

ETHNO-LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF ANIMALS IN MALTA

By J. CASSAR-PULLICINO

THIS paper is an attempt to bring together some ideas of the average man in Malta about animals and to show their place in ancient and modern folk-life as reflected in (a) special terminology, and (b) animal folklore, i.e. animal tales and legends, proverbs, songs, nursery rhymes, superstitions, beliefs, folk-medicine, etc.

Man's acquaintance with animals in Malta dates from prehistoric times. Numerous representations in stone or clay of bulls and other animals, of birds and fish carvings and charred bones of sacrificed animals may be seen in various temples, notably in Tarxien – cattle of the humped type, sheep or goats, and a sow with piglets. Besides, there are representations of snakes and a lizard – these creatures probably having a symbolic significance. In the following passage Evans gives the results of archaeological attestations on the role of animals in the economic life of ancient Malta: 'The economy of the early Maltese society was based, we can be fairly sure, on farming. The temples and tombs furnish abundant evidence of stock-breeding, in the form of bones and representations of domestic animals. Cattle, sheep or goat, pig, are all, as we have seen, well attested. Curiously enough, there seems to be no evidence for the oldest domestic animal, the dog ... That the diet was supplemented by fishing may also be assumed in view of the representation of fish at Bugibba and in the Hypogeum, and also perhaps by a little hunting and fowling. Representations of birds are found in the temples, and sometimes bird-bones are found there. Hunting is attested by finds of boars' tusks and deer antlers (a particularly fine antler was found quite recently when one of the carved altars from Tarxien was removed to the Museum). These could be imports, but it seems unlikely.'¹

Within historic times, apiculture early reached a high degree of development, as testified by Cicero in his oration against Verres. Classical authors, notably Strabo, make reference to the 'Maltese Dog', a domesticated lap-dog which has been allowed to decline and all but disappear. The use of draught animals for agriculture and farm work and as a means of transport, the evolution of a peculiar breed of the Maltese donkey, the importation and fattening of animals, the use of equines for defence purposes, the practice of falconry since medieval times, organised horse-

¹ J.D. EVANS, *Malta*. 1959, p. 157

rating, and the centuries-old use of netting devices for the trapping of birds and fish, all testify to the continuing and growing importance of animals in the social and economic life of the Maltese Islands.

Now all this must have helped in the process of formation, loans, changes and growth of the Maltese language. Indeed, the importance of the animal element in the language is reflected in the place-names and plant-names that have withstood the onslaught of later foreign lexical influences, surviving to this day in the fixed and immutable form established many centuries ago.

This long association with animals gave rise in the minds of the folk to the traditions, customs, sayings, beliefs and other manifestations of folk-life that are illustrated in the second part of this study.

Before proceeding further we must consider the main groups or classes in which animals are popularly classified. These are given by Annibale Preca in *Malta Cananea*² as follows:

Bhejjem ta' Laham il-Fart (Eovines). Exx. *gendus*, ox; *baqra*, cow; *barri*, bull; *gellux*, calf – recorded in the Maltese dictionaries but no longer used except as a nickname in the feminine gender *Ta' Gelluxa*; *ghogol*, calf; *erha* (pl. *erieh*), heifer;

Qabil ix-Xaghar (Hairy Species). Exx. *ziemel*, horse; *debba*, mare; *mohor* foal.

Bhejjem ta' Laham il-Kelb (Equines). Exx. *hmar*, ass, donkey; *felu*, colt. [This nice distinction between *qabil ix-xaghar* and *laham il-kelb* is lost nowadays in everyday use, and *laham il-kelb* is commonly used to cover all equines.]

Qabil is-Suf (Fleecy, woolly species). Exx. *naghga*, sheep; *ghabura*, a young ewe about a year old; *haruf*, lamb; *muntun*, ram; *tieni*, ram; *kibx*, ram; *wott*, ram; *ghenieqa*, a young goat that has not yet had its first offspring; *moghza*, goat; *bodbod*, he-goat; *ghens*, he-goat; *gidi*, kid.

To these one may add the following popular classifications:

Tjur u Fniek (Fowls and Rabbits). Exx. *serduq*, cock; *tigiega*, hen; *ghattuqa*, a young hen that has not yet laid eggs; *fellus*, chicken, pullet; *fenek*, rabbit, *zarmug*, a young cony or rabbit.

Klieb u Qtates (Dogs and Cats). Exx. *Kelb*, dog; *geru*, pup; *qattus*, cat; *ferh*, kitten.

Ghasafar (Birds). The following are examples of bird-names figuring in Maltese toponymy, proverbs and folk-literature: *bies*, falcon; *bida*, hawk; *hamiema*, dove; *summiema*, quail; *cawla*, rook; *cief*, cinerous petrel; *farrug*, chicken; *gharnuq*, crane; *gawwi*, sea-gull.

Dud (Insects, etc.). Exx. *hanex*, worm; *berghud*, flea; *susa*, woodlouse; *qamla*, louse.

² A. PRECA, *Malta Cananea*. 1904, pp. 159-160.

SPECIAL VOCABULARY.

In this section we give specimens of (a) common animal terms, (b) verbs denoting the cries of animals, (c) words used to call, stop, frighten or drive away animals, (d) adjectives denoting special qualities of animals, (e) miscellaneous terms connected with trades and callings, places where birds or animals are kept or trapped, (f) harness terms and (g) butcher's terms.

(a) COMMON ANIMAL TERMS

Under this heading we give some common terms used in the animal trade, together with their English equivalents and definitions as given by W.C. Miller and E.D.S. Robertson in *Practical Animal Husbandry* (1934, pp. 94-97): *ziemel imsewwi*, gelding 'a castrated male horse of any age'; *felu*, colt, 'a young immature male horse usually over one year old'; *felua*, 'a young immature female horse usually over one year old'; *debba*, mare; *debba ghar-razza*, brood mare; *debba tradda*, mare with foal at foot; *mohor*, yearling; *ziemel xih*, also *cikk*, an aged horse; *ziemel b'badja wahda*, rig, ridgling, 'a male horse of twelve months or over with one testicle retained in the abdomen'; *ziemel bla bajd*, double rig; *baghal bin id-debba*, mule, 'hybrid whose sire is a donkey and dam a mare'; *baghal bin il-hmara*, jennet, gennet, genet or hinny, 'a hybrid whose sire is a stallion and dam a female donkey'; *ghogol ragel*, bull calf; *ghogla*, heifer calf; *barri hasi*, bullock or steer, 'a castrated male ox'; *erha*, heifer, *barrijiet (barrin)* *ghas-simna*, store cattle, 'young beasts of either sex which are to be fed for the butcher later on'; *ghogla teumija ma' ghogol*, free-martin, 'when twin calves of different sexes are born'; *baqra dika*, hermaphrodite, 'a bisexual animal, ... animals in which the sexual organs are indefinite, or which possess organs simulating those of both sexes'; *barri fhuli*, castrated bull; *fahal*, uncastrated bull; *majjal bil-bajd*, boar, 'an uncastrated adult male pig'; *majjala*, sow, 'an adult female pig used for breeding'; *darfgina* (also *dargina*) gilt, 'a young female pig to be kept for breeding' also 'a home bred pig'; *majjali ghas-simna*, store pigs; *gidja hawlija*, goatling, 'a she goat over one year but not exceeding two years'; *botbot*, buckling, 'a male goat'; *fenek ghar-razza*, buck, 'a male rabbit capable of breeding'; *brakk*, a kind of short-tailed setting dog (Falzon).

(b) The following list gives the verbs which denote the cries of several of the lower creatures: *il-baqra tgargar* (the cow lows), *iz-ziemel (id-debba) jizher* (the horse (mare) neighs), *il-hamiam ibarqam* (pigeons, doves coo), *il-hmar jinbaq* (the ass brays), *il-hanzir iqazqaz* (the pig squeals, grunts), *il-kelb jinbah* (the dog barks), *il-moghza (naghga) tinbee* (the

goat (sheep) bleats), l-ghasfur *ipejjez* (isaffar), (the bird sings, twitters), il-qattus *inewwab* (the cat mews), is-serp *izekzek* (the snake hisses), it-tigiega *tqaqi* (the hen cackles), ix-xadina *twerzaq* (the monkey (ape) gibbers, chatters), iż-żring *itaqtaq* (the frog croaks), iż-żunżan *izanżan* (bees hum), is-serduq *jidden* (the cock crows), il-werżieq *iwerzaq* (the cricket chirps), il-papra *twaqwaq* (the duck quacks).

(c) The following exclamations, mainly monosyllables, some of them still used, are used to call, stop or drive animals. De Soldanis in the 18th century recorded various sounds or words falling under this category in his Ms. dictionary *Damma ta' Kliem Kartaginiz mscerred fel fomm tal Maltin*,³ e.g.

Brejċ Brejċ – così chiamano i guardiani de' porci questi sozzi animali da un luogo all'altro, e vale: "Venite, accostatevi" (f. 66)

Bsu – viene pronunciata da chi mena gli animali da soma e vale: "Fermati, allontanati da questo luogo per un altro" (f. 68)

Hajz – voce che si dice ai porci per farli camminare (f. 246)

Harr! Arri! – voce e parola che si proferisce al solo animale da soma, che serve per invitarlo e sollecitarlo a camminarvi più presto (f. 250)

Qajs – si dice dai porcari alli soli porci e vale: "Va via" (f. 280)

Kirċ – voce detta ai porci per chiamarli donde sono dal loro custode porcario (f. 307)

Wardat – Quantunque questa parola viene da chi mena gli animali da soma per fare loro largo, e perchè non venghino spinti e da loro urtati, tuttavia è da considerarsi antichissima ... (f. 498)

Za – viene pronunciato dai pastori o siano custodi delle pecore allorchè vogliono moverle e cacciarle da un luogo per portarle ad un altro (f. 505)

Zizi – voce con cui chiamansi pollastri et altri simili polli (f. 512)

To these may be added other words given by G.B. Falzon in his *Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese* (1882), i.e.

Bejżu – excl. used for calling bullocks; lit. 'corpulent, big bodied, muscular'.

Bsaqaf – 'hold!' an exclamation used for holding in a horse.

Ċhaw – an exclamation used by drivers to stop their cattle.

Has – an exclamation used to hinder cattle from stumbling.

Haw-Haw – a word used to back cattle in ploughing.

Hess, hiss – an exclamation used by the ploughman to hinder the cattle from straying into the previous furrow.

Hajz – an exclamation used in driving away pigs.

Haxk – a word used by shepherds to reprove their flocks (sheep)

Kiss – to hiss cats.

³ R.M.L. Ms. 143A.

Kixx – an exclamation to frighten birds.

Mejx – a word used to call cats, puss.

Praw – a word used to call oxen to drink.

Psahaw – a word used to correct (i.e. chide) an ass.

Qajz – word used to call hogs.

Tira – a word used to turn out or frighten dogs.

Za! – an exclamation used by shepherds or goatherds in driving their flocks.

(d) Herdsmen and breeders employ a special crop of adjectives to denote colours, conditions or defects of the animals under their charge. Thus, one may refer to a sheep or goat as *xagra*, ruddy; *garda*, without wool; *midliela*, long-haired; *għaslija*, mulatto; *qandlija*, wattled; *batra*, short-tailed, also tail-less; *xiklija*, shackled, “capra che cammina impacciata” (Caruana); *imxattrra*, with unequal teats; *belqa*, brown, blackish, grey; *muqrana*, horned; *fartasa*, without horns; *mondiya*, short-eared; *mejxa*, having small ears; *bl-imsielet*, wattled; *għawra*, squint-eyed.⁴

Nfuri is used to describe a shy, skittish horse or other animal. Of a runaway horse we say *harab!* or *sferra!*, while a startled horse *jippinna*, i.e. rises on its haunches. Other terms denoting a horse in motion are: *jofrok*, to go lame, to limp; *bit-trott*, at a trot; *bil-lbit*, at a racing speed.

The principal horse colour terms are given hereunder, together with the English equivalent of recognised colours of horses in Great Britain: *iswed*, black; *harrubi*, black-brown; *aħmar qrolli*, brown; *bellumi*, bay-brown; *qastni*, bay; *isfar*, chestnut; *isfar gludi*, cream; *ixheb*, grey; *sturnell*, roan; *abjad u iswed*, piebald; *faċċol*, white face.

(e) People employed in, or connected with animal trades have, or had in the past, distinctive names, such as *biċċier*, butcher; *bejjies*, falconer, game-keeper; *burdnâr*, an ass-driver, a muleteer; *buttâr*, cooper; *sarrâg*, (also *sillar*), saddler; *fieres*, trooper, horseman; *gerrej*, jockey; *sellieħ*, flayer; *staffier*, groom, lackey, footman; *raħħâl*, shepherd or herdsman; *raġĥaj*, shepherd, further subdivided into *raġĥaj il-mogħoż*, goat-herd, *raġĥaj il-baqar*, cow-herd; and *raġĥaj il-ħniezer*, swine-herd; *nagħal*, farrier; *kalessier*, driver of a *caleche*; *kalessar*, *caleche* maker; *karozzier*, coach man; *karozzar*, coach maker; *kuċċier*, coach man; *postiljun*, postilion; *gennien*, one who buys old or diseased poultry from the homes (Tarxien).

The following words denote the places where birds or animals are kept or trapped; *barumbara*, pigeon house; *biċċerija*, a slaughter house; *ċep-*

⁴Most of these terms occur in Temi Zammit's delightful sketch in Maltese which appeared in *Il-Malti* (1928, p. 109).

puna, paddock; *dura*, a circular wall or hut generally of rubble wall from which sportsmen watch the game; *gaġġa*, bird cage; *ġuna tal-ħamieħ*, a basket in which pigeons hatch or breed; *gallinar*, a roost, a hen coop; *gorboġ*, a pig sty; *kortil*, place wherein some beasts of burden are committed to one's care, generally for a short time; *mansab*, place in which anything is hung up; or nets or snares are spread, to catch rabbits, birds, etc.; also the instrument with which they are caught; *qafas*, a cage, an aviary, *ġabsala*, bee hive, *stalla*, stable.

Under this heading may be grouped also (a) fodder and related terms, e.g. *foraġġ*, forage, fodder; *furrajna*, fodder, hay, clover; *ġwież*, pulse, given to animals; *granża*, bran; *ġrixa*, fire bran; *nuħħala*, bran; *ġħefien*, the hay and straw that remains before any animals; and (b) various kinds of leather used in shoemaking, e.g. *ċmallott*, camlet; *dant*, tanned deer-skin; *vitellin*, neat's leather; cow hides, a calf-dressed leather; *kamoxxa*, chamois leather.

(f) HARNESS TERMS

The main parts of the driving harness (Fig. 1) are usually grouped under three headings:⁵

Il-Buq (The Pad): *l-imfietab*, rein rings; *iċ-ċinga*, back band; *il-kastanjoli*, shaft tugs; *is-suttabanza*, girth; *il-ħziem*, belly band; *il-kudiera*, crupper; *is-salib*, split cross strap; *il-braga*, web of breeching; *ir-refġbat*, breeching straps.

Il-Maħanqa (The Collar): *il-hems*, hames; *il-mullatura*, bearing rein; *il-brilja*, driving bit; *il-musmar* (*iż-żiemel*) pedestal; *is-sottogula*, under-band; *it-taranti*, traces; *il-kapijiet*, capes.

It-Testiera (The Bridle): *ln-nuċċali*, blinkers; *il-fruntiera*, brow band; *il-kukkardi*, rosettes; *il-geddum*, nose band; *ir-riedni*, driving rein; *il-brilja*, driving bit; *il-barbazzall*, curb; *il-martingana*, martingale.

For beasts of burden the harness includes also: *il-kappestru*, halter; *is-sarretta*, chain halter, *is-sidra*, breast strap; *il-berdġha*, pack saddle; *id-dafar*, web of breeching, crupper; *il-ganċ*, hook.

There are other harness, saddlery and grooming terms in use, of which the following are examples: *il-faldrappa*, saddle cloth; *l-imxedd*, a girth for a horse, undergirth, belly band; *il-pannell*, pack saddle; *l-utajja*,

⁵ I am indebted to the late Mr. Saverin Manduca, a well-known personality in local horseracing circles, for the Maltese harness terms listed here. A special word of thanks is due to my brother, Mr. A.J. Cassar, B.V.Sc., M.R.C.V.S., Principal Government Veterinary Surgeon, for his help with the English translation of these harness terms, of the words listed under A — *Common Animal Terms*, and of those given under G — *Butchers' Terms*. His help was also invaluable in checking the Maltese equivalents of the recognised English colours of horses shown under D.

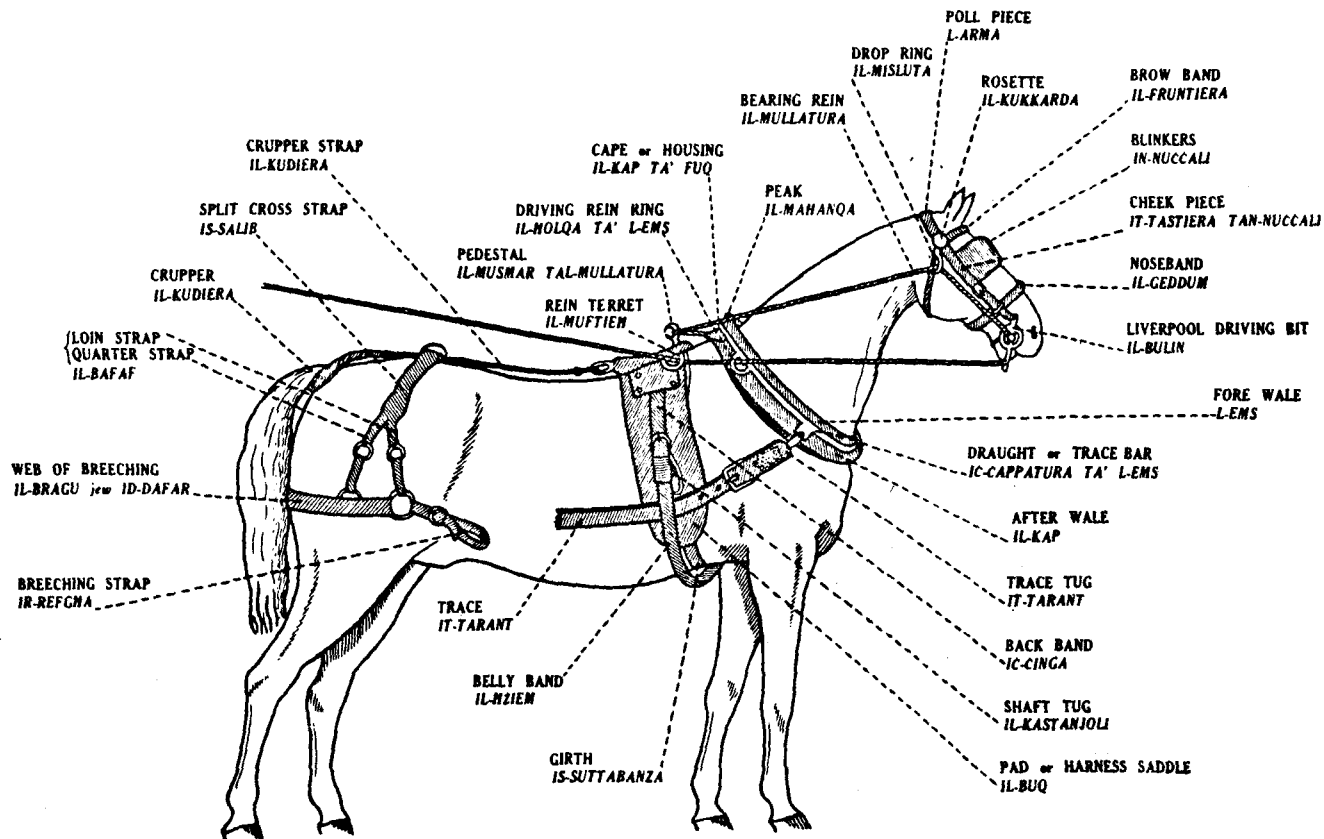


FIGURE 1

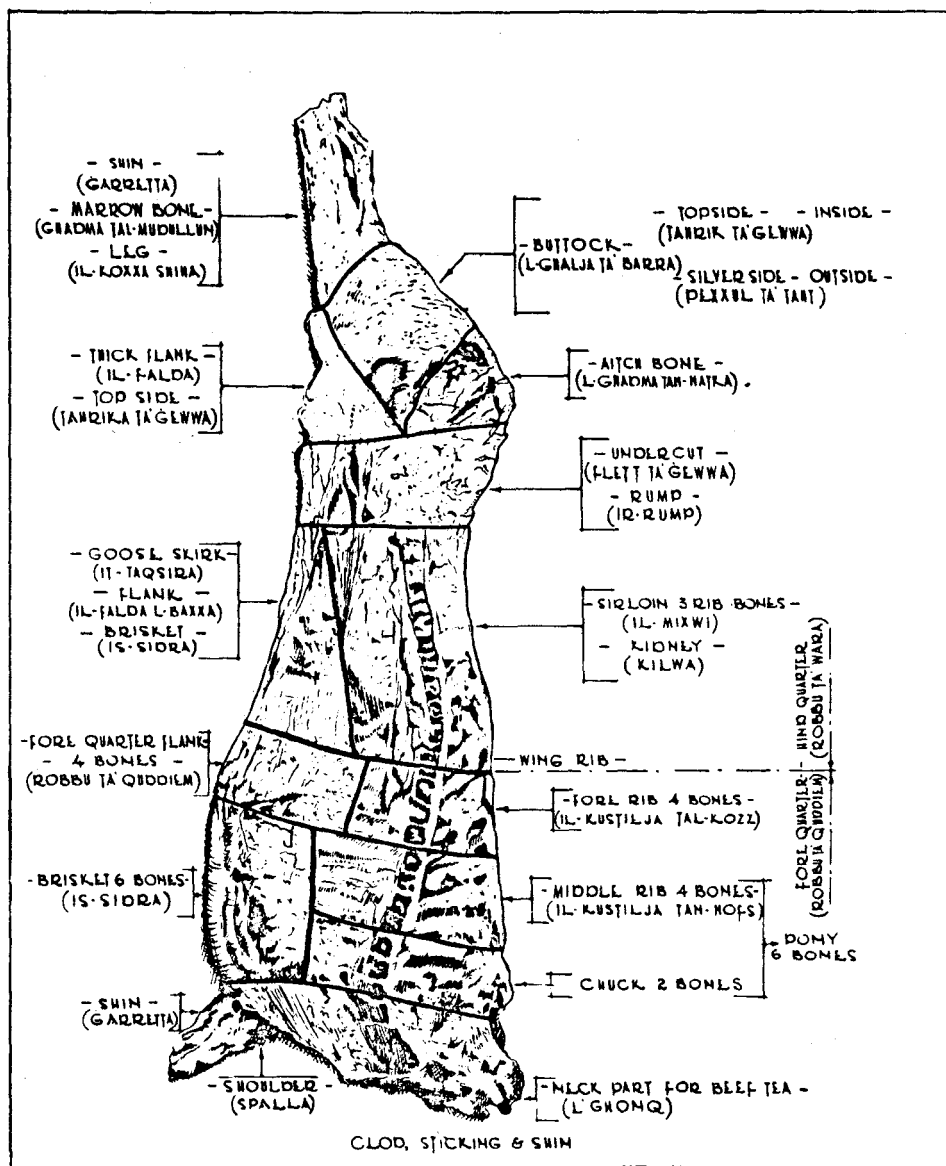


FIGURE 2

saddle cloth; *il-farda*, a horse cloth; *is-sarg*, saddle; *sarraġ*, to make saddles; *staffa*, stirrup; *strilja*, a horse comb.

(g) BUTCHERS' TERMS

Fig. 2 shows the main parts of the animal carcass, with their Maltese and English nomenclature. The list given hereunder was collected by the writer during the last War, when he worked as Sanitary Inspector at the Valletta Market. With the exception of *ramp* (Eng. rump) *ħokk* (Eng. hock) and *pastur* (Eng. *pastern*) it will be seen that the terms in common use among butchers and at the abattoir are either primitive Semitic ones, or Romance (Sicilian or Italian). In this respect it is interesting to reproduce the following note from Prof. Aquilina's study *A Survey of the Constituent Elements of Malta* published in his 'Papers in Maltese Linguistics' (1961, p. 12): 'Very often English borrows from French where Maltese borrows from Sicilian and, later, from Italian. One interesting instance occurs in the names for animals alive which in English, as in Maltese, are native as *cow*, *ox*, *pig*, *sheep*, etc. whereas the names for cooked meat are Norman French in English, and Sicilian or Italian in Maltese. Examples are: *ox* (common Teutonic); *beef* (R.), with which cp. S.M. *gendus* 'ox', and R.M. *čanga* 'beef'. Another example is common Teutonic *calf* – Romance *veal*, with which cp. S.M. *għogla* or *erħa*; R.M. *vitella* in *laħam tal-vitella*. Though S.M. has *kibx*, *wott* and *tieni* for 'ram', the word actually used in R.M. is *muntun* for both the animal and his flesh. While the M. word for 'pork' is *porku* in Valletta and amongst the better educated classes, the word *ħanzir* ('pig') is similarly used together with *majjal* in the villages where one hears both *laħam tal-ħanzir* and *laħam tal-porku* or, more commonly, *laħam tal-majjal*.

The 15th Century *bandi* or proclamations recently published by E.R. Leopardi,⁶ besides throwing an interesting light on the control of meat prices in medieval Malta, have some bearing on the history of certain Maltese words. On the 11th September, 1472 the *Consiglio Popolare* prohibited the importation of cattle from Gozo and the exportation of same to that island. On the same day another *bando* prohibited the sale of meat in private dwelling houses and regulated its sale at the market places, against a fine of 15 *carlini*. A price list dated 12th September, 1472 refers to mutton *la carni di lu muntuni*, veal and heifer, *la carni di la vitella*, *la carni di la gincza* (M. *għizzla*), and to pork from swine that roamed semi-wild in search of food i.e. *la carni di lu porcu* (M. *porku*) *di la xara* (M. *xagħra*). On the 4th September, 1473 the Jurats prohibited the sale of meat

⁶ E.R. LEOPARDI, *Bandi of the XV Century*. In "Melita Historica" Vol. 2, No. 2, 1957; *Bandi, Transactions of the "Consiglio Popolare", etc. of the XV Century*, *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1959.

by the quarter *a quartu* (M. *bil-kwart*), whether in a private dwelling or at the market, laying down that meat must be sold by the *rotolo a rotolu* (M. *bir-ratal*) at the price fixed by the Jurats.

The more common terms are: *garretta*, *xikel*, leg or shin; *ghadma tal-mudullun*, long bone; *koxxa*, round; *tahrika*, thick flank; *l-ghalja*, top side; *il-baxxa*, silver side; *pexxul*, fore shin; *ghadma tan-natka*, aitch bone; *falda*, thin flank skirt; *flett ta' gewwa*, the tender part of the rump; *ir-ramp* rump; *il-mixwi*, sirloin, *is-sidra*, plate and brisket; *kustilja l-magghura*, 6-rib fore-rib; *kustilja tal-pala*, 3-rib middle rib; *kustilja tan-nofs*, back ribs; *il-vakant tal-qasba*, fore rib; *robu ta' quddiem*, fore quarter, *robu ta' wara*, hind quarter, *l-ispalla*, shoulder, *il-lucertu*, sartorius muscle; *il-ponta tas-sidra*, brisket; *taqsira*, part of plate and brisket; *il-hokk*, hock; *l-iskannatura*, sticking; *ic-centupill*, omosum; *il-virga*, penis; *is-sawt*, penis; *il-mimli*, part with bone i.e. full; *il-mahsa*, cod fat and goose skirt (inguinal region); *id-dawwara*, mesentery; *il-bruxkett*, part of thin flank; *il-boqxiex*, oesophagus; *il-qarquca*, cartilage; *l-animelli*, sweet-breads; *il-fuliet*, glands; *l-ghalla*, foetus; *il-buzzieqa*, bladder; *il-frixa*, pancreas, *il-mindil*, omentum; *l-arlogg*, testicles; *l-ghonq*, clod and sticking; *ix-xabam tal-kilwa*, peri-renal fat; *gerriestu*, withers; *il-pastur ta' saqajh*, pastern; *l-itraf* or *it-truf*, explained by Caruana as '*le estrimità del corpo d'un animale, specialmente da macello*'; *ifda* (pl. of *fwied*), livers.

The following disease names are also in use among animal breeders: *il-habb*, cysticercus; *naghga mgelgla*, sheep in an oedematous condition; *marda ta' l-iskorfni*, swine erysipelas; *il-lantkun*, (It. *anticuore*) pyrop-lasmosis; *marda tal-halq u d-dwiefer*, foot and mouth disease; *pesta tal-baqar*, Rinderpest, Cattle Plague; *rimi*, miscarriage.

The names of the more popular meat cuts may be gauged from the following list, taken from an official price list recently issued in the Government Gazette (No. 11712 of the 24th November, 1964): *tahrika tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox thick flanks; *falda tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox thin flanks; *ghalja tal-koxxa u pexxun tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox topsides and silversides; *laham tax-xikel tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox knuckles; *koxxa tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox rumps; *flett tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox striploins; *čanga tax-xikel u ta' l-ispalla bla ghadam*, boneless ox chucks and blades; *irbiegh ta' quddiem tač-čanga bla xikel u sidra bla ghadam*, boneless ox crops; *flett tač-čanga bla ghadam*, boneless ox tenderloins and fillets; *irbiegh ta' wara tač-čanga bil-ghadam*, ox hinds (bone in); *koxxa shiha bil-garret-ta tač-čanga bil-ghadam*, ox butts (bone in) (shin on); *faxxatura ta' l-ispalla bla ghadam*, boneless ox clods; *saqajn tal-vitella bla ghadam*, boneless veal legs.

ANIMAL	PLANT-NAME	PLACE-NAME
<i>Baqra</i> (Cow)	<i>Bezzulet il-baqra</i> [Cow's Udder] <i>Sedum coeruleum</i> ; Blue Stonecrop (<i>Rep.</i> 6); <i>Għajn il-baqra</i> [Cow's eye] <i>Buphtalmum maritimum et spinosum</i> , <i>Lin.</i> , Ox-eye (<i>Rep.</i> 25); <i>Ras il-baqra</i> [Cow's head] <i>Antirrhinum majus</i> <i>Lin.</i> , Red Snapdragon (<i>Rep.</i> 49).	<i>Bubaqra</i> [Cow's place] (Sh. IX); <i>Djar il-Baqar</i> [Cows' farm] (Sh. IX); <i>Dejr il-Baqar</i> [Cows' stall] (Ab. 296); <i>Għar Baqrat</i> [Cows' Cave] (Ab. 251)
<i>Fart</i> (Bull)	<i>Lsien il-fart</i> [Bull's Tongue] <i>Anchusa Italica</i> , <i>Retz. Obs.</i> , Italian Bugloss (<i>Rep.</i> 39).	
<i>Gendus</i> (Ox)		<i>Habel Gendus</i> [Ox's enclosure (land)] (Sh. X)
II		
<i>Hmar</i> , pl. <i>ħmir</i> (Donkey)	<i>Basal tal-ħmir</i> [Donkey's Bulbs] <i>Muscari Comosum</i> . <i>Willd.</i> , Feathered Hyacinth (<i>Rep.</i> 4); <i>Bettieħ il-Hmir</i> [Donkey's Melons] or <i>Faqqus il-Hmir</i> <i>Ecbalium Elat.</i> , <i>L.C. Reich.</i> , Squirting cucumber (<i>Rep.</i> 6, 18); <i>Karġus il-Hmir</i> [Donkeys' Celery] <i>Smyrniolum Olusatrum</i> , <i>Lin.</i> , Common Alexanders (<i>Rep.</i> 11).	<i>Rdum il-Hmar</i> [Donkey's Cliffs] (Ab. 112, 253)
<i>Żiemel</i> (Horse)	<i>Denb iż-Żiemel</i> [Horse's tail] <i>Equisetum fluviatile</i> , <i>Lin.</i> , Horse tail (<i>Rep.</i> 15) <i>Nagħ-niegh taż-żiemel</i> [Horse's mint] <i>Mentha hirsuta</i> (B. 497)	<i>Sqaq iż-Żiemel</i> [Horse's alley] (Qormi, Sh. X)

Debba, pl. *dwieb*
(Mare)

Dib (Fox)

Għeneb id-Dib [Fox's Grapes] Solani species
indigenae (Pent. Mono), Night Shade (Rep.
26)

Liebru (Hare)

Denb il-Liebru [Hare's tail] Polypogon Mon-
speliense, Desf., Rabbit's tail (Rep. 15)

Kelb (dog)

Denb il-Kelb [Dog's tail] Cynosurus Crista-
tus Lin., Crested dog's tail (Rep. 15);
Fiswet il-Kelb [Dog's fart] Scrophularia
Peregrina Lin., Nettle-leaved figwort (Rep.
20);
Fula tal-Klieb [Dogs' Bean] Strychnos Nux
Vomica, Nux vomica seeds (Rep. 21);
Lsien il-Kelb [Dog's Tongue] Cynoglossum
pictum Ait. H. Kew., Hound's Tongue (Rep.
39)

Fenek (Rabbit)

Denb il-Fenek [Rabbit's tail] Lagurus ova-
tus, Lin., Hare's tail (Rep. 15);
Widnet il-Fenek [Rabbit's Ear] Bupleurum
protractum Link., Common Thorough-wax or
Hare's Ear (Rep. 62)

Bagħal (Mule)

Darid-Dwieb [Mares' house] (Mosta, Sh. X);
Bieb id-Dwieb [Mares' door] (Mosta, Sh. X);
Għar id-Dwieb [Mares' Cave] (Dingli, Sh.
VI).

Tad-Dib [Of the Fox] (Mdina, Sh. X)

Ta' Liebru [Of the Hare] (Gozo, Ag. 23)

Għajn Klieb [Dogs' Fountain] (Rabat, Ab.
266); *Toqbet il-Kelb* [Dog's Hole] (Mun-
xar, Gozo)

Tal-Fniek [Of the Rabbits] (B'Kara,
Sh. 64);

Bejter il-Fenek [Rabbit's Lair] (Dingli,
Sh. IX)

Ras il-Fenek [Rabbit's Head] (M'Xlokk,
Sh. X)

Ta' L-lbghal [Of the Mules] (B'Kara,
Sh. 64)

		<i>Denb il-Bagħal</i> [Mule's Tail] (Q. 11, Sh. IX)
		<i>Tal-Bagħal</i> [Of the Mule] (Siggiewi, Sh. IX)
<i>Hanzir</i> , pl. <i>ħnieżer</i> (Pig)	<i>Habaq il-ħnieżer</i> [Pigs' basil] <i>Theligonum Cynocrambe</i> L. (S. 663); <i>Basal-il-ħnieżer</i> [Pigs' Onions] <i>Muscari Comosum</i> Grape-Hyacinth (S. 740, B. 679)	<i>Ras Hanzir</i> [Pig's Head] (Marsa, Ab. 80) <i>Tal-Hanzira</i> [Of the Sow] (Ab. 244, 293, 294); <i>Ta' Hanzir</i> [Of the pig] (Gozo, Ag. 22); <i>Il-Wied tal-Hanzira</i> [Sow's valley] (Mel-lieħa, Sh. III); <i>Għar Hanzir</i> [Pig's cave] (Siggiewi, Sh. IX) <i>Wied Hanzir</i> [Pig's valley] (Siggiewi, Sh. IX)
𐤎 <i>Mogħza</i> (Goat) (m. <i>botbot</i> 'billy') (<i>gidi</i> 'kid')	<i>Qarn il-mogħza</i> [Goat's horn] also known as <i>Bżar twil</i> and <i>Bżar tal-qrun</i> , <i>Capsicum Cochicum</i> , <i>Willd.</i> ; Horny-pepper, Cockspur Pepper (<i>Rep.</i> 9, 34); <i>Leħjet il-botbot</i> [Billy Goat's Beard] <i>Tragopogon porrifolium</i> <i>Lin.</i> , Salsify or Purple Goat's Beard (<i>Rep.</i> 38)	<i>Marqad il-Mogħoż</i> [Goat's sleeping place] (Paola). <i>Kalanka tal-Gidien</i> [Kids' inlet] (M'Xlukk, Sh. X)
<i>Haruf</i> (Lamb)	<i>Denb il-Haruf</i> [Lamb's tail] <i>Reseda fruticulosa</i> <i>Lin.</i> , Shrubby Rocket (<i>Rep.</i> 15)	
<i>Qattus</i> (Cat)	<i>Beżżuleť il-qattusa</i> [Cat's Udder] <i>Briza</i> , quaking Grass (<i>Rep.</i> 6); <i>Denb il-qattus</i> [Cat's tail] <i>Cervus Peruvianus di Tabern</i> , Peruvian torch-thistle (<i>Rep.</i> 25);	<i>Tal-Qattus</i> [Of the cat] (B'Kara, Siggiewi); <i>Tal-Qtates</i> [Of the cats] (T'arxien, Sh. VIII); <i>Għajn Qattus</i> [Cat's spring] (Mosta, Sh. X);

Mustaċċ il-qattus [Cat's whiskers] phleum
tenue *Schrader*, Cat's tail grass (*Rep.* 43)

Ġurdien (Mouse)

Denb il-ġurdien [Mouse's tail] *Alopecurus*
pratensis *Lin.*, Meadow fox-tail (*Rep.* 15);
Widnet il-ġurdien [Mouse's ear] *Myosotis*
hispida *Schlect* (*S.* 521)

Far (Rat)

Xewk il-far [Rat's thorn] *Carthamus* *Lanatus*
L. (*Rep.* 65; *S.* 424; *B.* 614);
Żokret il-far [Rat's navel] also
Żokret il-ġhaġuża or *ix-xiħa*, *Cotyledon* *um-*
bilicus *Lin.*, Wall pennywort (*Rep.* 68)

Tiġieġ (Hens)

14

ġhattuqa 'pullet';

fellus 'chicken'

qroqqa 'brood-hen'

Serduq (Cock)

Buttuni di gallu [Cock's kidneys] *It. Uva*
Galletta, Cock's kidney grapes, (*Rep.* 8)
Ġħajn is-serduq [Cock's eye] *Adonis* *Cu-*
paniana *Guss.*, Pheasant's eye (*Rep.* 25)
Ġħallet is-serduq [Cock's Crest] same as
Ġħajn is-serduq

Ġħasfur (Bird)

L sien l-ġħasfur [Bird's tongue] also
Sieq l-ġħasfur [Bird's foot] *Silenes* *Sericea*
All.; Silky Catchfly (*Rep.* 39, 54)

Wied Qattus [Cat's Valley] (*Siġġiewi*, *Sh.*
IX)

Tal-Ġrejden [Of the little mouse] (*Ab.* 243)

Hal-Far [Rat Village] (*Ab.* 311);

Tal-far [Of the Rat] (*Gozo*, *Ag.* 75)

Sqaq it-Tiġieġ [Hens' alley] (*B'Kara*)

ix-Xaġbra ta' Ġhattuqa [Hen's Heath]
(*Bengemma*, *Sh.* IX);

Wied it-Tiġieġ [Hen's Valley] (*Ab.* 294);

Tal-fellus [Of the Chicken] (*Dingli*, nr.
Buskett);

Tal-Qroqqa [Of the brood-hen] (*B'Kara*).

Ta' Srejdaq [Of the young cock] (*Imdina*,
Sh. X)

Ġħar Ġħasfur [Bird's Cave] (*St. Paul's*
Bay, *Sh.* X)

- Hamiema* (dove) *Għads il-Hamiem* [Dove's wort] or
beċċun 'pigeon' *Ġilbiena vicia sativa* Lin., Common vetch or
tare (*Rep.* 24)
Raqbet il-hamiema [Dove's neck, back] also
known as *Sieq il-hamiema* [Dove's foot]
Fedia cornucopiae Vahl., purple-flowered
corn salad (*Rep.* 48); *Delphinium Longipes*
Moris, Wild Larkspur (*Rep.* 46)
- Summien* (quail) *Ras is-Summiema* [quail's head] *Craniolaria*
annua Lin. (*Rep.* 49)
- Ċawla* (rook) *Hara taċ-ċawl* [Rook's excrement] *Coix lach-*
ryma Lin., Job's tears (*Rep.* 28)
- Bies* (falcon) *Hagret iċ-Ċawl* [Rook's stone] (Gozo, Ab.
354);
Għar taċ-Ċawla [Rook's cave] (Gozo, Ag.
27);
Taċ-Ċawla [Of the Rook] (Gudja, Luqa,
Sh. X, VIII);
Sq̣aq taċ-Ċawla [Rook's alley] (Mdina,
Sh. X)
- Rdum il-Bies* [Falcon's cliffs] (M'Xlokk,
Sh. X; also Ab. 249);
Wilga l-Bies [Falcon's plain] (M'Xlokk,
Sh. X);
Għar tal-Bies [Falcon's cave] (Gozo, Ag.
27)
- Hida* (hawk) *Għoxx il-Hida* [Hawk's nest] (Mellieħa,
Sh. III, Gozo, Ag. 22)
Ta' Hida [Of the hawk] (Mqabba, Sh. IX)

Ġemel (Camel)	Ġargġir il-ġemel [Camel's Spanish Mustard] Capsella Bursa-Pastoris De Cand; Shepherd's Purse (Rep. 24)	
Ljun (Lion)	Denb il-Ljun [Lion's Tail] Leonotis Leonu- rus. Rob. Brou, Lion's Tail (Rep. 15)	
Lifgħa (Viper)	Garni qexret il-lifgħa (serp) [Viper's (snake's) Arum], Arum Dracunculus Lin., Common Dragon (Rep. 22), Qexret il-Lifgħa [Viper's Skin] Stapelia variegata Lin., Stapelia (Rep. 34)	Tas-Serp [Of the Snake] (Mellieħa, Sh. III).
Qanfud (hedge-hog)	Qanfuda [Hedge-hog] Cichorium Spinosum Lin., Prickly Succory (Rep. 33)	Tal-Qanfud [Of the hedge-hog] (Mosta, Sh. X)
ⵝ Lupa (Wolf)		Fomm ta' Lupa [Wolverine's Mouth] (Im- garr, Sh. III)
Pagun (Peacock)	Denb il-Pagun [Peacock's Tail] Padina Pavonia, Adamson; Peacock's tail (Rep. 15)	
Alwett (skylark)	Pedidalwett [Skylark's feet] Delphinium Aja- cis Lin., Garden larkspur (Rep. 46)	
Gawwi (Gull)		Tal-Gawwiġa [Of the Gull] (Dingli, Sh. VI)
Ġief (Cinereous Petrel)		Xiġfer iċ-Ġief [Petrel's Edge] (Mdina, Sh. X); Ponta taċ-Ġief [Petrel's Point] (Gozo, Ag. 28);
Tellerita (Bustard)		Tat-Tellerit [Of the Bustard] (Imdina, Sh. X).

Farruġ (Chicken)

Għarnuq (Crane)

Tajr (Fowl)

Nahla (Bee)

Susa (Woodworm)

Berġbud (Flea)

Qamla (Louse)

Hanex (Worm)

Ġurat (Locust)

Halib it-Tajr [Fowl's Milk] *Ornitogalum Arabicum* Lin., Star of Bethlehem. (Rep. 28)

Nagħnieġħ in-Naħal [Bees' mint], also known as *Melissa*, *Melissa Officinalis* Lin., Common Balm (Rep. 42, 43)

Għud is-Sus [Wormwood] *Glycyrrhiza glabra* Lin., Liquorice (Rep. 26)

Żerriegħet il-Briegħed [Fleas' Seeds] *Plantago Psyllium* Lin., Flea-Wort (Rep. 67)

Żerriegħet il-Qamel [Lice's Seeds] *Delphinium Staphysagria* Lin., Savesacre (Rep. 68)

Żerriegħet il-Hniex (Worms' seed) *Musco di Corsica*, Corsican Moss (Rep. 67)

Hal-Farruġ [Chicken's Village]

Ta' Għarnuqa [Of the Crane] (Qrendi, Sh. IX)

Djar in-Naħal [Bees' Houses] (Mdina, Sh. X).

Għar ta' Hanex [Worm's Cave] (Gozo, Ag. 27).

Bir Ġurat [Locust's Well] (Tarxien, Sh. VIII)

PLANT NAMES AND PLACE-NAMES

In the above table we group, under each animal listed, the plant-names and place-names brought together from various sources. For plant-names our main source has been G. Gulia's *Repertorio Botanico Maltese* (1855-56), supplemented by R. Vella Tomlin. 'Additional Index to *Flora Melitensis Nova* (1915) by S. Sommier and A. Caruana Gatto, and *Descriptive Flora of the Maltese Islands*, (1927), by J. Borg, published in *Melita Historica* (1960). For Maltese place-names I have relied mostly on G.F. Abela's *Descrittione di Malta* (1647) and on Rev. G. Farrugia's translation of Agius De Soldanis's history of Gozo *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu* (Vol. 1, 1936, Vol. 2, 1953). I have also referred to the Survey Sheets at the Public Works Department for several other place-names.

The following abbreviations are used in the table:

Rep. – G. Gulia, *Repertorio Botanico Maltese*, 1855-56.

S. – S. Sommier et A. Caruana Gatto, *Flora Melitensis Nova*, 1915.

B. – J. Borg; *Descriptive Flora of the Maltese Islands*, 1927.

Ab. – G.F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta* ... 1647

Ag. – G.P.F. Agius De Soldanis's history of Gozo translated by Rev. G. Farrugia: *Għawdex bil-Ġrajja Tiegħu*, 2v., 1936, 1953.

Sh. – Survey Sheets at the Public Works Department.

Analysing the plant-names given in the above list, one gets an insight into the mind of the folk at work creating the popular names of the plants and surroundings among which they moved and lived. The main criterion was comparison to some physical feature of the animal with which the people were familiar:

Għajn (The Eye): **exx.** *għajn il-baqra, għajn is-serduq*

Ras (Head): **exx.** *ras il-baqra, ras is-summienna*

Lsien (Tongue): **exx.** *lsien il-fart; lsien il-kelb; lsien l-għasfur.*

Denb (Tail): *denb iż-żiemel, denb il-liebru, denb il-kelb; denb il-fenek; denb il-ħaruf; denb il-qattus; denb il-gurdien; denb il-pagun.*

Bezzula (Udder): **exx.** *bezzulet il-baqra; bezzulet il-qattusa.*

Widna (Ear): **exx.** *widnet il-fenek; widnet il-gurdien.*

Qarn (Horn): **exx.** *qarn il-mogħża.*

Lehja (Beard): **ec.** *lehjet il-botbot.*

Mustaċċ (Whiskers): **ex.** *mustaċċ il-qattus.*

Żokra (Naval): **ex.** *żokret il-far.*

Halib (Milk): **ex.** *ħalib it-tajr.*

Another feature of these plant-names is the association of particular plants with animals in the Construct Case, examples being *baṣal il-bnieżer, gargir il-gemel, nagħniegħ in-naħal, żerrigħet il-briegħed, zer-*

riġhet il-ħniex.

The place-names are built round the more common physical features and toponymic classifications:

Dar, Djar, Dejr (House, Farm): *exx. Djar (Dejr) il-baqar; Djar in-Naħal; Dar id-Dwieb.*

Għar (Cave): *exx. Għar Baqrat; Għar id-Dwieb; Għar Hanżir; Għar ta' Hanex.*

Wied (Valley): *exx. Wied tal-Hanżira; Wied Hanżir; Wied Qattus; Wied it-Tigieg.*

Rdum (Cliffs): *exx. Rdum il-Hmar.*

Habel (Enclosed Land): *exx. Habel Gendus.*

Għajn (Spring): *exx. Għajn Qattus; Għajn Klieb.*

Sqaq (Alley): *exx. Sqaq iż-Żiemel; Sqaqit-Tigieg.*

Kalanka (Inlet): *ex. Kalanka tal-Gidien.*

Ras (Head): *ex. Ras il-Fenek; Ras Hanżir.*

Fomm (Mouth): *ex. Fomm ta' Lupa.*

Marqad (Sleeping Place): *ex. Marqad il-Mogħoż.*

Unusual grammatical forms, such as diminutives, and little known plural formations occur in some of the place-names listed in the table. Examples are: *Ta' L-ibgħal*, for more common plural form *bghula*; *Ta' Srejdaq*, diminutive of *serduq*; and *Tal-Ġrejden*, diminutive of *gurdien*.

NURSERY RHYMES

In the nursery the child's imagination, powers of observation and sense of adventure are quickened by repeated references to certain animals in rhyme and doggerel. The range of animals thus falling within the child's perception is not extensive, being limited to the horse or mare, sheep and goats, hens, cats and dogs, cows and pigs, and a few insects such as lice, ladybirds, etc.

The following examples give an idea of the way in which animals figure in Maltese nursery rhymes. Roman numerals in parenthesis after each example refer to the texts of the rhymes as given in my 'Għana u Taqbil il-Tfal', published in *Lehen il-Malti* (April-June, 1948): On St. Gregory's Day we go to the feast on Sidor's mare (II); by mid-day the hen is put on the fire (IX [ix]); when it rains the grass grows and the goat gives us more milk (XVIII); I take out the sheep to graze and later make a shirt of her fleece (XVIII); the cat scratched my tail (XXVII); chickens are served at the wedding feast (XXVII); a white wig full of lice (XXVII); my grandmother beating the sow and feeding the dog (XXX); hen can lay eggs but wants bran (XXXVI); dog spying on a crab that is looking for

worms (XXXVI); the Sultan's cow (XXXVIII); ladybird goes to school (XLIII); a goat with a small tinkling bell (XLV); a dog called *Babaw*, i.e. Bogyman (XLV); two sheep make one young ewe (XLVI); the sheep and the ram grazing in the meadow (XLVII [14]).

RIDDLES

The following animals form the subject of some Maltese riddles contained in my collection *Haga Moħġaga u Tabbil il-Moħħ leħor* (1957-59): cow (No. 130); cat and mouse (No. 131); rook (No. 132); doves (No. 133); cock (No. 134); bat (No. 135); snail (No. 136); bug (No. 137); flea (No. 138); fly (No. 139); louse (No. 140); spider (No. 141); locust (No. 142); glow-worm (No. 143); snake (No. 144); tortoise (No. 145); cockroach (No. 146).

Besides being the themes of riddles, animals sometimes provide the fundamental conception underlying the enigmatical comparison in which the object described is equated to something entirely different from itself. Analysing the material of Maltese riddles according to the classification used by Archer Taylor in his *English Riddles from Oral Tradition* (1951) we get the following grouping of Maltese comparisons:

COMPARISONS TO AN ANIMAL: 47. Tied from the waist – not a monkey. *Capuchin Friar*. 76. Tiny worm walks and leaves entrails behind. *Thread and Needle*. 108 (ii). Stings you – not a wasp. *Prickly Pear*. 112. It breeds winged creatures though not born of a winged creature. *Broad Bean*. 126 (x). Has bones – not an animal. *Pomegranate*. 135. Flies – is not a bird and has no feathers. *Bat*. 135. Flies – does not lay eggs. *Bat*. 136 (i). Horse and cab climbing a wall. *Snail*. 144. Without feet – walks wherever he likes. *Snake*. 146. Flies through the air – not a bird. *Cockroach*. 154. Has a tail – not a sheep. *The Devil*. 182. Flies without wings or beak. *Smoke*.

COMPARISONS TO SEVERAL ANIMALS: 11. Cattle among straw on top of a tower. *Head Lice*. 131. Four feet on four feet waiting for four feet. *Cat on chair waiting for mouse*. 138 & 140. Five search for it; one is hidden; two catch it. *Flea, louse*.

FOLKSONGS

The Maltese folk-singer, himself often a lover of animals, draws his ideas from the world around him and we find references to horses, mules and donkeys, to birds, goats and other animals. The main animal motifs and ideas inspiring the singers may be grouped hereunder:

HORSES AND DONKEYS: horse-racing in general; the Imnarja horse-races

on the 29th June; the races on St. Rocco's Day (16th August); the cost of a mare; how to test a mare's strength and endurance; no mare without a cart; animal fodder; lover's mind compared to wood full of animals.

PIGEONS, HENS AND COCKS: Comparison of lover to a white pigeon; maidens in moonlight compared to white and red pigeons in a pigeon-house; comparison to white dove spying lover's movements; pair of pigeons in pigeon-house compared to growing lads and lasses; mother should eat hen's head soon after childbirth.

BIRDS: Lover's tears compared to pools of blood drunk up by birds; caged birds long to get free; the country bird leads a freer life; comparison of maiden to bird flying freely and of lover to hawk lying in wait high up in the skies; maiden's heart compared to bird's nest; caged birds long for fresh lettuce; bird carries lover's letter on its wings; bird's voice compared to sweetmeats; maiden's voice compared to singing canary; lark lays its nest on *cumin* plants.

GOATS AND OTHER ANIMALS: purchased goat returned to owner if milk yield is found not up to standard; small mouse is harmless; snails reign on ruins of one-time splendour; lover compared to mosquito whose din keeps lady love awake all night.

The above analysis has been based on B. Ilg – H. Stumme's *Maltesische Volkslieder* (Leipzig, 1909), a collection of 400 stanzas with German translation, and on a further 200 *Maltese Folk-Songs* collected by Bertha Koessler-Ilg in 1909-1912 and edited, with English translation and introduction, by the present writer in *Maltese Folklore Review* (No. 1, 1962). Considering that the majority of improvised four-line stanzas are generally drawn from a rural *milieu*, the range of images and motifs relating to the animal world is rather small.

PROVERBS

The 306 proverbs and proverbial sayings which are included in this section reflect the wit and wisdom of the 'folk' in so far as their observation and experience of the animal world around them are concerned.

I have taken the proverbs from Professor J. Aquilina's *Comparative Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs* which is now in the press and to which the reader is referred for comparative material drawn from North Africa, the lands of the Mediterranean, especially Sicily and Italy, and most other European countries. As the sayings are included in the Dictionary under various headings according to subject-matter based on usage, they have been re-grouped here under broad animal headings so as to present a

connected picture of the impact of animals on the popular mind.

An analysis of this material reveals various aspects of folk-psychology. One notices, above all, a strictly utilitarian mentality. Though not exactly indifferent to animals, man's actions and outlook are guided and conditioned entirely by the profit motive. Once fattened, the bull is either sold or slaughtered (Proverb No. 2); sheep are good only if they are good milkers (139), and doves are nice in so far as they breed pigeons (No. 257). Certain kinds of fodder help to fatten the cattle (No. 3) or to help them become more useful for ploughing (No. 4); and it is not profitable to keep a bull that does not eat (Nos. 5, 6). A good cow or horse gets sold in its own country (Nos. 12, 13); equines are useful as beasts of burden (No. 20 [iii]) or for racing (No. 20 [i] – [ii]); ploughing by donkeys is not as profitable as ploughing by cows, which fills the threshing floor with sheaves of corn (Nos. 43, 44); a pig bred in Gozo is better than one from Malta, but then one can get a better mule from Malta (No. 115).

Some animals serve as a symbol for, and typify, specific traits of human character. The mare stands for swiftness (No. 29) or for the transitoriness of time (No. 28); it also typifies good sense (No. 30), and in many respects its attributes are applicable to those, both physical and moral, of a young lady, e.g. stoutness (No. 31) and loose morals, e.g. *debba gerrejja* (No. 33), *debba bla lgiem* (No. 34), *dwieb tal-eghnienel* (No. 35). Like a horse, one's tongue has to be curbed (23). The ass or donkey stands for unreasonableness and folly (Nos. 50-54), or for ignorance (Nos. 56, 57, 60), incompetence (Nos. 68, 69) and inability to appreciate wealth (No. 77); but then fortune is also on its side (No. 67, 71) and people credit it with a good dose of common sense (No. 81). Howling dogs create a feeling of impending misfortune (No. 98); a barking dog does not bite, but one must beware of the silent or sleeping dog (i.e. person) (Nos. 96, 99, 100). The dog watching onions represents the dog-in-a-manger attitude (No. 105) while the scalded dog (*il-kelb il-mismut*), like the rat whose hair has been plucked (*il-far il-mintuf*), becomes 'twice shy' (Nos. 107, 172). The pig is equated with a miser (Nos. 118, 119), and is associated with ingratitude (Nos. 120, 121), cheating (124) and envy (No. 122). Goats and sheep stand for people who eke out a miserable existence (Nos. 126, 127, 134, 135, 137); bearded billygoats give an idea of false manhood (No. 129). Sheep, however, also signify wealth, song and happiness (No. 140). Cats are bullies (No. 148), shady or crafty old men (Nos. 149, 162), but at the same time serve as a reminder of tragic haste (No. 152) and are practically indestructible as 'a cat has seven souls' (No. 160). Mice and rats may be restless or indecisive (No. 167) and crafty (No. 170). The rat is man's enemy *par excellence* (No. 174), and its presence in a house spells misfortune (Nos. 175, 176). The viper symbolises treachery and ingratitude

(No. 273); the ant typifies diligence and the bee stands for wisdom (No. 282). The crowing cock symbolises the father of the family (No. 224); like the wetted hen, a lazy man is unable to bring up a family (No. 230). Doves are equated with married people and wagtails to bachelors (No. 262). Black-feathered birds are associated with ill-luck (Nos. 268-269). Birds symbolise swiftness of action (No. 219).

Close observation of animals has given rise to weather and other sayings that are by no means obsolete, though their use is perhaps restricted to particular classes or circumstances. These weather sayings are generally placed at the beginning of each subheading in this study. The following are examples: The red sky in the morning foretells bad weather and warns you to keep your cows indoors (No. 1); but when the evening sky is red you can get your horses ready for the races (No. 20). Expect bad weather when dogs roll playfully on the ground (Nos. 94, 95). The January cold or rain shuts up, or drowns, the sheep in the cave (Nos. 131, 132, 133). The cat washes its face in the direction of the wind (No. 143); when it sneezes or rolls about expect bad weather (No. 144, 145), but the sun is bound to come out when you see a cat in a balcony (No. 146). October is the best time for ploughing to ensure a rich harvest (No. 194). Every fowl lays its eggs in March (No. 202), which is also the mating season for birds (No. 203) as well as the time when well-fed sheep, goats, cattle etc. yield a great quantity of milk (No. 197), as opposed to Autumn, when the price of milk becomes almost prohibitive (No. 196). The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (observed in some places on 15th September) marks the departure of the lark and the return of the skylark (No. 244), while St. Catherine's Day (25 November) marks the end of the song-bird catching season (No. 254). Other examples may be given, but these should be enough to help the reader to form an idea of his own about the subject.

Preceding the proverbs under each subheading of the following list are the various animal names used in the text of the proverbs.

MAMMALIA

BOVINES

il-baqra, the cow; **il-baqar**, the cows; **il-fart**, the bull; **iž-žewg**, pair of oxen

1. **Il-hmura ta' filghodu**, **aghlef il-baqar halli jogoghdu**, 'When the morning sky is red, feed the cows and let them remain', i.e. don's take them out, the weather will be foul.

2. **Il-fart li simen jew bieghu jew oqtlu**, 'when the bull has grown fat, sell it or kill it'. Variant **Il-fart la jismen oqtlu**, 'when the bull gets fat, kill it'.

3. **Il-fart li jiekol il-widna jaghmel il-laħam bil-wizna**, 'cattle which feed on prickly caterpillar will put on flesh by the wizna', i.e. will soon grow fat. One wizna – five rotoli.

4. **Meta l-fart jiekol ix-xnien u n-nifel**

Il-mohriet urajh erħilu jindifen,

'When the bull eats trefoil and lucern media, let the plough behind him bury itself deep'.

5. **Fart meħmieħi jew aqgħu jew jaqgħek**, 'if the bull does not enjoy its food, 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.

6. **Fart li jitmeħmeħ ma jismenx**, 'a bull which does not eat will not grow fat'.

7. **Drabi s-sisija aħjar mill-ħrit biħ-żewġ fil-Hemsija**, 'sometimes begging is better (more profitable) than ploughing by a pair of oxen at Hemsija'. Hemsija is in the Rabat area.

8. **Marzu, il-fart iħossu (iħoss il-bard) f'qamu**, 'in March the ox feels the cold in his horns'. Var. **Meta Marzu jaħqama il-baħra turina b'qamha**, 'when March oppresses us (with cold) the cow points her horns at us', i.e. shakes her head with cold.

9. **Il-qarn xieraq f'irjus il-baqar**, 'the horns fit well on cows' heads'. i.e. do not dress differently from your social condition.

10. **La tghaddix minn quddiem il-fart imma minn urajh: iħża' minn ġrunu**, 'Pass not in front of the bull, pass behind him: beware of his horns'.

11. **Il-fart (barri) jintrabat minn qamu, u r-raġel minn kelmtu**, 'The ox is bound by his horns and the man by his word'.

12. **Baħra tajba (il-ħmar it-tajjeb) tinbiegħ f'pajjiħha**, 'a good cow (a good horse) gets sold in its own country'.

13. **Għalhekk il-baħra tinbiegħ kollha, għax min irid minn rasha u min irid minn denbha**, 'That is why all the cow sells; because some want (to buy meat) from the head and some from the tail'.

14. **Meta taqa' l-baħra jaqgħu s-skieken (jaqgħu għaliha skekinha)**, 'when the cow falls, the knives fall down against her'. When misfortune befalls one who lost power, all those that dislike him or are envious speak against him freely.

15. **Il-baħra ma tbiħx tiben**, 'the cow does not sell straw', i.e. one does not give away to others what one needs very badly for oneself.

16. **Meta l-baħra tilgħaq tintha, il-qamar ikun kwinta**, 'when the cow licks her behind, the moon is full'. Full moon excites sexual heat in cows.

17. **Meta l-baħra tmejjel widintha, il-qamar ikun kwinta**, 'when the cow droops her ear, the moon is full', i.e. at the full moon the cow is on heat; it is the right time for mating her.

18. **Sawt il-fart inehhi l-mard**, 'bull's leather stripe takes away all evil'. The remedy for corruption is strong punishment.

19. **Il-bidwi taf x'ighid?**: 'Il-baqar bin baqartu u t-tfal ulied martu, 'do you know what the peasant says? 'The cows are the offspring of his cows, and his children of his wife'. Said to or by a disillusioned person that adopts or brings up other people's children as his own.

EQUINES

iż-żiemel, the horse; **iż-żwiel**, the horses; **id-debba**, the mare; **id-dwieb**, the mares; **il-bhejjem**, the horses, donkeys (lit. beasts) **il-hmar**, the donkey; **il-hmir**, the donkeys; **il-hmara**, the she-ass; **il-baghal**, the mule, **il-baghla**, the she-mule.

20. **Il-hmura ta' filghaxija, gib żwielmek ghat-tigrija,**

Il-hmura ta' filghodu, gib żwielmek minn ġor-robu

'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'. There are several variants of this proverb, i.e.

(i) **Il-hmura ta' filghaxija, lesti d-debba ghat-tigrija**

Il-hmura ta' filghodu, halli l-bhejjem 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 the fold)'.

(ii) **Hmura ta' filghaxija, lesti d-dwieb ghat-tigrija,**

Hmura ta' binhar, hu hwejġek 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'.

(iii) **Hmura ta' filghaxija, lesti l-bhejjem ghat-tagħbija,**

'when the evening sky is red, prepare the beasts for loading'.

21. **M'hemm x żiemel li jimxi wisq u ma sabx iehor li għaddieh**, 'there never was a fast running horse which was not outstripped by another'.

22. **Min jirkeb iż-żiemel tar-riħ bis-saqajn tax-xama'**, **fix-xemx idub**, 'he that rides the horse of wind, with legs of wax, melts away in the sun'.

23. **Ligġem żielmek għaliex jarmik; u ligġem ilsienek għaliex iġhabbik (iġhallik)**, 'curb your horse lest he throws you off; and curb your tongue lest it compromise you'.

24. **Meta jkollok żiemel ma jkollokx furrajna, u meta jkollok il-furrajna ma jkollokx żiemel**, 'when you have a horse you have no fodder, and when you have fodder you have no horse'. We can't do what we like, even when we have the means.

25. **Jekk taq'a żiemel, tharix lejn ix-xedaq**, 'if you are given a horse as a gift don't look at its jaws', i.e. look not a gift horse in the mouth. Var. **Hmar taqilghu tikxifux snien biex tara kemm snin għandu**, 'when

you have received a donkey as a present, don't expose his teeth to see how old he is'.

26. *Ahjar issuq erba' żwimel minn ħmar*, 'it is better to drive four horses than one donkey'. It is better to deal with four intelligent people than with a fool.

27. *Ġrejt daqs żiemel u bqajt lura daqs ħmar*, 'you have run as fast as a horse and lagged behind like an ass'. Said of a person who, no matter what he does, never prospers because he lacks the necessary ability.

28. *Iż-żmien jiġri fuq id-debba*, 'time runs on a mare', i.e. time passes quickly.

29. *Il mard jidhol riekeb fuq debba u johroġ riekeb fuq nemla*, 'illness comes in riding on a mare's back (i.e. quickly) and goes out on an ant's back'.

30. *L-ghaqal sabiħ fuq id-debba, aħseb u ara fuq ix-xebba*, 'good sense is appropriate to a mare, let alone to a maid'.

31. *Is-simna sabiħa f'debba, aħseb f'xebba*, 'stoutness becomes a mare, let alone a maid'.

32. *Debba ġerrejja tagħmel 'l uliedha ġerrejja*, 'a mare that runs about brings up her young like her'.

33. *Bint id-debba l-ġerrejja, jekk ma tehux is-sena, tiehu il-ġejja*, 'the daughter of a running mare (a street walker), if she doesn't win first prize this year, will do so next year', i.e. sooner or later, the daughter of a street walker will acquire her mother's habits.

34. *Debba bla lġiem fis tikser għonqha*, 'an unbridled mare soon breaks her neck'. Var. *Debba bla lġiem tisferra u tiggarraf*, 'an unbridled mare breaks loose and falls down a precipice'. A young girl or a woman that resists control and self-restraint will come to grief.

35. *Hemm dwieb tal-ghenienel u bil-mantiet*, 'There are sluts (mares) that wear faldettas and others that wear mantillas'. There are girls of loose morals in every class of society.

36. *Il-baġħal idakkar id-debba*, 'the mule impregnates the mare'. Said of useless unprofitable work, waste of time and energy.

37. *Turi d-debba u tqabbez il-ħmara*, you show the mare and then you present a she-ass instead'.

38. *Pont fis-sahra jitma' l-ħmara*, 'overtime sewing feeds the she-donkey'. The woman who sews in the evening after her household work enables the family to earn some extra money.

39. *Il-ħmara tiegħi u nirkibha meta rid;
Insuqha fejn idoqqli mohħi;
Issa mela int minni xi trid?*

'the she-ass is mine and I ride her when I want; I drive her where I want to, and now what do you want of me?'

40. *Dejjem tinbet is-silla, imma mhux dejjen il-hmar jirgha minnha*, 'the sulla always grows, but the ass does not always graze (eat of it)'.
Var. *Is-silla kibret, wil-hmar tieghi ma jsibx jirgha*, 'the sulla has grown but my donkey does not find any to graze'.

41. *Il-hmar jingabar meta ġej it-temp*, 'when the weather is going to get bad, the donkey returns to its stall'. This proverb shows the donkey's sensitiveness to atmospheric change.

42. *Rih is fel, meta tniggeż il-hmar kemm jiżfen!*, 'when the wind blows from the South East, and you prick the donkey, how it will dance!', i.e. everybody feels bitter when the South East wind (*ix-xlokk*, scirocco) blows.

43. *Hrit il-hmar ma jaghtix sandar,
Hrit il-baqar jimla l-andar.*

'ploughing by donkeys is profitless, ploughing by cows fills the threshing floor (with sheaves of corn)'.

44. *Min jahrat bil-hmir ma jehux qoton*, 'he who ploughs by donkeys will not have any cotton (harvest)'.

45. *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 men it gives threshed corn from which we get flour for our bread, to donkeys and other animals it gives threshed straw.

46. *Il-bard ta' Jannar iqaxxar ġild (dahar) ta' hmar*, 'the cold of January nips the skin (back) of the donkey'.

47. *F'Jannar il-ġidra aghtiha 'l-hmar*, 'in January give the kohlrabi (turnips) to the donkey'; i.e. by this time it is no longer good to cook.

48. *Nhar San Girgor, il-kaboċċi tiha 'l-hmar*, 'on St. Gregory's Day (12th March) give cabbages to the donkey'.

49. *Nhar San Tumas il-ġurnata titwal pass ta' hmar qammas*, 'on St. Thomas's Day (21st December) the day grows longer by the pace of a kicking donkey'.

50. *Min jahsel ras il-hmar jitlef ir-ragħwa wis-sapun*, 'he that washes the head of a donkey wastes the lather and the soap'.

51. *Tahsel ras il-hmar bil-lissija u jdur għalik bl-iżwieġ*, 'wash the donkey's head with lye and he'll kick you'.

52. *Min jitwieled hmar, hmar jibqa'*, 'he that is born an ass, an ass will remain'.

53. *Il-hmar qatt ma sar żiemel*, 'never did an ass become a horse'.

54. *Taf x'qal il-baruni? – Li mal-hmar m'hemmx raġuni*, 'Do you know what the baron (learned) said: You can't find reason with an ignorant or pig-headed person!'. You can't argue with fools.

55. Mitt hmar, mitt kappestru, 'a hundred donkeys, a hundred halters'.
56. Il-hmar jekk ma taghmillux il-kappestru ma ssuqux, 'you can't drive a donkey unless you fasten a halter round its head'. Ignorant people must be led, not followed.
57. Il-hmar jekk taqtaghlu denbu jifrah, 'cut a donkey's tail and he will be happy'.
58. Il-hmar ighajjar 'il denbu, 'the ass chides its own tail'. Said of a person who reproaches others with faults of which he himself is guilty.
59. Kull hmar ihobb jisma' lilu nnifsu jinhaq, 'every ass enjoys hearing his own braying'.
60. Nahqa ta' hmar qatt ma telghet is-sema, 'never did the bray of an ass reach as far as heaven'. Unimportant or foolish persons are not taken seriously by anyone.
61. Mela hmar wiehed hawn? 'there is more than one ass!'
62. Twajjeb hu, imma hmar mhux, 'he is good (kind-hearted) but not an ass'.
63. Distratt il-gharef, jaf xinhu jaghmel il-hmar, 'the wise man is absent-minded, but the ass knows what he is doing'. Sometimes the ignorant are more practical than the learned.
64. Kulhadd ibati b'tal-hmar, 'there is something of the ass in everyone', i.e. no one without a kink of some sort.
65. L-ebda hmar m'hawn fartas, 'there has never been a bald ass'. Said to defend bald people against those who make fun of them.
66. Il-hmar haddmu ghal rasu biex tkun taf x'jaf jaghmel, 'get a donkey to work on its own and you will know what it can do'.
67. Il-hmar xi daqqiet jitla' l-arblu, 'sometimes the ass climbs up the pole'. Even fools sometimes achieve something unexpected of them.
68. Hmar qammies jikser sinslet id-dahar, 'a kicking donkey breaks his backbone'. Restless people do themselves great harm.
69. Girja ta' hmar taqla' sinslet id-dahar, 'a donkey's run dislocates the backbone'. The efforts of the incompetent are more expensive or time-wasting than useful.
70. Mitt xejn qatlu hmar, 'a hundred nothings killed the donkey', the last straw breaks the camel's back.
71. Il-fortuna mal-hmir u s-skaren, 'fortune is on the side of fools and drunkards.'
72. Il-hmar denbu urah, u tieghu hadd ma jarah, 'the ass has his tail behind him, and no one see his own tail (i.e. shortcomings)'.
73. Kieku l-hmar jara hotobtu, kieku jaqa' u jmut zobtu, 'if the ass could see his own hump, he would fall down dead', i.e. we would be terribly ashamed of ourselves were we to realise how serious are our weaknesses.

74. Tghabbix il-hmar iktar milli jiflah, 'do not load the ass more than it can carry'.

75. Nahfer bhala Nisrani, ninsa bhal hmar, 'as a Christian I forgive, but I'll forget like a donkey'.

76. Taghmilha tal-hmar biex ma thallasx dwana, 'to play the fool in order to dodge the excise officer'. Said of a person who feigns ignorance to evade responsibility.

77. Il-hmar meta ghabbewh il-flus, billi kien bil-hsieb illi hu mgħobbi d-demel, baqa' sejjer jiġbed għall-mizbla bhalma dari, 'the donkey, when it was loaded with money, thinking it was loaded with dung, went straight ahead to the dunghill as usual'. Fools are unable to appreciate the value of wealth.

78. Gallettini f'halq il-hmir, 'biscuits in the mouths of donkeys'. Said of good things or opportunities offered to persons who do not appreciate them.

79. Tagħlim il-kbir, qris fil-hmir, 'the teaching of grown-ups is like pricking the side of donkeys'.

80. Il-hmar ix-xih, issa jogħkos u issa jogħtor, 'the old donkey sometimes limps and sometimes stumbles'. When one grows old one's health begins to fail.

81. Ghaddi dejjem mnejn iġhaddu l-hmir u ma jibdilekx, 'always pass where donkeys pass and you won't be sorry'. The donkey is not credited with courage but it is credited with common sense.

82. Ehmez (orbot) il-hmar fejn irid sidu, 'tie the donkey where his master tells you', i.e. obey superior orders unquestioningly.

83. Il-hmar tiegħi, ma rridx nirkeb wara, 'the ass is mine, why should I ride behind?'.

84. Is-sinjur imutulu t-tfal, u l-fqir imutlu l-hmar, 'death takes away a rich man's sons and the poor man's ass'.

85. Tghaddix bi hmar 'il huk, għax int l-aktar qaribu, 'say not your brother is an ass for you are the nearest of kin'. He that disgraces his kinsfolk disgraces himself.

86. Ma setax għall-hmar, dar għall-berdgha, 'because he could not overcome the donkey, he attacked the pack-saddle'. Said of a person who, unable to avenge himself on his enemy, torments a member or friend of his enemy's family.

87. Il-hmar il-magħlub iliegheb, 'the lean ass froths at the mouth'. Var. Il-bagħal il-magħlub ibelghen sikwit, 'the lean mule often froths at the mouth'.

88. Il-hmar il-magħkur (magħkus) idur għalih id-dubbien, 'flies attack the ulcerous donkey (the sore oppressed donkey)'. Misfortune falls to the lot

of those already sore oppressed. Var. **Id-dubbien dejjem imur fuq il-hmar il-maghkur**, 'flies always alight on the sore skinned donkey'.

89. **Min irid jirkeb jahtieglu jnieghel**, 'he that would ride must needs shoe his horse'.

90. **Wiehed inieghel u l-iehor jirkeb: mhux sewwa**, 'one shoes the horse and the other rides it: that's not fair'.

91. **Qabil il-baghal jaghti biż-żewġ**, 'the mule by nature kicks (you)'. Var. **Il-baghal issemnu jtik bis-sieq**, 'fatten a mule and he will kick you'.

92. **Tbieghed mill-ġild ta' baghal mejjet, ahseb u ara meta jkun haj**, 'keep away from the hide of a dead mule, let alone from a living one!'. Avoid an ungrateful man, dead or alive.

93. **Bnazzi tax-xitwa, trott ta' baghla xiha u kappell ta' miġnun qatt iżżomm maghhom**, 'never trust fair weather in winter, an old trotting she-mule and a hat of a madman'.

THE DOG

Il-kelb, the dog; **il-klieb**, the dogs.

94. **Meta jidlieghbu l-klieb ikun ġej il-maltemp**, 'when dogs roll playfully on the ground, expect bad weather'.

95. **Meta l-kelb jitmieghek u l-hmar jimrah**

Jew irwiefen 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'.

96. **Kelb jinbah (nebbieh) ma jigdimx**, 'a barking dog does not bite'. Var. **Kelb li jinbah wisq la tibżax minnu**, 'don't be afraid of a dog that barks too much'.

97. **Il-kelb jinbah u inti turih il-bastun?**, 'the dog is barking and you show him the stick?'. One must not provoke trouble.

98. **Il-kelb in-naghaj idejjaq qalb in-nies tad-dar u tal-ġar**, 'the howling dog saddens the heart of those living in the house and the neighbour'. Howling dogs create a feeling of pending misfortune.

99. **Ibża' mill-kelb il-ħiemed (mutu)**, 'beware of the silent dog'.

100. **Kelb riegied la tqajmux**, 'do not wake a sleeping dog'. Var. (i) **tneb-bahx kelb li hu riegied**, 'don't cause a sleeping dog to bark'; (ii) **tmissx il-kelb li sieket**, 'touch not the silent dog'.

101. **Il-kelb qabel ma tinbxu af sidu min hu**, 'before you tease a dog be sure you know his master', i.e. before you pick a quarrel with someone, be sure you know with whom you are quarrelling.

102. **Min iħobb il-kelb iħobb 'il sidu**, 'he that loves the dog loves his master'.

103. L-ewwel ma trid taghmel habib mal-kelb, 'first make friends with the dog', i.e. bribe the servants (or subordinates) and then through them you can captivate the sympathy of their master.

104. Waddab il-haġra qabel il-kelb, 'throw the stone in front of the dog'. One should try to anticipate objections.

105. Il-kelb tal-basal la jiekol u la jhalli 'I min jiekol, 'the dog watching onions neither eats of them nor lets others eat'. Var. Dak bhall-kelb tal-basal, 'He has a dog-in-a-manger attitude'.

106. Il-kelb li jilgħab bl-irmied tafdalux dqieg, 'don't trust with flour the dog that plays with ashes'. If a man does one kind of wrong he is as likely to do another kind of wrong.

107. Il-kelb il-mismut kull ilma jahsbu mishun, 'the scalded dog mistakes all water for hot water'. Once bitten, twice shy.

108. Għal kull għadma hawn mitt kelb, 'there are a hundred dogs for every bone'. There are more workers than working opportunities.

109. Bħall-kelb tal-biċċerija: imċappas bid-demm u dejjem bil-guħ, (u laham ma jekolx), 'like the dog at the slaughter-house: stained with blood and always hungry (and doesn't eat meat)'. Said of a person who works very hard or is well off but yet doesn't enjoy what he has got.

110. Il-fqir sal-klieb tagħrifu u tinbah għalih, għax indunaw li hu miskin, 'even dogs recognise the poor man, and bark at him, aware how wretched he is'.

111. Ahjar jekluk il-klieb milli tiġi b'żonn il-hbieb, 'it is better to be eaten by dogs than ever to need the help of friends'.

112. Min iraqquad miegħu l-klieb il-brieghed ma jiġuħx nieqsa, 'he that sleeps with dogs will have no lack of fleas'.

113. Min irabbi l-klieb ma jkunx tal-hsieb, 'he that rears dogs has no cares'. Dogs, unlike children, are not expensive to maintain.

114. Ras bla hsieb torqod mat-tiġieg u tqum mal-klieb, 'a thoughtless head sleeps with the hens and gets up with the dogs'.

SWINE

Il-hanżir, the pig; il-hanżira, the sow; il-qażquż, the pig

115. Hanżir Ghawdxi, u bagħal Malti (Aġius: Damma), 'a (good) pig from Gozo, and a (good) mule from Malta'.

116. Il-hanżir (qażquż) taqtagħlu denbu hanżir jibqa', 'cut off a pig's tail; it will always remain a pig'. Var. Il-hanżir taqtagħlu mnejn taqtagħlu dejjem hanżir jibqa', 'a pig remains a pig wherever you cut off'.

117. Fis-sena kollha liema hu l-ghid l-aktar kbir? Meta missieri jidbah il-hanżir, 'Throughout the year which is the biggest feast? When my father

will kill the pig'. This proverb, given by Vassalli in his *Lexicon* (1796) illustrates the ritual importance attached to the slaughter of the pig by the head of the family. Rejoicings took place on that day; parents and friends were invited to the banquet, while pork chops were distributed to the poor of the neighbourhood. This meat offering was known as *middija*, and the recipient was bound to do likewise when his turn came to slaughter his pig. Unmarried men and heads of families who were known to be destitute were exempted from this obligation. In some families it was customary for the groom to kill a pig immediately on getting married.

118. *Mewt ix-xhih bhal dbih il-hanzir: il-werrieta ferhana se ttir*, 'when a miser dies the heirs feel as happy as when they kill the pig'.

119. *Il-ghani u l-hanzir jitwieżnu fid-debha*, 'the rich man and the pig are weighed when they are killed'. Many are not as rich as they are believed to be.

120. *Hanzir min irabbi*, 'a pig is he that brings up children', i.e. an expression of disappointment at ingratitude of one's own or of adopted children.

121. *Ahjar trabbi hanzir minn tifel ta' haddiehor*, 'better to rear a pig than bring up somebody else's child'.

122. *Mill-ghira tehbil il-hanzira*, 'jealousy makes the sow pregnant'. Envy engenders all sorts of malicious or wishful thinking.

123. *Hanzir dak li jistaham f'kull ghadira*, 'a pig is he that wallows in every pool'.

124. *Il-hanzir b'xahmu jinqela*, 'the pig is fried in his own fat'. A cheating business man is cheated by others.

GOATS

il-moghza, the goat; *il-moghoż*, the goats; *il-botbot*, the billygoat; *l-utut* (sing. *wott*), the billy-goats.

125. *Il-moghza li tirgha m'hi bil-ghu qatt*, 'the grazing goat is never hungry'. The diligent man is never out of work because he always looks for work.

126. *Fajn tqarram il-moghza jishet*, 'where the goat nibbles falls under a curse'.

127. *F'marqad il-moghoż ma ssibx sbul*, 'you won't find ears of corn where goats lie'. Needy people are not likely to leave anything.

128. *Ix-xitan jahleb bla moghza*, 'the devil draws milk without a goat'. This saying expresses the surprising ingenuity of the devil in the means he uses to make trouble.

129. *Jekk kull min ghandu l-lehja huwa raġel, kiek u l-botbot raġel ukoll*,

'if anyone wearing a beard were a man, the billy-goat would also be a gentleman'. Var. **Kieku l-irġiel jitkejlu mill-mustaċċi, kieku l-botbot mis-sierhom**, 'if men were to be judged by their moustaches, the billygoat would be their father'.

130. Ir-raba' ta' l-ixtut bhall-lehja ta' l-utut, 'fields situated near the seaside are comparable to the beards of billy-goats'. Var. **Ix-xaghri wixxtut lehjet l-utut**, 'rocky and seaside soil are like the beard of billy-goats.'

SHEEP

in-naghġa, the sheep (sing.); **in-nghaġ**, the sheep (coll.); **in-naghġiet**, the ewes; **l-ghabur**, the ewes; **l-ghanem**, flocks of sheep; **il-haruf**, the lamb; **il-hrief**, the lambs.

131. Qożżot, qożżot ghalik, Jannar,

Ghaddejt bil-bard bla xita

U hallejtni bin-nghaġ fil-ghar

'Fie on you, fie on you, January! You passed with cold but no rain, leaving me with the sheep in the cave'.

132. Qożżot, qożżot ghalik, Jannar,

Jien u n-naghġiet inqilu fil-ghar

'Fie on you, fie on you, January, I and the ewes have to lie down in the cave'.

133. Jannar gharraq (ghalaq) in-nghaġ fil-ghar, 'January drowned (shut) the sheep in the cave'.

134. Naghġa li ma ddurx ma tirghax, 'a sheep that does not wander about does not graze'. Said of a person who stays at home and so misses good opportunities.

135. Fejn tirgha n-naghġa ma jikberx haxix, 'where the sheep grazes grass will not grow'. The poor and the hungry eat everything that comes their way.

136. Raba' xaghri w niġġiemi ffit weraq jibqaghlek għall-ghabur, 'land full of rocks and dog-grass produces but little leaves for the ewes'.

137. Naghġa li ma taqtax bi snienha ma tahlidx, 'a sheep that does not look for food on her own will not produce milk'.

138. Dik il-ġeżza ma tiġix minn dik il-moghġa, 'That fleece does not come from that sheep'. This saying, given by De Soldanis (**Damma**, p.395v) seems to imply reference to unprofitable work.

139. Tajba n-naghġa l-hallibija, 'good is the ewe that gives milk'. No work or undertaking is worth the trouble if it is not profitable.

140. Il-ghana mal-ghanem, u l-ghanem iġib il-ghana, ighid ir-rahhal,

'wealth from the flock of sheep, and from the sheep (comes) song'.

141. **Il-hrief imutu qabel in-nghaġ**, 'lambs may die before sheep'. Said of people who die young.

142. **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 baked lamb with potatoes.

CATS

il-Qattus, the cat; **il-Qattusa**, the she-cat; **il-Qtates**, the cats

143. **Il-qattus jahsel wiċċu lejn fejn ikun ġej ir-rih**, 'the cat washes its face in the direction of the wind'.

144. **Ġej il-maltemp jew mill-poppa jew mill-pruwa meta jisghol (jaghtas) 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 head or tail.

145. **Meta qattus ikun jitmieġhek, mur għall-kabozza għax tkun ġejja xita kbira, u hu dha mieġhek**, 'when the cat rolls about go and fetch the cloak for it will be going to rain very heavily, and take it with you'.

146. **Meta qattus tara f'xi gallarija, għid li hieġa x-xemx**, 'when you see a cat in a balcony, expect the sun to come out'.

147. **Meta l-qattus jorqod, il-grieden toħroġ**, 'when the cat is asleep, the mice come out'.

148. **Il-qattus ahrax isib il-qattus dghajjef**, 'the fierce cat looks for (attacks) the weak cat'. Said of bullies who vent their anger on persons unable to stand up to them.

149. **Qattus xieref ġurdien tari jfittex**, 'an old cat seeks a young mouse'. A crafty old man takes advantage of the inexperience of the young.

150. **Qattus xieref għidlu kixx**, 'shoo away an old cat'. Do not encourage familiarity with a crafty old man.

151. **Il-qattus u l-far qatt ma hasbu għalenija**, 'the cat and the rat never saw eye to eye with each other'.

152. **Il-qattusa għaġġelija tagħmel frieh (qtates) għomja**, 'the hasty cat brings forth blind kits'.

153. **Min jibza' għall ikel tal-qattusa jekluh il-grieden**, 'he that grudges the cat's food will be eaten by rats'.

154. **Qattusa tal-ġara tiġi għall-hsara**, 'your neighbour's cat comes to make mischief'. Don't trust your neighbour for even her cat brings you mischief.

155. **Doqq, sieheb, doqq lill-qattusa, biex tiżfen il-gharusa**, 'play, my friend, play to the cat, that the bride may dance'.

156. **Thallix ix-xaham f'halq il-qtates**, 'Don't leave lard in the mouth

of cats'.

157. **Il-qattus jitlob (ihobb) bil-ghama, u l-kelb jitlob bix-xaba'**, 'the cat prays for blindness, the dog for abundance'. Applied when a cat has run away with fish, meat, etc. in the kitchen, the meaning being that the blame is more of the person who should have been more careful than of the cat which obeys merely its instinct.

158. **B'idek il-wahda aghġen, u bl-oħra keċċi l-qattusa**, 'knead with one hand and with the other scare the cat away', i.e. when you do your work see that no one will ruin it for you.

159. **Ftit laham isebbah qattus**, 'a little flesh makes the cat lovely'. This saying is applicable to persons.

160. **Il-qattus għandu sebat irwieh**, 'a cat has seven lives'.

161. **Sinna ta' ljun u lsien ta' qattus ifejqu miġnun**, 'the tooth of a lion and the tongue of a cat cure a madman'.

162. **Il-qattus kissi kissi: wiċ-ġisinn tal-fqir qatt ma jimixxi**, 'stealthy cat: the poor man's designs never succeed'.

RATS, MICE

il-Ġurdien, the mouse; **il-Ġrieden**, the mice; **il-Far**, the rat; **il-Firien**, the rats.

163. **Qattus xih ifittex ġurdien żgħir**, 'an old cat looks for a young mouse'.

164. **Fejn il-qtates huma għamja l-ġrieden jirrenjaw**, 'where the cats are blind, mice abound'.

165. **Meximxu, ġrieden, la l-qtates għamja**, 'nibble away, mice, since the cats are blind'. Said of persons who connive at abuses.

166. **Dur u dur madwar in-nassa, fl-aħħar il-ġurdien fiha jingassa**, 'the mouse that keeps going round the trap shall at last get noosed by it'. They that court danger will fall into it.

167. **Ġurdien qluqi qatt far ma jsir**, 'a restless mouse will never grow into a rat'.

168. **Il-Malti u l-far iddahlux id-dar, (turixx bieb id-dar)**, 'let not into your house a Maltese or a rat'. This racial proverb seems to be of Arabic origin, and may go back to the time of a mixed Christian and Moslem community in Malta.

169. **Il-far il-mintuf issibu mixgħuf**, 'the rat whose hair has been plucked (pulled out) is chary'. Once bitten, twice shy.

170. **Il-far fejn ma jlahhaqx f'islienu jilħqu b'denbu**, 'what the rat cannot reach with its tongue, it will reach with its tail', i.e. a shrewd or crafty man will somehow always get what he wants.

171.

Id-dinja mxattra, il-ghajnejn tibri,

Din l-art hamra u l-frien tigr

'this world is uneven, eyes are prying; this earth is red and the rats are scurrying about'. There is no sense of order in this world.

172. **Gurdien xih ma jikolx gobon,** 'an old mouse does not eat cheese', i.e. experience makes us chary.

173. **Bil-kelma t-tajba tohrog il-far mit-tqajba,** 'with one little word we can lure that rat out of the hole'.

174. **Meta s-sultan ihoss il-far jiftah in-nar,** 'when the king feels the rat coming he opens fire'. In war shoot your enemy, never spare him.

175. **Hu xi haga fl-ewwel zjara li gejt, biex ma jidhollikx il-far,** 'take something on your first visit lest the rat enter the house'.

176. **Kafe' fir-nar wisu' lill-far,** 'coffee in the fire, room for the rat'. Apparently the overflowing of coffee is a bad omen. The rat is the incarnation of the evil spirit.

RABBITS

il-Fenka, the doe-rabbit

177. **Ma' fenka mghammra, lesti l-kenun bil-gamra,** 'when you have an impregnated rabbit, get live coal in the fireplace' i.e. in a short time you will be able to eat rabbits as the pregnancy period is short.

178. **Hobla u tradda' ghandek qawwi ssibha, ghajr jekk tkun fenka,** 'you won't easily find her both pregnant and suckling unless she is a rabbit'. Of a man who expects too much from something or someone.

HEDGEHOGS

il-Qanfud, the hedge-hog

179. **Il-qanfud, qanfud iehor missieru,** 'the hedgehog is the son of another hedgehog', i.e. like father, like son.

180. **Ilkoll ulied il-qanfud,** 'we are all the children of the hedgehog'.

FOX, WOLF, BEAR, ELEPHANT

il-Volpi, the fox; **il-Lupu,** the wolf; **il-Lpup,** the wolves; **il-Lippijiet,** the velves; **il-Lipp,** the wolf; **l-Ors,** the bear; **il-Ljunfant,** the elephant.

181. **Meta l-volpi ma lahaqx, qal: 'L-gheneb qares!'** 'when the fox could not reach high enough, he said: 'the grapes are sour'. The motif behind this proverb is derived from the Aesopian fable.

182. **Il-lupu jbidel sufu imma le drawwietu (ghamilu),** 'the wolf changes his hair but not his habits'.

183. **Il-lejl magħmul għal-lup**, 'night was made for wolves'. Var. (i) **Il-lejl għal-lippijiet**, 'the night was made for the wolves', (ii) **In-nhar għall-bniedem, u l-lejl għal-lipp**, 'the day was made for man and the night for the wolf'.

184. **Nhar il-Gandlora johroġ l-ors: jekk isib l-art imxarba, jew riġlejh jibqghu 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".'

185. **Tibla' ljunfant u tixraq f'nemusa**, 'to swallow an elephant and choke with a gnar'. Some people make fuss about little things.

186. **Bil-paċenzja ljunfant hexa nemla**, 'with patience an elephant succeeded in having intercourse with an ant'. If one perseveres one achieves also what looks impossible.

VARIA

il-Bhejjem, the beasts; **il-Bhima tar-refgha**, the stud horse or bull; **il-Bhima**, the beast; **Qabil-il-Baghal**, the equine species; **Laħam il-Kelb**, the equine species.

187. **Il-bhejjem ta' filghodu tihom tibna ha joqogħdu**, 'give the animals straw in the morning and that will be enough (to keep them quiet)'.

188. **Il-bhima tar-refgha hija nofs il-merħla**, 'the stud bull (horse) is half the herd'.

189. **Jekk trid tirkeb, ixtri bhima**, 'if you want to ride buy a beast'.

190. **Tfal u bhejjem, għali dejjem**, 'he that has children and animals is always worried'. These are the peasant's main preoccupations in life — his family and his cattle.

191. **Qabil il-baghal aħrab minnu, għaliex jew jigdmek jew jagħtik ix-xewka**, 'keep away from the equine species for it will either bite you or sting you'.

192. **In-nisa laħam il-kelb**, 'women are of the equine species', i.e. ungrateful and hard-hearted.

193. **Ir-ragħa fil-ġbis ma jsemminx**, 'grazing in fallow land does not fatten (the cattle)'.

194. **La jidhol ix-xaħar tar-Rużarju, aħrat u tenni biex int u taħsad 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 will always sing (i.e. be pleased with the harvest)'.

195. **Mill-Kunċizzjoni sal-Milied erfa' l-mohriet minn haq il-wied**, 'From the feast of the Immaculate Conception (8th December) till Christmas, take away the plough from the valley's mouth',

196. *Il-harifa tbiddel l-arja, u l-halib jitla' fl-ajru*, 'Autumn changes the air, and the (price of) milk soars in the air'.

197. *Marzu r-rebbiegha 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.

198. *Min irid jirkeb jehtieglu jnieghel*, 'he that wants to ride must needs shoe the horse'.

199. *Min ma jnighelx bir-ram, inieghel bid-deheb*, 'he that uses not copper horse-shoes, will use gold ones', i.e. a stingy person may fall ill for want of nourishment and will then spend all his savings on medicines, etc.

200. *Taghmilx bhall-bieccier li joqtol kull ma jigi quddiemu, biex meta tifttex kwart laham issibu*, 'don't do as the butcher does who kills whatever comes his way, so that when you need a quarter of a rotolo of meat you'll find it'.

201. *Slih id-denb l-aghar u l-aqwa*, 'the skinning of the tail is the worst and the hardest (job)'. Var. *L-aqwa slih id-denb*, 'the most difficult thing (or annoying part of the work) is its end'.

AVES

GENERAL

it-Tajr, the fowl, bird; *it-Tajra*, the fowl; *l-Ghasfur*, the bird; *l-Ghasajfar*, the little bird; *it-Tjur*, the domestic fowls; *l-Ghasafar*, the birds.

202. *F'Marzu kull tajr ibid*, 'In March every fowl lays its eggs'.

203. *F'Marzu kull tajr (ghasfur) ifttex (jingabar ma'; jaqbad) 'il martu*, 'in March every bird looks for (seeks, finds) his wife'. March is the mating season for birds.

204. *L-ajru ikbar mit-tajra*, 'the sky is bigger than the fowl', i.e. the hunter must aim well to hit the target.

205. *Kull ghasfur(tajr) jifrah b'rixu*, 'every bird is proud of its own feathers'.

206. *Imsejkna dik it-tajra li titwieled post hazin ghax tiekol ghadamha u tnut fi żmien qasir*, 'alas for the bird that is born in an uncomfortable nest, for it will eat its bones away and die in a short time'. Var. *Imsejken dak l-ghasajfar li trabba f'bejta hazina*, 'alas for the little bird that was reared in an uncomfortable nest'.

207. *Mara li trabbi t-tjur ghall-kexxun iddur*, 'a woman that rears domestic fowls spends the money she keeps in the drawer'. Fowls are reared at a loss.

208.

*Ja ghasfur, tbahbah u nfela,
Waslet ghalik ir-Rebbiegha
La darba fl-art ix-xghir mela,*

'O bird, wash and clean yourself; for you Spring has now arrived since the corn ears in the field have filled out'.

209. **Toqtol žewg ghasafar b'gebla wahda**, 'to kill two birds with one stone'. Var. **L-ahjar toqtol žewg ghasafar bi skartott wiehed**, 'it pays to kill two birds with one cartridge.'

210. **Ahjar ghasfur f'idejk minn mija fl-ajru**, 'better a bird in the hand than a hundred in the air'. Var. **Ghasfur fil-gagga jiswa aktar minn mija fl-ajru**, 'a bird in the cage is worth more than a hundred in the air'.

211. **Rixiet sbieh jaghmlu ghasafar sbieh**, 'fine feathers make fine birds'.

212. **Kull ghasfur ghandu l-bejta tieghu**, 'every bird has got its own nest'. Every one loves his own house and his own things better than he loves those of other people.

213. **Iggorr, iggorr, sa l-bajda ttorr**, 'carry and carry (straws) till the nest is built'. Man's projects take some time to materialise.

214. **Ghasfur li dahal fix-xibka ghandu qawwi sa ma johrog**, 'A bird that gets caught in the net won't easily get out of it'.

215. **Ghasfur li jhobb jiggera, dur dur jehel fix-xibka**, 'a bird that flutters about, as it turns about gets caught in the net'.

216. **Il-hbar hi li l-ghasfur tar, u l-ghoxx baqa' battal**, 'the news is that the bird flew away and the nest is empty'. It is no use asking for something when it is no longer obtainable.

217. **Thallix l-ghasfur itir**, 'don't let the bird fly away'.

218. **Meta jtir l-ghasfur imbaghad kollu ghalxejn**, 'when the bird has flown away all is to no avail'.

219. **L-ghasafar trid l-ghasafar**, '(to catch) birds the bird trapper must needs be as swift as the birds'.

HENS, CHICKENS, ETC

il-Flieles, the chickens; **is-Serduq**, the cock; **id-Dundjan**, the turkey; **is-Sriedeq**, the cocks; **l-Ghattuqa**, the young hen; **it-Tigieg**, the hens; **it-Tigiega**, the hen.

220. **Biex trabbi l-flieles trid it-flieles**, 'to rear chickens you need sacks (of fodder)'.

221. **It-tfal bhall-flieles inaqru dejjem**, 'children, like chickens, are always pecking'. Children nibble food several times a day.

222. **Tghoddx il-flieles qabel ifaqqsu**, 'do not count your chickens before they are hatched'.

223. **Fuq il-binnija jidden is-serduq**, 'every cock crows on its nest'.

224. **Fuq il-binnija tidden is-sriedeq kullma taghmel turihx 'l uliedek**, 'the cocks crow on their nest, never tell your children all that you do'. The crowing cock symbolises the father of the family who will do well

not to reveal his secrets to his children.

225. Ta' serduq irid dundjan, 'he wants a turkey for a cock'.

226. Jisbah bis-serduq u jisbah bla serduq, 'it dawns with and without a cock'. No one is really indispensable. Var. **Il-gara tghid**: "Minghajr serduq jisbah", 'our neighbour says that it will dawn even without a cock'.

227. F'San Luqa ż-żara' tinheba fih l-ghattuqa, 'By St. Luke's Day (18th October) the wheat is tall enough to hide the young hen'.

228. Fi Frar it-tigieġ dejjem ġol-ġhar, 'in February the hens are always in the cave'.

229. Kelli elf, u kelli mija; u qatt ma wira fija:

Ilbierah kilt tigieġa, u llum bajda moqlija,

'I had a thousand and I had a hundred, but it never made any difference to me; yesterday I ate a chicken, and today a fried egg'. Somehow man adapts himself to circumstances and keeps alive.

230. Tigieġa miblula mhix tajba għal qroqqa, 'a wetted hen is no good as a breeding hen', i.e. a lazy man is not good to marry and if he does his family will fall in misery'.

231. It-tigieġ tal-Furmarija, jekk ma tehilx filghodu tehel filghaxija, 'the hens of the Infirmary if they do not get killed in the morning will certainly get killed in the evening'. The idea is that we are all doomed to die, some soon, some late; none escapes. The reference here is to the Holy Infirmary which the Knights of St. John maintained in Malta during their rule.

232. Sieq ta' tigieġa, geddum ta' han'zir, u lsien ta' mara: m'hawnx aghar minnhom, 'there is nothing worse than a hen's foot, the snout of a pig and the tongue of a woman'.

233. It-tigieġa tbid il-bajda fejn tiekol in-nuhhala, 'the hen lays the egg where she eats the bran'.

234. Jaghti bajda biex jiehu tigieġa, 'he gives away an egg to get back a hen'. Of a person who expects too much from you in return for the favour he does you.

235. Bajda tas-sultan tiħallas b'tigieġa (b'dundjan), 'the king's egg is paid back by a hen (turkey)'.

236. Min seraq bajda jaf jisraq tigieġa, 'he that stole the egg knows how to steal the hen'.

237. Tigieġa hawtiela bajjada, 'the active hen is a good layer'. Fig. an active man produces results.

238. Min irid il-bajd frisk irid ibati bit-tlaqliq tat-tigieġ, 'he that wants fresh eggs must put up with the cackling of hens'.

239. Min jiħallat man-nuhhala, it-tigieġ tgerfxu, 'he that gets himself mixed up with bran shall be scratched by hens'. Those that associate

themselves with bad company or marry into bad families have to face the consequences of their bad choice.

240. It-tigieġa hija u tixrob tiżzi hajr 'l Alla, 'the hen while drinking renders thanks to God'. If a fowl does so, how much more should man thank God for His favours!

241. Ras bla hsieb torqod mat-tigieġ u tqum mal-klieb, 'a thoughtless person sleeps with the hens and gets up with the dogs'. The dog barks all night, and sleeps throughout the day.

242. Ma ghjieb ix-xemx jorqod it-tigieġ, 'at sunset the hens sleep' i.e. go to roost. Said of someone who goes to bed early; also as a warning to children not to stay out too late in the evening.

243. Ir-raġel tigieġa u l-mara serduq id-dar tinqaleb ta' taht fuq, 'when the husband is a hen and the wife is a cock the house is topsy-turvy.'

244. Mara ssaffar u tigieġa tidden iżżommhomx id-dar, 'a whistling woman and a crowing hen, keep them not at home'. Both are associated with ill luck and misfortune.

VARIOUS BIRDS

I-Alwetta, the skylark; **I-Ajkla**, the eagle; **il-Bilbla**, the lark; **il-Bliebel**, the larks; **il-Bufula**, the warbler, wood-wren; **il-Beccun**, the pigeon; **il-Bciecen**, the pigeons; **iċ-Ċawla**, the rook; **il-Gallina**, the woodcock; **il-Gru**, the crane; **il-Hamiam**, the doves; **il-Hamiema**, the dove; **il-Huttaf**, the swallows; **I-Ispunsun**, the chaffinch; **il-Kokka**, the owl; **I-Ghorab**, the crows, ravens; **I-Ghamuq**, the crane; **il-Pluvieri**, the plovers; **is-Seqer**, the hawk; **iz-Zakak**, the wagtail.

245. Fid-Duluri tmur il-bilbla u tiġi l-alwetta, 'on the day of Our Lady of Sorrows the lark goes away and the skylark returns'. This feast may fall in March (as early as the 13th March) or in April (as late as the 16th). In some parishes, however, the feast is observed on the 15th of September, to which date the proverb here recorded refers.

246. Kull fejn hemm il-qniepen hemm ukoll il-bliebel, 'wherever there are churchbells one finds also larks'. Larks make their nests in the church belfries.

247. Bufula kiel nemusa, farfar gwienhu u beda ighanni, 'When the warbler ate a grub and was sated, it flapped its wings and began to sing'. Foolish people are easily pleased even when they have little reason for feeling so.

248. Il-bufula qalet: "skond m'ahna qnatarna", 'said the warbler: "according to our station is our burden".'

249. In-naspla saret, u iċ-ċawla taret, 'the medlar tree is ripe and the rook flew away'.

250. Ċawla bajda qatt ma dehret, 'there never appeared a white rook'. Something impossible to happen.
251. Ċawl u ghorab, af illi jiekol, ma jitmax, 'mind you, rooks and ravens want to eat, they do not feed'; said of close-fisted persons who like to receive but not to give.
252. Jekk int ċawla, tippruvax tagħmilha ta' seker, (ajkla), 'if you are a rook, do not ape the hawk (eagle)'.
253. Qasba mgelgħa tajba għal qaċċieqa biex tnaqqar iċ-ċawl, 'a cracked reed is only good to scare rooks with'. Bad tools are more of a hindrance than of help.
254. Iċ-ċawla 'l uliedha tara l-isbah, 'the rook sees none lovelier than her young ones'.
255. Santa Katarina tvara gallina, 'St. Catherine (25th November) sends out (lit. launches) a woodcock'. This is the time when migrating woodcocks fly through Malta – a good time for our *kaċċaturi*. By St. Catherine's Day the peak of song-bird catching is over – it is at its peak between All Saint's Day (1st November) and the 25th. This is recorded in the proverb Santa Katarina lesti x-xbiek għal gol-kantina, 'On St. Catherine's Day put the net in the cellar'.
256. Meta l-gru jghaddi fil-gholi jkun geġ il-maltemp, 'when the crane flies high, expect bad weather.'
257. Sabiħ il-hamiem għax jagħmel il-beċċun, 'Doves are nice because they make pigeons', i.e. nothing is worth while unless it yields material profit.
258. Il-beċċun isir hamiem, 'Pigeons become doves'. In time children will become men; fig. also small unproductive enterprises in time grow and become lucrative.
259. Il-beċċun qatt ma żaqq 'l ommu, 'the pigeon never fed its mother'. It is parents that have to work to maintain their children.
260. It-tfal meta jkun zghar jitimghuk il-bċieċen, meta jikbru jitimghuk is-skieken, 'your children when they are still young make you eat pigeons, when they grow up they feed you on knives' i.e. they cause you trouble and heart-aches.
261. Kull hamiena li bla ħjiena jtemmha s-seker, 'every guileless dove is eaten up by the hawk', i.e. guileless persons are easily cheated and exploited.
262. Iz-zakak jaqbeż u jittfarfar, izda l-hamiem ižoqq u jgargar, 'the wagtail hops and flaps its wings; but the male dove feeds and coos'. Bachelors (wagtails) lead a carefree life, while married people (doves) are full of worries.
263. Il-hamiem li jafda is-seker itemmu, 'the trusting pigeon is destroyed

by the hawk'. Simple-minded persons are easily cheated.

264. *Meta tara l-huttaf tkun ġejja x-xita*, 'when you see swallows, expect rain'.

265. *Il-kokka 'l uliedha kollha tarahom sbieh*, 'the owl thinks all her children are beautiful'.

266. *Min jibża' mill-gharnuq ma jiżrax ful*, 'he that is afraid of the crane should not sow beans'. He that is afraid of trouble should not provide the cause of it himself.

267. *Ghorab ma jaqlax ghajn siehbu*, 'one crow does not pull out another's eye'. Two persons of the same rank or equally interested in the same thing are not likely to let down one another.

268. *Ghorab u ċawl ma jġibu ebda riżq*, 'crows and rooks bring no good luck'. Black feathered birds are associated with ill luck.

269. *Il-ghorab iswed: immela hajr ma fihx*, 'crows are black: therefore crows bring no good luck'.

270. *Meta jiġu l-pluvieri jiġi l-maltemp*, 'when plovers come bad weather comes too'.

271. *Min ibakkar u jwahhar jiehu l-pluvieri minghajr ma jsaffar*, 'he that gets up (starts work) early in the morning and works till late in the evening catches plovers without having to whistle for them'.

272. *F'San Anard l-isponsun ma jmiddx saqajh ma' l-art*, 'On St. Leonard's Day (6th November) the chaffinch does not rest its feet on the ground'. Bird migration and bird netting begin on October 16 (St. Theresa Day) and by the 6th November the chaffinch is very difficult to catch.

REPTILIA

il-Lifgha, the viper; *is-Serp*, the snake; *is-Sriep*, the snakes; *il-Gremxul*, the lizards.

273. *La ddahhalx il-lifgha f'kommtok*, 'don't let the viper into your sleeve'. Cfr. Ingratitude and treachery of snake in Aesop's fable. Var. *Min idahhal il-lifgha f'kommtu ttemmu*, 'he that inserts a viper in his sleeve shall be destroyed by it'.

274. *Meta l-kliem jitwal isir serp*, 'when words grow long they become a snake'. Too many words may lead to quarrels.

275. *In-nies ta' l-art sriep ta' l-art*, 'land workers are land snakes'. This saying refers to the peasants who spend their life working in the fields, till they become part of them.

276. *Ghawdx i zokrati, il-gremxul hasbu kavati*, 'the big-navelled Gozitan saw a lizard and thought it was a pancake'.

277. *Ghandu l-faham miblul, kull xkumvata jahsibha gremxul*, 'he has his

coal wetted and mistakes the fritters for lizards'.

INSECTA, ETC.

ANTS

in-Nemla, the ant; **in-Nemel**, the ants

278. **Dak li fis-sajf iggorr in-nemla, fil-harifa ssuqu l-hamla**, 'what the ant carries in summer, the valley water sweeps away in autumn'.

279. **Meta johroġ in-nemel tal-ġwienah tkun ġejja x-xita**, 'when winged ants come out rain will be forthcoming'.

280. **Mitt ziemel idahhlu 'l ġewwa, u nemla tohroġ 'il barra, tlahhaq magh-hom**, 'a hundred horses carrying things inside are matched by an ant that takes out what they bring in'. Said of a person that slowly but surely destroys capital reserves collected by the industry of others.

281. **Ahjar ras ta' nemla minn denb ta' ljun**, 'it is better to be the head of an ant than the tail of a lion'.

282. **In-nemla l-mara l-bieżla u n-nahla r-raġel ghaqli**, 'the diligent woman is the ant and the wise man is the bee'.

BEES, ETC

in-Nahla, the bee; **in-Nahal**, the bees; **Ferh Nahal**, a swarm of bees; **iż-Żunżana**, the wasp.

283. **Meta n-nahal tarah fuq il-fjur, tahsir ma jkun hemmx żgur**, 'when you see bees on the flowers, that is a sure sign that there will be no rot'.

284. **Fejn hemm il-ghasel jersaq in-nahal**, 'where there is honey, bees gather'.

285. **Iddur kemm iddur, in-nahla lejn l-ghasel tmur**, 'no matter how long a bee may go on flying around, it will at last alight on the honey', i.e. self interest always prevails.

286. **Miet in-nahal u spicċa l-ghasel**, 'the bees died and there was no honey'. When the source of income or prosperity ends the benefits cease as well.

287. **Alla jharsek minn ferh nahal u mit-tfal tar-rahal**, 'God protect you from a swarm of bees and from (a swarm of) village children'. Children can be as great a nuisance as a swarm of bees.

288. **Iż-żunżan ghamel żinn, u x-xitwa sejra 'l hinn**, 'the wasp has started buzzing and winter is going away.' Var. **Tiġi d-dubbiena taghmel żinn, u s-shaba tmur lil hinn**, 'the flies come and buzz, and the cloud goes away'.

289. **Ghall-Kandlora stilli fora: iż-żunżana taghmel żinn, u t-temp imur**

'il hinn, ikun ġej id-dawl u t-tjeb, 'on Candlemas Day the 'star Days' are over: the wasp buzzes and the bad weather goes away; light and fair weather are coming'.

FLEAS

il-Berghuda, the flea (fem.); il-Brieghed, the fleas.

290. Żmien il-ful jibdew il-brieghed, 'beans begin with fleas'. March is the month when fleas begin to bite and beans to appear on the market.

291. Meta l-fula tnawwar, il-berghuda tibda tfawwar, 'when the broad beans begin to blossom, the fleas begin to abound'.

292. Meta d-dulliegħa tonfoħ, il-berghuda tibda toľfoq, 'when the water-melon begins to fill out, the flea begins to sob'.

293. Mejju żmien il-ghana u żmien id-dris, u fis-sodda thoss il-qris, 'May is singing time and threshing time, and in bed you will feel the bites (pricks of fleas)'. Var. Ġunju xħar tad-dris, fis-sodda thoss il-qris, 'June is the month for threshing, and the time when you begin to feel pricks in bed,' i.e. when fleas begin to bite'.

FLIES

id-dubbien, the flies.

294. Fejn il-helu jingema' d-dubbien, 'where there are sweets, the flies gather'.

295. Fejn ma jersaq id-dubbien ma jbejtux frien, 'where there are no flies, no rats breed', i.e. no action without self-interest.

296. B'qatra għasel taqbad iżjed dubbien milli b'mitt barmil ħall, 'with one drop of honey you catch more flies than with a hundred barrels of vinegar'.

297. Dak ma jħallix dubbien joqghod fuq imnieħru, 'he doesn't let flies rest on his nose'. Said of someone who is not easily caught or taken in.

298. Mart is-sajjied b'idħa wħda tagħgen u bl-oħra tkeċċi d-dubbien, 'a fisherman's wife kneads with one hand and scares flies away with the other'. Her husband earns so little that she hasn't much to cook.

LICE, ETC

il-Qamla, the louse; il-Qamel, the lice; is-Susa, the woodlouse; il-Kamla, the moth worm; il-Qardinet, the dog ticks.

299. Għal ħabba jqaxxar qamla, 'for a grain (one twelfth of a penny) he will skin a louse'.

300. *Il-flus taghmel il-flus, u l-qanel taghmel il-qamel*, 'money begets money, and lice beget lice'.

301. *Iż-żmien jaghmel is-susa*, 'time breeds woodlouse'. Time wears away everything.

302. *Kull ghuda ghandha susitha*, 'every wood has got its worm-wood'.

303. *Kollox fl-ahhar jintemm bil-kamla*, 'at long last everything is consumed by moth worms'. Nothing endures for ever.

304. *Il-qardeniet f'ghajnejn sidu jidhru gawhriet*, 'dog ticks look like jewels in his (dog's) owner's eyes'.

SPIDER, CRICKET

il-Brimba, the spider; *il-Werżieq* the grass hopper

305. *Trid toqtol il-brimba biex tnehi l-ghanqbuta*, 'kill the spider and you'll destroy the cobweb', i.e. attack evil at its source.

306. *Meta tisma' jghajjat il-werżieq, tista' tmur għall-gheneb u t-tiniet*, 'when you hear the grasshopper chirping it is time to go and pluck grapes and figs'.

ANIMAL TALES

The material falling under this heading is rather scanty although the animal tale is one of the oldest types of popular fiction. According to Krappe⁷ 'the animal tale in its most primitive form is essentially an aetiological story, i.e. a tale purporting to explain a cause.... The animal tale is in reality quite short and the number of the motives constituting a type are generally few'. Stith Thompson⁸ says that 'some of the most interesting of animal tales are sometimes not told as simple stories but may have attached to them some explanation accounting for the form or present habits of the animal... Animals sometimes obtain another's characteristic by failing to return things which they have borrowed'. The following Maltese stories illustrate the type.

I. EXPLANATION OF PLACE-NAMES

L-imrieħel—(limits of Birkirkara). In times of heavy rainfall farmers found it difficult to sow seeds properly. Their flocks, however, helped by walking over the flooded fields and pressing the seeds with their feet. Hence the name of the locality *L-Imrieħel* (The Flocks). (Birkirkara).

⁷ A.H. KRAPPE, *The Science of Folklore*. 1930, pp.60-62.

⁸ STITH THOMPSON, *The Folklore*. 1951, pp.227-228.

Ghar Hanżir – A man went into a cave looking for his pig. Entering from the Valletta side of Corradino Hill he came out at the Cospicua end, and thereafter the cave was called *Pig's Cave*.

Xaghra ta' l-Għażżenin – (Gozo). Originally this village was all waste land (M. *Xaghra*) where sheep were let out for pasture. Before turning out their flocks on this hill, the shepherds used to cry: 'Go, you lazy ones!'. This gave rise to the place name *Xaghra ta' l-Għażżenin* (The Lazy Ones' Waste).

(RML Ms 143a, p.214)

II. HOW THE ASS RECEIVED ITS NAME

The ass had another name at creation, but it forgot what it was. It went back to Adam who had given animals their names, and asked him: 'What name did you give me?' Adam replied: 'Go away, you ass!' And this name has stuck to the ass ever since.

(Munxar, Gozo)

III. WHY THE BAT FLIES BY NIGHT

When Adam called the birds the bat did not answer, because it had no feathers. Nor did it turn up with the land animals because it could fly. As a punishment it has to remain hidden away during the day, and to come out only by night.

(RML Ms 143a, p.156)

'Didn't you tell me that your young ones are the loveliest of them all? I have only killed the ugliest ones'.

The owl replied: 'That is true. But don't you know that every bird is proud of its own feathers?'.

(V.M.B. Ms)

X. NOAH AND THE CAMEL

The Ark was ready. Noah was requested to bring into the Ark a male and a female of each animal species and to store enough food to last the occupants throughout the rains.

To keep their number constant Noah persuaded the male animals to deposit their genitals before entering the Ark and he put them up on a board to facilitate their reclaim later on.

After the Deluge the order came that the males may claim their tools back and go out. The animals rushed out, bull-dozed everything in their

way and made for the board. In the confusion that followed everyone grabbed an organ and left the Ark.

When the others had left a camel hobbled slowly towards Noah and claimed his organ. 'Well', said Noah, 'you can see there is nothing left so please go away now and leave me alone'. 'I will go', said the camel 'but to the Master to report you for exterminating the camel race'. At this Noah became furious and, happening to find a small, insignificant tool, he threw it at the camel as he was turning away to leave. It hit the camel at the back-part where it stuck. 'You will have it now, whether you like it or not, and you will have to work your way back to back, you fool'.

(Pawla, Malta).

IV. CREATION OF THE MONKEY

Originally the monkey was a woman. One day she sat down on a hot pancake (*M. ftira*) and was turned into a monkey.

(V.M.B. Mss)⁹

V. THE DOLPHIN'S TAIL

The dolphin's tail is straight and flat. Fishermen believe that at creation it was pointed like that of other fish. The Lord, however, had to change it because the dolphin used to go round the world more swiftly than the sun.

(St. Paul's Bay and Imġarr, Gozo)

VI. WHY THE GOAT'S TAIL IS TURNED UPWARDS

When Christ was born several animals stood beside him in the manger. The sheep warmed him up with its wool, but the goat kept on bleating and so annoyed Baby Jesus that He pulled up its tail. Ever since goats have been born with their tail turned upwards.

(Valletta)

VII. THE CONSISTENCY OF GOAT'S MILK

The goat went along with other animals when Christ was born, but kept on bleating all the time. At last Baby Jesus shouted: 'A curse on you and on half your milk!' This explains the popular belief that water makes up 50% of goat's milk.

(Birkirkara)

⁹ Vzo. MIFSUD BONNICI (1871 – 1929), author of Maltese verse and prose, left some unpublished lexical notes and a few texts of popular tales. These are at present with the writer of this study.

VIII. THE DONKEY WITH THE CROSS

Some donkeys have a marking in the form of a cross running down their back and across their shoulders. It is believed that Our Lady rode such a donkey during the Flight into Egypt. Ever since this animal has been known as *Il-Hmar tas-Salib* (The Donkey with the Cross)

(Rabat, Malta)

IX. EVERY BIRD IS PROUD OF ITS FEATHERS

The owl met the falcon and asked: 'Where are you off to?'.
'I am going out in search of prey', the hawk replied.

'See that you won't touch my young ones, is that clear?' said the owl.

'Which are they?'

'The loveliest of the lot:'

The hawk went on its way and attacked the ugliest birds. They met again and the owl said: 'What have you done? You have killed my young ones!'

ANIMAL MOTIFS IN FOLK-LITERATURE

Maltese tales and other folk-literature contain various motifs relating to animals. As a motif-index of these folk-tales is not available, an attempt is here made to index motifs contained in the Maltese stories collected by Fr. E. Magri, S.J., which are the least accessible to non-Maltese scholars. The index could be considerably enlarged by analysing the tales and anecdotes included by H. Stumme in his *Maltesische Märchen, Gedichte und Rätsel in Deutscher Übersetzung* (Leipzig, 1904) and in B. Ilg's *Maltesische Märchen und Schwänke* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1906).

The motifs indexed here are arranged according to the classification system used in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (revised edition, 1955, 6 vols.). Whenever a Maltese motif could not be traced in an identical form in Thompson's Index, that motif has been given a separate notation and marked with an asterisk to show that it is a local variation of a motif already indexed there. The reference after each motif, given in upper case Roman numerals, is to the Maltese tales as enumerated by Magri himself, the variants being shown in parenthesis and in lower case type. The complete list of Fr. Magri's tales is given hereunder in English translation. No. 1 in his collection is a general introduction to the tales contained in *Hrejjef Misserijietna*. Nos. II-XV follow Magri's own enumeration, to which Nos. XVI-XXVII have been added to cover the tales which appeared in his other publications:

HREJJEF MISSERIJETNA (Our Fathers' Tales) – Book one. 1902 [M.Z.¹⁰ 15]

II. How the First Boat was made.

III. The Origin of the Maltese People.

IV. The Two Pillars between the Inner and Outer Seas.

V. The Many-Headed Serpent.

VI. *Bufies* (The Land of no Return)

VII. The Prowess of the Wise Woman's Son.

(i) The Wise Woman's Son kills the 'Golfu'.

(ii) The Wise Woman's Son brings the Singing Bird.

(iii) The Wise Woman's Son brings the Tree of the Singing Bird.

(iv) The Wise Woman's Son brings the Elephants' Bones with which the Sultan can build a Temple.

(v) The Wise Woman's Son brings the Lady of Beauty.

VIII. A Girl brings the Singing Bird.

HREJJEF MISSERIJETNA – Book Two. 1902 [M.Z. 18]

IX. The Man that loves his Mother, or, The Maltese Samson.

X. The Water Monster.

(i) He that does good in the World frees a Maiden from the Water Monster. [+ variant]

(ii) The Four Trades.

XI. The Eighth Son delivers the Sultan's Daughter from the Dragon.

XII. The Seven Inhabited Citrons [+ variant].

HREJJEF MISSERIJETNA – Book Three. 1903 [M.Z. 29].

XIII. The Land ship [+ 3 variants].

XIV. *Balmies*.

XV. Our Fathers and the Giants.

(i) The Thirteenth Child.

HREJJEF MISSERIJETNA – Book Four. 1904 [M.Z. 38, 39].

(ii) The Children of the Giantess, or the Origin of the people of Gozo and Malta.

(iii) The Woman that carried huge building stones in Malta and Gozo.

(iv) *Il-Borg ta' l-Imramma* (place-name in Gozo).

(v) The Crown of Giants (place-name in Gozo).

(vi) The Giants' Bastions (place-name in Gozo).

(vii) The Giants' Gathering (place-name in Gozo).

¹⁰ M.Z. – *Mogħdija taz-Żmien*, a series of 150 books of popular reading on various subjects edited by A.M. Galea between 1899 and 1915.

- (viii) The Giant and the Bird Hunter [+ variant].
- (ix) The Giant Goliath.
- (x) A Boy destroys nine Giants [+ variant].
- (xi) A Girl destroys a Giantess [+ variant].
- (xii) The Tree.
- (xiii) The Jews' Cave.
- (xiv) The Jews' City.
- (xv) The Knight
- (xvi) *Kanċla* (place-name in Gozo).
- (xvii) *In-Najt* (nickname).
- (xviii) *Ta' Seksek* (The Gossiper – nickname).

X'JGHID IL-MALTI FUQ ID-DINJA TA' TANT U FUQ IR-RJIEH – (What the Maltese say about the Nether World and the Winds) 1905 [M.Z. 44]

XVI. The Nether World [+ variant].

XVII. The Explanation of the Story of Balmies.

XVIII. The Winds [+ variants].

X'JGHID IL-MALTI JEW L-GHERF BLA MIKTUB TAL-MALTIN – (What the Maltese say, or The Unwritten Lore of the Maltese People) 1925.

XIX. A Chariot of Gold and Silk.

XX. Long March.

XXI. Rise Early and Work Overtime.

XXII. The Story of the Old Man buried in the Cave.

XXIII. The Red Doctor cures the Sultan's Daughter.

XXIV. The Tale of the Months [+ 2 variants].

XXV. The Sultan's Daughter answers 'No' to three Questions.

XXVI. The Baker's Son sets Three Riddles to the Sultan's Daughter.

XXVII. The Farmer that planned the (agricultural) year in the place of Blessed God.

XXVIII. Rainless January borrows two days from his Brother February.

Nos. II, III, IV, XV(ii)–(vii), (xiii)–(xiv), (xvi)–(xviii), XVII and XXVII, in the above list should more appropriately be considered as aetiological tales, purporting to explain a cause. The remaining stories fall neatly under the more specific heading of Fairy Tales. For the purpose of this study, however, all the texts published by Magri have been considered. The following animal motifs occur in Magri's tales:

A. MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS

A2460. Animal Characteristics: attack and defence.

*A2461.1.1. *Lion (bird) with closed eyes is wide awake.* VII(ii) 43; IX 8; XII 62.

A2520. Disposition of animals.

*A2521.2. *Why bird is sad and stops singing.* VII(iii) 46.

B. ANIMALS

B10. Mythical beasts and hybrids.

B11.4.1. *Flying dragon.* X(ii) 30.

B11.10. *Sacrifice of human being to dragon.* X(i) 23, (ii) 30.

B11.11.1. *Dragon fight. Respite granted and dragon returns with renewed strength.* V 28; XVI 22.

B11.12.1.2. *Dragon dips wounded part in water trough, is healed immediately.* XI 43; XVI 22.

B11.12.7. *Human-dragon marriage.* XI 33, 35.

B15.1.2.6.1. *Seven-headed serpent.* V 27; X(i) 23.

*B16.0.1.1. *Beast (serpent) that steals fruit (apples, pears).* V 27; XVI 7, 18.

B16.5.1.2. *Devastating (man-eating) sea- (river-) monster (serpent).* X 23, 30.

B100. Treasure animals.

B102.5. *Golden Calf.* (XV(iv) 34.

B120. Wise Animals.

B122.1. *Bird as adviser.* V 28.

B170. Magic birds, fish, reptiles, etc.

B172.6. *Magic birds lure hunters to certain places.* XIV 33.

*B172.12. *Magic bird (dove) exposes false bride's treachery.* XII 58, 65.

B180. Magic quadrupeds.

B184.1.12. *Magic horse goes through fire.* XII 69.

B210. Speaking animals.

B211.1.3. *Speaking horse (mule)* XI 35; XIV 35; XVI 9.

B211.3. *Speaking bird.* VII(ii) 43.

B240. King of Animals.

B241.2.1. *King of Lions.* XIV 39.

B242. *King of birds.* VII(v) 50.

B242.2.13. *King of Eagles.* XV(xii) 63, 65.

B243. *King of fishes.* VII(v) 50; XIV 37; XV(xii) 62, 68.

B246.1. *King of ants.* VII(v) 50; XIV 38; XV(xii) 62.

B290. Other animals with human traits.

B291.1.0.1. *Bird (dove) as letter carrier.* XI 36.

*B292.4.1.2. *Oxen plough for man by night and for king by day.* XXII 27

B310. Acquisition of helpful animal.

*B319.3. *Helpful animal (ant, eagle, lion) acquired as reward for food*
V 28; XII 55; XIV 39, 43.

B320. Reward of helpful animal.

B322.1. *Hero feeds his own flesh to helpful eagle.* XVI 25.

B390. Animals grateful for other kind acts.

B391. *Animal (ant, lion, eagle) grateful for food.* V 38; XII 55; XIV 38-43; XVI 24.

B392.1. *Animals grateful for being given appropriate food.* Hero finds dog with hay and donkey with meat bones. He changes it about. XII 55.

B400. Helpful domestic beasts.

B401. *Helpful horse.* XIV 45; XV(xii) 62, 69; XVI 11, 14, 16.

B430. Helpful wild beasts.

B431.2. *Helpful lion.* XIV 39.

B450. Helpful birds. VII(v) 52.

B455.3. *Helpful eagle.* XV(xii) 66; XVI 24.

B470. Helpful fish. VII(v) 52; XIV 50; XV(xii) 68.

B480. Helpful insects.

B481.1. *Helpful ant.* VII(v) 51; XIV 43; XV(xii) 67.

B500. Magic power from animals.

B501. *Animal gives part of body as talisman for summoning its aid.* XIV 38-39; XV(xii) 62-63; XVI 11.

*B501.4.1. *Eagles give hero feather to burn when in need of help.* XV (xii) 63.

*B501.5. *Fish gives hero bone to burn if he is in difficulty.* XV (xii) 62; XIV 38.

*B501.5.1. *Fish (bird, ant, lion) gives hero whistle for summoning when*

in need of help. VII (v) 50-5.

**B501.6. Ants gives hero one wing to burn if he is in difficulty. XIV 38; XV(xii) 62.*

B501.7. Lion gives hero two hairs from tail for summoning him, XIV 39.

B510. Healing by animals.

**B516.1. Sight restored by deer's (bird's) milk. XIV 47; XVI 17.*

B520. Animal saves person's life.

**B521.2.1.1. Eagle rescues hero from Underworld. XVI 24.*

B540. Animal rescuer or retriever.

B542.1. Bird flies with man to safety. V 28; XVI 24.

**B544.1.1. Magic (transformed) horse helps captive hero. XVI 10.*

B548.2.1. Fish recovers ring from sea. VII(v) 52; XV(xii) 68.

B550. Animals carry men.

B552. Man carried by bird. (eagle). V 28; XVI(ii) 24.

B560. Animals advise men.

**B560.2. Grateful horse gives hero advice. XI 36; XIV 36; XV(xii) 62.*

B570. Animals serve men.

**B576.6. Lion guards water of life. IX 8.*

B580. Animal helps men to wealth and greatness.

B582.2. Animals help hero win princess. XIV 44-49; XVI 15-16.

B587.1. Magic horse wins jumping contest for man. XIV 45; XVI 14.

B600. Marriage of person to animal.

B605. Marriage to dragon. XI 35.

B640. Marriage to person in animal form.

**B640.1.1. Marriage to beast by night and man by day. XI 35.*

B730. Fanciful colour, smell, etc. of animals.

**B739.2. Horse's sweat fire-proof. XV(xii) 69.*

B750. Fanciful habits of animals.

**B765.7.2.1. Snake's head re-joins body after it has been severed. V 28.*

B800-B899. Miscellaneous animal motifs.

**B801.1. Elephants' bones used to build temple. VII(iv) 48.*

B847. *Lions placed in city-gate to prevent entrance.* XIV 40.

*B848.3. *Man sleeps on lions's tails – unharmed.* XIV 41.

*B848.4. *Captive princess removed from dragon's (lion's) embrace without being harmed.* X(ii) 30.

D. MAGIC

D130. Transformation: man to domestic beast (mammal).

D131. *Transformation: man to horse* XVI 9.

D132. *Transformation: man to mule.* XI 39.

D150. Transformation: man to bird.

*D154.1.1. *Transformation of maiden to dove by sticking magic pin into head.* XII 58.

D330. Transformation: domestic beast (mammal) to person.

D332. *Transformation: equine animal (domestic) to person.* XI 43; XIV 51.

D350. Transformation: bird to person.

D354.1. *Transformation: dove to person.* XII 59.

D620. Periodic transformation.

D621.1.1. *Man by day; animal (dragon) by night.* XI 35.

F. MARVELS

F100. Visit to lower world – miscellaneous motifs.

F101.3. *Return from lower world on eagle.* XVI 24.

G. OGRES

G300. Other ogres.

G308.1. *Fight with sea-(lake-) monster (serpent).* X(i) 23.

H. TESTS

H100. Identification by matching parts of divided token.

H105.1. *Dragon-Tongue proof.* Dragon slayer cuts out the tongues and uses them to prove his identity as slayer. X(i) 25.

H105.1.1 *False dragon-head proof.* Impostor cuts off dragon heads (after tongues have been removed) and attempts to use them as proof of slaying the dragon. X(i) 24.

H1050. Paradoxical tasks.

H1053.2. *Task: coming neither on horse nor on foot. (Comes sitting on animal but with feet reaching the ground).* XXII 30.

H1090. Tasks requiring miraculous speed.

*H1091.1.1. *Task: gathering needles scattered by maiden: performed by helper ants.* VII(v) 51.

H1320. Quest for marvellous objects or animals.

*H1331.1.3.3. *Quest for golden chickens.* XV(i) 62.

K. DECEPTIONS

K1910. Marital impostors.

K1911.3.1. *Substitution of false bride revealed by animal (bird).* XII(i) 65

R. CAPTIVES AND FUGITIVES

R10. Abduction.

*R13.2.4. *Abduction of woman by horse.* XV(xii) 64.

R110. Rescue of captive.

R111.1.3. *Rescue of princess (maiden) from dragon.* X(i) 24; X(ii) 30.

S. UNNATURAL CRUELTY

S260. Sacrifices.

*S262.2.2. *Maiden (princess) as yearly tribute to monster (seven-headed) serpent.* X(i) 23.

Other motifs, not necessarily figuring in folk-narrative, may be noted from the wider field of Maltese Folk-Lore. In the following examples, where no publication can be quoted, the locality where a particular motif has been heard is given in bracket after each motif:

A1882. *Creation of ass* (See under *Animal Tales*, No. II)

A1895. *Creation of bat* (See under *Animal Tales*, No. III)

A2221.2.2. *Blood from cross on robin redbreast* (Tarxien).

A2221.3. *Markings on animals (donkey) as recollection of Christ's life (entrance into Jerusalem)* (Luqa).

A2356.2.7. *Why ass has cross on back (shoulders).* See under *Animal Tales*, No. VIII).

A2378.2.2. *How goats lost tails.* (Luqa).

*A2434.2.3.1. *Why there are no poisonous snakes in Malta* (general).

B155.1. *Building site determined by halting of animal* (Nadur, Gozo).

- B184.2.1.1. *Magic cow gives extraordinary milk* (B'Kara).
 B335.4. *Wife demands magic parrot (bird, dove) who has accused her.* (B'Kara).
 B335.7. *Helpful cow to be killed because of refusal to help step-daughter.* (B'Kara).
 B523. *Spider-web over hole saves fugitive.* (Mosta).
 *B524.2.1.1. *Helpful ants sting opposing army.* (Gozo).
 B582.1.1. *Animal wins wife for his master.* (Valletta).
 C841. *Tabu: killing certain animals (doves).* (Tarxien).

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Under each item we list here odd pieces of information relating to animals that reflect folk-customs or superstitious beliefs and often combine to produce popular medical cures and remedies. The material is presented under title headings alphabetically arranged, giving easy and quick reference to the reader.

Amulets – Some of the more common amulets either worn by persons or used as ornaments in decorating buildings, doors, buses, etc. are derived from or have a direct bearing on animals. The following deserve special mention:

(i) The horns of a bull which one can see on the outside of farmhouses or of meat-shops and in the decorations of other buildings. Ivory horns are also used as pendants in watch-chains to protect the wearer from the evil eye. Some people put out the fore and little fingers of the hand in the form of a horn in the presence of persons suspected of 'wishing ill' (M. *tbezzel*) or having 'the evil eye'. Children at play likewise do this sign secretly to make the others lose the game, saying *Ċiribedbud idur ma' jdejk!* i.e. may bad luck twist itself round your hand. A horse-shoe sometimes takes the place of the horn (M. *qarn*). It is commonly found nailed to doors, carts, buses and wedding cars, from which it is intended to ward off the evil eye.

(ii) Cowrie shells (M. *babbuħ*) hung round the neck of children have the effect of preserving them from the evil eye.

(iii) Maltese cart-drivers indulge 'in decking the horse or mule trappings with red and yellow galloons or with red tassels attached to the carriage pole or with a tuft of feathers which is the characteristic ornamental appendant to the head of a cabman's horse'.¹¹

(iv) Maltese cart or cab-drivers attach a small piece of softened wax can-

¹¹ A. CREMONA, *Some Myths and Beliefs in Maltese Folklore*. In 'Melita', 1923, p. 119.

dle blessed on Candlemas Day (*Xemgħa tal-Kandlora*) to the hairy inside of a horse's ear as a defence against the evil eye. The same kind of wax candle is wrapped up in a cloth and put beneath the head-stall of cows.

Ants – Like the famous geese which saved Rome in classical times it is believed that during the French Blockade the ants proved of great help to the Maltese as their biting made the French soldiers fire amiss. For proverbs about ants see Nos. 278, 282 under Proverbs.

Beast of Burden – Animal dealers declaring a beast to be *qawwi u sħiħ* (lit. strong and whole) undertake to guarantee that the animal is in fact free from the following four diseases: *pilzju* (It. *bolso*, asthma [vet. term]); *lantkur* (It. *anticore*, chest tumour of a horse [vet. term]) *formika* (It. *formica*, animal foot disease [vet. term]) and *ugiegh ta' żaqg*, tummy ache.

Bird-pets – The owner of a bird which flies away from the cage can only reclaim it within a distance of seven streets.¹² This may lie at the bottom of the otherwise obscure expression *seba' kantunieri bogħod* 'seven street corners away'.

Blessing of animals – The following is Busuttil's description¹³ of this ancient custom: 'Among the popular Maltese customs in which animals play a leading part that of the blessing of the quadrupeds of the equine species, in Valletta, on St. Anthony's Day, is the most familiar. On the morning of the 17th January (St. Anthony's Day) a number of horses, mules, and donkeys, decked out in ribbons and tassels, are driven in procession in front of the Vittoria, a little church in Strada Mezzodi, at the back of the Royal Opera House, where a priest standing at the door of the little church sprinkles the animals with holy water as they pass by. The same ceremony takes place annually at Notabile, where the animals are blessed by an Augustinian friar, at the door of St. Augustine's Church. Here the quadrupeds partake of some barley which is placed in a tray for them. In the time of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the ceremony of blessing the quadrupeds on St. Anthony's day was more imposing than it is in our days. The first that took part in the procession were the horses drawing the Grand Master's stately carriage, followed by every description of vehicle, from the gala coach of the dignitaries of the island to the peasant's cart'. The scene has not changed much since this description was written in 1894. However, one should add that a similar ceremony takes place at

¹² For the information in this and the preceding entry cf. L. BONELLI, *Saggi del Folklore dell'Isola di Malta*. Palermo, 1895, pp. 30-31.

¹³ V. BUSUTTIL, *Holiday Customs in Malta*... 1894, pp. 13-14.

Xaghra, in Gozo, and that other animals besides those of the equine species are nowadays taken to be blessed both at Valletta and at Notabile, e.g. piglets, bulls, cats, dogs, birds and other domestic pets.

Bogey-Man – Busuttil¹⁴ writes: 'The ancient Maltese thought, and insisted upon others believing, that the Bogey-man wanders about our streets during the winter nights. The Bogey-man is described as a hideous animal partaking of the nature of an ox, a ram and a donkey, going about until it comes to the first house which has been unfairly possessed, in order that with its hideous cries it might frighten the inmates. Parents and nurses are still in the habit of frightening the little ones with the Bogey-man in order to induce them to go to sleep'.

Bull – There is a persistent tradition in these islands that a Golden Bull lies buried somewhere, waiting to be unearthed by some lucky person. The strongest claim is made for the locality of Gelmus Hill, in Gozo, where a sensational find of a golden bull occurred in the 18th Century but the treasure was buried again and has not been found since. Recently, in the course of excavations at Tas-Silġ, in the Marsaxlokk area, there was a strong rumour that the golden bull would likely be found there. According to another belief, the bull is said to turn into snail shells at the moment of finding. Margaret Murray writes of this belief in the Introduction to her *Excavations in Malta* (London, 1923, Part 1, p. 3):

'The belief in bull worship in ancient times was very strong, and has been confirmed among the workmen by the finding of the sculptured bull at Tarxien... The story of the Golden Bull buried in the foundation of one of the ancient buildings is very firmly believed in. In this connection I heard interesting stories of buried treasure. There was, in the time of my informants' grandfather, a farmer who was one day ploughing his field, when he felt a tug from below at the plough. As there was another man with him, he said nothing but made a mental note of the place, and went out that night with a lantern to investigate. He found a flat stone which he raised, and then dug below it. He came upon the figure of a sheep all of solid gold "as big as that", said my informant holding his hands about two feet apart. Being afraid lest it should be taken from him he broke it to pieces, and disposed of the fragments to a goldsmith to such advantage that he became a rich man and never did a day's work after...'

In connection with the church at San Pawl tat-Targa Count Ciantar mentions an old custom which was subsequently abolished. On St. Paul's Day

¹⁴ V. BUSUTTIL, op. cit., p. 136.

(February 10) it was customary for the farmers of the vicinity to prepare a banquet. Each one gave some grain or its equivalent in money, and a beautiful bull was fattened for the feast. These banquets, however, gradually came to be a source of great disorders: the Bishop prohibited them and, together with the Apostolic Visitor, ordered that the money usually spent on the feast should, in future, go towards the saying of masses to be celebrated on feast days for the benefit of the inhabitants of that neighbourhood. 'And so it happened that, on the day of that Saint, a strong bull, tightly bound though it was, broke loose of the ropes that bound it, and set out at a run until, arriving before the door of the church, it paused for a while, then continued its headlong run to the shore and plunged into the sea. On account of this those simple farmers believed that it was a clear indication that the Apostle was displeased because the feast was no longer being celebrated in the original manner. And they went before the Bishop, pleading their case and asking permission to continue the custom of preparing the usual banquet; but the prudent prelate, following the orders of the Holy See, instructed them to abide by the decree and thus that custom came to an end.'¹⁵

Cows— To guard cows against the evil eye a bell (*M. naqusa*) is hung round their neck. A Gozitan peasant told me that the bell is there just for pride (*M. għall-kburiġja*) for the cow likes to feel important. For other beliefs enshrined in sayings see Proverbs Nos. 1-19.

Dog — The howling of a dog in a neighbourhood is held to presage the death of any people that are sick in it. The practice of staging dog-fights still exists in some localities. The tails of fighting dogs are cut off when they are still young. The dogs are smeared with the gall of an animal of the bovine species, the idea being that when the dogs try to bite one another, the bitter taste of the gall will prevent them from doing so.

Busuttil¹⁶ refers to a popular remedy against the effects of a fright. 'The cure of the ailments brought about in consequence of a fright is to kill a puppy, boil it, give the patient to drink the water in which it is boiled, then throw the whole boiled pup in the plate in such a way as to cause a fright to the patient'.

Dove (pigeon) — It is considered taboo to cut off the head of a dove as this bird symbolises the Holy Ghost. So one has either to twist its neck or think of some other way of killing it.

Fever — A popular remedy which is now going out of use was to cut open

¹⁵ G. F. ABELA — G. A. CIANTAR, *Malta illustrata*... 1772, p. 792.

¹⁶ V. BUSUTTIL, op. cit., p. 156.

a live rabbit and place it with the still warm entrails on the stomach of the patients. People believed that the fever thus passed on from the patient to the animal.

Fumigation of Animals – This practice is believed to ward off disease and the consequences of the evil eye. In 1575 Mgr. Duzina refers to the practice of women at Naxxar reciting some mysterious words over sick animals. He says: '...and there are some women who cut laurel leaves, throw them into the fire and then, as they go round fumigating the sick animals, they utter some words which I do not know'. Commenting on this practice,¹⁷ which has survived to the 20th century, Cremona writes: 'the smoking of cattle and swine with the fumes of herbs as was practised in medieval times by the Anglo-Saxons tribes and the blessing of herds and cattle pens by the sprinkling of holy water as is done nowadays by the priest in Sicily, find their parallel in the Maltese custom of calling the good old man of the village to perform the identical rite by smoking with the burning leaves of the blessed olive tree. The process is meant as a protection against the "evil eye" or a charm for good luck. The ashes of the burnt leaves are never dropped on the premises but are thrown away in a cross-way lest the evil eye should remain in the house'.

Hawkmoth – The appearance of a white hawkmoth (*M. bahrija*) betokens the coming home of some one who is abroad. The appearance of a black hawkmoth, however, is the harbinger of sad news.¹⁸

Hen – The mother of a newly-born babe has to eat a hen's neck and head on the day following childbirth, for if she fails to do so the child will take more than three months to start keeping its head erect.

Horseracing – This has long been a favourite sport in the Maltese Islands. The Imnarja races, which are the earliest on record, can be traced back to the 15th C. State encouragement under the Knights helped to establish horseracing as a favourite pastime, and some of the races instituted by the Grand Masters, especially by Verdala and Lascaris, have survived to this day. After the First World War, the revival of this sport in Malta was likewise due to the influential patronage extended to it by the late Lord Plumer, then Governor of Malta. This period also saw the introduction of trotting races, in which the late Mr. S. Manduca, a well-known figure in local racing circles, took a leading part.

Traditional horseraces take place on the road, not on the race track. Horse and mare races are held over a longer distance than those of don-

¹⁷ A. CREMONA, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁸ V. BUSUTTIL, op. cit., p. 152.

keys and mules. In recent years *mezzukavalli* of fourteen hands and ponies of thirteen have been allowed to enter for the races.

Racing animals in Malta are still ridden barebacked, without bridle or trappings excepting the halter (*M. kappestru*). This peculiarity so struck Brydone in 1770 that he wrote in his *Travels in Sicily and Malta*, (1848, p. 132): 'The horseraces of Malta are of a very uncommon kind. They are performed without either saddle or bridle, whip or spur; and yet the horses are said to run full speed, and to afford a great deal of diversion. They are accustomed to the ground for some weeks before and although it is entirely over rock and pavement there are very seldom any accidents. They have races of asses and mules, performed in the same manner, four times every year. The rider is only furnished with a machine like a shoemaker's awl, to prick on his courser when he is lazy'. After noting this 'very curious method of horseracing' Charles Mac Farlane in his *Popular Customs, Sports and Recollections of the South of Italy* (1846, p. 20-1) describes the races held on *Imnarja* in Malta: 'The horses are generally barbs, imported from the neighbouring coast of Africa — small, good-tempered and certainly not swift. To these characteristics of the animals, which facilitate such a mode of equitation, we must add the important circumstance that where the run or the great effort is made they go up hill... but, notwithstanding this, the Maltese races certainly offer a novel and amusing scene to the stranger'.

Maltese jockeys are usually youngsters ranging from twelve to eighteen years of age, generally chosen because of their slight weight. They are accustomed to ride barebacked from a very early age and take great pride in being selected to run at one of the traditional Maltese races such as those held on *Imnarja* Day. They are for the most part dressed in a white and red silk shirt and white trousers; but an old *palju* sometimes takes the place of the national colours. It is not uncommon for the same jockey (*M. gerrej*) to ride in all or most of the events, and some of them can be seen running breathlessly at the termination of one race to reach the starting point in time to take part in the succeeding one.

Severe punishment was meted out in the past to those who in any way obstructed the animals taking part in the races. A popular version of an old proclamation dating from the days of the Grand Masters and collected by Prof. L. Bonelli¹⁹ recalls this in the following lines:

Bandu kontra bandu!
Minn tas-Sultan minn taghna
Li nistmaw bhal Alla taghna:

¹⁹ L. BONELLI, *Il Dialecto Maltese*. In 'Supplementi periodici all'Archivio Glottologico Italiano', Dispensa VIII, 1907, p. 16.

Min jinbex xi bhima — b'xi siegla u b'xi kamxott
Nibaghtuh fuq ix-xwieni ta' Malta — jiekol il-biskott xott!

(A proclamation by the Grand Master whom we honour as we honour God. Whoever obstructs an animal with a rope or with a shirt shall be sent to the Malta galleys to eat dry biscuits).

Such practices may be due to a perverted sense of parochialism. The horse's win was a village win as well. After the races the winning horse is still paraded through the village streets, the owner leading his horse with the jockey on its back and a trusted friend making a show of the *palju* or prize-flag behind. People on all sides gather around and shower congratulations on the horse's achievement.

The prize distributed at this race is called *palju* from the Latin *pallium*. It consists of a narrow strip of fine damask of various shades about seven feet in length and one and a half feet wide. It recalls the use of similar *palji* in the annual races held at Siena and Ferrara in Italy. In Malta it is customary to make a present of these *palji* to the parish church after the festivities come to an end.

In the past the most important races were those held on St. John's Day (June 24), *l-Imnarja* (June 29) and St. Rocco's Day (August 16). On June 28, 1651 a Magisterial 'bando' decreed that entry to these three races was limited to those who were enrolled in the militia.²⁰

The races on St. John's Day were instituted by Grand Master Lascaris by a decree dated May 29, 1638. We read that 'in order that the solemnity of the nativity of the glorious patron and protector St. John the Baptist may be celebrated with public rejoicing, and to perpetuate the custom but lately introduced, of holding various races for the 'palji' on that day, it was ordered that the expenses of the said races would be defrayed by the Grand Crosses who had been promoted during the year elapsing from one feast to another', and in their default 'the Common Treasury itself had to supply the money, on condition that the races would be held in Strada Reale'.²¹ The starting point was near St. Elmo and the winning post near Porta Reale. The street used to be strewn with sand in order that the horses may have a surer foothold in their steep ascent from St. Elmo. This race is no longer held in Malta. In Gozo, however, horseracing takes place on this day at Xewkija, which has St. John the Baptist for its patron saint. The custom dates back to the 18th Century when they were first held 'in virtue of a new legacy left by one of the parish priests of that village'.²²

²⁰ R.M.L. Ms. 149, p. 132.

²¹ BARTOLOMEO DAL POZZO, *Historia della Sacra Religione Militare di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano*. Parte Seconda, 1715, p. 30.

²² ABELA-CIANTAR, op. cit., Lib. III, Not. IV, 1780, p. 233.

L-Imnarja (June 29) is the most popular folk-festival of Malta. In the 15th Century the *Universita* provided funds for the palji and the races were already strongly established when the Order came to Malta. The races held at Rabat to this day are still a characteristic feature of the feast. A prize (M. *palju*) won at these races is greatly coveted and is deemed enough to win the good looks of the beloved. This old folk-song refers to the Imnarja races:

Waslet l-Imnarja, waslet,
Ghandi ziemel ingerrih;
Jekk jehodli l-ewwel, goja,
Il-palju lilek naghtih!

(*L-Imnarja* has come and I will enter my horse for the races; if I win the prize, my dear, I shall give the prize to you). The scene has not changed much since 1738, when Agius de Soldanis wrote: 'Then they return from the Boschetto and repair partly to the Cathedral Church and partly to the walls where the race is to be held; and I truly cannot say how they can stand the heat of the sun, remaining, especially the women, for four whole hours waiting to see the races'.²³ Horses, mules, and mares and donkeys take part in these races. In Gozo horseraces are held at Nadur, several Maltese horse-owners entering their animals for the races. This custom can be traced back at least to the 18th Century.

St. Roque's Day (August 16) is specially noted for the horse races held in honour of this saint. *Santu Rokku tat-Tigrija* (St. Roque for horseraces) is a common expression to this day, and there are various references to them in folk-songs. The races were introduced by Grand Master Verdala in 1592 after a great plague epidemic which had wrought havoc among the population for eighteen months. By a vow of the *Universitā* of Malta, the Church of St. Roque at Valletta was constructed and a confraternity in the said church set up in honour of the saint, 'while to commemorate the liberation from the plague, by a vow of the same *Universitā*, the races for the palji were instituted on the feast of the same saint'.²⁴ The races were at first held in Valletta for Agius De Soldanis²⁵ says: 'In the afternoon a great number of people repair to Valletta, under the roof of the Knights (i.e. Upper Barracca) and pass the time until vespers in dancing, singing and eating. In the evening the races are held and the city (although it is not a feast day) is no less crowded than on St. John's Day'.

Subsequently the races were transferred to Pietà where the spectacle

²³ R.M.L. Ms. 142, Vol. 5, p. 301.

²⁴ B. DAL POZZO, op. cit., Parte Prima, 1703, p. 340.

²⁵ R.M.L. Ms. 142, Vol. 5, p. 308.

aroused great excitement every year. Mr. V. Busuttil gave the following description in 1894: 'Although the races do not commence before 6p.m. yet, as early as 3 o'clock the Pietà Creek is all covered with hundreds of boats of every description laden with people; and all along the Pietà quay, from the bathing-house – the place from which the competing animals start – to the winning post at a little distance from Portes des Bombes is always lined with thousands of spectators in order to witness the sport. Some five minutes before 6 o'clock a gun is fired as a signal for the people to clear the way: a second report is then heard, and some ten or twelve donkeys are seen running at full speed, driven by jockeys, amidst great shouts and roars of laughter from the spectators caused sometimes by the stubbornness of some of the long-eared quadrupeds which, instead of running keep kicking right and left, not being in humour perhaps on that day of being tormented by the constant goading of their merciless rider. The donkey race is immediately followed by the horses first and then by that of the mares.²⁶

When the streets at Pietà were asphalted the races began to be held at the Marsa, and since the War they have been transferred to Rabat. The money for these races was usually drawn from the rent of a large house at Floriana, left for the purpose by the Knights, which was blitzed during the War.

Of the other popular races, those held on July 16 on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of Carmel go back to about a century ago, being first organised by the Carmelite friars themselves and the funds being collected every year by public subscription. Although the feast is celebrated in Valletta, the races used to be held at Gżira and the *palji* distributed at these races were usually taken from Kingsgate to the playing of marches by the civic bands amidst the great enthusiasm of the people. The starting point was near the Sliema ferry and the winning post in the vicinity of the Police Station at Ta' Xbiex. Large crowds attended and it was not uncommon for people to pay some money to the residents along the streets through which the quadrupeds passed in order to get a good view of the races from the roofs. When the streets were asphalted, however, it became dangerous for the animals to go at breakneck speed over the asphalted roads and the races were transferred to Rabat.

On the feast of the Assumption of our Lady (August 15) many Maltese cross over to Gozo to witness the festivities at Victoria which are brought to a close by the races on the afternoon of the feast. As far back as 1738, according to Agius De Soldanis, 'In the evening the races were held for donkeys, mules, cart-horses and men, the horses being left for the feast of

²⁶ V. BUSUTTIL, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

Our Lady of Victory, giving beautiful *palji* as prizes'.²⁷ These races have survived to this day.

On September 8, known as *Il-Vitorja* in memory of the victory of the Maltese and Knights over the Turks in 1565, horseracing takes place at Xaghra in Gozo. In the 18th Century Count Ciantar refers to 'a similar race held on the 8th of September, day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin known as 'tal-Vitorja', at the expence of the *Università* of Gozo'. Horses, mares, mules and donkeys take part in these races. Up to the early thirties of this century, similar horseraces at Sliema formed part of the popular rejoicings in commemoration of the victory of 1565. Large crowds attended and the same excitement as on St. Roque's Day was witnessed. These races, which were comparatively of recent origin, have not been held since the last War.

Three other races held in Gozo may be considered as later innovations in this field: (i) at Victoria on St. Calogero's Day (August 16), in which animals taken over to Gozo for the races on August 15 took part; (ii) at Sannat on St. Margaret's Day (July 22), and (iii) since 1946, at Victoria on the occasion of the feast of St. George.

Mare – It has been shown in the Proverbs Section that a mare (*debba*) in the popular mind is equated with a too lively maid (*xebba*). A curious practice about which I was told by an informant from Lija illustrates this belief from another angle. Folk-memory there records that a certain Ganni nicknamed 'Paxxi', had a mare which girls intending to marry were allowed to ride to see if they were fit for marriage. If the girl slipped off the mare's back she was not considered good for marriage; if the mare rode quietly with her, it was a sign that she was fit for marriage.

Mouse – It was believed that if a person paying a visit, for the first time, to a party was not treated to a sort of drink called *żambur*, made of aniseed, a mouse would enter the chest of drawers and gnaw all the petticoats of the mistress of the house.²⁸

Newt – When one kills a newt (*M. wiżgħa*) or a lizard (*M. gremxula*) and leaves its tail contorting or wagging on the floor that tail is said to be cursing the parents of its destroyer.²⁹ Bonelli adds that it is a bad omen to see a newt, and to avert bad luck one must exclaim: *Gimgha u Sibt!* (Friday and Saturday!). If one happens to see the contortions of a newt's tail, one has to repeat this exorcism three times, at the same time making the horn-sign with two fingers of the right hand to undo the effects of

²⁷ R.M.L. Ms. 142, Vol. 5, p. 305.

²⁸ V. BUSUTTIL, op. cit., p. 148.

²⁹ L. BONELLI, *Saggi del Folklore dell'Isola di Malta*, Palermo, 1895, p. 29.

the tail's 'imprecations'.

Octopus – In stewing octopus or any other fish or meat that requires long cooking, a clean piece of cork is put into the stew. It is said to make the flesh tender. A fresh piece must be used each time.³⁰

Pigs – From the abattoir comes the belief that human beings have grown so callous because pigs had eaten up the plant of human conscience! At Qormi there is a rural chapel known as 'Ta' Qrejqa'. People fattened a sow during the year and on the day of the feast they killed it, melted its fat and gave away the dumplings (*M. grieqeċ*) to the people present. Another custom which has gone out of use since the War was known by the name of All Souls' Pig (*M. il-Hanzira ta' l-Erwieħ*). This pig roamed about the village, receiving food and delicate morsels from the villagers. On all Souls' Day (2nd November), however, the pig was killed, flayed and cooked: the poor of the village were called together and each received a good morsel of pig.

Snakes – According to tradition, St. Paul removed the poison from the snakes of Malta. Another cynical saying asserts that after removing the poison from the tongues of the serpents he put it into the tongues of the Maltese. Some of our people believe in a house ghost or guardian spirit which exists in the shape of an old black serpent and bestows riches and good luck on the children born in that house. It is held to be extremely unlucky to kill the old black serpent, as after its death great misfortunes will befall the members of the family.

Tortoise – Well-to-do families used to keep a tortoise at home for good luck. On special feast-days, e.g. St. John's Day, *l-Imnarja*, the 8th of September, etc. they used to apply oil to its back till it shone and then left it in the yard to be admired by visitors. Some people believe that the blood of a tortoise is an excellent remedy for jaundice caused by a fright. Male patients have to bleed a female tortoise, and female patients a male tortoise; after which they make the sign of the Cross with its blood on their arms and legs.

It is not irrelevant here to reproduce the following extract from an early 19th Century manuscript entitled *Descrizione di Malta* (Chap. 1, p. 22) in the possession of the late Sir Philip Pullicino. Speaking of tortoises which abound in the neighbourhood of Lampedusa and Linosa, the writer says '*La si porta a Malta ancor vivente, perchè questi animali vivono per lungo tempo senza bere ne mangiare, e non muoiono se non quando*

³⁰ M. MURRAY, *Maltese Folk-Tales*. 1932, p. 57.

il loro grasso è del tutto consumato. La gente povera soltanto mangiava anticamente nell'isola la tartaruga marina, ma da che vi si trovano gl'Inglese che hanno introdotto il gusto della mock turtle soup, questo amfibio si è di molto nobilitato. La moda e la medicina trovano la sua carne delicata e salubre soprattutto per ristabilire la salute degli scorbutici e per far del suo brodo un rimedio depurativo calmante e ristorante alle persone attaccate da febbri etiche, o minacciate di consumazione'.