck, Andra No. 1921); Eng. 'February, an ye be fair/ The hoggs (year old unshorn sheep) 'll mend, and naething pair (lessen). / February, an ye be foul/ The hoggs 'll die in ilka pool' (Tweedside - Inwards p. 39). The

Maltese saying links with the idea explained by the following rhythm.

Qożżot, qożżot għalik, Jannar! Fie, fie on you January!
Għaddejt bil-bard bla xita You passed (along) with cold but no rain
U hallejtni bin-nagħaġ fil-għar Leaving me with the sheep in the cave.

(Agius De Soldanis: *Damma*), 'Fie on you, fie on you, January! I and the ewes had to lie down in the cave'.

According to folk-tradition, these words were uttered by an angry shepherd who was very disappointed because January had been so rainless and therefore 'grassless' that he had to keep his sheep in the cave. January was so annoyed that he borrowed two days from his brother February and in these two days it rained so heavily that the shepherd and his flock were drowned in the cave. Cp. Proverb No. 199.

For a similar motif transferred to later months cp. the following Sicilian folk story: 'Marzu cci diSSI ad Aprilli: 'Mprestami tri jorni, quantu a sta vecchia la fazzu muriri'; and also

'Marzu si fici 'mpristari tri jorna d'Aprili
pri la vecchia fari muriri'.
'Dice Marzu ad Aprì: prestem un di.
Se 'n te ne basta uno,
Te ne presterò due e anche tre,
Ma el primo el vuojo per me.
E sei prestennari non ce presta,
Tutto l'anno ce molesta' (Marchigiano)

The following story is told in Artas, (Palestine): 'The old wife was sitting in the *wadi*, minding her sheep and spinning. Now the end of February was near and little rain had fallen. The Beduins said to her: 'Come out from the *wadi*, for the rain may come and sweep you away'. She would not listen to them and mocked at the month of February. 'O February, you wild fellow, that on your hand, meaning a blow with her spindle. February in a rage cried to his cousin March, 'O my cousin, help me, lend me, lend me three of your days of rain'.

'Three of yours and four of mine
And we will make the *wadi* sing'

So March lent February three days' rain, and they flooded the valley and swept the old wife away with her spindle and her sheep, right down to the Dead Sea'. The Jerusalem variant of this story runs as follows: 'The old wife (*el 'ajuza*) was content that February was at an end, because she had burnt all her wood except her bobbin winder and her spindle. She

cried, 'Go away, February, we will beat you with the washing bat', and, saving your presence, she added remarks much ruder than these. February was angry and he had yet three days to run. So he cried to his cousin, March 'O son of my uncle, four of thine and three of mine, and we'll burn up the old wife's winder'. March gave February four days' rain and the old wife burnt up her bobbin winder and her spindle and still she couldn't keep warm. On the third day she died of the cold' (Crowfoot and Baldensperger: *cp.cit.*, p. 6-7)

(R. Tresse on pp. 18-19) of his *Usages Saissonniers et Dictons sur le Temps dans la Région de Damas* gives the following version: Février et mars conspirent contre elle. Février s'adresse à mars:

âdâr ya ben 'ammi tlâté mennak u arba'a menni
u lâ nhaili dûlâb el 'agûz tgânni.

'Mars, mon cousin, trois (jours de toi et quatre (jours) de moi, et nous ne laisserons pas chanter le rouet de la vieille femme'.

Une autre version termine ainsi:

nağbor el 'agûz tadrot
'et nous forcerons la vieille à péter'.

Une troisième version plus osée dit encore:

dahasnâ bi uzha el mehbât âdâr yâ ben 'ammi tlâté mennak
u arb'a menni bihailû l'aguz barra.

'Nous avons poussé dans son cul le manche du battir, alors, mars, ô mon cousin, trois jours de toi et quatre de moi, et nous jetterons dehors la vieille femme'.

Une autre dicton montre au contraire la vieille expulsant février:

halasna men şât u 'ala mehbât.
'Nous en avons fini avec février en lui assenant un coup de battoir'

L'on représente aussi février sollicitant quatre jours de mars afin de chasser la vieille. Ces (jours) empruntés, el meşta' rağât, sont matqués par de grands vents froids. On les appelle aussi les journées des vieilles, car elles leur sont funestes.

Mars surprend les novices par ses brusques élévations diurnes de la température, suivies de basses températures nocturnes, aussi comprenons-nous vite ce sage conseil:

ğabbi fağmâtak el kbâr la 'ammak âdâr

'Cache (dans le sens de garder) tes gros morceaux de charbon (de bois) pour ton oncle mars'.

qożżot excl. known in the above context only meaning 'Fie' seems to

link up with Ar. ^{فَرَّ} 'to loathe, shrink from' (Hava) whence also M. *tqaz-zeż*, 'to feel, be affected with, nausea, to reject food'.

qiel, int.v., 'to lie down'. Cp. Ar. ^{قَالَ} 'to make a siesta' (Hava).

201. Qamar Jannar (ix-xemx ta' Jannar) johrog' (tohrog) ix-xebbiet (it-tfajliet) mill-GHAR: hasbuh bi nhar, 'The moon (sun) of January brings the young women out of their caves: they thought it was daylight'. Var. *Qamar Jannar hareġ il-bniet mill-ghar* (Agius De Soldanis: *Damma*), 'The moon of January brought the young women out of their homes'. Said of a clear full moon in January. Cp. M. expression *dawl ta' qamar tara' habba*, Cave dwellers in Malta were not uncommon in the XV-XVIIth centuries, when the islands were exposed to frequent raids by pirates and corsairs.

Cp. Tusc. *Aprile esce la vecchia dal covile; e la giovine non vuole uscire*; Ven. 'April, cava la vecia dal covil'; Lecce 'Abrile, tie zitella lassa la cammera e tie ecchia lu fuculire'; Pitre (op.cit., p. 30) gives the following variants: 'La luna di Jinnàru luçi comu jornu chiaru' and 'La luna di Jinnàru scopri 'n terra un triddinaru'. Chios (prov. No. 4).

Τὸ Φεγγάρι τοῦ Γενναρίου
παρὰ λίγο 'μέρα 'μοιάζει.

The January moon
Nearly resembles day.

(Argenti-Rose, vol. II, p. 1056)

202. Jannar il-QASBA imiddha fl-art, 'January lays down the cane on the ground'. January is the month when reeds are cut.

203. Jannar (u Frar) ma jhallix (jhallux) QATTUSA d-dar, 'January (and February) does not (do not) leave a cat in the house'. In January cats are generally on the heat and the nights are filled with their erotic mewing.

Cp. It. 'Ogni gatta ha il suo gennaio'; 'Il mese di gennaio non lascia gallina a pollaio'; Sic. 'Lu misi di Jinnaru non lassa gaddina 'ntra lu puddaru'.

204. Is-SAJF ta' Jannar, ghana tal-bidwi u tal-fqar, 'January summer (i.e. fair warm weather in January), brings wealth to the peasant and the poor'. Cp. Proverb. No. 189.

205. Nhar San Pawl it-TEMP ibiddel (iqalleb) seba' darbiet, 'On St. Paul's Day (25th January) the weather changes seven times'. As pointed out by Fr. Magri (*X'Ighid il-Malti*, p. 154) *seba'* (seven) here means just 'many'.

Cp. Ger. 'Alla conversione di San Paolo, l'inverno si volge mezzo qui e mezzo là'; 'A San Paolo il tempo cambia' (Straff).

**206. TWELID fl-ewwel ta' Jannar,
Ifakkrek fih kull kampnar.**

'When a birth takes place on the first of January every belfry reminds

you of it'. The very bells that ring in the New Year seem to ring in also the new born child. The parish churches celebrate the New Year with special functions and bell-ringing.

207. Meta x-XEMX issahhan f'Jannar ikollok biex fis-sajf timla d-dar, 'When the sun is warm in January, you'll have enough (wheat) to fill the house in summer'.

Cp. L. 'Si herbescit januarius, conde triticum'; Sic. 'Junaru siccu, bur-gisi riccu'; It. 'Quando gennaio mette erba, se tu hai grano, e tu lo serba'; 'Gennaio secco, villan ricco'; Sp. 'Seco enero, abundante el granero'; Fr. 'Si tu vois l'herbe en janvier serre ton grain dans le grenier'; Ger. 'Wenn Gras wächst im Januar/ Wächst est schlecht das ganze Jahr'; Eng. 'If you see grass in January, lock your grain in your granary'.

208. Ix-XEMX ta' Jannar ahjar il-bard minnha, 'Better cold than the sun of January'. Var. *Xemx li ma ssahhanx ahjar il-bard ta' Jannar minnha,* 'Better the cold of January than sun that doesn't warm'. In January it's so cold – at least it often is – that the sun does not make much difference. This proverb has given rise to the idiom *ahjar il-bard ta' Jannar minnek!* 'Better (I prefer) the cold of January than (to) you'.

209. Ix-XITA f'Jannar troxx il-bzar, 'January rain sprinkles pepper (euphemism for 'manure')', i.e. is very beneficial to the fields.

210. Meta tkun ix-XITA f'Jannar ghandek il-qoton id-dar (Agius De Sol-danis: *Damma*), 'When it rains in January you'll have cotton in the house'. Var. *Ix-xita ta' Jannar tajba biex tahdem hadma r-raba' tal-qoton,* 'Rain in January is good for tilling the land for cotton'.

211. Titlobx XITA f'Jannar ghax jaghmillek is-silġ 'Don't ask for rain in January lest it will snow'. Var. *La ssejjahx (titlobx, tghajjatx) xita f'Jannar,* 'Do not call for rain in January'. Don't provoke trouble lest you have more than you expect; don't ask for something unpleasant at a time when it may very well happen, as rain in January.

212. Qabel Jannar la XITWA u lanqas bard, 'Before January neither rain nor cold'.

213. F'Jannar ix-XITWA taghmel taghha: Alla hares ma jkollokx fejn til-qaghha, 'In January Winter is very severe; it will be very bad for you (*lit.* God forbid) if you won't have a place where to take shelter from it'.

taghmel taghha, lit. 'does its (worse work)', 'to grow severe'. Cp. It. 'Sta facendo una delle sue'.

214. Jannar kiefer u Frar ghandu d-DWIEFER, 'January is cruel and February has got claws'. Var. *Jannar gerriefi u Frar bid-dwiefer*, 'January scratches and February has got claws'.

Crowfoot and Baldensperger say that in Palestine 'February has the reputation of a wild and stormy month. 'February, the striker, no bonds hold (Shbat el khabbât ma 'aleh rbât, p. 6).

giref, tr.v., 'to scratch', fig. 'to take away stealthily'. Cp. Ar. جَرَفَ 'to sweep away' (Hava); 'enlever, emporter tout, en balayant, d'un coup de balai' (Kaz). But for a closer meaning cp. كَرَفَ 'to pare off the scar of (a wound)', Hava.

215. Meta Frar ikun FAWWAR, fdaqqa l-biedja tmur fi-ibjar, 'When February rains heavily, all the cultivation suddenly goes down the wells (i.e. is ruined)'.

216. Frar FAWWAR, jekk ma tohroġ ix-xemx fil-ghodu tohroġ wara nofs inhar, 'In February, the month of heavy rain, if the sun does not come out in the morning it will come out in the afternoon'. Cp. Proverb No. 254 under March.

217. Frar FAWWAR, tal-bidwi ghana fid-dar, 'A flooded February enriches the farmer's house'.

Cp. Sic. 'Frivaru asciuttu, massàru ruttu, 'Frivaru quann'è chiuvsu, è assai lucrusu'; Sp. 'Agua de febrero llena el granero; Agua en febrer, civada en lo graner' (Morella). Mantova. Cp. 'Aqua 'd favrer/l'è pèr a' n ledamer also La piöva de favrer/L'inpris al graner. (G. Tassoni, p. 58).

218. Frar FAWWAR, itella' l-fwar, 'Heavily raining February raises vapour (steam, the humours of the earth)'. Vass. (No. 274) gives the following explanation: 'In questo mese si provano quasi tutti gli effetti atmosferici, e la terra comincia a fermentarsi, onde muovere il sevo dei vegetali per farli germogliare nell'imminente primavera'.

fwar, m.n. 'vapour, steam'. Cp. Ar. فَوَان 'vapeur' (Beauss).

219. Frar FAWWAR, kull xitla (haxixa, ghadira, laqxa) bin-nwar, 'In heavily-raining February, every plant (blade of grass, pool, chip of stone) is in blossom'. Var. *Frar sawwar*, kull haxix johroġ minn ġol-ħitan, 'In heavily-raining February every plant (blade of grass) comes out of the walls'.

220. Frar FAWWAR, jimla l-ibjar, 'A heavily-raining February fills the wells'. Var. *Frar sawwar*, ixebba' r-raba' u jimla l-bjar, 'A heavily-raining (lit. overflowing) February sates the fields and fills the wells'. *Frar*

fawwar il-bjar li jkun mela Jannar, 'February makes the wells filled by January overflow'.

Cp. *Ar.* بېر اير كيرمي *Février verse l'eau à grands seaux* (Sas. Nos. 299); *Sic.* 'L'acqui di Frivaru inchinu lu granaru'; *It.* 'Pioggia di febbraio empie il granaio', with variants in Lombardo and Veneziano; *Sp.* 'Febrero, cebadero'; 'Abril llovedero (note different month for different climate) llena granero'; *Catalan* (Pyrenees) 'Al febrer omplena el graner' *Eng.* 'February fill dyke'; *Fr.* *Février remplit les fossés, Mars les sèche*.

221. FELLUS ta' Frar, brodu u fran (Balzan), 'A February chick is good for soup and the oven'. It doesn't make a good layer.

**222. Ghall-GANDLORA, stilli fora;
Iz-zinzana taghmel zinn
U t-temp imur 'il hinn,
Issa gej id-dawl u t-tieb.**

'On Candlemas Day the 'star-days' are over/ the wasp buzzes (lit. makes zinn – onomatopoeic)/ and the (bad) weather goes away/ light and fair weather is coming'. Var. (i) *Il-Gandlora stilla vora, l-ajru jtalla' u jerga' jcora*, 'On Candlemas Day the star is out; the weather is sometimes cloudy, sometimes clear'; (ii) *Meta tigi l-Gandlora t-temp jtllaq u jvora*, 'When Candlemas comes, (bad) weather goes away and sets off (to other lands – lit. launches). *Fr.* Magri (op.cit., p. 169) says: 'We call days of heavy rain *stilli* (stars); for example star St. Michael (*S. Mikiel stilla*), star St. Catherine (*Santa Katarina stilla*), and others like them'. Cp. Proverb No. 276 under April.

Cp. *L.* 'Si sol splendescat Maria Purificante, major erit glacies post festum quam fuit ante'; *Sic.* 'A la Cannilora (2 febbraio) lu nvernu è fora (di lu nvernu semu fora)'; 'A la Santa Cannilora/ s'un cci nivica nè chiova/ La 'nvirnata è nisciuta fora' (Catania); 'A la Santa Cannilora/ Si cci nivica o cci chiova/ Quaranta jorna cci nn'è ancora'; 'Primalora, Brasilora/ Si nun lampa, si nun tona/ A 'nvirnata è nisciuta fora. / Siddu lampa e siddu trona/ Ci nn'è quaranta jorna ancora' (Naso); *It.* 'Candelora, estate dentro, inverno fuori, sono quaranta giorni ancora, quello che fa il sole fa la neve ancora'; 'Per la santa Candelora/ Se nevica o se plora/ Dall'inverno siamo fora/ Ma s'è sole e solicello/ Noi siamo sempre a mezzo il verno'; with other variants in many parts of Italy. *Fr.* 'Selon les anciens on dit: / Si le soleil clair luit/ A la Chandelour vous croirez, / Qu'encore un hiver vous aurez'; 'La veille de la Chandelour l'hiver se passe ou prend vigueur'; *Sp.* 'Si la Candelaria plora, el invierno ya està (va) fora' (variants in Valencia, Catalonia and Galicia); *Eng.* 'If Candlemas day be fair and bright, winter will have another flight

If on Candlemas day it be shower and rain, winter is gone, and will not come again'; 'St. Swithin's Day (July 15) if thou dost rain, for forty it will remain; St. Swithin's day, if thou be fair, for forty days 'twill rain na mair'; Ger. 'Ist's zu Lichtmess hell und rein, wird ein langer Winter sein; Wenn es aber stürmt und schneit, Ist der Frühling nicht mehr weit'.

vora (for *vara*, Gozitan or Maltese village dialect), v.t. 'to launch', from It. *varare*, 'to launch'.

fora (dialectal, also *vora*), 'outside, away', from Sicilian *fora*. The word is not otherwise used in Maltese.

223. Nhar il-GANDLORA jhrog l-ors: jekk isib l-art imxarba, jew riġlejh jibqgħu niexfa, ighid: ix-xitwa ġejja; jekk isibha niexfa jghid: ix-xitwa għaddiet. 'On Candlemas day the bear comes out; if he finds the ground wet, or his legs remain dry, he says: 'Winter is coming'; if he finds it dry he says: 'Winter is over'. One should note that in Sicily and elsewhere the bear is not a constant element. In Calabria, for instance, it is sometimes the bear, sometimes the wolf and sometimes the lion. In Maltese it can also be the *Gawgaw*, a curious word of uncertain meaning (See under Prov. No. 391). A very interesting paper on the subject is *L'Orso della Candelora*, by Raffaele Corso (*FF Communications*, No. 153, Helsinki 1945).

224. Fix-xahar ta' Frar iżra', saqqi u baqqi l-HABAQ ghazzi, 'In February sow, water and sprinkle the basil bush'. Parents who had girls to give in marriage used to place pots of basil on the window sills.

habaq ghazzi, m.n. 'bush (common) basil', fr. Ar. عَرَبِيٌّ + حَبَق the latter occurring in *habbghaziz*, 'edible cyperus', fr. Ar. عَصَا الْعَرَبِ *Cyperus esculentus* - plant' (Hava).

225. Meta jiġi HADD IL-BLUH, ix-xita tibda tfuħ, 'When Carnival (lit. Fools' Sunday) comes, rain begins to get scarce'. Carnival in Malta takes place on the three days preceding Lent.

Hadd il-Bluh, an old name for 'Carnival Sunday', lit. 'Follies' Sunday', *Hadd*, 'Sunday' (Ar. يَوْمَ الْاِحْدَى) *bluh*, v.n. 'tomfoolery' (Ar. بَلَاهَةٌ *M. bluba*) from *blieb*, IXth Form, int.v., 'to grow foolish', Ar. بَلَه whence *ibellah*, 'to commit follies', Ar. تَبَلَّه.

226. HOZZOT (Qozzot) Jannar inizzlu Frar, 'February brings down what January accumulates'. That is Bonelli's literal explanation. I should rather say: 'February pulls down what January pulls up', i.e. January's end of the shirt (cp. *M. bozoz* or *hozztu barra*, said of a careless man that does not bother to pull in the end of his shirt). For *hozzot* as a variant of *qozzot*, 'fe on!' cp. Proverb No. 200 under January.

227. Frar it-tigieg dejjem gol-GHAR, 'In February hens are always in the cave'.

228. Fi Frar (Fix-xahar ta' Frar) jinkixfu l-GHAWAR, 'February reveals defects'. In this month our peasants can tell whether they are going to have a good or bad harvest. Cp. No. 233.

aghwar, pl. m.n., 'defects', from Ar. عَجَار pl. of عَار (M. *ghār*) 'shame, disgrace, vice' (Hava).

Cp. It. 'A primavera vengono fuori tutte le magagne'.

229. It-twil seftur tal-QASIR, 'The tall one (March) is the servant of the short one (February)'. Var. *Frar ifttx seftura aħjar*. 'February seeks a better maid (servant)'. In Maltese Folklore March is nicknamed 'the tall one'.

Cp. Eng. 'While the tall maid is stooping, the little one hath swept the house'.

230. RAS IR-RANDAN ras il-maltemp, 'The beginning of Lent is the beginning of bad weather'.

Cp. Fr. 'De carême haute de froid n'aura faute'.

231. Meta Frar ikollu s-SLEJJEF, aħjar il-bidwi jogghod mal-gwejjef, 'When, in a bissextile year, February takes a day or more on loan, it's better for the farmer to stay with the idle. If he works it will be practically all wasted. It is a popular belief that a leap-year is unlucky and dangerous to the harvest (A. Cremona, op.cit., p. 14).

Bonelli explains the proverb thus: 'Quando febbraio abbia i suoi cognati (sia bisestile) meglio è per il contadino di starsene a sedere coi poltroni (ogni sua fatica sarebbe vana, l'anno bisestile essendo forse tenuto per infausto)'. Crowfoot and Baldensperger on p. 6 of their book *From Cedar to Hyssop: a study in the folklore of plants in Palestine* say that 'in spite of the flowers and occasional blazes of sunshine the last days of February and the first days of March have a special reputation for storminess. They are called the 'Borrowed Days' (Cp. M. *slejjef*), Cp. Proverb No. 200.

232. San Mattija, i'zra' t-TOMNIJA, la mwahhra lanqas bikrija, 'On the day of St. Matthias (24th February), sow the wheat neither too late nor too early'. Var. (i) *San Mattija, żriegħ it-tomnija*, 'On St. Matthias' day, sow wheat'; (ii) *San Mattija, l-arżnelli fil-lenbija*, 'On St. Matthias' day the streaked sparus are in the pan'.

Cp. Sp. 'Por San Marcos (in April) bogas a sacos'.

arżnell, coll.n., 'streaked sparus', fr. It. *asello* (L. *asellus*, dim. of *asinus*, 'come calco del ὀνόμας, ὄνοχ che indica lo stesso pesce' (Diz. Et. It.) The M. word seems to derive from dim. form *asinello*, 'small

donkey', whence *arznell* with insertion of *r*.

lenbija, pl. *lnjiebi*, generally pronounced without *l*, f.n., 'a large earthenware basin'. Also 'a basin in which dough is kneaded', wrongly derived fr. Ar. *عَلْبَة* 'leathern vessel for milking' by Barbera and from *يَنْبُوع* pl. *يَنْبِيع* 'water-spring, streamlet' by Dessoulavy, is more commonly believed to derive from Greek (κο) λυμβή (ῥοα) 'a baptismal font' κολύμβιον, 'holy water stoup' (Du Cange), whence dialectal It. and Calabrian *limba* (Sic. *lemmu*), 'a basin (earthenware) from L. *limbus*, through Gr. λέμβος 'a small light ship'.

233. **IL-WIĊĊ kif iħallih Frar issibu fil-ghamar**, 'At harvest time you'll find the crop as February left it'. Cp. Proverb No. 228.

234. **FI Frar ix-XITA bil-lejl u xogħol (taħdem) bi nhar**, 'In February the rain falls by night and the work is done by day'. As the rain which falls during the night is generally absorbed, the peasant can till the field during the day.

Cp. Sp. 'Marzo marceador, de noche llueve y de día hace sol'.

235. **'Isbel', ighidli Frar,
'Ma niffahx', iwiegħbu z-ZARA';
'Ibqa' mela kif int,
Għax żmien iżjed ma hemmx wara'.**

'Run to seed', says (lit. tells him) February, / I haven't got the strength', / answers the corn; / 'Therefore remain where you are, / because there is no more time left after this.' Cp. March Proverb No. 252.

MARCH

236. **Meta jidher il-busuf, u l-farfett jibda jittajjar
L-ART tkun saħnet u l-uċuħ taqbeż koliha nwajjar.**

'When the hairy beetle comes out and the butterfly begins to fly about, know then that the earth has grown warm and the crops will all burst into blossoms'.

busuf, m.n., 'a kind of hairy beetle', a word made up of *bu* (Ar. *بُ*) and *suf*, 'wool' (Ar. *صُوف*).

uċuħ, m.n., pl. pf *wiċċ*, 'face' Ar. *وَجْه* with *ح* unvoiced by *ʾ* in Maltese in the plural form and final radical replaced by lengthening of *ā*.

237. **Marzu r-rebbiegħa tal-BHEJJEM**, 'March is the Spring of beasts'. This is the time when the well-fed sheep, goats, cattle etc. yield a great deal of milk.

238. **F'Marzu kull TAJR ibid**, 'In March every fowl lays its eggs'. Cp.

Sic. 'Marzu marzolu, ogni gaddina fa l'ovu'; 'La cchiù tinta gaddina a Marzu grapi'.]

239. **Žmien il-ful jibdew il-BRIEGHED**, 'At beans time fleas begin'. March is the month when fleas begin to bite and beans to appear on the market.]

240. **Marzu, il-FLISSJONIJIET komuni bhax-xebbiet**, 'In March 'flus are as common as young women'. This proverb is evidently of recent formation.]

flissjonijiet, pl. pf *flissjoni*, f.n., 'running nose, a cold' from Sic. *flus-sjoni*, 'catarro, reuma' (Mort).]

241. **Marzu MARZELLU jahraq il-moxt u r-rixtellu**, 'March, dear March, burns the stay (of the weaver's loom) and the flax comb'. Var. *Marzu Marzurellu (in-nanna tahraq)*, *jahraq ix-xatba (il-hajt) u r-rixtellu*, 'March little March (the old woman) burns the gate (the thread) and the flax comb'. For the dim. cp. Sic. equivalents and similar usage in Spanish as in 'Febrerillo (from febreo) el corto, un día peor que otro'. Cp. Ar. آذار يا بن عمي أربعة منك و ثلاثة مني سنة ثوبير العجور ذولا بها. 'O cousin March' (says February) 'four days from you and three from me (for a severe storm) which will make the old woman burn her spindle (for fuel)' (Frayha, 9); Sic. 'Marzu marzeddu, s'ardi la vecchia cu tuttu lu rast-eddu' (*rast-eddu*, tirabrace di legno, e il proverbio vale che il freddo di Marzo è così intenso che la vecchia non sa allontanarsi dal fuoco quasi a pericolo di bruciarsi insieme col tirabrace che getta nel fuoco'; 'Marzo scorcchia la vecchia 'ntra lu jazzu'; 'Marzu scorcchia li vecchi' (Pitrè) Sp. En abril, (different month for a different climate) quemó la vieja el mandil, y en mayo, el escaño'. Chios (prov. No. 24).]

Μάρτης, γδάρτης καὶ παλουκοκαύτης.

March, the flayer and the stake-burner.]

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. V, p. 1060).]

242. **Marzu MARZELLU, itajjar ix-xebbiet b'dellu**, 'March, dear March, with its shadow lures the girls away (from their homes)', i.e. courting time for young ladies.]

243. **Marzu MARZELLU, (Marzurellu), bil-kabozza u bil-kappell**, 'March, dear March, with the (wears) great coat and a hat'. In March sometimes it rains or is cold, and sometimes the sun is very hot.]

Marzurellu, m.n., dim. form of *Marzu*, March, a name of endearment (Cp. Sic. *Marzu, marzeddu*) Cp. note under Proverb No. 241.]

244. **NHAR San Girgor, il-kabocci tiha l-hmar**, 'On St. Gregory's Day (12th March), give cabbages to the donkey', i.e. by this time it is no longer good to cook. Note dialectal pronunciation of *hmar* corresponding to

vocalic sequence. Cp. Proverb No. 192.

245. NHAR 'San Tumas, il-gumata titwal pass ta' bmar qammas, 'On St. Thomas's day (7th March) the day grows longer by the pace of a kicking donkey'.

Cp. It. 'San Tommè cresce il dì quanto il gallo alza un piè'; Sic. 'Di San Tummasi a Natali quantu u passu di cani'. For a similar figure of speech cp. also Eng. 'A New Year's tide, the day lengthens a cock's stride'.

246. F'Marzu kull GHASFUR (tajr) iftiteḡ (jingabar ma', jaqbad) 'il martu, 'In March every bird looks for (seeks, finds) his wife'. March is the mating season for birds.

Cp. Eng. 'On St. Valentine's day (14th February) all the birds of the air in couples do join'.

ingabar, int. v., VIIth form of *gabar*, tr. v., 'to collect, pick up', fr. Ar. *جَبَرَ* 'trouver, retrouver' (Beauss), *أَجْبَرَ* 'acquérir de nouveau une chose qu'on avait perdue (cobrar lo perdido, Alcalà) (Dozy) *اِنْعَجَرَ* 'to regain one's former condition after loss (Badger under 'recover' — cp. M. *raġa' ngabar*, said of some one who has regained his former position).

247. Marzu, il-fart ihossu (ihoss il-bard) f'QARNU, 'In March the ox feels the cold in his horns'. Var. *Meta Marzu jahqarna, il-baqra turina b'qamba, 'When March oppresses us (with cold) the cow points her horns at us, i.e. shakes her head with cold.*

Cp. Sic. 'Lu friddu di Marzu si 'nfla 'ntra li corna di lu. voi'.

248. F'Marzu aqla' mniehrek u QARTSU, 'In March pull out your nose and wrap it up'. Var. *Marzu qala' mniehru u qartsu, 'March pulled off its nose and wrapped it up' i.e. to prevent its falling off on account of the very sharp cold.*

249. Marzu jtambar u JQARTSU, 'March beats the drum and wraps it up (his nose). Cp. Proverb No. 248.

tambar, int. v., 'to beat a drum', hence, 'to harp on the same subject, rub it down'. Quadriliteral verb by analogy with Semitic quadrilaterals like *hambaq* (Ar. *حَبَقَ*) 'to speak raucously at the top of one's voice'.

qartas, tr. v., 'to wrap up something in a paper bag', from Ar. *قَرَطَاسَ* 'scroll of paper' (Havā), hence Ar. *تَقَرَّطَسَ* 'être roulé en tuyau' (Kaz) with which cp. M. *iqartas*, 'it was wrapped up in a paper'. Cp. also, mediaeval Lat. *cartotius* whence It. *cartoccio* 'paper bag'.

250. Meta Marzu jitnigges, SENA hażina, 'When March shows signs of decay, expect a bad year (poor harvest)'.

251. *Ibza' mis-SOKOR ta' Marzu*, 'Beware of the drunkenness of March', i.e. heavy or frequent rain in March damages the crops.

Cp. Sic. 'Si ntra Marzu cc'è acquazzina, è annata di risina' i.e. 'la rugiada (acquazzina) in Marzo è funesta a cereali, i quali vengono presi della ruggine (*risinu*)'. (Pitré)

252. *Marzu jghid lili-qamh: 'Ikber'. 'Ma niflahx'*, '— Meia ISBEL, 'March says to the wheat: 'Grow!'. 'I cannot'. 'Then run to seed!'. Cp. Proverb No. 235 under February.

sibel, also *sebbel*, int. v., 'to put out ears (corn)' corresponding to Ar. IVth form سَبَلَ fig. it also means 'to lose one's temper', with which cp. Ar. سَبَلَ 'to revile'.

253. *Marzu bl-ilma xebghan, italla' gbira, u gods ikbar ikun tat-TGHAM*, 'March, water-sated, raises a collection (of rain) and the pile (stack) of grain will be larger'.

gbira, f.n., 'a collection', local formation from *gabar*, (q.v. under Proverb No. 246 above).

gods, m.n., 'a heap or pile of', whence *geddes*, Ar. كَدَسَ 'to heap up spikes' (Hava); tr. v. 'to pile or heap up', from Ar. كُدْس 'heap of herbage'. The change of *k* to *g* seems to be the effect of regressivevoiced assimilation.]

254. *F' Marzu jekk ix-XEMX ma tohrogx fil-ghodu tohrog fil-ghaxija*, 'In March, if the sun does not come out in the morning, it will come out in the evening'. Cp. Proverb No. 216 under 'February'.

255. *F' Marzu x-XITA tibda tfulh*, 'In March rain begins to grow scarce'.

tfulh from *fah* (Ar. فَاح) 'to emit a pleasant odour'; fig. 'to become rare'.

256. *XITA hrug Marzu u dhul April, karu deheb, iehor harir, (karu deheb u gawhar fin)*, 'Rain at the end of March and the beginning of April is like two chariots, one full of gold and the other of silk (precious stones)'. Var. *Ix-xita fi hrug Marzu-dhul April, ahjar minn mitt karu deheb fin*, 'Rain at the end of March and the beginning of April is better than a hundred coins'. Cp. Proverb. No. 275.

Cp. Sic. 'Quanto va l'acqua di Marzu (o di Maju) e d'Aprili, 'Un va lu carru cu tutti li vili'; 'Vecchierella di Menfi: Quanto va l'acqua di Marzu e d'Aprili? Nun va Re Carru cu tutti l'aviri (cu lu so aviri)'; 'Quanto va n'acqua ni Marzu e n' Aprili? Nun ci va 'na varca di zicchini (cu li sò vidiri); Modica 'Quanto va un'acqua di Marzu e d'Aprili/Nun cci va un carru cu chissi dui vili'; It. 'Val più un'acqua tra aprile e maggio che i buoi con il carro'; 'La prima acqua d'Aprile vale un carro d'oro con tutto l'assile'; Sp. 'agua de enñe, cada gota vale un dinero (different month but

similar image); 'lluvia de abril, hinche el rey el carro y el carril' with variants in Pontevedra and Catalonia. ;

For usefulness of March and April rain Cp. also Chios. (prov. No. 33)

"Αν κάμη ὁ Μάρτης δυὸ νερά
κι' Ἀπρίλης ἄλλο ἓνα,
θὰ δῆς τὰ ψωμοκάλαθα
μὲ τὰ σεμιδαλένια.

If March has two rains
And April yet another,
You will see the bread baskets
Full of fine flour. ;

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1061). ;

A. Cremona (op.cit. p. 15-6) says: 'All these proverbs have derived their shape and meaning from a Biblical legend which is traditionally known in the Maltese folk-lore by the name *Is-sultan Salamon u Hub* (King Solomon and his brother. See Magri's *X'Ighid il-Malii*, p. 60) and in the Sicilian folk-tales under the heading *Salamuni e Marcorfu* (See Pitre, *Fiabe e Leggende*, No. XXI). In both Sicilian and Maltese legends the sharp cleverness and identity of Solomon's brother is tested and brought to light through the King's proposed riddle and prize offered for any one who might guess the value of two carts or of a waggon drawn by oxen, which in the Maltese version were supposed to contain a load of gold and silk, and in the Sicilian legend Solomon himself with his mistress. The lively explanation or witty estimate given by Marcorfu of the King's device has traditionally been responsible for the *great value which a fall of rain in the end of March or at the beginning of April* has on agriculture for the the Spring harvest. Such a proverbial answer to Solomon's riddle is still recorded and preserved in the various maxims which before the Christian era might have been primitively derived from some Phoenician sources. A similar legend is claimed by Magri as being written by Justin on the Phoenicians (Liber XVIII of his *Trogi Pompei Fragmenta*). ;

karlu, m.n. 'name of an old coin', linking up with *karlin*, 'the name of another old coin (= *ghaxar ħabbiet*, ten grains). Cp. It. *carlino*, 'antica moneta napoletana fatta coniare nel 1278 da Carlo d'Angiò, nome passato poi a monete papali e sabaude (fino al 1786)... Anche antiche monete redesche (Baviera, Brunswick) portavano il nome di *Karl*, e monete francesi quello di *carolus*'. (Diz. Et. It.). ;

257. *Marzu t-twil gieb* (for *gieb+bi*, lit. 'came with' Ar. جـاء *ix-XKORA tal-qamh*, 'Tall March brought the sack of corn'. This saying evidently refers to a Maltese folk-story given by Fr. Magri (op.cit., p. 14). March is tall (long) as compared with February, which a Spanish proverb describes as *Febrerillo el corto* (un día peor que otro). ;

258. *Marzu, l-ŻARA bis-sbula f'halqu*, 'In March the wheat has got the corn-ear in its mouth'. ;

259. } **APRIL jagħmel il-fjuri u Mejju jiehu l-unuri**, (Agius De Soldanis, (Damma) 'April makes the flowers and May takes the honours'. }

Cp. L. } 'Messein Aprilis metit Majus'; It. } 'April fa il fiore e Maggio n'ha l'onore'.

260. } **APRIL imut mal-bard u Mejju jrid il-ward**, 'April dies of cold (i.e. when the cold season is over) and May wants flowers'.

261. } **APRIL xahar tal-boloh**, 'April is the month of fools'.

262. } **APRIL xahar ta' nifs twil**, 'April is the month of long breath', i.e. the daylight being longer, the peasants put in more work and eat more than usual. Cp. Proverb No. 267.

263. } **Minghajr BELLA ma tinbena halla**, 'Without a shower (lit. a wetting) there won't be any stacks of sheaves'. Var. *Bla bella ma tiħux qatta*, 'without a shower you won't take a sheaf'.

Cp. It. } 'Maggio asciutto, ma non tutto, gran per tutto, maggio molle, per le donne'.

264. } **Fid-DULURI tmur il-bilbla w tigi l-alwetta**, 'On the day of our Lady of Sorrows the lark goes away and the skylark returns'. The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, first celebrated in 1423, has been held on the Friday following Passion Sunday since 1727. It is included here under April but it may fall in March, as early as the 13th March, or in April, as late as the 16th. (See Cappelli, *Cronologia, Cronografia e Calendario Perpetuo*, 2nd Ed. Milano, Hoepli, 1952)

Duluri, f.n. from Sic. *duluri*, 'pain, grief, sorrow'. In Maltese *id-Duluri*, meaning 'Our Lady of Sorrows', is short for *il-Madonna tad-Duluri*.

bilbla, f.n., 'short-toed lark'. A local form. Cp. Ar. بَلْبَل 'nightingale'.

alwetta, f.n., 'skylark'. Cp. Fr. *alouette* (Lat. *plauda*).

265. } **F' April, il-HADDIEM jidhroġ għvni u jidhol xih**, 'In April the worker goes out (i.e. of his home) young, and returns an old man', i.e. a long day means longer and harder work.

ħaddiem, m.n. 'workman'. Industrious. cp. حَادِم 'laborieux' (adjectif). (2) Ouvrier. (W. Marçais, *Textes Arabes de Tanger*, Paris, 1911, p. 277).

266. } **Żmien il-HARUF l-ixkora tal-patata tibda tħuf**, 'When lambs abound (i.e. about Easter) the potato sack grows less'. About Easter time more potatoes are consumed because the favourite dish at this time is lamb with potatoes baked in an oven.

267. **F' April, il-hobz wasal fil-MINDIL**, 'In April bread arrives in the table cloth'. **Var.** *April, irid hobza twila (kbira) fil-mindil*, 'In April you want a large loaf in the napkin'. The reference here is to the ripeness of corn, which by this month begins to fill; also, to the fact that in April, as the day gets longer, more bread is eaten. The fifth line of a months' verse in Artas referring to March says: 'O mistress, make my loaves larger' (See Crowfoot and Baldensperger: op.cit. p. 8)

Cp. It. 'April freddo, molto pane, poco vino'; Sp. 'Abril mojado, panes trae en el saco'; Eng. 'A cold April the barn will fill'.

268. **F' April arfa' I-MOHRJET, minn halq il-wied**, 'In April take away the plough from the valley'.

269. **Meta n-NAHLA taraha fuq il-fjur, tahsir ma jkun hemmx zgur**, 'When you see the bee on the flower, that's a sure sign there is no rot'.

270. **Ja ghasfur, ttabbah u nfela;** 'O bird, wash and clean yourself;
Waslet ghalik ir-REBBIEGHA, for your Spring has now arrived since
La darba ft-art ix-xghir mela. the corn-ears in the field have filled out'.

271. **Bil-kumplament tajieb t'April, l-UÇUH kollha taqbez u ttir**, 'With the rest (of the fair weather) of April, the crops look as if they would jump up and fly away (i.e. burst with mellowing maturity). Rain is not good after April 25th. **Cp.** Prov. No. 273.

Cp. Sic. 'Aprili chiuvsu, Maju vinturusu, annu fruttusu'; Tusc. 'Aprile nevoso, maggio veneroso, anno fruttuoso'; Gen. 'Arvi u l'ha trenta; se ciuvesse trentun, no ghe saiva mâ nisciun'. Pitre explains these and other variants in Bologna, Milan and Venice as follows: 'Perchè l'annata sia ricca di prodotti e cereali è molto utile che piova in Aprile, spirino moderati venti in Maggio, i quali agevolino l'evaporazione della terra umida'.

272. **Ix-XITA ta' San Gorg meghuda**, 'Rain on St. George's Day is by appointment (i.e. to be expected as if promised)'. **Var.** *Ix-xita tal-qighan meghuda*, 'Rain at the time of the threshing floors, i.e. June, is by appointment'. The following excerpt from *From Cedar to Hyssop* by Crowfoot and Baldensperger (p. 3) indicates a common belief and also perhaps a common explanation, though the time is differently placed due to two different climates. 'Id Lidd, (Feast of Lydda, the Feast of St. George, November 3-16). If the rain comes several days earlier or later it is good and welcome, but if it comes on or near the Feast itself then indeed 'the rain comes right'. The Feast of Lydda is the feast of St. George himself, the dragon slayer, who is now regarded as a rain-bringer. **Cp.** Proverb No. 309.

Cp. Sic. 'Ppi San Giorgi o acqua o sbrizzi' (Ragusa); Ger. 'Se San Giorgio è caldo e sereno, si vedrà ancor cattivo tempo'; 'Prima di San Giorgio, asciutto: dopo San Giorgio, bagnato'. (Straff.).

273. Nhar San Mark ix-XITA nar fl-art, 'On St. Mark's Day (25th April) rain is (like) fire on earth'. Variant Wara San Mark, min jillob ix-xita jkun jixtieq in-nar fl-art, 'After St. Mark's day, he that prays for rain, wishes fire on earth'.

Cp. Reggio Calabr. 'Acqua di giugnu consuma lu munnu'; 'Acqua di giugnu focu pi tuttu u mundu'; Sp. 'Agua de marzo, peor que la mancha en el paño (o en el sayo)'.

art, 'earth', f.n. Cp. Ar. اَرْضُ the final radical of which is always unvoiced in Maltese.

274. Bix-XITA f'Marzu u April tingabar l-annata, 'Rain in March and April makes the year's crop possible'. The two lines are the last two in a folk quatrain collected by Mr. J. Cassar-Pullicino from Ghasri in Gozo which runs as follows:

L-ghaġuza harget tghanni	The old woman went out singing
Bl-imghazel u l-loqqata;	Carrying the spindle and the distaff;
Bix-xita f'Marzu u April	Rain in March and in April
Tingabar l-annata.	Makes the year's crop possible.

275. Qatra XITA f'April tiswa daqs karru deheb fin, 'A drop of rain in April is worth a chariot of fine gold'. Cp. Proverb No. 256.

Cp. Ar. سَنَوَةٌ بَنِيْسَانٍ يَنْسَوِي السَّكَّةَ وَالْعَدَّانَ 'A shower in April is worth the plough and the oxen' (Frayha, 1980); السَّنَوَةُ بَنِيْسَانٍ يَنْسَوِي الْقَرْقَةَ وَالسَّيْمَانَ 'A shower in April is worth a hen and its brood' (Frayha, 1981); أَشْنَوَةٌ بَنِيْسَانٍ جَوَاهِرُ سَائِلِهَا أَثْمَانُ 'A shower in April is a priceless gem' (Frayha, 1982); عَيَانَةٌ بَنِيْسَانٍ يَنْسَوِي السَّكَّةَ وَالْعَدَّانَ 'Une bonne pluie en avril vaut charrue et attelage' (Fegh., No. 1975); Palestina, 'El nuqta fi nisàn ibtiswa el sikke w elfaddān, w el qruqqa w el şişān, 'A drop of rain in April is worth the plough and the yoke of oxen and the hen and the chickens' (Crowfoot, op. cit., p. 8); Sp. 'En abril, cada gota vale mil (por mil)'; It. 'La prim'acqua d'aprile vale un carro d'oro con tutto l'assile'; 'Va! più un'acqua tra aprile e maggio che i buoi con il carro'. A similar comparison occurs in Eng. 'A shower in July, when the corn begins to fill, is worth a plough of oxen, and all belongs there till'.

276. Iz-zunzana ghamlet ZINN u x-xitwa sejra 'l hinn, 'The wasp has started buzzing and winter is going away'. Var. (i) In-Naħla tagħmel zinn, u l-maltemp imur lihinn, 'The bee buzzes (lit. does zinn - onomatopoeic) and the storm goes away'; (ii) Tiġi d-dubbiena tagħmel zinn, u s-shaba

tmur lil hinn, 'The fly comes and buzzes, and the cloud goes away'. Flies, wasps and other insects appear in large quantities when the rainy season is over. Cp. Proverb No. 222 under February.

MAY

277. Mejj u mirjleh u l-BAHAR jfstennih, 'May is windy and the sea waits for it'. In May gales are common. Cp. prov. No. 292.

278. Il-BAHAR ta' Mejj u jgharrqek u jhallik, 'The sea of May drowns you and then leaves you'. The sea in May gets stormy all of a sudden and as suddenly calms down.

279. Meta l-fula tnawwar, il-BERGHUDA tibda tfawwar, 'When the broad beans begin to blossom, the flea begins to abound'. Cp. Proverb No. 283.

nawwar, v.int., and tr., 'to blossom' (from Ar. نَوَّرَ to blossom: plant) and, fig., 'to grow stale, musty' (e.g. *ħobż imnawwar*, musty bread). The latter meaning is local, unrecorded in Arabic dictionaries. But cp. also Ar. نَوَّضَ 'to ripen: corn'.

280. Meta d-dolliegħa tonfoħ, il-BERGHUDA tibda tolfog, 'When the water melon begins to fill out, the flea begins to sob'. This is the time when fleas begin to disappear (die away).

lefaq, int.v. 'to sob'. Cp. Ar. فَاَقَّ 'to sob'. The M. verb was evolved from the verbal noun فَوَاقَّ 'sobbing' preceded by the def. art.

281. Mejj u kull ma fih, jirwina il-BTIEH, 'The month of May and all it brings with it ruins the courtyards'. Our peasants breed rabbits, hens, sheep etc. in the courtyard (*btieħi*) of their houses. If it rains in the month of May, there will be no fodder for them. For contrast see prov. No. 234, and for comparison see proverbs nos. 239, 249.

282. Mejj u x-xaħar (tqil) tad-DISGRAZZI, 'May is the (heavy) month of misfortunes'. Cp. Proverb No. 292.

Cp. Eng. 'Marry in May, repent alway'; L. 'Mense malum Maio nubere vulgus ait' (Ovid, *Fasti*, 5.490).

283. Mejj u żmien il-ghana u żmien id-DRIS, u fis-sodda thoss il-qris (it-tniġġiz), 'May is singing time and threshing time, when in bed you'll feel the bites (pricks of fleas)'. Cp. Proverb No. 279 and 297.

284. Mejj u xaħar il-fjuri, fih il-GHOMMA tibda turi, 'May is the month of flowers, and the time when heat (hot weather) makes itself felt'.

ghomma, f.n. 'distress; excessive heat'. Cp. Ar. غَمَّة 'grief, sadness, perplexity'; غَمٌّ 'suffocating, sultry day' (Hava).

285. Mejjū HOBŹ u sikkina għaliex minn kull ġid (minn kollox) jibda jagħtina, 'In May (get your) loaf and knife, for it will give us all sorts of things (largesse)'. May is a month of abundance.

286. Mejjū l-ibleh t'ommu, 'May is his mother's naughty child (lit. his mothers' fool). At this time of the year the weather is generally inconstant.

287. Mejjū bil-KABOZZA u bil-kappell, 'May with the great coat and a hat', i.e. it can be cold (*bil-kabozza*) and sunny (*bil-kappell*). Var. (i) *Mejjū bil-mingel u bil-kabozza*, 'May with the scythe and the great coat'; (ii) *Mejjū jġib il-mingel, il-kabozza u l-kappell*, 'May brings the scythe, the hooded coat and the hat'; (iii) *Mejjū bil-kabozza jbigħ il-qtar*, 'May with the hooded cloak sells the (last) drops (of rain)'. May is reaping time (Cp. Proverb No. 290); it is also a month of rain – hence the *kabozza*, and much sun – hence the *kappell*. According to Magri (op.cit., p. 18) the scythe (*il-mingel*) symbolizes also the destruction of death, May being the month of misfortunes. Cp. Proverb No. 282.

288. Min ommu tħobbu, tagħmillu KABOZZA f'Mejju, 'The mother that loves her son makes him a great coat in May', i.e. May is not yet the time to wear lighter clothes (Cp. Proverb No. 302 under June).

Cp. Sic. 'La matri chi voli ben a lu figghiolu, a Maju cci criscilu rubbolu (lu trubiolu) (Mazzara)'; 'Ntra Maju nun livari, ntra sittèmmiru nun mètteri'. Pitrè explains the word *rubbolu* as 'roba, abiti' and adds: 'La madre che ama il suo bambino non si lascia illudere da'tepori di Maggio, anzi gli cresce le vesti'.

289. Mejjū jimliena bil-KAPPAR, 'May gives us large quantities of (lit. fills us with) caper.'

290. Flex int? – liż-żara' jghid Mejjū,

Għax naħsad sejjer, imqar kont għadek PLEJJU.

'How big have you grown? says May to the corn; for I'am going to reap even if you are still (no bigger than) penny royal mint'. Var. (i) *F'Mejju aħsad imqar kien (qasir daqs) il-plejju*, 'In May reap, even if it were (as short as) royal mint'; (ii) *Mejjū jnixxef (jaħraq) il-plejju*, 'May dries (burns) the penny royal mint'. (iii) *Wasal ix-xabar ta' Mejjū, kebbes innar u aħraq il-plejju*, 'The month of May has arrived, kindle the fire and burn the penny royal mint'. This proverb is applicable mainly to barley (*xgħir*) and plants left over from April. Corn is reaped in June.

Cp. Ar. (Andrja) مايو حصد واخا يكون فلايو, 'In May, reap it even if it be penny royal' (West., No., No. 1931) اذا نزلت الشتا في مايو تغسد; 'If rain falls in May, the crops and its wheat are spoilt'. (West., No. 1932) En mai, moisson ولو كان فليو, 'In May, reap it even if it be penny royal'.

ton orge serait-elle encore verte (mot-à-mot, 'serait-elle [encore de la couleur]) de la mélisse (MBCH. No. 1345); also Tunisian (Stumme) and Palestinian *Fi Ayyār ihmil manjalak u ghār*, 'In May take your sickle and cut with might' (Crowfoot, p. 9)

imqar, adv., 'even, also, if only', from Sic. *macari* (It. *magari*). Cp. Sic. excl. *Macari Diu*, 'Would to God', and M. *Imqar li Alla*.

plejju, coll. m.n., 'pennyroyal (pulegium vulgare)'. Ar. *فليم* and *فليما* (Bedevian) from Sic. *puleu*, also *puleiu*, 'mentha pulegium. L.' (Mort.)

291. **Mejju MIRJIEH**, *jaqleb il-wiṭṭ u l-qiegh*, 'Windy May upturns the surface and the bottom'. (i.e. it lashes the sea into a raging storm).

292. **Mejju MIRJIEH**, *b'kull deni stennieh*, 'Expect May, the windy month, to bring with it all sorts of misfortunes.' Var. (i) *Mejju l-mirjieh, deni stenna bih*, 'From windy May expect all kinds of misfortunes'; (ii) *Mejju bir-riḥ u bid-deni stennieh*, 'Expect May to be windy and full of misfortune'. Cp. Proverb No. 282.

293. **Mejju bla RIH**, *il-biedja bla tifrigh*, 'A windless May means a stunted (?) harvest'. Should *tifrigh* be spelled *tifriḥ*, verbal noun of *seraḥ*, Ar. *فَرَح*. If so, *bla tifriḥ*, should be translated 'joyless, windless May; joyless harvest'.

294. **Minmitt Mejju**, *ma jghaddix wiehed li ma jaghmilix XITA*, 'Of a hundred Mays not one passes without rain'. May is known to be a windy month; but occasional showers are not unusual.

295. **WARDA ta' Mejju u mhux ta' qalb il-plejju**, 'Pick a rose of May and not one among the penny royal mint'. This proverb, figuratively used, means marry a young woman when she is still young and not when she has passed the prime of her life.

JUNE

296. **L-ANDAR bil-halel kbar jaghti lin-nies u lill-hmar**, 'The threshing-floor with its big stacks of corn sheaves provides sustenance (lit. gives) to men and the donkey', i.e. to the peasants it gives threshed corn from which they get flour for bread, to donkeys and other animals it gives *tiben*, threshed straw.

halla, f.n., 'hay or corn stack'. Cp. Ar. *حَلَاة* 'large basket made of reeds' and *حَلَاة* 'set of clothes' (Hava).

297. **Gunju xahar tad-DRIS**, *fis-sodda thoss il-gris*, 'June is the month for threshing and the time when you begin to feel pricks in bed', i.e. it is the

time when fleas begin to bite. Cp. Proverb No. 283. }

298. ĠUNJU *jdewwagna l-frott*. 'June gives us fruit to taste'. 'This is the month when we begin to have some fruits. }

299. ĠUNJU *kbir, rasu ras il-hmr*, 'June is big, with the head of a donkey'. Probably because it is an unpleasantly hot month. 'This is how June was described by a man who gave unflattering descriptions of all the months and by way of punishment January gave him a stick which would automatically beat him whenever he uttered the secret word. The story is told by Fr. Magri (op.cit., p. 87). }

300. ĠUNJU, Ġunjett, *inehhi l-qnis u d-dublett*, 'June, little June, takes off the shirt and the skirt'. Var. *Ġunju, ġunjett, inehhi l-trizzi u l-kappell*, 'June, little June, unloosens (lit. takes off) the tress (or the plait) and the hat'. In the hot months we wear lighter clothing. }

Ġunjett, 'little June'. Cp. Sic. *giugnettu*, 'July'. I understand from an old man of eighty years from Musta that the now obsolete word *Ġunjett* was also used in the sense of July. *Dublett*, m.n., 'skirt' from It. *dobletto*, (Sec. xv), also *dobretto*, 'panno' di Napoli di lino e bambagia tessuto al modo francese; a.f. *doblet*, XII sec. (*doble*, doppio) passato al piemontese *dublet*, nap. *dubbrette*, calab. sic. *dubbrettu*, romagnolo *dobbolétto* (DEI). Cp. Sic. *dubbrettu*, 's.m. voce antiquata, veste lunga usata un tempo dalle donne di bassa condizione. Questo nome *dubbrettu* è preso dalla spezie di tela di lino, e di bambagia, che n'era la materia detta *dobletto* (Mont). }

301. F^o San Gwann jaharqu l-HĠEJJĠĠ, 'On St John's Day (24th June) bonfires are lit'. }

Cp. Ar. عيد مار يوحنا عراقي الدواليب 'La fête de Saint-Jean-Baptiste est l'incendiaire des roues' (Fegh., No. 2594). }

'The season at which these fire-festivals have been most generally held all over Europe is the summer solstice, that is Midsummer Eve (the twenty-third of June) or Midsummer Day (the twenty-fourth of June). A faint tinge of Christianity has been given to them by naming Midsummer Day after St. John the Baptist, but we cannot doubt that the celebration dates from a time long before the beginning of our era. The summer solstice, or Midsummer Day, is the great turning-point in the sun's career, when, after climbing higher and higher by day in the sky, the luminary stops and thenceforth retraces his steps down the heavenly road. . . . Whatever their origin, they have prevailed all over this quarter of the globe, from Ireland on the west to Russia on the east, and from Sweden on the north to Spain and Greece on the south, (Frazer, *ibid.*, pp. 266-7, Vol. III). }

302. Qabel il-**HĠEJJEG** la tbiddilx hwejjeg, 'Do not change your clothes before the bonfires'. Var (i) *Qabel nhar il-ħġejjeg, la jitneħħa s-suf, la jitbiddlu l-ħwejjeg*, 'Before the bonfires (on St. John's Eve) do not take off your woollies and do not change your clothes'; (ii) *Mal-ħġejjeg jinbidlu l-ħwejjeg*, 'At the time of the bonfires clothes are changed'; (iii) *Min ommu iħobbu, qabel il-ħġejjeg ma tbiddillux il-ħwejjeg*, Cp. Proverb No. 288 under May, 'The mother that loves her son does not make him change his clothes before the bonfires'; (iv) *Min ommu thobbu hwejjgu għall-ħuġġieġa tneħħi-homlu*, 'The mother that loves her son takes off her son's clothes at the time of the bonfire'; (v) *Qabel jigi San Ġwann, tneħħix is-suf minn fuqek*, 'Don't take off your woollies before St. John's Day'.

Cp. It. 'Prima di San Giovanni non si cambiano i panni'; Eng. 'Cast not a clout till May is out'.

303. Tgħidx tieghek il-**HLEWWA** qabel ma tkun ġewwa, 'Don't consider the aniseed yours before you have gathered it in'. The crop is not safe so long as it is still in the fields. Figuratively, the proverb is a warning not to count one's chickens before they are hatched.

Cp. Ar. لا تقول فول تايدخل المكيول 'Ne dis pas "mes fèves", avant de les avoir dans le boisseau' (Fegh., No. 2416); Sp. 'Trigo no mellames, hasta que me tengas bajo llaves'.

304. Meta jidhol Gunju,
tqallibx l-art bil-**MOHRIET**,

Biex il-grass tagħha x-xemx ma teħodhiex.

'When June enters, / do not turn the soil with the plough, / lest the sun takes away its juices'.

305. Tidrix fl-**ENTRIEQ**, biex it-tiben ma jinħeliex, 'Do not thresh the wheat when the *ehtrieq* (i.e. hot wind) is blowing, so that you won't waste the straw'.

ehtrieq, m.ŋ., 'burning wind', morphologically the verbal noun of the VIIIth form of *ħaraq*, Ar. حَرَق 'to burn', whence M. *ħteraq* 'to kindle or burn' (Falzon) so that Cp. احترق 'to burn, take fire, be on fire' (Elias); احتراق 's.m. Combustion, adustion, conflagration, déflagration, consumption (par le feu); crémation; action d'être brûlé' (Beauss). It is also an astronomical word used 'quand le soleil et un planète se trouvent dans le même degré du zodiaque' (Dozy).

306. Nhar l-**IMNARJA** l-bajd itir fl-arja, 'At the time of the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul (29th June) the price of eggs soars in the air', i.e. eggs become scarce and dearer.

307. Rih ta' siegħa jnaddaf **QIEGHA**, 'An hour's wind clears the threshing

floor'. Figuratively, 'one strong remedy or punishment will put an end to all abuses'.

308. F'San Ġwann tidhol il-GHASSA, 'In the month of St. John there is a change of guard', i.e. 'Spring ends and Summer begins'.

ghassa, f.n., 'watch; guard', fr. N.Afr. Ar. عسة, pl. عسس (M. *ghases*) 'garde, faction'. (Beauss).

309. Ix-XITA tal-qighan meghuda, 'When the time for forming threshing floors arrives, expect rain'. Cp. Proverb No. 272.

qiegha, f.n., 'threshing floor, floor, ground'. Cp. Ar. قاعة 'paved court' (Hava); 'le plancher, le carreau, le sol' (Beauss).

310. Meta żŻARA jorqod, sidu jqum, 'When the wheat hangs down, its master gets up'.

Cp. It. 'Quando il grano ricasca, il contadino rizza'.

JULY

311. Lulju xahar id-DRIS, 'July is the month of threshing'.

312. Lulju, il-HAJJATIN jibdew jaqlghu xi kariin, 'July is the month when the sailors begin to earn some *kariins*', i.e. it is the best time for their business, when they really begin to make some money. But cp. Proverb No. 324 under August.

313. HRIT il-hmar ma jaghtix sandar,

Bi hrit il-baqar timla' l-andar.

'Ploughing by donkey leaves no profit, / ploughing by cows fills the threshing-floor'.

Cp. It. 'Chi lavora la terra colla vacca, va al mulino colla pulladra (colle somare)'. Sp. Arar con mulos, poco más que nada, arar con bueyes, plata quebrada.

314. Ix-xita ghal SANT'ANNA bikrija,

Jekk taghmel, beraq u sajjetti jkun fha.

'Rain on or about St. Anne's Day (26th July) is early rain; / when it rains it is accompanied with lightning and thunderbolts'.

Cp. Ven. 'Se piove il dì de Sant'Ana, piove un mese e una settimana'; Pol. 'A Sant'Anna, mattina freddi' (Straff).

315. It-tin bejn SANT'ANNA U SAN ĠAKBU (jibda') jbexxaq fomm, 'Between St. Anne's Day (26th July) and St. James' (25th July) figs begin to open their mouths (i.e. show signs of over-ripeness)'. Var. *Bejn Sant'Anna u Santa Vendra it-tin jibda jbexxaq fomm*, 'Between St. Anne and St.

Vennera figs begin to open their mouths. (The latter's feast falls on July 26th if it is a Sunday; if not, the following Sunday).

Cp. Sic. 'Sant' Anna, la racina si manna', Pitré says: 'A 26 luglio l'uva già in via di maturazione a metà di luglio entra in maturità, e però si può raccogliere, e si manda in regalo come cosa nuova'. Ligur. 'A Sant' Anna, a figa (il fico) a l'è in scià cana'; 'A Sant' Ana, a figa a l'è manù (Straf.)'. Ven. 'Se piove il dì di Sant' Ana, piove un mese e una settimana (Straf.)'.

bexxaq, tr. *v.*, 'to leave ajar', (doors, windows)'. Cp. *بشق*, 'to tear off clothes' (Hava). The M. verb is unrecorded in the Ar. dictionaries. It can be originally a denominative formation from *bi* (Ar. *ب*) + *xaqq*, 'opening'; fissure (Ar. *شق*, 'chink'). *Halli t-tieqa bix-xaqq*, 'Leave the window with an opening (ajar)', whence *bexxaq*.

316. **Ahjar SBULA minn ghenba**, 'Better a corn-ear than a grape'. Bread as a staple food is indispensable; not so wine.

317. **FELLUS tà' Lulju jtik bajda f' San Publju**, 'A July chicken gives you an egg on St. Publius Day'. Hens hatched in this month lay eggs late in the season. The best are those hatched in January, March, August and September.

AUGUST

318. **AWISSU qatt ma hamel lilu nnifsu**, 'August never had any love for itself'. It is a cruelly hot month, the time when everyone begins to complain of the heat and blame the month for it.

319. **F'Awissu l-BAHAR tisma' nissu**, 'In August you (begin to) hear the sound of the sea'. This is when the sea begins to become rough and choppy.

320. **Ittendi għall-BIKRI u għall-bikrija, għax bħalhom tkun il-bqija**, 'Watch out for the early fruit, for the rest will be of similar quality'.

321. **Sigra FROTTATA ahjar minn platt kawłata**, 'Better a tree laden with fruit than a plateful of cauliflower mess'.

322. **FROTT tajjeb, suq hażin**, 'Good fruit, bad market'.

323. **Meta l-gewnah tal-GRILLU jagħleb isir l-gheneb**, 'When the cricket is over-weighed by its wing, grapes grow ripe'. By the time the cricket which is believed to ripen grapes has grown very big, grapes must be ripe. Cp. Proverb. No. 335.

324. **AWISSU tal-HAJJATA l-iswed**, 'August is the black month for tailors', i.e. the time when they have little work to do. Cp. Prov. No. 312.

325. **IX-xahar t'Awissu s-sinjur u l-fqir IHISSU**, 'The rich and the poor alike feel the month of August'.]

Cp. Sic. 'Agustu, lu càudu è sustu (fastidio)'; Tusc. 'Il sol d'agosto inganna la massara nell'orto'.]

326. **AWISSU jahbat (isawwat) 'il MARTU kemm (kif) imissu**, 'August gives his wife a sound threshing'. Fr. Magri (op.cit., p. 54) has the following note: 'On ancient Maltese coins Osiris figures always with a cane (M. *sawt*) in hand. Therefore Osiris (the sun) canes and strikes his wife; the wife of Osiris is Isis and Isis is the earth'.]

327. **META l-GHANSAL jagħmel il-ward f'Awissu, ix-xita tkun bikrija**, 'When the squills bloom in August, there will be early rain'.]

328. **META l-GHANSAL itella' l-bonn imghawweg, annata hażina; meta jtella' l-bonn dritt, annata tajba**, 'When the squill's stem grows crooked, the year's harvest will be bad; when the squill's stem grows straight, the year's harvest will be good'.]

bonn, m.n., for *bont*, from Ar. بَنْتُ 'cordon (tresse, ruban); Courroie pour chaussures (Dozy)', whence the M. figurative meaning 'stem'. M. *bannat*, 'to form the stem, onion, tulip' is its denom. verb. With M. *benn*, 'swelling in the groin' (Falzon) fig. 'tough guy' cp. It. *bugno*, 'swelling'.]

329. **SAN BARTILMEW** (also *San Bert* for short) **ghandul-muftieħ tax-xita**, 'St. Bartholomew (24th August) has got the keys of the rain'.]

Cp. Sp. 'Por San Bartolomé (24 de agosto) las aguas primeras'; Ger. 'Se piove il dì di San Bartolomeo, buon autunno' (Straf.).]

330. **SAN LAWRENZ, ix-xahar tas-shana**, 'The month of St. Lawrence (10th August) is the month of heat'.]

Cp. Sic. 'San Lorenzu la gran calura; Sant'Antonio la gran freddura; l'una e l'altra pocu dura'; It. 'San Lorenzo, gran caldura; Sant'Antonio, gran freddura; l'uno e l'altro poco dura' (Straf.), with variants in several parts of Italy.]

331. **SANTA MARIJA f'nofs Awissu, u kul'hadd jieħu li jmissu**, 'St. Mary's Feast (15th August) falls in the middle of August, when everyone takes what is due to him'. This is the time when peasants pay and landowners receive the year's rent for the fields.]

332. **SANTA MARIJA, żriħ it-tomnija**, 'St. Mary's Day is the time for sowing late corn'.]

333. **F'Awissu, kull TIN tibda tmissu**, 'In August you can begin to taste (lit. to touch) every kind of figs'. Var. **Awissu t-tin imissu**, 'August begins to touch (i.e. to ripen) figs'; also **F'Awissu l-gheneb iħallik tmissu**, 'In August grapes let you touch them'.

334. **TWELID f'Santa Marija, jiġi msejjah għat-tiġrija**, 'He that is born on St. Mary's Day (15th August) will be called to become a jockey'. On the feast of St. Mary in Gozo races are held. Maltese jockeys take part in races held in Gozo; races in Malta are held on the day after St. Mary which is the feast of St. Roque.

335. **Meta tisma' jghajjat il-WERZIEQ, tista' tmur għall-gheneb ut-tiniet**, 'When you hear the cricket chirp, you can go for grapes and figs', i.e. are sure to find them ripe.

336. **Awissu, ix-XEMX taharq u x-xita tmissu**, 'August is burnt by the sun and touched by the rain', i.e. it is a very hot month when we have the first showers.

337. **Kif TIŻRA' tahsad**, 'As you sow, so will you reap'.

Cp. It. 'Come seminerai, così raccoglierai'; 'Si raccoglie quel che si semina' (widespread); L. 'Quae enim seminaverit homo, haec et metet'; Fr. 'Chacun recueillera ce qu'il a semé'; Sp. 'Como sembráredes cogere-des'; Ger. 'Was der Mensch säet, das wird er ernten'; Eng. 'As they sow, so let them reap'.

338. **ĠHAŻ-ŻRIEGH bikri tikri; għall-imwahħar ikołlick tbahħar**, 'For early sowing you can rent (a barn); for late sowing you'll have to fumigate' i.e. to propitiate the Deity to give you a good crop. Var. **ix-zriġħ bikri għalib ikri, u l-ħalla tal-imwahħar maħruqa**, 'When you sow early you can rent (a place where to store the crops), while the stack of late sowing is good for burning (i.e. useless)'. Early sowing is recommended for an abundant harvest. A Cremona says: 'Some of our old farmers call in the good man of the village and ask him to bless their cows or breeding mare by fumigating them with the burning of holy leaves (of the wild olive tree which has been blessed in Holy Week)' Cp. Proverb No. 355 under October.

Cp. Sic. 'Prestu per natura, tardi per vintura'; It. 'Presto per natura e tardi per ventura'.

SETTEMBRU

339. **Il-borma ma ssirx mingħajr nar, lanqas l-art tagħti mingħajr BŻAR**, 'The pot doesn't cook without fire, nor does the earth produce without manure'. This proverb is given as a September saying in *Gazzetta Agraria*

Maltese of the 1st September, 1856.]

Bzar, coll.m.n., polite word for *demel* (Ar. دَمَل) 'Manure for agricultural use', but literally 'pepper', Ar. بَزَر pl. of بَزْر 'spices, seasoning' (Hava). For literary M. meaning cp. Ar. بَزْر 's.coll. poivre noir' (Beauss). M. fig. meaning links up with the meaning of sowing (Ar. بَزْر which follows manuring. Cp. also Sp. *basura*, 'dung'.]

340.] **Kullma tara b'ghajnejk hu kollu ġej mill-ART.**

Min għalhekk jahdimha tajjeb, ma jbatix u la ġuħ u la bard.]

'Whatever you see with your eyes comes from the earth; / who therefore tills it carefully will suffer neither hunger nor cold'.]

341. **Ir-rimi tal-BERWIEQ wit-tewm safi f'werq**, 'The sprouts of asphodel and garlick plants with clear leaves (grow in September)'. This is the explanation given by Bonelli in *Il Dialetto Maltese*.]

342.] **Xahar ta' l-GHENEb,**

Xahar tar-riħ isfel.]

L-ghassara jitoibu għalih.]

'The month of grapes / (is) the month of the south-east-wind. / The grape-pressers pray for it'. September is the best time for pressing grapes when the south-east wind blows.]

343. **QAMAR Settembru jiġbed sebgha warajh**, 'The moon of September draws seven others after her'. Var. *jekk il-qamar ta' Settembru jimla bix-xlokk, jagħmel ix-Xlokk seba' xhur tas-sena*, 'If the moon of September waxes when the wind blows from the South East, there will be seven months of South East wind during the year'.]

Cp. Sic. 'La luna di sittèmmiru cuverna sei luni'; la luna di San Michele (29 sett.) cuverna sei mesi'; It. 'Alla luna settembrina sette luna le s'inchina'; Mantova. 'La lūna setenbrina/la 'gh n'ha sèt ch'as gh'inchina' (G. Tassoni, p. 64)'; Port. 'Luna setembrina, sete laudos declina'; Sp. La luna de octubre siete lunas cubre; also 'cinco lunas' (Sbarbi).

344. **Settembru settembrina, jibdilna s-SALA mal-kantina**, 'September, dear little September, makes us change (move from) the drawing room for (to) the cellar'. Var. *Settembru ser jagħtina, s-sala fil-kantina*, 'September is going to give us the hall in the cellar'. In September the Scirocco (South East wind) is so oppressive that to get away from it we prefer the cool cellar to the hot parlour.]

Cp. It. 'Ottobre vino e cantina, da sera a mattina.']

345. **F' Settembru, għas-SALARJU jmur kull membru**, 'In September every member goes to collect his salary'. Meaning obscure.]

346. **SAN MATTEW**, *zrigh it-tewm, qdigh ir-rummien*, 'St. Matthew's Day (21st September) is the right time for sowing garlick and for cutting pomegranates'. Var. (i) *Għal San Matthew aqt d' r-rummien u izra' t-tewm*, 'About St. Matthew's time cut the pomegranates and sow garlick'; (ii) *San Matthew zrigh it-tewm*, 'On St. Matthew's Day sow garlick'.

Cp. Ger. 'A San Matteo va e semina' (Straff).

347. **SAN MIKIEL** *zrigh ir-rummien*, 'St. Michael's Day (29th September) is the time for sowing pomegranates'.

348. **Għal SAN MIKIEL lesti l-gandlier**, 'About St. Michael's Day get the candlestick ready'. Var. *F' San Mikiel jibdew il-ħaddiema (il-mastranzi) jixegħlu l-gandlier (il-musbieħ)*, 'On St. Michael's Day the workmen begin to light the candlestick (the oil lamp)'. Agius De Soldanis (*Damma*, f. 347, v.) gives the following explanation: 'È costume dei mastri e professori delle arti che tengono bottega di lavoro di vegliare dando principio dalla sera della veglia di San Michele'. St. Michael's Day falls on the 29th September.

Cp. Sic. 'A San Micheli si metti lu cannileri; l'omini a la tirra, e li fimmini a la cannila'; 'A San Micheli l'omu a lu cunziri e la fimmina a lu cannileri'; 'Pri San Micheli s'adduma lu cannileri' explained by Pitré (op. cit.) thus: 'Vuolsi intendere che per San Michele Arcangelo o in quel torno si comincia dalle donne a tenere acceso di sera il lume, che durante l'estate non s'è tenuto; e dagli uomini a preparare gli attrezzi per l'aratura e la prossima seminagione, oppure si occupano della vendemmia'; Eng. 'St. Matthew, get candlestick new'; 'St. Matthei (24 February) lay candlestick by'.

gandlier, m.n., 'candlestick', from It. 'candeliere'.

349. **Konz ta' SETTEMBRU jagħmel bil-gziez / Konz ta' Diċembru wiśq bil-qies**. 'A September fishing-line catches large numbers (lit. heaps of fish); a December fishing-line very small quantities. September is the season for a good catch of 'lampuki'.

350. **F'tal-VITORJA l-bahar jitle' fl-gholja**, 'On the Day of our Lady of Victory (8th September) the sea rises high', i.e. begins to be rough.

351. **Nhar il-VITORJA n-nies kollha lbies u borja**, 'On the Day of our Lady of Victory people wear their best dress and show off'. This proverb seems to apply to the people of Senglea (*L-Isola*), whose parish church is dedicated to our Lady of Victory and who are reputed to be very vain and showy.

352. **XEMX ta' Settembru tiftaħ il-bibien tar-rixtellu**, 'The sun of Septem-

ber opens the gateways'.

353. Il-moxt ta' SAN MIKIEL jidhol fil-mizien, 'The calyx of the cotton-flower on St. Michael's Day is included in the scale'. Var. (i) *It-tilqit tal-qoton ta' San Mikiel jidhol bhall-iebor fil-mizien*, 'The gleanings of St. Michael's cotton are added on the scale with the rest'; (ii) *Dak li jagħ-qad sa San Mikiel jidhol fil-mizien*, 'All that attains full growth by St. Michael's Day is weighed with the rest (of the crop)'. The leavings of previous crops, especially cotton crops that are picked in November, are harvested and sold with the rest of the crops (i.e. potatoes of irrigated fields, sulla, etc.).

Cp. It. 'Per San Michele, la giuggiola (la succiola) nel paniere'.

moxt (tal-qoton), مڠول, 'the calyx of the flower of cotton resembling a comb' (Falzon). Cp. Ar. مشط fig. 'comb-shaped brand or camel'. For similar usage in plant names cp. مشط السراعي 'dipsacus sylvestris'; مشط السراعي nom d'une plante'. (Dozy).

OCTOBER

354. La jidhol ix-xahar tar-Rusarju, AHRAT u tenni biex int u tahsad dejjem tghanni, 'When the month of the Rosary (i.e. October) begins, plough and plough again, so that when the time for reaping comes, you'll always sing (i.e. be pleased with the harvest)'.

355. Tal-ahhar IBAHHAR, 'The last one will have to fumigate (the crops)'. According to Proverb No. 338 early sowing yields good crops and the peasant must hire a place where to store the crops, but crops of late sowing are not likely to be prosperous. The fumigation may therefore be an act of propitiation to ensure a good harvest.

356. Il-BIGILLA saret, wil-wiċċ tal-ghalqa hdaret, 'Bigilla is being cooked (again), and now the fields are green'. About October *bigilla* is still popular in some towns or villages of Malta, but unknown in Gozo.

bigilla, f.n., 'cooked beans'. According to Domenico Magri (*Hieroglossicon sive Sacri Dictionarii*), Ottava Edizione, Venezia, 1788, s.v. *exequiae*) this word is derived from Turkish *begala* 'fabae' but cp. Ar. بَقَالَة 'beans' (Lane).

357. Tal-BIGILLA ma qal xejn, u r-rebh tagħna għadu ġej, 'The 'bigilla' man hasn't said anything yet, our luck is still to come', i.e. we are near October but rain hasn't started yet.

358. In-NEJJA fegħet ġiet, u l-fawwara għoddha mtliet, 'Raw chestnuts are back (on the market again) and the spring is nearly filled'. By the

time chestnuts begin to sell again the rainy season has already started.

359. F^o **SAN LUQA** *z-zara tinheba fih l-ghattuqa*, (Agius De Soldanis, Damma) 'By St. Luke's Day (18th October) the wheat is tall enough to hide a young hen'. Var. *Hu tajjeb li f'San Luqa tgħib fiż-żara' għattuqa*, 'It is a good thing that on St. Luke's Day a young hen disappears amidst the wheat'.

Cp. Sic. 'Santu Luca simenza minuta, si nun è nata, è siminata'; Eng. 'When St. George (23rd April) rye will hide a crow, a good harvest may be expected'.

għattuqa, f.n., 'a young hen that has not yet laid eggs', Cp. 'attuqa, pl. 'attuqat, 'poule qui n'a jamais pondue; le mot ne se trouve, à ma connaissance, en Algérie qu'au Souf, mais il est connu du tunisien, du tripolitain et du maltais' (W. Marçais: *Textes Arabes de Tanger*, Paris, 1911).

zara', coll. n., 'standing corn; that which is sown; hence crop of wheat, barley or other grain' (Falzon). Cp. زرع 's.m. jorge. Fruits de la terre, grains, céréales, récoltes. Champ de céréales - Tunis' (Beaus).

360. Meta tiekol it-tamra, għall-KACĈA tibda' n-namra, 'When you (begin to) eat dates the craze for game-hunting begins.'

361. Nhar SAN XMUN iżra', niexef jew miblul, 'On (or about) St. Simon's Day sow whether the soil is dry or wet'. St. Simon's Day falls on the 28th October.

Cp. It. 'O molle o asciutto per San Luca (18th October) semina'.

362. Ottubru jidhol u johroġ fil-TUBRU, 'October gets into the coffin and out of it'. Quite a number of invalids die (or at least used to) during this month. This is Magri's explanation (op.cit., p. 58).

363. F^o Ottubru l-gheneb ġewwa t-TUBRU jithassar u jmut, 'In October grapes lie in the coffin, rot off and die'. Grapes are gathered in September. Those that are not gathered in this month decay very quickly.

364. Jekk tagħmel ix-XITA nhar tar-Rużarju filghodu, tkun bikrija; jekk tagħmel minn nofs inhar 'il quddiem, tkun imwahrja, 'If it rains on the morning of the day of the Holy Rosary (i.e. the first Sunday in October) rain will come early; if it rains from midday onwards, rain will be late'.

365. Fir-raba' hamri IZRA' kmieni, imwahrhar fil-bajjad, 'In red soil sow early, in white soil late'.

hamri, m., adj., 'reddish'. Used also as a noun to indicate 'reddish soil (tal-hamri)', whence fem. adj. *hamrija*, 'reddish', used also as a noun to indicate 'arable soil used for growing vegetables'. Cp. حمري 's. coll. Terres rouges ferrugineuses; on dit aussi حمريّة (Beauss).

366. F'NOVEMBRU jaqtghu, ikişru u jzembu, 'In November the peasants pick, break and place in baskets'. The reference seems to be the picking of olives and dates.

367. Sal-QADDISIN KOLLHA r-rih fuq jiġ bil-bolla, 'Up to the feast of All Saints (1st November) the North West wind comes by bull', i.e. it does not come suddenly, takes some time. The figure is from the papal edict which prescribes certain conditions but gives time for their fulfilment.

368. Meta ġasal SAN ANARD iżra' f'kull art, 'When St. Leonard's Day arrives, sow in every soil'.

San Anard, p.n., a martyr of the Catholic Church, whose feast falls on November 6, flourished in the Vth century. The name derives from Germanic *Leo* or *Lewo* (Cp. Germ. *Löwe*, 'lion') + *hart*, 'strong' whence *Leonhart*, 'strong lion'.

369. F'SAN ANARD l-işponşun ma jmiddx saqajh ma' l-art, 'On St. Leonard's Day the chaffinch does not test its feet on the ground'. Bird migration and bird trapping begin on October 16 (St. Theresa's Day); by the 6th of November the chaffinch is very difficult to catch.

370. SANT' ANDRIJA, nofs il-muna mitnema, u nofs il-miżarġhami żrugħa, 'By St. Andrew's Day (30th November) half the provision is exhausted, and half the seeds sown'. By the end of November most of the crops have been sown and a great part of the year's provision has already gone.

371. SANT' ANDRIJA, il-ġiem jiqsaru pass ta' tarbija, 'On St. Andrew's Day the day grows shorter by the pace of a child'. Contrast Proverb No. 404 under December. In Chios (prov. No. 54):

Ἄφ' τ' ἀγιοῦ Ἀνδριᾶ ἀντρίων ἡμέρα
κτ' ἀφ' τὰ ἑῶτα παίρνει ὥρα.

From St Andrew's Day the day gets strong
And from Epiphany it gains [lit. takes] an hour;

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1065)

tarbija, f.n., 'child, baby', a local formation from *rabba*, 'to bring up a child' (Ar. رَبَّى).

372. SANTA KATARINA seftura tal-Kuncizjoni, 'St. Catherine is the handmaid of (the feast of) our Lady of Conception'. The outside festivities of the latter depend on the weather prevailing at the time of the feast of the former. St. Catherine's Feast falls on the 25th November, and the

Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8th December. *Var. Jekk toħ-ro ġ is-seftura, toħro ġ is-sinjura*, 'If the (statue of the) handmaid comes out, (the statue of) the mistress will also come out'.

seftura, f.n., 'maid servant', fr. Sic. *servituri*, final *i* replaced by fem. *a* in Maltese; whence *servitura* (cp. Old It. *servidora*, XVth cent.) *servtura > se(r)tura*.

Kuncizjoni, f.p.n., from Sic. *cuncizioni* (It. *concezione*, Eng. *Conception*). As in Sicilian and Italian short for 'Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God', indicating also the day (8th December) on which the feast is celebrated, whence proper name *Kunċetta* (Sic. *Cuncetta*; It. *Concetta*) and *Ċetta* for short.

373. SANTA KATARINA, lesti x-xbiek għal ġol-kantina, 'On St. Catherine's Day put the net in the cellar'. The peak of song-bird catching is over – it is at its peak on All Saints' Day (1st November) and by the 25th the hunting season is over.

374. SANTA KATARINA, fora gallina, 'On St. Catherine's Day the woodcock goes away'. For explanation of *fora*, 'away', see under *February* Proverb No. 222.

375. İzra' l-fuġ nhar SANTA KATRINI, biex jagħmel bla fini, 'Sow beans on St. Catherine's Day and the yield will be beyond counting'.

fini, m.n., 'end, aim' (It. *fine*, Sic. *fini*). *Bla fini*, 'endless, innumerable', also 'aimless(ly), unintentional(ly)' according to context.

376. Il-qamh (ix-xahar) ta' SANTA KATRINI, it-tiben wiġ-tagħam jagħtini, 'The corn (month) of St. Catherine gives me wheat and straw'.

377. Ix-XAHAR TA' l-ERWIEH, xogħol, galbu u frieh, 'The month of All Souls is the month of work, orderliness and lambkins'. In the month of November (All Souls, 1st of Nov.) the peasant works till late in the evening and his wife finds much to keep her busy at home.

378. SANTA KATRINI, il-Milied jibqagħlu xahar ġentili, 'From St. Catherine's Day to Christmas there is a 'gentle' (courtesy) month left'.

Cp. Sic. 'Santa Catarina a Natali: Sunnu un misi, e nun cuntari'; Abruz. 'Santa Caterina, Natale trenta die; Tusc. 'Da Santa Catarina a Natale, un mese reale'; Marchigiano 'Santa Catarina a Natale, un mese uguale; Genoa 'De Santa Cattaenna a Dênâ ghe un meise inguâ'; Eng. 'St Andrew the King three weeks and three days before Christmas comes in'.

379. SAN MARTIN iklisser it-tin, u Katarin tişqih milli-ġin, 'Martin crushes figs and Catherine gives him delicious liquor to drink'. On St. Martin's Day we eat (break up) lumps of dates (*tin taċ-ċappa*); on St. Catherine's

day the rain waters the fig-trees.

380.]SAN MARTINEK tajjeb; aghmel hilek; (twegiba) biex il-lant ikunlek tajjeb, 'A happy St. Martin to you; do your best (*reply*) so that your business may prosper'. Var. *]San Martin il-tajjeb biex il-miskin ikun lant tajjeb,* 'A good St. Martin so that the business of the unlucky man may prosper'.

Note in the first part of the first version the play on the word *San Martinek* which in quick speech may be heard as *samma tintek* 'nail your buttocks' (coarse humour); *lina*, lit. figuratively meaning 'arse'.

381. F'SAN MARTIN jittgħu l-ixbiek fuq in-newl, 'On (or about) St. Martin's Day the nets are put aside on the loom'. About this time ends the migration of quails over Malta.

382. Is-sajf ta' SAN MARTIN, il-biedja tifraħ bih, 'St. Martin's Summer gladdens the fields (agriculture)'.

Cp. It. 'A San Martin, la semente del poverin'.

Sajf ta' San Martin, 'St. Martin's Summer', translation of It. *estate di San Martino*. Cp. Eng. *St. Luke's little summer*, (18th October) 'There is often about this time a spell of fine, dry weather, and this has received the name of 'St. Luke's little Summer' (Inwards p. 64). In Palestine (also Damascus) they say: 'Ben Tishrin w Tishrin fi sef tani', i.e. Between October and November there is another summer, as it were 'St. Martin's little Summer' (Crowfoot and Baldensperger op.cit., p. 11). Cp. also Chios. (prov. No. 48):

Τ' Ἀγίου Δημητρίου τὸ καλοκαίρουν.

The little summer of St. Demetrius.

(Argenti-Rose, Vol. II, p. 1063).

The festival of St. Demetrius falls on October, 26.

biedja, also *bida*, f.n., 'agriculture'. Cp. بادية pl. بواحي s.f. 'Campagne, champs, par opp. à ville'. فى البادية 'en pleine campagne'. أهل البادية 'les campagnards' (Beauss.).

383. F'SAN MARTIN bil-martell inkissru l-gewż/ U fil-Milied il-lewż naqsmuh mal-bews, 'On St. Martin's Day we break walnuts with a hammer and in Christmas we share nuts with kisses'. Note the play on the two meanings of *qasam* 'to divide' or 'to share'. On St. Martin's Day we give walnuts to children; on Christmas day at home we eat nuts, kiss one another and make merry because it is a day of love.

384. F'SAN MARTIN jiftha t-tun u l-inbid, 'On St. Martin's Day (11th November) figs and wine are opened'.

385. *Meta tisma' l-QERD IN-NAHAL, / Erfa' x-xbiek, mur lejn ir-rahal,* 'When you hear the bee-eaters, lift the net and go to the village'.

386. *Min JIZRA' fin-niexef u ma jnaqqix fil-mibbul, hatab ikollu u jikber bosta s-sbul,* 'He that sows in dry soil and does not root up weeds when it is wet, will have (a lot of) wood and the ears of corn will grow bigger'.

DECEMBER

387. *Fil-Milied, iz-ZIEMEL fejn il-gamra jsahhan wirtih,* 'At Christmas time the horse stays near the fire warming his thighs'. Heating the stable of horses in Winter was once a more common practice.

388. *Sal-Milied, la BARD (brud) u lanqas gwieh (ksieh),* 'Till Christmas neither cold (chill) nor hunger' (cold).

Cp. Sic. 'Avanti Natali, nè freddu nè fami; ddopu Natali lu friddu e la fami'; Tusc. 'Avanti Natale, nè freddo nè fame; da Natale in là, il freddo se ne va', with variants in Marchigiano, Abbruzzese, Veneziano.

brud, obsolete local pl. pf *bard* (Ar. بَرْد), 'cold'. The Ar. pl. بُرود is given by Kaz. with a different meaning, 'vêtements en étoffe rayée'. Maltese has also *bruda* 'cold, affecting the stomach as when one hiccoughs', with which cp. بُرودة 'coldness, coolness' (Hava).

gwieh, obsolete local pl. form of *gub*, 'hunger', Ar. جُوع.

289. *Mill-Milied 'il fuq iz-zmien jibda jaghti bil-BUQ,* 'From Christmas onwards time begins to strike with a rod', i.e. a hard time (cold, hunger, etc.) begins for the poor.

buq, m.n., 'trumpet, bugle', Ar. بُوق 'trumpet' and بُوقَة 'calamity'.

390. *DICEMBRU jilhaq fis-sala membru,* 'December becomes a member of the assembly hall (of the months)'. The Romance words, as pointed out by Fr. Magri (op.cit. p. 74), may very well be a modern replacement of Semitic ones. His explanation is that December becomes a member of the Month's Assembly Hall because it is the month which provides the rules (*M.rwiegel*) of weather laws.

391. *Il-GAWGAW johrog lejlet il-Milied f'nofs il-lejl: jekk isib mustacc'ih miblula jghid: 'Ix-xitwa ghaddiet'; jekk isibhom nexxin ighid: 'Ix-xitwa ghadha gejja',* 'The 'Gawgaw' comes out on the eve of Christmas at midnight; if he finds his moustache wet he says: 'Winter is over'; if he finds it dry, he says: 'Winter is still coming'. Cp. Proverb No. 223 under February.

Gawgaw. According to Fr. Magri (op.cit., p. 76) it is believed that it is a phantom (*M. dell*) which appears on the eve of Christmas and that a

person born at midnight on Christmas Eve is also known as *Gawgaw* or *Gewgew*. Fr. Magri interprets Maltese *Gawgaw* as the Phoenician diety *Astharte* and Vassalli in his *Lexicon* (1796) as Syro-Chaldaic *bagogo*, meaning 'phantom', while A. Cremona identifies it with *babaw* (It. *paubau*), an imaginary monster for frightening children, — an onomatopoeic word imitating the dog's bark, with which cp. Gr. *bau bau* and L. *paubari*. I suggest that M. *Gawgaw*, also pronounced *kawkaw*, which is formed of duplicated base *kaw*, may have some connection with *quauque* in the composite Norman word *quauquemaire*, whence Fr. *cauchemar*, meaning 'nightmare'. Proverb No. 222 attributes the same gift of weather forecast to the bear.]

392. *Il-Milied igib il-HELU*, 'Christmas brings sweets'. It is a happy day for children who love sweets.

393. *Mill-Kuntizzjoni sal-MILIED erfa' l-mohriet minn halq il-wied u qiegħed l-ixkubetta fuq l-utied*, 'From the day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8th December) till Christmas, take away the plough from the mouth of the valley and put the fowling piece on the peg'. Var. *Bejn tal-Qala u l-Milied arfa' l-mohriet minn halq il-wied, ixhet xkubettitek fuq l-utied*, 'Between the Feast of Qala in Gozo (i.e. of the Immaculate Conception) and Christmas take away the plough from the mouth of the valley and hang your fowling pieces on the pegs'.

halq (il-wied), m.n., 'the mouth (of the valley)'. Cp. Ar. حَنَق 'throat, gullet, strait valley' (Hava); 'gorge, goshier' (Beauss.).

xkubetta, f.n., 'gun'. Cp. Sic. 'scupetta', which in Maltese phonetically should give *xkupetta*. For voicing of *p*, cp. Sp. *escobeta*.

394. *La jig l-MILIED erfa' xkubbetitek fuq il-farxa tal-bieb*, 'When Christmas comes put your fowling piece on the door shelf', i.e. the game (birds') season is over.]

farxa, f.n., 'a wooden board on which are kept the week's loaves baked in the village bakery (dying village custom in Gozo)'. Cp. Ar. فَرْشَة 'bad, mat, mattress (dialect of Syria, Hava), 'le carreau; lit' (Beauss). Different usage, different meaning.]

395. *Il-MILIED bil-kappell u l-Għid bil-mantar*

In-nies tiekol tajjeb u l-bhejjem tixtarr ahjar.

'Christmas with a hat on and Easter with a cloak (mantle); the people eat well and the cattle chew better'. Var. (i) *Il-Milied bil-kappell u l-Għid bil-mantar, u aktar listenna xita w bard*, 'Christmas with the hat on, Easter with a mantle, very likely there will be rain and cold'; (ii) *Ir-raba' jrid il-Milied bil-kappell u l-Għid bil-mantar*, 'Fields want Christmas with a

hat on and Easter with a mantle' (*Calypso*, No. 8) A sunny Christmas and a wintry Easter mean a prosperous year. Fr. Magri (op.cit., p. 78) explains *bil-mantar* 'with a mantle' worn by men and women alike as a protection against cold and rain.]

Cp. It. 'Chi fa il ceppo (Natale) al sole, fa la Pasqua al fuoco'; 'Da Natale al giuoco, da Pasqua al fuoco'; Mantova Cp. Nadal solon, Pasqua stison; Nadal stison, Pasqua solon, also Mantova Cp. Bel Nadal, brüt Carnival (G. Tassoni, p. 68) Fr. 'Noël a son pignon et Pâques à son tison'; 'A Noël au balcon, à Pâques au tison'; Qui est à Noël a son perron, il est à Pâques à son tison'; 'A Noël les mouchérons, à Pâques les glaçons'; Ger. 'Grüne Weihnachten, weisse Ostern'; 'Weihnachten im Klee, Ostern im Schnee'; Eng. 'Christmas in mud, Easter in Snow'; 'Green Christmas brings white Easter'.

396.] **Meta l-MILIED taht il-bejt, il-Ghid fuq il-bejt;**

Meta l-Milied fuq il-bejt, il-Ghid taht il-bejt.

'When (you spend) Christmas under the roof, (you'll spend) Easter on the roof; Christmas on the roof, Easter under the roof'. 'Under the roof' means indoors, i.e. a cold Christmas means a warm Easter and vice-versa. Var. (i) *Il-Milied taht il-ħajt, il-Ghid fuq il-bajt*, 'Christmas close to (lit. under) the wall, Easter on the roof'. The *ħajt-bajt* rhyme reveals the Gozitan origin (perhaps Xaghra or Xewkija) of this variant. (ii) *Il-Milied taht hwejta, u l-Ghid fuq bwejta*, 'Christmas close to (lit. under) the small wall, and Easter on the small roof'. *Hwejta* and *bwejta* in the form of this variant given by A.E. Caruana in his Dictionary under *Milied* are diminutive forms of *ħajt*, 'wall' and *bejt*, 'roof'.

397.] **Il-MILIED fil-kċina, il-Ghid taż-żina,**

Il-Milied taż-żina, il-Ghid fil-kċina.

'Christmas in the kitchen, fair Easter; fair Christmas, Easter in the kitchen'.

Cp. Sic. 'Natali a lu focu, Pasqua a lu jocu'. 'Natali a lu suli, e Pasqua cu lu tizzuni; chissa è la vera staciuni', with many other variants in various parts of Italy; Fr. 'Noël au jeu, Pâques au feu'; Sp. 'La de Navidas, al sol, y la florida al tizon'.

398.] **Meta jasal il-MILIED/ il-omm timla' l-platt bil-ftiet, /U l-missier iqabbad iż-żnied,** 'When Christmas arrives mummy fills the plate with bread-slices; and father lights (his pipe by striking) the flint.] When Christmas arrives one wants warm food and the pleasure of smoking one's pipe to keep warm.]

399.] **Min johroġ fil-lejl tal-MILIED/ irid jiekol tliet darbiet,** 'He that goes

out on Christmas must eat three times', that is, he eats after the mass, at mid-day and in the evening.

400. *Min ma jsumx lejlet il-MILIED imut bhall-klieb*, 'He that does not fast on Christmas eve, shall die a dog's death'.

401. *Qabel l-ghajba tal-MILIED il-Gurđan ma jżidx fl-żnied*, 'Before the end (late disappearance) of Christmas, *Gurđan* does not increase the quantity of flint'. *Gurđan* was the name of a flint-seller who lived at Zebbuġ. Flint was formerly used for lighting one's pipe. The idea is that up to Christmas it is not usually very cold and we need not puff at a pipe to keep warm.

402. *SANTA BARBARA, la deni u lanqas hsara*, 'St. Barbara, pray we suffer neither evil nor harm'. Var. *Santa Barbara la tisma' u la tara*, 'St. Barbara neither hears nor sees', or optatively, 'May St. Barbara neither hear nor see'. St. Barbara's Day falls on the 4th December. The saint usually invoked in Sicily is St. John, but St. Barbara is invoked also in Giarre, Montevago, Butera, Nicosia and Nossoria. The Saint's name occurs in a few place-names of Western Palestine.

Cp. Ar. (Jerusalem) 'Daiman biji shita 'ala id Burbāra, 'Always there is rain on the Feast of St. Barbara' (Crowfoot and Baldensperger, op.cit., p. 4); also 'id Burbāra titla el moiya min khzuq el fāra', 'At the Feast of St. Barbara water rises in the mouse's hole'. But for origin of M. custom, Cp. Sic. 'Santa Barbara, vardati a chiddi di dentra e di fora'; 'Santa Barbara mia, auta quanta la cruna di Maria; faciti cadiri li trona lontanu di casa mia'. (Giarre) Sp. 'Nadie se acuerda da Santa Bárbara hasta que truena'.

403. *Nhar SANTA BARBARA ż-żara' jikber ghabara*, (Agius De Soldanis, *Damma*) 'On (about) St. Barbara's Feast the wheat will have reached its fullest growth'.

ghabara, f.n., an old Maltese measure equivalent to 10 *kejliet* (Ar. كَيْلَات) which equal a *siegh* (Ar. مَاع 'measure for grain'), six of which make a *tomna* (Ar. ثَمْنِي) pl. *tmana* 'mesure capacité pour le son et les céréales équivalente à un 8e de mudd' (W. Marçais ibid., p. 247) equivalent to 1 rood, 4 square poles, 13 sq. yards, 3.9 sq. feet. Cp. Ar. عبارات 'poids pour peser' (Beauss), عَينِ 'Nombreux, en parlent d'un peuple, d'une assemblée, etc.'

404. *Iż-żara' nhar SANTA LUCIJA jikber sieq ta' tarbija*, (Agius De Soldanis, *Damma*), 'On (by) St. Lucia's Feast Day (13th December) wheat grows by the length of a baby's leg'. Var. *Nhar Santa Lucija l-jum jitwal pass ta' tarbija*, 'On (about) St. Lucia's Day, the day grows longer by the

pace of a baby'. Cp. Proverb No. 371 under November.]

Cp. Sic. 'Di Santa Lucia a Natali allonga un passu di cani'; It. 'Da Santa Lucia a Natale, il di allunga un passo di cane' with variants in Marchigiano, Genovese, Comasco, Bergamasco, Veneziano, Triestino, Cp. Sardinian. 'A Santa Lucia i giorni crescono un passo di gallinetta'; Fr. 'A la Sainte-Luce, le jour croit le saut d'une puce'; Port. 'Da Santa Lucia a Natale il di cresce d'una spanna' (Straff); Sp. 'Por Santa Lucia acorta (mengua) la noche y alarga (crece) el día'; 'En llegando Santa Lucia un palmo crece el día'. The metaphor *pass ta' tarbija* is local.]

405.]

IL-QASTANIJA tajba,

u x-xemx dejjem mgħajjba.]

'Christmas treacle ring-cakes are good,/(but) the sky is always overcast'. In December the sun generally shines behind thick rainy clouds. *Il-qastanija*, composition of fine flour and treacle of a chestnut colour is used in the confection of Christmas cakes (Falzon). For the form Cp. Gr. καστανάα whence Lat. *castanea* (nux). With M. *qastan*, cp. It. *castagno* 'chestnut tree', and with M. *qastna* 'a chestnut' It. and Sic. *castagna*.]

406.]

Marret is-SENA, u l-gdida ghoddha mibdiġa,

Niżżuħajr 'l Alla u lil kulhadd kbira themmija.]

'The year is gone and the new one is nearly begun, / let us thank God and wish everyone great happiness'.]

ADDENDA

(Proverbs collected after the above classification was completed)

1. **IL-BAHAR** sinjur iżjed mill-art u jekk l-art tkun sinjura iżjed mill-bahar, **il-bahar jitlea' għaliha u jiblghha**, 'The sea is richer than the earth, and if the earth were to be richer, it would rise (over it) and swallow it up'. Cp. proverb No. 66.]

2. **Ix-xahar tal-Vitorja, il-HALIB** itir fl-**örja** (arja), 'In the month of our Lady of Victory milk goes up in the air'. At this time the milk-yield becomes scarce. Cp. proverbs Nos. 175, 350.]

3. **Risq fil-HAMIEM** / bini bla tmiem, 'Luck in pigeons numberless buildings'. Pigeons bring good luck. Variant of proverb No. 138.]

4. **HARIFA** bit-tjieb / żwieġi u dwieġ, 'Good weather in Autumn prepare horses and mares (for outings etc)'.]

5. **Meta jidher il-KAWKAW riĥ nofsinħar**, 'When the *kawkaw* (stars) appears, expect the wind to blow from the South'. *Kawkaw* was described to me by a fisherman of Marsalforn (Gozo) as the name of two stars of the shape of a pea-nut which appear in the South in the month of November. For use of *kawkaw* in another context, cp. proverb No. 391.

6. **Fil-KLOMI stenna xi ħaġa**, 'When it is perfect calm except something to happen'. When the day is windless, hot and sultry, one expects earthquakes etc.

7. **Il-MALVIZZ izekzek (bil-lejl), riĥ nofsinħar**, 'When the songthrush chirps, expect the wind to blow from the South'.

8. **X'ħin ġasal il-MILIED il-ħegġa tax-xitwa tkun diġa ħdiet**, 'By the time Christmas arrives, the enthusiasm for Winter will be already over'. This proverb contradicts Proverb No. 388. I suspect that for *ħdiet* 'ceased' one should read *bdiet* 'began', and thus get an agreement in sense between the two proverbs.

9. **Nagħġa wara l-GHID 'k tara l-botbot taqbeż il-ħajt**, 'After Easter when an ewe sees a ram, she will leap over the wall'. Easter time is not the right time for mating of sheep.

10. **Xarba tar-RIĤ/ il-wiċċ ġiġi f'sessieh**, 'Wind with rain restores the harvest'. The explanation given to me is that rain accompanied with wind revives the drooping harvest.

11. **Aħġar PONN ta' bittieħa tajba minn bittieħa ħażna**, 'Better a melon (even) as small as a fist than a bad melon'. It is the flavour and not the size of a melon that one must look for.

12. **Riġħ ir-RIĤ katta fil-ġieġħ**, 'High wind, the hunting season at its end'. April is the month of high winds and the time when the hunting season is over.