

# SUPERSTITIONS IN MALTA

## Towards the Middle of the Seventeenth Century In the light of the Inquisition Trials

by

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### 1. The nature of a Superstition.

For many centuries Ecclesiastics and cultured laymen have examined and discussed the nature of a superstition. Some say it is an outgrowth of a common sense interpretation of life-experience, while others maintain that it is the result of corruption and change of religious creeds. As yet, no satisfactory definition has been given. The Catholic Church defines a superstition as any deviation of religious sentiment, based on fear or on ignorance, which attributes divine power to vain beliefs and worthless practices. At the same time, the opponents of the Catholic Church consider that many of the beliefs and practices of the faithful are superstitious; to cite an example, the veneration of relics is a case in point. We must admit that this cult may appear superstitious until the teaching of the Church, in this regard, is fully understood (1). The definition of a superstition thus presents no little problem. For the purposes of this study, we shall consider as superstitious "those beliefs, habits and fancies, both tribal and individual, which are regarded as not being founded on reasonable conceptions of the world and of human life because they attribute divine power to a creature or assign to God an unworthy cult" (2).

Perhaps, because of the lack of stability in the new ideas, the common people often cling to familiar superstitions. These superstitions, though they may seem shocking to the enlightened members of the community, survive because they are still in harmony with the thoughts and feelings of those who,

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- (1) Regarding the cult of relics, it is worthwhile noticing that we attribute to them just a relative worship: only for the relation that they bear to the saints. On the other hand, the saints themselves are honoured for their intimate union with God. The Christians for over 1,000 years have always revered and honoured the relics because it is according to the teaching of the Catholic Church whose universal guidance furnishes us with a sound reason for our actions. Nevertheless, the Church admits that some religious customs intermixed with sound doctrines crept out of ignorance; such usages are just tolerated to avoid major scandal among the simple folk.
  - (2) S. THOMAS AQUIN., *Summa Theol.*, II-IIae, q. 92, a.1.  
A. GARDNER, *Superstition in E.R.E.*, v. 12 (1921), pp. 120-122.  
H.J. ROBE, *Superstition in E.B.*, v. 21, pp. 577-579.  
J. MELLOTT, *La superstizione surrogato della fede*, Catania, ed. Paoline, 1960, pp. 13-17.  
C. ZUCKER, *Psychologie de la superstition*, Paris, Payot, 1952, pp. 12-13.

although introduced to civilization by their betters, remain simple and ignorant at heart (3).

At this point, it should be made clear that superstition is not the exclusive trait of the lower classes. It is found also in the upper levels of highly civilized nations, during periods later even than the seventeenth century. "Notwithstanding the great advances made in science and in education generally, superstition exists among all classes of society in all parts of the world" (4). For example, Paul de Saint Victor did not dare to use an ink-pot which was not his own, because he feared lest his ideas could not spring from another's ink. Victorien Sardou never wrote on paper unless it was specially prepared for him; and Alexander Dumas demanded a special paper which he considered as an unique source of his wisdom (5).

## 2. A slow but steady struggle for civilization in Malta.

Although our study is limited to the seventeenth century, and, in particular, to the period when Mgr. Anthony Pignatelli (6) who was Inquisitor in Malta (1646-1649), it is important to keep in mind the following: "In 1420, at the height of the Renaissance, they (the Maltese) were scraping together 30,000 gold florins to redeem the islands from Don Consalvo Monroy, to whom they had been mortgaged by Alfonso the 'Magnanimous' and, barely four years later, they were desperately resisting an attack by a horde of Barbary corsairs. Some respite was gained in 1530 when, on the initiative of Pope Clement VII, the Islands were granted in fief to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem; but the latter had hardly settled down when, in 1565, they were subjected to a terrific onslaught and were almost overcome by the whole armed might of Suleiman the Magnificent" (7).

(3) J.G. FRAZER, *The scope of social anthropology*, united to *Psyche's task*, London, 1913, pp. 168-169.

(4) Cf. J.S. THOMPSON, *Survival of witchcraft in the 20th. century* in *E.M.K.*, v. V, pp. 2439-2445.

(5) P. MANTEGAZZA, *La psicologia delle superstizioni: lettera a Z. ZANETTI in La medicina delle nostre donne*, p. XIV.

(6) Anthony Pignatelli, a Neapolitan of noble origin, the future Vicar of Christ with the name of Innocent XII, came to Malta in December 1646. He was the successor of Mgr. Gori Pannellini, who had not left a good impression on the island, especially in the administration of justice. Though Pignatelli was not eminent for his activities, he was always very highly praised. It is enough to quote three documents that contain the expectations of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office, the impression of the Maltese, and the final praise from the part of the Pope.

"Spiace alla Sacra Congregazione che tutto sia così sconvolto, ma la prudenza di lei saprà ben tosto ridurlo a quel segno ch'è necessario per servizio di Dio e della Cattolica Religione". A.I.M., *Lettere del S. Officio all'Inquisitore di Malta* (1642-1648), ms. 8, f. 207r.

"Dal principio che gionse fece raddolcire l'odiosità del predecessore con le soavi maniere". R.M.L., Ms. 8, *Notizie dell'origine del tribunale del S. Offizio*, f. 216r.

"Io, nel darne a Vostra Signoria questo avviso l'accompagno ancora con l'attestazione che le faccio della molta sodisfattione che Sua Santità ha ricevuta da Lei nell'esercizio di cotesta carica". (The Secr. of State to Pignatelli). A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 82, f. 29r.

(7) E. SAMMUT, *Art in Malta*, Valletta, Progress, 1960, pp. 29-31.

Thus, we see that the islands of Malta were unable to take part in the great progress that the rest of Europe was undergoing because the peace and the calmness needed for both cultural and social advancement were lacking. But the approach of the seventeenth century ushered in a period of relative security, during which the major economic problems were at least minimized. During that period the ecclesiastical authorities helped in the progress of the Islands by raising their voice against the corruption that not rarely was reigning on the Islands. Hence, the Church, also in that period, in seeking to guide its faithful towards salvation played an important role for the renewal of Malta.

Just as any human being, from the cradle to the grave, strives hard to free himself from the religious, intellectual, and physical infirmities, if he really means to be civilized and he is strong enough to dominate his passions, so, in that same way, our small nation, after centuries of darkness, began to raise its reputation in the struggle for civilization, by stripping away, under the guidance of the Church, the defects emerging out of superstitions, which were proving a hindrance in the way of progress.

So, that century finds the Maltese Islands moving slowly but steadily in civilization. Through the influence of the Knights of St. John, a small class of cultured Maltese citizens was taking shape. The ideas, however, of that intellectually developed class did not permeate quickly down to the masses. In fact, such permeation is slow in every nation. Very often, by the time that the new ideas have filtered through all the strata of society, these same ideas are ready to be replaced by the latest thoughts of the educated classes.

### 3. Superstitious practices as remedies against physical disturbances.

In ancient times, in Babylon, there was a custom for those suffering from illness to be exposed in front of the temple where they could demand counsel from each passer-by concerning remedies to be used in their particular illness. The passer-by was obliged by law to respond to the sufferer's enquiry (8).

At that time, however, medical art was in its infancy. Since then, thousands of years have elapsed, and with the passing of time, man has been able to improve and expand his medical knowledge to unbelievable proportions.

Looking back on Malta of the seventeenth century, we find that here too medicine had made a discreet progress (9). Nevertheless, it did not uproot the 'Babylonian custom' which has prevailed through the centuries, and will continue to do so in one form or another so long as man exists. Simple people, at those times, rather than seek to cure themselves through accepted medical practices, sought the home remedies of their ancestors which they regarded as "sacred heritage". When they themselves could not procure the medicine, then, and only then, they accepted it from the medical practitioner. At the same time, however, they still designed to fetch some slave or woman versed in special practices of healing.

Bearing this in mind, it is no wonder that towards the middle of the

(8) Z. ZANETTI, *La medicina delle nostre donne. Studio folk-lorico*, Città di Castello, Lapi, 1892, p. 3.

(9) P. CASSAR, *Medical history of Malta*, London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1964, 568 p.

seventeenth century, we find many Moslem slaves in Malta who were accredited with special powers against disease.

Let us not, however, form the impression that the remedies prescribed by these sorcerers, whether of Moslem or of any other origin were based on mere phantasy. Generally speaking, these persons are not the source of such "wisdom". They do not create, but merely convey what they themselves have received. These practices might have had their origin, at one time or another, in legitimate medical art, but due to individual addition or diminution, they have become corrupted beyond recognition (10).

One of the most serious maladies, against which a special power was required was the "*evil-eye*". It is a belief which attributes to some persons the power of inflicting harm on others by merely looking at them. It is also believed that the evil-eye can be used on animals in order that they, in turn, will inflict harm on others.

"It was one of the most wide-spread and venerable of human beliefs, accepted by medieval authors and Fathers of the Church and primitive races everywhere" (11). "It is not limited to any one race or to one stage of culture, for in all countries certain people, especially persons with some facial peculiarity such as very penetrating eyes, are credited with the power of casting spells or curses on objects upon which the eye may rest" (12).

Here, we ought to put in an ulterior explanation. Many still discuss whether the evil-eye should be considered among the superstitions. Serious persons, on whom we can rely, point out of positive facts the existence of these evil-eyed persons. We do not mean to open a new discussion; it remains sure, however, that even if the belief in the evil-eye is not a superstition, the exorcisms used by the Maltese throughout the centuries to ward off its harmful influence are undoubtedly superstitious. Consequently our study will be limited to the *superstitious cure of the evil-eye* (13).

When the Maltese of the seventeenth century felt themselves overlooked by the evil-eye, they employed slaves or other experienced persons in order to hear their counsels and to learn their remedies. Let us consider the following passage that concerns the denunciation of a certain Narda: "Some days before Carnival, I went to visit Narda the Sicilian, the wife of a sailor that worked on the galleys... and, in my presence, she asked for some blessed olive leaves and a palm branch; then, after that she had wafted over herself the fumes of the burning leaves, she placed a plate full of water over her head, and, afterwards, threw away all the things she had burned in that plate. Following

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- (10) "Many of the remedies have no rational basis but some of them are the residuals of the medical thought of earlier generations of physicians and surgeons such as, for instance, the use of fumigations with rosemary to check the spread of infectious illnesses — a practice that still received official sanction in Malta up to the eighteenth century". CASSAR, *o.c.*, pp. 430-431.
- (11) J.W. WICKWAR, *Witchcraft and the black art* taken from R. THURSTON HOPKINS, *Ghost stories*, Surrey, World's work, 1913, p. 303.
- (12) J. CASSAR PULLICINO, *An introduction to Maltese folk-lore*, Malta, Allied Newspaper, 1947, p. 13.
- (13) For interesting references to the evil-eye and to the remedies applied by the Maltese to ward off its malicious effects throughout the centuries cf. CASSAR, *o.c.*, pp. 426-428.

that series of actions along with frequent invocations of the Blessed Trinity, she ordered her daughter to throw out in the street all the ashes of the burned leaves. On asking her why she had acted so strangely, Narda explained that she had done so because she was doubtful whether she was or was not influenced by an evil-eye" (14).

The intervention of slaves was quite frequent also in these cases. For example, Theresa Mallia's aunt called for a female slave when she was suffering from a head-ache not only to seek a remedy for her infirmity, but also to determine whether she had been bewitched (15).

According to these beliefs, it is also possible to be bewitched by our relatives and friends who also unwillingly can put a spell on us or on our possessions. It is enough for an evil-eyed person to admire your strength to cause you to feel ill. In 1617, Maruzza Agius stated that she was waiting for a moslem to cure Dominica, who had been bewitched either by her friend Pauline Calleya or by her friend's mother (16).

Again, about two years later, a certain John Francis Gauci from Valletta fetched similar illicit remedies. He knew a slave who pretended to have the power of recognizing whether a spell was cast on his wife (17); then to his discomfort, doubted whether the slave was acting licitly. In the hope of warding off the evil-eye from his wife, he consulted several other persons; each of them asked for something worn by his wife (18); but all his care was to no avail. In his vehement grief, he continued to hope that queer remedies still belonged to the natural order (19).

Despite the fact that the Maltese belonged to the Catholic Religion, there were many who were not well grounded in its tenets and were ignorant of the illicit nature of these practices. We do find a number of them, who in spite of knowing that these practices were forbidden, made use of them when all other effects had proved fruitless. Sometimes, they even went to the extent of invoking the aid of the devil.

The point can be better illustrated by the following narration: Pauline Hagius from Siggiewi was worried about the health of her daughter; she had tried all sorts of remedies, both natural and supernatural, namely medicine and prayer, but to no avail. In despair, she then sought out among the slaves a cure for the suspected evil-eye. In the slaves' prison of Valletta, a dark

(14) ". . . ciò faceva perchè dubitava che fosse fascinata". A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 143, 18 July 1648, f. 721r.

(15) "Una certa schiavà . . . la quale detta mia zia, sentendosi con un mal di testa, chiamò ad alto in casa . . . gli dimandò alcun rimedio e che gli dicesse s'era adocchiata o no". *Ib.*, n. 40, 13 Febr. 1647, f. 223r.

(16) "Mi rispose che aspettavano un infedele per curarla e perchè si disse che detta Domenica era fatturata per opera mia o di mia madre, il che non è vero". *Ib.*, n. 70, 14 June 1647, f. 336v.

(17) "Lui mi rispose che in veder una persona conoscerebbe se lei fosse malefiziata o spiritata". *Ib.*, n. 195, 22 May 1649, f. 956r.

(18) "M'ha scritto che gl'havessi mandata alcuna cosa dalli vestimenti di detta mia consorte". *Ib.*, f. 956v.

(19) "Il desiderio che havevo della salute di mia moglie mi faceva credere di poterla aggiutare in alcun modo, e che le cose naturali che mi si davano potevano fare qualche buon effetto". *Ib.*, f. 957r.

white-bearded man of about eighty was pointed out to her. She begged the old slave to visit and cure her daughter. After examining the girl, the slave boasted that he would break the spell cast over her and bring her back to health. He asked for a bowl of water, over which he placed a large basin, while whispering over some mysterious words. Then, he asked the girl to put her hand in the bowl and see whether she could find anything; she found nothing. Once again he whispered over the bowl and asked her for the second time to put her hand in. This time she found a bound up lock of hair. At this, the slave concluded that it was the effect of an evil-eye. Later on, when the mother of the girl was asked by the Inquisitor about her opinion concerning the power of the slave, she replied: "I presumed that the slave had a relationship with the devil who dictated to him how to heal" (20).

#### 4. Superstitions for the sake of love and hatred.

The contagious fear of the unknown greatly helped for the perpetuation of superstitions. Superstitious practices became the patrimony of the ordinary people. Instruments which formerly were barely a medium of healing, through their gradual mixing with mysterious words and actions, became means of magic applicable not only as a remedy against infirmities, but also as means against any physical danger.

Charms, mysterious formulas and exercisms very often form a part of the magical art. Some witchcraft, however, consists uniquely of words; words which at times are completely senseless, as, for instance those that the Maltese Francis de Mattheolo whispered to achieve his purpose: "Oriens, anvar, caron, cacan" (21). In the same vain, a Calabrian priest living in Malta taught a Maltese how to obtain whatever he desired by saying: "Ara dei, sacra cana" (22).

Generally, these words were transmitted from generation to generation in set formulas, and, to obtain their effect, they had to be repeated without the vibration of the vocal cords, word by word, and secretly. It is commonly held that the magic words lose their occult power if uttered in a loud voice or in the presence of others who are strange to the affair.

Most frequently in Malta, witchcraft consisted in words of love or hatred, for good or evil omens; such words, though insignificant in themselves, acquired their meaning and effects when accompanied by certain acts.

Glancing at the superstitions of which women were victims, we immediately notice that very frequently these refer to love. Considering that we are dealing with three hundred years ago, this is easily explained.

By their very nature, women feel an ardent desire to donate themselves to others in order that they might be loved in return. Generally, however,

(20) "Io giudicavo che quell'infedele ricorreva dal demonio il quale gli mostrava come curasse". *Ib.*, n. 94, 13 Nov. 1647, f. 457r-v.

(21) ". . . in Levante, i Turchi, per far corrompere una donna, in vederla dicevano queste parole, cioè: 'Oriens, anvar, Caron, Cacàn', però non si doveva credere a quelli canaglia. Et io due volte l'ho dette vedendo certe donne". *Ib.*, n. 73, 3 July 1647, f. 344r.

(22) ". . . m'insegnò un secreto per far corrompere qualsivoglia donna che lui vedesse e volesse con dire 'Ara dei, sacra cana', il che io non ho provato". *Ib.*, n. 60, 25 Apr. 1647, f. 285r.

there are to be wooed but not woo. Husbands normally choose their own wives but not vice-versa. The fact was especially prevalent in the past when women were not even allowed to stroll along in the streets with an uncovered face. In spite, however, of that pseudo modesty, some girls, under the pretence of taking a pinch of snuff (which among the Maltese was frequently used), adjusting their veil, picking up the handkerchief or any other object, which designedly had been let fall on the ground, did not miss an opportunity to make themselves stealthily observed when and by whom they liked (23).

When attempts to get a lover failed, or when some troubles broke up an already initiated love, they had recourse to superstitious practices. For instance, Magdalene de Stephani of Valletta called upon Antona the Sicilian to make her bring back her lover. On her insistence, Antona took the woven stuff around her temples "to fasten the repose of her lover", so that he might return to her, while reciting these words: "At two in the morning, I found myself out of doors; I found myself in the stench of death; there I found my beloved" (24).

*12 anni sono in circa essendo in ordine ad habitarla sotto l'etere  
valletta nella strada che condurrà dal convento di s. franc. verso la  
casa del p. m. r. volentieri, et mi a me stessa in alcune man  
docevo consigliare chiamato bruno salterio d'anni 20 in circa  
na grassa et magra na bagna et curata di color argenteo e q. d.  
humiditate peccata in dispetto al mio amico bruno, m'ha detto che  
si rivederle meo humore pres. tra con di sale tra con di  
uino - agio, e tra altre parole d'ammoroso, e l'humore bruno  
nel giro e per l'humore estivo con sangue di morce, con grasso  
per in stento, et come io ho fatto per tra molte altre affare mi  
similite in dice che humore al mio affare nel parlaro. D'istesso  
basso con la mano al mare, con dice come bacio al mare con  
basso il mare di 4 che manchi da me il che ho detto q. d. ha  
con l'umore meo et ho meo estivo alcune*

A DENUNCIATION (dated 1648) against Minica of Valletta by Antonetta Calleja who practised some superstitious actions in the hope of being reconciled with her beloved.

- (23) G. SEMPRINI, *Malta nella seconda metà del seicento* (da un manoscritto del tempo: 1677) in *Arch. Stor. Malta*, v. 4 (1933), p. 110.
- (24) "Prese la tovaglia di mia testa a mia instantia per legar il sonno del detto mio amico, acciò fosse ritornato da me, e di là tre mesi m'insegnò di legare il sonno dell'amico con ingroppare la tovaglia di testa e dire: 'Alle due hore fuori mi trovai, alla puzza delli morti mi trovai, la trovai l'amico colli braghi in collo' et altre parole che non mi r'cordo". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 4, 19 Dec. 1646, f. 15r.

It reads: "Sette anni in circa, essendo io andata ad habitare nella Città Valletta, nella strada che conduce dal convento di S. Francesco verso la strada del quondam Ill. S. Valdina, et ivi a me vicina ci stava una donna corteggiana chiamata Minica maltesa d'anni 40 in circa, ne grassa, ne magra, ne lunga, ne curta, di color argentino, e questa havendomi trovata in disgusto col mio amico lascivo, m'ha detto che per reconciliarlo meco havessi presi tre cocchi di sale, tre cocchi di cimin-agro, e tre altri pezzotti d'armoniac, e l'havessi buttati nel foco, e poi l'havessi estinti con acqua di mare, con gettarli poi in strada, si come io ho fatto per tre volte all'effetto sudetto. Similmente mi disse ch'havessi al medesimo effetto nel svegliarmi di notte battute con la mano il muro, con dire: 'come batto il muro così batti il cuore di N. che venghi da me', il che ho fatto per altre tre volte in circa; però non ho visto effetto alcuno".

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

About seven years ago, I went to dwell in Valletta, in the street which from St. Francis Friary leads to the house of the late illustrious gentleman Mr. Valdina. There I had as a neighbour, a courting Maltese woman named Minica who was neither fat nor thin, neither tall nor short, and grey-haired. This woman, having found me disgusted with my lover, gave me some remedies to reconcile myself to him. She told me to take three pinches of salt, three pinches of 'cimin-agro', and three pinches of ammoniac and throw them on fire; then I was ordered to extinguish the flame with sea-water and cast out everything in the street. I did all this three times for the above mentioned reason. Similarly, she told me that for the same reason, when I awoke by night, I had to beat with my hands on the wall saying: "As I am beating on the wall may the heart of N. beat for me, so that he might come to me". I did all this for another three times, but I did not see any result. (A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 51, f. 624r.).

The superstitious acts were manifest because they did not consist merely of desires or internal thoughts. The persons concerned used to visit also others and tell them what to do. For instance, Grace Greg from Birkirkara denounced herself in the following manner: "Having been disgusted with my lascivious friend, I went to the dwelling of a certain Margaret, known as 'Palamita' .....(who) taught me how to exercise the sun: "O Sun, o Sun, you will see N. and I do not see him; the head cut off, the leg stretched; o Devil, St. Lovia, make him quarrel with any other woman and come back to me" (25). Here again, some mysterious and incomprehensible words are included.

While many superstitious omens were the effect of love, similar deprecations were also the fruit of hatred and revenge. If a woman was molested by a man, she expected to drive him away by sorceries. Such was the device of Barberina Greg of Vittoriosa: "Having been disgusted with my lascivious friend... in meeting him along the street. I was instructed to murmur: 'I eat your heart and drink your blood, with five demons I fasten you'; and I said these words twice. Besides, she continued to instruct me that in the evening, when the bells tolled for the Holy Souls, I was expected to whisper: 'I darken the hour, the sky and any entrance that you might see it black, coloured, and dark; and all this to the effect that if my friend meant to go to another woman, he would not go" (26).

(25) "Sole, Sole, tu N. vedrai, et io non lo vedo. La testa tagliata, la gamba stirata, Diavolo Santa Lovia fatelo sciarrare con tutte le donne, et che hora venga dove mia". *Ib.*, n. 165, 22 Sept. 1648, f. 875r.

(26) "Il cuore ti magno, il sangue ti bevo, con cinque diavoli ti ligo . . . Oscuro l' hora e lo cielo, l'entrata che 'a possa vedere nigra e tinta, et scura". *Ib.*, n. 9, 3 Jan. 1647, f. 37r.



The preceding cases refer to women who were not married. Sorcery, however, was quite frequent also with married couples who, through illicit words and actions, tried to constrain the unfaithful consort to return to his duties. Jacobina de Lango of Valletta learned from a christian sorceress how to keep her husband away from infidelity. "The mentioned Grace taught me to murmur two words that I do not remember; I had to say then in seeing my husband that he might not go to his prostitute friend. I uttered these words ten times in the hope of having my desire granted" (27). In this case the intention was perfectly laudable but the means to achieve it were to be condemned.

Sometimes it was through the fault of the wife that agreement and harmony in the family broke down, as in the case of Augustine Vial of Valletta, who noticed that his wife had very little affection towards him; she was still exceedingly attached to her relatives. For this reason, he tried to change and transform her heart through the help of a moslem slave (28). Again in this case, we condemn only the means to regain the wife's affection.

At times the husbands were not to be blamed for being suspicious of their wives. Especially when they sailed away from Malta on the galleys of the Order, they could not be certain of their wives' behaviour. "Sometimes, it happened that when the Order's galleys returned unexpectedly during the night, the poor husband found his bed occupied by some other mate. On account of the many disorders that followed, in the hope of finding a remedy, it was ordered that if a galley pulled down the anchor in the harbour by two at night, its crew could not disembark before the following morning (29).

##### 5. Amulets and superstitious words as a precaution against any physical danger.

In ancient times, in countries outside Europe, like China, Japan, India, and Africa, fragments of human or animal bones, nails, hair, etc. were frequently used as amulets or talismans. In Europe, on the contrary, amulets consisting of magic formulas or blessings were used.

The island of Malta, under the heavy influence of the Moslems was grieved also in this respect. During the period that we are considering, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, most of the amulets found on the island were like those scattered in the European countries. "They were worn as a protection against evil spirits and to preserve one's life from accidents or death" (30).

It happened sometimes that some amulets dearly kept by the simple folk had been given them by priests who did not have the least intention of giving away amulets. Some Ecclesiastics distributed some religious relics of

(27) "M'insegnò dire due parole delle quali non mi ricordo". *Ib.*, n. 44, 23 Febr. 1647, f. 243r.

(28) "Gl'era stato mostrato un infedele che s'intendeva . . . e questo s'offerse di farmi la sudetta cosa da me desiderata con la paga di sei scudi". *Ib.*, n. 108, 9 Jan. 1648, f. 548r-v.

(29) G. SEMPRINI, *Malta nella seconda metà del seicento* in *Arch. Stor. Malta*, v. 4 (1933), p. 108.

(30) CASSAR PULLICINO, *An introduction* . . . p. 13.

saints and recommended to the people to carry them on their person; but through their ignorance, in the midst of so many illegitimate amulets, the ordinary Maltese were unable to recognize the permitted and approved devotions from the prohibited ones. For instance, Thomas Korkop kept a saint's prayer hung to his neck, but, being assailed by doubts, to unburden his conscience, he denounced himself to the Inquisitor (81).

The use of forbidden amulets procured a special power against the evil spirits because the written characters were considered to have the power of exorcising the devil. The word had to be of the shortest possible pronunciation, and could not be interchanged with another (82).

It was quite common for the Maltese of those times to attribute their preservation from diverse physical evils to the innate power of such words. For instance, Sperantia of Vittoriosa recalled that "while sighing after hearing that Emanuel, the nephew of Marcel Xeberras, was designing to murder me, an infidel slave passed by me... and, while pitying my affliction, the day after, he brought me a slip of paper written with a rugged instrument, and enjoined me to carry it on my person" (83).

According to the mentality of the superstitious Maltese, the power of a slip of paper inscribed with magical and mysterious words did not reside in the paper itself, but in the characters that it contained. Generally, the Maltese received such magical papers for the first time from an infidel; then, they used to pass them on to their friends in the hope of having them transcribed (84). Whenever the Maltese denounced themselves to the Inquisitor, they were bound to consign also the instruments of their superstitions. In one case only, however, during the Inquisitorship of Mgr. Anthony Pignatelli, such a slip of paper is found enclosed together with the documents of the proceedings, but it is not easy to decipher its characters (85).

Unluckily, it is very hard to trace these magical scripts. Such cases were very frequent, but, normally, these instruments of superstitions were not kept together with the proceedings of the Tribunal. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some forty years before the period that we are examining, the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office instructed the inquisitor *Leonetto della Corbara* (86) about his behaviour in similar affairs. When the proceedings were still pending, those magical scripts had to be cautiously kept in a safe place, not to be seen and read, if not by those who were in charge of the

(81) "Havendogli io dimandato che ricetta era quella, mi rispose ch'era d'un Santo, e però per scarico di mia coscienza sono venuto a fare detta denontia senza passione alcuna". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 50, 18 March 1647, f. 257r.

(82) C. ZUCKER, *Psychologie de la superstition*, pp. 23-30.

(83) "... l'indomani mi portò un pezzo di carta scritto con cosa rozza imponendomi che la portassi adosso". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 144, 28 July 1648, f. 723r.

(84) "Gregorio Manuelli del Gozzo m'ha detto che la detta ricetta fu copiata dal clerico Clementio". *Ib.*, n. 50, 18 March 1647, f. 257r.

(85) *Ib.*, n. 208, f. 1044r.

(86) Mgr. *Leonetto della Corbara* came as Inquisitor for the islands of Malta in the year 1607. He maintained his office only for a very short period because he did not satisfy the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome; just after about a year he was already called back to Rome. Cf. R.M.L., Ms. 8, *Notizie dell'origine del tribunale del S. Offizio*, f. 206r-v.

case; then, after the final decision of the Inquisitor, those instruments had to burnt up (37).

It is amusing to observe the simplicity of some persons who were ready to believe whatever they heard from others about the power of such scripts. For example, Thomas Corcop seemed to think that such a magical script really had extraordinary powers against fire and arms. He gave credit to a certain Clementio who had referred to him that "he had tied the magical charm to the neck of a dog, at which he fired a gun, and while the gunshot fully hit the animal, nothing happened to it" (38).

## 6. The Religion of the Maltese under the unhealthy influence of infidel slaves.

If one examines the strange beliefs (sometimes called "Taboo") of some tribes who never had any sound culture, he will conclude they had no religion in the strict sense of the word: their beliefs are based on fear. Their ancient customs, viewed as authoritative and frequently in a negative form (Thou shalt not) become like precepts when accepted by the existing society. For this reason, such religious fear binds the individuals to traditions of unknown origin. These customs, however, help in giving a moral character to the people and to open the way to a common welfare in as much as such customs shape the minds of the people in a way to form a religious sect that guides to a certain real progress (39).

If sorcery and magic completely dominate a society and are approved by the religious beliefs of the nation we cannot speak of superstition. In such a case, magic is a primitive mystical culture.

Our considerations, however, should be given to Christian countries which in some way or another always abounded in superstitious practices. In these countries "superstitious practices go back to the pre-Christian era, although as we know them today they contain unmistakable traces of the influence of Christianity in the many references to saints and to religion which the people in their ignorant piety, have blended with their superstitious beliefs" (40).

In the island of Malta, since the shipwreck of St. Paul on our shores, superstitious practices of which we do not possess clear records, permeated themselves little by little in our Religion. After the settlement of the Order of St. John in 1530, the cultured society which was gradually taking shape did its best to do away with these superstitions. Magic in Malta was only hindering our constant struggle for a realistic world because through the ignorance of the plebeians magic dimmed the beauty of our nation wide true Religion.

(37) "Ella facci abbrugiare detti scritti sortilegi et magici, et annotare in processo tal'atto, et mentre pendono le cause, proveda che tali scritti siano custoditi cautamente, in maniera che non possano esser visti et letti, se non da quelli a' quali tocca di fare la causa et formar i processi contro i delinquenti con dare in ciò gl'ordini necessari". A.I.M., *Lettere del S. Officio all'Inquisitore di Malta*, Il Card. Arigone all'Inquis. Della Corbara, 23 Aug. 1608, ms. I, f. 323r.

(38) "L'havea posta legata in un collo d'un cane, e che poi gli tirò un archibugiata con palla, e lo colse senza fargli danno alcuno". A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 50, 18 March 1647, f. 257r.

(39) H. WEBSTER, *Taboo, a sociological study*, California, Stanford Univ., 1948, p. 370.

(40) CASSAR PULLICINO, *An introduction* . . . p. 13.



The main harm to our Religion came from the fact that a great number of slaves was populating the Island. "Safety also suggested the building of the slaves' prison. There was a large number of them in Valletta in the service either of the Order or of private families and they were naturally the cause of great worry to the Government. Verdala constructed a large prison for them in Strada Cristoforo where he obliged them to spend the night. He also laid down a number of restrictions amongst which the wearing of a chain of six ounces or more around the ankle, the shaving of the head with the exception of a tail — like twist at the back of the head — and the prohibition of leaving the city, approaching the coast or entering a boat unless in the company of their master" (41).

The great number of slaves was the effect of the Maltese privateering during those centuries. "The Maltese were among the finest sailors of the Mediterranean, a fact attested by many sources, and, though estimates are difficult, between roughly 1650 and 1750 about half the able bodied male population was at sea during the greater part of the year. Raiding raiders was the concern of the galleys; the Maltese corsairs turned their attentions to civilian shipping in the Levant and the Aegean with such success that the sight of the Maltese flag in the waters of Rhodes and Cyprus and Alexandria was enough to put all shipping back into port until some sort of escort had been summoned by the local Pasha from Smyrna or Sidon" (42).

The material gain resulting from that privateering increased not only by the booty plundered from the Turkish galleys, but also by the capturing of the Moslems themselves. While the capture of slaves somewhat helped to mitigate the extreme poverty of the island, it became harmful to the people's spiritual welfare because the slaves communicated to the Maltese their magic beliefs and practices. Consequently, Malta overflowed with superstitious scripts, mixtures, and filters (43).

It should be observed that whenever the Moslems had a part in these magical practices there was not even the slightest relation to Religion: they invoked neither the name of God nor of the devil (44). In the majority of cases, the Maltese themselves went in search of the Moslem slaves. Sometimes they were perplexed what to do or where to go; but knowing that some slaves

(41) LAFERLA, *The story of man in Malta*, pp. 78-79.

(42) R.E. CAVALIERO, *The decline of the Maltese Corso in the eighteenth century in Mel. Hist.*, v. 2, n. 4 (1959), pp. 224-225.

(43) "Sortilegorum dein maxime occasione infidelium et meretricum, et sortilegarum processus Inquisitionis vix ullum habent finem". S. SALELLES, S.J., *De materiis tribunalium S. Inquisitionis*, Roma, Gollini, 1651, Prolog. XIII, n. 1.

The present study fully confirms what J. Cassar Pullicino wrote about the influence of slaves in Malta: "Slaves exerted a direct influence on certain practices and beliefs held by Maltese women": *Malta as a place for folklore research in Maltese Folklore Review*, v. 1, n. 1 (1962), p. 1.

(44) Our deductions are based on the attestations of the trials in front of Mgr. Anthony Pignatelli (1646-1649); undoubtedly, these three years reflect the mentality of the Maltese in the middle of the seventeenth century. We do not mean, however, to extend our judgement to other periods. Cf. A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61.



Nos Antonius Pignatellus, Utriusque Signaturae Domini Nostri Papae Referendarius, in insula Melitae, locisque adiacentibus contra hereticam pravitatem Generalis Inquisitor et Apostolicus Delegatus.

Essendo il Santo Sacrificio della Messa misterio altissimo e sacramento della Chiesa tanto principale al quale si deve somma riverenza e culto, e conseguentemente a gl'altri officii divini, e per ciò dalli Sacri Canonii è stato meritamente proibito a gl'Hebrei et Infedeli, che non credino, ne intendono così grandi misterii, anzi tal volta se ne burlano, l'assistenza nella chiesa mentre si celebrano le Messe e Divini Officii. Per tanto noi, per debito dell'officio nostro, e per ordine particolare che ne teniamo, riduciamo alla memoria de fedeli le pie et antiche ordinationi, et proibiamo espressamente a tutti gl'Infedeli et Hebrei di star in chiesa in detto tempo, esortando e comandando ad ogni e qualunque persona ecclesiastica e secolare di qualsisia stato grado, sesso, e conditione etiam della Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana, che non debbano lasciar dimorare nelle chiese, durante il tempo del Sacrificio della Santa Messa e Divini Officii; i loro schiavi Infedeli o Hebrei, homini e donne, sotto qualsiasi quesito colore o pretesto d'accompagnamento o altro ossequio, sotto pena della scomunica, et altre pene a nostro arbitrio, e perchè con publico scandalo s'intende che tanto le persone benemerite, quanto di mala vita tengono nelle chiese a'tempo di Divini Officii le loro schiave Infedeli vestite e coperte con manti come loro stesse, sì che da non conoscenti nascano varii scandali e pericoli, perciò comandiamo sotto le pene come sopra a padroni e padrone di qualsisia stato e conditione che s'astenghino di lasciar dimorare detti Infedeli nelle chiese in tempi di Divini Officii, e dichiariamo che si procederà ancora contro gl'Infedeli medesimi alla pena della frusta in caso della sudetta contraventione.

Datum in Palatio Sancti Officii Melitensis, die 8 Aprilis 1648.

A. Pignatellus, Inquisitor et Delegatus Apostolicus.

physical ailments (47); also Maruzza Agius asked for their help against the evil-eye (48). Others tried to flee away from home through the help of an amulet given by slaves (49). Finally, an infinite number of persons tried to find a way to get a lover or how to bring back a lost one through the help of slaves. (50).

Nevertheless, the infidels were not the only ones who suggested vain superstitious practices. It may be that persons of other nationalities were influenced by the Moslems themselves or by customs common in other European countries; but the fact remains that if one compares the methods used by other foreigners it is at first sight clear that they had a great resemblance to the Moslem practices. On the contrary, filters and charms were used by the Maltese not only to invoke God and his saints, but also to summon the devil.

(47) "Il detto infedele dava il medesimo rimedio al clerico Mariano Caruana". *Ib.*, n. 15, 18 Jan. 1647, f. 77r.

(48) "Mi rispose che lei la curava per un infedele, il quale gl'havea data una pignata con non so che dentro, imponendogli di metterla sotto l'inferma, e che poi spezzasse in una via crociata, et un'altra volta gl'impose detto infedele di portargli la tovaglia di testa di detta inferma, alla quale doveva attaccargli la detta inferma tarì doi con la mano sinistra, sì come ha fatto". *Ib.*, n. 70, 14 June 1647, f. 336r.

(49) "Trovandomi io molto maltrattata da miei parenti nella mia casa, hebbi pensiero di fugirmene, et in tal modo trovar la mia sorte, il che havendo io conferito con uno schiavo . . . mi diede una polizza scritta in turchesco, dicendomi che con quella haveria potuto fugire senza poter haver male dalli miei". *Ib.*, n. 64, 21 May 1647, f. 298r.

(50) *Ib.*, n. 15, 18 Jan. 1647, ff. 77r-80v; n. 44, 23 Febr. 1647, ff. 243r-248v; n. 56, 16 Apr. 1647, ff. 275r-280v; n. 71, 19 June 1647, ff. 340r-341v; n. 108, 9 Jan. 1648, ff. 548r-551v; n. 135, 10 June 1648, ff. 684r-691v; n. 194, 12 May 1649, ff. 950r-955v.

For instance, a Jewish witch predicted the future by examining the hands of a girl and by throwing oil in water, but she was mocked at (51). A Neapolitan fellow offered to others a written amulet, just the same as the Moslems did (52). A Neapolitan sorceress placed on fire a triangle formed of three nails, while she fixed a black-handled knife at the outside part of the window and other one under the bed in order to call back the lover of a certain Maltese woman (53). A Greek person expected to restore to health even a Brown-Franciscan priest through magic acts and words (54). The only person among foreigners who resembled the Maltese Christians in using superstitious means was a Sicilian woman who mixed together charms and filters with the invocation of God and his saints (55).

### 7. Charms and filters in the hands of the Maltese.

Under the heavy influence of infidel slaves and wicked Christians, magico-religious practices became very common in Malta, especially among those of the weaker sex. It is not surprising therefore, that the inhabitants of the Island, in their simplicity obtained a thorough knowledge of many superstitions and overvalued them. The magico-religious practices "usually represent a mixture of pagan and Christian beliefs and rites. They comprise the use of charms, such as carrying a dried fig in one's pocket against piles or a dried fish for the cure of rheumatism; the uttering of magic words with occult healing powers; and the use of invocations, incantations and exorcisms either by themselves or in conjunction with the administration of supposedly curative substances such as fumigations with laurel and olive leaves and the drinking of potions, etc. In this combined method, however, more stress is laid upon the magico-religious element than upon the herb or drug itself" (56).

Undoubtedly, some Maltese women gained their living by procuring charms and filters, but this was not very common. Generally, the Maltese did not

- (51) "Vedendo la pianta della mano mi disse che mio marito fra tre mesi doveva arrivare . . . senza dargli credito". *Ib.*, n. 101, 23 Dec. 1647, f. 501r.
- (52) "Mi mostrò una certa scritta con certi caratteri, quali mi disse che gli l'haveva dato un certo Napolitano". *Ib.*, n. 50, 18 March 1647, f. 257r.
- (53) "Una donna Napolitana chiamata Catarina . . . si ritirò in casa m'a per 8 giorni, e poi andò in scicli, e questa un giorno mese un rettangolo su il foco con tre chiodi, e piantò un coltello alla porta della fenestra con manico negro, et un altro sotto il mio letto, e disse l'haverli fatti per lei e per me per venir da me il mio amico lascivo". *Ib.*, n. 9, 3 Jan. 1647, f. 38r.
- (54) "Un Grego quale sanava la melsa . . . mi ha fatto mettere il mio piede manco sopra un foglio di fico d'India, e poi in giro del mio piede andò tagliando il detto foglio mentre la sua moglie diceva: 'Che cosa fate?' e lui li rispondeva: 'Taglio la melsa di Fra Paolo', quali parole loro replicorno per tre volte". *Ib.*, n. 209, 20 May 1649, f. 1048r-v.
- (55) "La quondam Antona, detta la Siciliana, quale sei mesi sono s'era partita da Malta e andata in Sicilia . . . prese novi para di fave e segnò una d'esse per maschio, l'altra per donna, un'altra ha partita per mezzo segnando una parte il luogo della casa, e l'altra per parte del cuore dell'amico, mescolando con essi un picciolo, un pezzetto di pane, un altro di carbone, un cocchio di sale, et un pizzotto di carta con dir un 'Ave Maria' et un 'Pater Noster' in honore di S. Elena". *Ib.*, n. 4, 19 Dec. 1646, f. 15r-v.
- (56) CASSAR, *Medical history of Malta*, p. 425.

make use of the services of their fellow country-men once many foreigners dwelled on the Island. Quite frequently, they communicated their experience to others, but only out of friendship or neighbourliness, without any personal interest or gain. For instance, this is the denunciation of Antonetta Calleya: "About seven years ago, having gone to live in the city Valletta, in the street that runs from St. Francis Friary to the house of a certain illustrious gentleman, Mr. Va'dina, I had as my neighbour a courting woman named Min'ca. Finding me disgusted with my beloved, this Minica once told me to take three pots of salt... and to throw everything in the street" (57).

In the above mentioned cases there is no sign of Religion, but it is worthwhile noticing that some of those who indulged in such superstitious practices did not imagine that they were acting against the faith. Most of them never thought to associate themselves with the devil whenever their intentions were honest (58). Besides, it was not uncommon for persons who were expected to be better than the ordinary folk to adapt superstitious methods to exercise the devil himself.

There is case in which a priest, two Carmelite friars and a layman were involved. Entering a cave with the intention to free it from the devil, they lighted a candle, recited devoutly the Symbol, called of St. Athanasius, 'Quicumque', and just dug into a side of the cave; but Fr. Philip Cagliola, a Franciscan Conventual Consulor of the Holy Office (59), warned them of the obligation to denounce themselves to the Inquisitor (60). Fr. Philip Farrugia justified himself before the Inquisitor by saying: "I imagined that by lighting the candle 'of darkness' and in doing the other mentioned things, we could drive away the devils that might have dwelled in that place" (61).

If some priests who lacked a sound formation in theology indulged themselves in such superstitious practices, it is not surprising to find such idle acts

(57) ". . . ci stava una donna corteggiata chiamata Min'ca, Maltese d'anni 40 in circa . . . questa havendomi trovata in disgusto col mio amico lascio mi ha detto che per riconciliarlo meco havessi presi tre cocci di sale, tre cocci di cimin-agro, e tre altri pezzotti d'armoniaco, e l'havessi buttato nel foco, e poi l'havessi estinti con acqua di mare con gettarli poi in strada, si come ho fatto per tre volte all'effetto sudetto". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 123, 24 March 1648, f. 624r.

(58) It is interesting to read the following case: "la detta quondam Barbarica . . . m'accomodò il sale, e m'ha buttato le fave all'effetti da me sopra detti. Di più la medesima Barbarica nel detto tempo m'insegnò dire per 9 volte innante la figura di Santo Vito: 'Beato Santo Vito che fosti amico del nostro Signore, una gratia ti domandasti come fedele servitore' et altre parole delle quali non mi ricordo, in ginocchione, perchè il mio amico fosse reconciliato meco; il che habbiamo fatto insieme per due volte a 9 volte la volta". *ib.*, n. 4, 19 Dec. 1646, f. 16r.

(59) Cf. B. FIORINI, O.F.M.Conv., *Father Philip Cagliola O.F.M.Conv.* in *The Teacher's Magazine*, v. 3 (1945), pp. 437-442.  
B. FIORINI, *I Frati Minori Conventuali a Malta* in *Misc. Franc.*, v. 65 (1965), pp. 323-324.

(60) ". . . però essendo stato avvertito dal P.re M.ro Cagliola che la detta nostra attione sia stata soperstitiosa, sono venuto a scarricare mia coscienza". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 129, 22 Apr. 1648, f. 656r.

(61) "Entrassemo nella presupposta grotta del detto avvertimento, et accesa la candela delle tenebre, da me portata solamente, io e li detti frati per devotione dissemo il Simbolo di S. Atanasio 'Quicumque', e poi non havendo fatto altro se non scavato un poco in un lato della grotta, siamo usciti fuori". *ib.*, f. 656r.



far more common among ordinary Christians who were unable to make a distinction between Religion and superstition. A certain Ann was accustomed to use love-filters, but she also firmly believed that on certain days they could not be effective. She was denounced by Angela Gregh of Valletta: "I have seen this Ann lighting a candle in front of the image of St. Anthony to obtain from him a reconciliation with her lover; she also added that since that day was Saturday, sortilges were of no avail; on that day it was necessary to recite an 'Our Father' and a 'Hail Mary' in honour of St. Anthony" (62). Likewise, Magdalene de Stephani was not satisfied with the superstitious practices; she added also some fervent prayers and other invocations in honour of St. Helen (63).

That good faith, which can be easily ascribed to ignorance, cannot be found in other cases when the devil was invoked for evil purposes. At times, during superstitious act itself, they did not even think of the evil spirit, but, then, they themselves declared that as Christians they should keep themselves aloof from these extraordinary means. Here is the sincere self-accusation of one of these poor women: "At that time, I was oppressed by love; so I considered neither this nor any other thing; but now I understand that the effect had to be expected from the devil, because God does not want evil things" (64).

Others, however, were to be condemned from the very beginning. Theirs was not an act of inconsideration because they went directly in search of the devil's aid. For instance, Joseph Deguenara, oppressed by the vehemence of uncorresponded love, invoked the devil for four times to inflame the heart of his beloved so that she might hear how much his heart was beating for her (65). Similar is also the case of Margarita Cosbor of Zabbar who spoke to the devil saying: "O Satan, go and inflame the heart of N. as I am burning this salt" (66).

A suspicion of a possible interference of the devil may have some ground in the case of Rinalda Torrento of Valletta, who, some time after her unpleasant experience, decided to serve God in the monastic life. "Josephine, called the pimp, a Maltese, that I may be loved in return by my lover... told me to make my bed because she would call in it the devils so that anyone that might have gnawn me lasciviously in that bed would become fond of me. She gave me also a sign: after making the bed, I would find it spoilt and disordered.

(62) "Haveva acceso una candela innante la figura di S. Antonio per reconciliarsi l'amico, dicendomi che per essere quel giorno di sabbato, non servevano li sortilegii, e che bisognava dire l'Ave Maria et il Pater Noster in honore di S. Antonio". *Ib.*, n. 3, 19 Dec. 1646, f. 9v.

(63) "Beata Santa Lena, che fosti madre di re Costantino, per la santa nave che montasti, per la santa tavola che trovasti, per la Santa Ecclesia che tu havisti, per la Santa Croce che trovasti, mostrami la verita in queste fave, se l'amico mio mi vuol bene". *Ib.*, n. 4, 17 Dec. 1646, f. 15v.

(64) "Io allora oppressa d'amore non ho pensato a questo ne ad altra cosa, però adesso io intendo che l'effetto doveva sperarsi dal demonio, e che Iddio non vuole le cose mali". *Ib.*, n. 123, 24 March 1648, f. 624v.

(65) "Accesi il fuoco, et in esso buttai del sale, invocando il demonio per 4 volte ch'havesse abbrugiato il cuore della detta mia amica in amarmi conforme io amavo lei". *Ib.*, n. 13, 15 Jan. 1647, f. 59r.

(66) "Satanosso, va abbrugiare il cuore di N. come io abbrug'o questo sale". *Ib.*, n. 131, 8 May 1648, f. 660r.

In fact, after making the bed and keeping the room under lock and key, I found it spoiled and disordered" (67). The further explanation of the victim convinces us of her sincerity; she was also in danger of being possessed by the devils, but when she denounced herself, ten years later, she was already a nun in St. Mary Magdalene's Convent in Valletta (68).

### 8. The contempt of superstitions in Malta.

As we have noticed, the Maltese quite often used filters and mixtures, procured love and lucky charms for themselves and for others, and wore on written amulets; but were they really convinced of the infallible effects of that magic? Not at all.

At first, those who were not thoroughly confident had at least some trust to achieve what they aimed at. Very often, however, it was through illusion that they thought they had regained health through their practices; the fever or head-ache ran its proper natural course and the person consequently returned to normal.

If those methods enjoyed a real power in themselves, there would be no need to repeat them over and over again (69). Besides, those repetitions meant for them a lot of money extorted especially by the Moslem slaves. One must not forget, however, that certain ointments admittedly possessed medicinal properties in themselves, but they added to them the magic words, just as if the effects could not be produced in a natural way. Sometimes, other persons counselled these practices to show off their ability in front of others.

Those who were strongly attached to superstitions very often lost all their faith in them because they soon experienced their inefficacy. For instance, Mattheola Mentuf, after carrying on her person a written amulet for about a month, in the hope of her husband's return, threw it away when she saw that it had no effect (70). Likewise, Antoinette Calleya prepared some mixtures, but she was completely disappointed (71). Sperantia of Vittoriosa wanted to

(67) "M'ha detto che io havessi accomodato il mio letto, perchè haverebbe fatto venire li demoni in esso perchè chi m'havesse conosciuta lascivamente in esso, m'havesse vo'suta bene, e per controsegno mi disse che io l'haverei trovato da accomodato che fosse, guasto et imbrogliato, si come in effetto havendo io accomodato il letto et serrata la cammera a chiave, poi apertola, ho trovato detto letto guasto et imbrogliato". *Ib.*, n. 194, 18 Apr. 1649, f. 950r.

(68) For clear examples of the confusion between Religion and superstition in Malta up to our century, cf.: L. BONELLI, *Saggi del folklore dell'isola di Malta*, Palermo, Giornale di Sicilia, pp. 29-34.

(69) "Quali parole io allora dissi all'effetto circa 10 volte". A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 44, 23 Febr. 1647, f. 243r.

"Il che ho fatto allora tre volte". *Ib.*, n. 53, 2 Apr. 1647, f. 265r.

"Il che ho fatto per altre tre volte in circa". *Ib.*, n. 123, 24 March 1648, f. 624r.

"Quali al medesimo sudetto effetto buttai da cinquanta volte". *Ib.*, n. 165, 22 Sept. 1648, f. 875r.

(70) "L'ho portato sopra per circa un mese, e poi senza effetto l'ho buttato via". *Ib.*, n. 71, 19 June 1647, f. 340r.

(71) "Però non ho visto effetto alcuno". *Ib.*, n. 123, 24 March 1648, f. 624r.

safeguard herself from any danger of being murdered, but she soon got rid of the amulet used (72).

Others who were not so credulous wondered how anybody could have ever believed such nonsense. These persons either tried to convince their fellow-countrymen not to overvalue the superstitious filters and amulets or, as we do to-day, heartily laughed at them. John Domin'c Muscat showed a small stone to Fr. Saviour, telling him that there were some who were attributing a special power to that stone; but he himself considered it nothing but scandal (73). John Francis Gauci happened to be persuaded to call in a slave to help him have his wife recovered, but seriously doubted whether the slave's words and actions were honest and threw him out (74). Others were convinced that they should not believe to what those rogues said (75), and if any credit was ever given to them, it was generally out of human weakness or ignorance (76).

Some persons acted as fortune-tellers without being requested, but they were soon exposed as fakes because they showed lack of intelligence; and owing to the inconsiderate manner of presenting themselves to the public, they soon lost all credit. Let us examine the denunciation of Andreana Martin, a married girl of just 14 years old: "About a month ago, a Jewess who used to go selling along the streets, came to me. In examining my hands, she began to say that my husband would be back to Malta without any trouble in three months time, but I laughed at what she said, because my husband was here in Malta. Then, she took a vessel containing water and poured in it some oil while murmuring certain words; then, she went on to say that the husband of my sister Giovanella had to return to Malta within a month. The month already elapsed and he did not appear. She continued also to say that the three galleys that had sailed to Messina would be back within five days; but in all that she said we made fun of her and we did not give any credence to her words" (77).

In those times, some manuscripts purporting to teach magic secretly passed from hand to hand; but even these manuscripts were far from enjoying credibility. Most persons, at least after their first or second experience, lost all faith in them. For instance, two young priests, Fr. Philip Bonnici and Fr. Vincent Mangion, narrated their experience of past years. The case had happened sixteen years before when they were still schoolmates. They had found a manuscript of recipes how to avoid physical evils and how to find a lover; out of their juvenile curiosity, they determined to try the love-pres-

(72) "Io per tre giorni l'ho portata e doppo l'ho buttata via". *Ib.*, n. 144, 28 July 1648, f. 723r.

(73) L'ho preso dalla detta Cianciolina solo per mostrarlo, e perchè mi sono maravigliato del sudetto dire di detta Cianciolina, havendo giudicato la detta pietra esser cosa di scandalo". *Ib.*, n. 141, 11 July 1648, f. 715r.

(74) "Io entrai in sospetto che esso infedele non operava cose licite . . . all' hora dissi alla detta signora mia socera che non permettesse che detto schiavo fosse entrato più in casa". *Ib.*, n. 195, 12 May 1649, f. 956r.

(75) "Non si doveva credere a quelli canaglia". *Ib.*, n. 73, 3 July 1647, f. 344r.

(76) "Fu senza riflessione per mia ignoranza, non ch'havessi creduto che queste parole potevano fare il detto effetto". *Ib.*

(77) "Però il tutto noi habbiamo fatto burlando della detta Giudea, senza dargli credito alcuno". *Ib.*, n. 101, 23 Dec. 1647, f. 501r.

criptions. "Then, jointly with my schoolmate, I began to boil the finger-nails in oil over a fire, but failing to see any effect, as predicted in the script, we threw everything in the fire and did not try any other prescription" (78). When one of the two priests was questioned whether the human free will could be moved by witchcraft, he answered: "At that time, I knew nothing about it; but now, since I am a Christian, I do not believe in it at all" (79).

That was the common mentality, but in some instances certain individuals asserted that they had obtained their petitions. When others felt that they had been frustrated and deceived, the sorcerers accused them of their little faith in their practices. On some occasions they had serious troubles with the infidels. For example, Catharinuzza Napulu applied every remedy prescribed by a slave, but to no avail, except that she began to suffer from a head-ache; when she informed the slave of her present situation, he accused her of the lack of faith, with a consequence that a quarrel ensued among them by insulting each other (80). Joseph Scarso of Valletta had the same degree of credulity: at first he believed in them because he was told that faith was necessary, but immediately perceived that also with his trust in them he could not obtain anything; so he ceased to give them any more credit (81).

Perhaps the real perpetual victims of superstitions were those who imagined that they were obtaining recoveries or something else through these extraordinary actions. Some persons admitted that they had seen surprising phenomena: perhaps they were in the presence of a juggler. For instance, Antonio Oliveri demonstrated to Antonio Randazzo of Lentini how he could draw a triangle on his wrist and thrust a thorn in its centre without any flowing of blood (82). Here, however, the case is quite different: no predictions, no recoveries, no amulets, but only an action which cannot be performed by ordinary people, but can be realized without any superstition by a man of ability after study, observation, and practice.

Perhaps, in rare cases, a true intervention of the devil has to be admitted. "While princes and warriors were toying with the dangerous mysteries of the occult sciences, influencing the destinies of states", also in Malta, there had been "a gradual increasing develop of sorcery in different direction among the

- (78) "Mesemo a bullire le nostre uguna nell'oglio, et scrissemo col proprio sangue le parole nelle foglie di noce, però essendosi abbrugiato l'oglio su il foco e non havendo visto effetto alcuno delle foglie scritte, abbruggiammo il libro, e non ci siamo serviti ne dell'una ne dell'altra ricetta". *Ib.*, n. 45, 11 March 1647, f. 219r.
- (79) "In quel tempo io non sapevo niente di questo; però adesso come Christiano credo che no". *Ib.*
- (80) "Et essendo detto infedele ritornato da me, havendogli detto che in haver messo in testa il poliziesco sentii dolori, mi disse che questo era successo perchè ero Luterana e non credevo a queste sue cose, et io gli risposi che era lui Luterano, e lo cacciai via, e lui mi disse che m'haveria fatta una cosa che m'haveria strozzata". *Ib.*, n. 135, 10 June 1648, f. 684v.
- (81) "In quei sortilegii ch'io ho fatti ci ho creduto perchè chi mi l'insegnò disse doverci credere, ma è ben vero che quando poi non ho veduto l'effetti, ci ho perso ogni fede". *Ib.*, n. 125, 7 Apr. 1648, f. 650r.
- (82) "All' hora mi disse il secreto, et è che con una spingola si segna nel luogo del polso a modo di triangolo e poi ficca la detta spingola in mezzo del triangolo con dire: 'scarapapi, scutumello', et altre parole, et infine: 'entra diavolo'". *Ib.*, n. 197, 28 Apr. 1649, f. 988r.

despised peasantry, which before it ran its course, worked far greater evils than any which has thus far sprung from the same source, and left an ineffaceable stain upon the civilization and intelligence" (83). Its practitioners were never learned persons, but ignorant peasants, generally women. They were credited to have frequent relations with the devil, and for this reason they were feared or hated. The above mentioned case referring to a girl who found her bed in disorder after making it and locking the door contains something which is beyond the natural order (84). The possibility of the devil's interference is well grounded if one examines the perverse intentions of immorality in the girl who is involved.

### 9. Superstitions at the Inquisition Tribunal.

The inquisitor *Frederick Borromeo* (85) in his report about the Holy Office in Malta referred to the cases of superstition on the island of Malta in the middle of the seventeenth century. When he drew a list of the denunciations which were quite frequent, those that refer to superstitions were put in the first place.

The Maltese Inquisition judged the infidels, who, after falling into slavery strolled along the city of Valletta, and under the pretext of selling merchandise, they were communicating their miserable creeds. They used to spread among women and simple persons any kind of superstitions, charms, love-remedies, and other similar vanities (86). In Malta, during that period, one of the main worries of the Inquisitor was that of not permitting particularly the Moslem slaves to spread their evils. The Inquisitor had to defend the faith strenuously in order to avoid all dangers of apostasy and heresy; but after a century from the foundation of the Holy Tribunal in Malta (1561), numerous superstitions were still wide spread throughout the island. After examining the 209 denunciations, during the period of Anthony Pignatelli as Inquisitor

(83) H.C. LEA, *A history of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, New York, Harper, 1888, v. 3, p. 492.

(84) A.I.M., *ib.*, n. 194, 13 Apr. 1649, f. 950r. Cf. here note 67.

(85) *Frederick Borromeo*, the nephew of the famous Frederick Borromeo mentioned by Alessandro Manzoni in the "*Promessi Sposi*", came to Malta in the year 1653. He was the successor of Charles Cavalletti who had died in Malta. Although most of the Inquisitors did not like to stay in Malta, Borromeo was quite glad to be in this office. He would have stayed for a longer period if his mother did not ask the Pope incessantly to take him back to Rome. He continued to repair the Palace of the Holy Office in Vittoriosa. During the first year, he kept quite good relations with Grand Master Lascaris and the Order of the Knights: in fact he is the last Inquisitor who regularly kept his seat in the Conventual Church of St. John. Later on, on account of his intrigues in the internal affairs of the Order, he began to have some trouble with the Knights. He left the Island in the year 1654.

For the essential documents about Borromeo see:

A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 9, Lettere originali dell'Inquisitore di Malta Mons. Fed. Borromeo alla Segreteria, dal 11 genn. 1653 al 3 sett. 1654, ff. 5-68.

A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 82A, Registro di lettere della Segreteria all'Inquisitore dal 17 genn. al 22 Agosto 1654, ff. 2-5.

R.M.L., Ms. 8, *Notizie dell'origine del Tribunale del S. Offizio*, ff. 217v-218r.

(86) F. BORROMEO, *Relazione di Malta e suo inquisitorato* (published from ms. 23, ff. 237r-261r of the R.M.L.) in *Malta Letteraria*, s.II, v. 2 (1927), p. 189.

on the Island, we can safely conclude that throughout the Island, without any distinction between cities and villages, one could scarcely successfully hope to uproot the evil resulting from superstitions. A closer examination of Pignatelli's period conclusively proves that the majority of cases came from the cities of Valletta, Vittoriosa, and Senglea: that is from those places which were feeling the greatest influence of Moslem slaves.

The Inquisition Tribunal was not enough to eradicate that evil. Mgr. Duzzina, the first Inquisitor and Apostolic Delegate, in 1576, had already dealt against those women who were suspected of magic and sorcery (87). "The parish priest of Naxxar informed the Apostolic Visitor that in his village there were some women who fumigated sick animals with burned laurel leaves; they also uttered certain words unknown to him, while going round the animal" (88). At that time (1591), "Bishop Tommaso Gargallo banned all books on astrology, necromancy, palmistry and other forms of divination, and condemned all those who exercised the magic art" (89). Not even the moderate measures of the seventeenth century had any success in eradicating the common superstitions. In the first decades of that century, "Bishop Balthasar Cagliares (1614-1688) condemned superstitious practices: 'sorcerers as well as evil-doers, enchanters, fortune-tellers and witches holding intercourse with the devil and making use of images and figures, or of signs, letters or dreams to harm other people, were to be denounced to the Sacred Tribunal of the Inquisition'" (90). In glancing through another report towards the last years of the Tribunal's existence in Malta, (1777), we notice that superstitions up to that time remained one of the Inquisitor's worries (91).

The Holy Tribunal, established to safeguard the faith and morals on the Island could not behold indifferent the faults of those persons who were as a hindrance to other in the pure preservation of their beliefs. The mentality of that age demanded a severe judgement by the Inquisition Tribunal. If the norms in practice in those times are examined, similar prescriptions are to be found: "If a Jew or any other infidel is found guilty, the mentioned Pontiff (Gregory XIII in a Brief of 1581) demands the Inquisitor to punish him according to the quality, frequency, and manner of the crimes. They are to be condemned either to suffer whipping, or to row on the galleys, even for life, or to the forfeiture of their property, or to be sent to exile, or to be punished in some other atrocious penalty. Their punishment should stand as an example to prevent other scoundrels from repeating similar errors, crimes, and wickedness" (92).

The Instructions given to each Inquisitor on his departure for Malta give a clear idea of his duties in respect of anything related in some way or

(87) J. CASSAR PULLICINO, *Malta in 1575. Social Aspect of an Apostolic Visit in Mel. Hist.*, v. 2, n. 1 (1956), p. 37.

(88) CASSAR, *Medical History of Malta*, p. 426.

(89) CASSAR, *ib.*

(90) CASSAR PULLICINO, *An introduction . . .* pp. 13-14.

(91) "Le cause più frequenti della Inquisizione sono quelle di bestemmia e sortilegi". A.I.M., *Memorie di Mons. Zondadari*, t. 1, Relazione generale del sistema politico di Malta presentata a Clemente XIV da Mons. Manciforte e da esso comunicata: nel giugno dell'anno 1777, f. 269 (N.N.).

(92) A.I.M., *Prattica per procedere nelle cause del Sant'Officio*, f. 61.

another to superstitions. Throughout the seventeenth century, each instruction speaks of the frequency of superstitious practices in Malta (93). The Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office reminded each new Inquisitor that he should not believe that the persons denounced were really working extraordinary things through the devil (94). Notwithstanding this, they were to be punished. Their practices, though vain, were deceiving the simple and incautious folk; in this way, many persons were wasting money in the illicit quest of love, hatred or in any other personal interest (95). The Holy Tribunal firmly believed however, that the devil might have interfered when invoked; moreover, something which could not be done by mere humans could have been procured by the evil spirit. For this reason, the Inquisitor was bound to examine diligently every denunciation so as to see whether the devil really shared in and used all his faculties (96).

The evil of superstitions in Malta was extremely contagious. As we have already seen, the superstitious practices very easily passed on from one person to another. In fact, Borromeo, in his report goes on to say that many other cases that came up before the Inquisition Tribunal referred to those "who, having fallen into the trap of these depraved persons, co-operated with them in giving them credit, in experiencing the magic practices for themselves, and also in teaching them to others" (97).

In most cases of superstition, the Maltese sought the Inquisitor of their own accord to denounce themselves and to ask for the ecclesiastical absolution in the external forum. Notwithstanding this, some of them, for years, did not care to make the denunciation; others did not know about their obligation; sometimes they presented themselves after many years: after ten or fifteen years, or even more.

In another report of that period we find that an Italian, who disliked the Maltese, openly manifested the esteem enjoyed by the Inquisitor on the Island: "They hold in a very high esteem the protection of the Inquisition Tribunal to which they frequently have recourse" (98). In spite of this, no

(93) Bibl. Vat., *Borg. Lat.*, ms. 558, Instr. a Mons. Gori (1939).

A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 186, Instr. a Mons. Marescotti (1664).

A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 151, Instr. a Mons. Spinola (1703).

Bibl. Linc. Roma, Ms. 35, C. 3, Instr. a Mons. Brancacci (1654).

*Mgr. Stephen Brancacci* was earmarked as successor of Frederick Borromeo for the Inquisitorship of Malta. The Holy Office had already prepared his instructions which we were able to examine in the Biblioteca dei Lincei in Rome. However, Borromeo's successor was Julius Degli Oddi who is remembered for his unsuccessful attempts against De Redin, who, in spite of the Inquisitor's antagonism, succeeded to obtain the highest dignity in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

(94) "... non possano operare per mezo de' malefici quelle cose che naturalmente sono impossibili". A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 151, f. 27r.

(95) "Sotto i pretesi malefici e stregarie si racchiudono illusioni et inganni rivolti a deludere le persone semplici et incaute, et a cacciar denari dalle mani de' proclivi a gli amori, a gli odii, et all'interesse". *Ib.*

(96) "Sarà parte della prudenza di Vostra Signoria il non credere che tutto quello che si puol fare dal demonio, sia fatto, et in non discredere, che in qualche parte non si sia posto in esecuzione". *Ib.*, ms. 186, f. 93r-v.

(97) BORROMEO, *l.c.*, p. 89.

(98) G. SEMPRINI, *Malta nella seconda metà del seicento* in *Arch. Stor. Malta*, v. 4 (1933), p. 107.

one liked to be charged before the Inquisitor. When a person was summoned to present himself, anyone that knew the fact presumed that he was guilty of offences against faith or morals (99). For this reason, some priests while hearing confessions came across serious problems. Many persons were afraid to present themselves to the Tribunal. The inquisitor *Diotallevi* (100), at the request of many confessors, wrote to the Holy Office in Rome to ask for a special faculty of absolving 'in foro conscientiae' those persons guilty of superstitious practices who refused to appear before the Inquisitor (101). The Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office examined the petition but the answer was a negative one: the Inquisitor should not grant such faculties. The confessors had to perform their duties and oblige the penitents to present themselves to the Holy Tribunal, but at the same time they should also predispose them in order that the moral fatigue might be in some way alleviated (102).

Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, during the inquisitorship of Anthony Pignatelli, the use of corporal punishments was very rare, but, as regards Moslems, the Inquisitor was left with no other alternative. Since they were not Christians, spiritual Penances could not be meted out on them effectively. For this reason, the only penalties which could serve as a medicine for them were the corporal ones. For instance, Chag Chut of Damiatina had been first admonished during the period of *Mgr. Gori Pannellini* (103) neither to visit nor to hold conversation with Christian women; some years before, he had been treated with severe penalties. During the period of Anthony Pignatelli, however, he was again caught prescribing magic mixtures and filters. This

(99) "Il Tribunale del S. Offitio (et in conseguenza la persona dell'Inquisitore) è odiosissimo universalmente in Malta perchè 'irrogat iniuriam' a quelle famiglie e persone che vengono da lui molestate per materie di fede, quali materie sempre si presumono dalle persone non informate in uno che si sappia carcerato da ufficiali del S. Offitio". Bibl. Vat., *Ottob. Lat.*, ms. 2206, p. 2, f. 340r-v.

These words are worthy of a special consideration because they are taken from the Report of *Mgr. Marescotti*, who was Inquisitor in Malta between the years 1664 and 1666.

(100) *Mgr. Ettore Diotallevi* was sent as Inquisitor in Malta in 1605 by Pope Paul V. He remained in his office for about two years. Soon after his arrival, he chose Fr. Sebastian Salelles, S.J. as a Consultor of the Holy Office; this Jesuit became the most famous of all the Consultors of the Holy Tribunal. *Diotallevi* left Malta in 1607. Cf. R.M.L., Ms. 8, ff. 505v-506r.; A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 186, f. 379r.

(101) "La lettera di Vostra Signoria riceuta a' 3 del presente, è stata letta in questa Sacra Congregazione a' 12, et considerato quanto Ella scrive circa la facultà che le vien richiesta alla giornata da i confessori di potere assolvere li penitenti nel foro della coscienza, li quali recusano di denunciare al Santo Officio i sortilegii et bestiame hereticali . . .". A.I.M., *Lettere del Sant'Officio all'Inquisitore di Malta*, ms. 1, f. 261r.

(102) "Questi miei Illustrissimi hanno risoluto ch'io le scriva che Ella non conceda simili facultà, ma ordini a' i confessori che facciano il debito dell'officio loro in disporre et astringer li penitenti e deporre nel Santo Officio, ne i casi che sono tenuti conforme a' i Sacri Canoni et Editti". *Ib.*

(103) *Mgr. John Baptist Gori Pannellini* was sent as Inquisitor to Malta in 1639 by Pope Urban VIII. He maintained his office for seven years, but he was never liked by the Maltese. He was in continual dissensions with the Knights (who at one time attempted also to murder him) and with the Bishop. Many Maltese were also against him for his extremely severe decisions. During his period, the ministers of the Holy Tribunal abused of their office and many were unjustly imprisoned.



obstinate insistence in tempting others led to his being condemned to public whipping in Vittoriosa (104).

Mgr. Pignatelli followed the spirit of the law, rather than the plain rigid words. When persons were found guilty in Malta, there was no need to adduce profound theological discussions because, as a rule, the culprits' faults did not amount to that of heresy or apostasy. They went astray only through physical sufferings and as a result of vehement human passions.

Cases of superstitions were examined by the Inquisitor because, in some way or another, they involved heretical assertions and beliefs. The sentences, however, during that period were not very severe. For instance, Pauline Hagius was not formally condemned of heresy, even though she believed that a slave could procure some effects through the devil's aid; this happened because she formally meant to obtain the effect and not to adhere to a heretical doctrine (105). The same thing can be said of Philip Bonnici and Vincent Mangion whose fault lay only in their juvenile inconsideration (106). There are numerous other cases which illustrate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the full comprehension of the penitent sinners by the Inquisitor.

The consideration of human frailty was not alien from the norms which had to serve as a guide to the Inquisitor. "When sortileges are exercised, the persons who practice them are to be particularly asked whether they believe, or have believed that the devil can constrain the free will. Though some of them, especially women, either through ignorance or through vehement passionate love (which blinds and dims the intellect), confess their belief in those superstitions (which in itself is heretical because the devil possesses no power to constrain the human will), the Holy Office should not oblige them

He had, however, also the good side of his character: he interceded in favour of the Maltese so that the Holy See might not give to foreigners the benefices of the Island; he left no occasion to escape him whenever he had the possibility of favouring the Jesuits, who had quite recently suffered a short ignominious expulsion from the Island. When an Archbishop had been captured by the French corsairs and stripped of all his possessions, he insisted and finally obtained his freedom and, moreover, he also offered him clothes, linens, provisions, money, and anything desired. Mgr. Gori left the Island in 1646.

Cf. A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 7, Lettere originali degli Inquisitori di Malta Mons. Gori Pannellini G.B., Mons. Pignatelli A., Mons. Cavalletti C., dal 9 maggio 1645 all'8 nov. 1651.

A.S.V., *Malta*, ms. 82, Reg. di lettere della Segr. a Mons. Inquis. dal 14 genn. al 28 nov. 1651.

Bibl. Vat., *Barb. Lat.*, mss. 6684, 6686, 6687, 6688.

Bibl. Vat., *Borg. Lat.*, ms. 558.

R.M.L., Ms. 8, f. 215r-v.

(104) "Attenta bina contraventione precepti facti supradicti Chag Hali, dicto Chag Chut, de Damiatia, de non conversando cum mulieribus Christianis nec earum domos ingrediendo sub poenis arbitrio infrascriptis: cumque denuo plura sortilegia confecerit prout in actis presentis processus, mandamus ipsum Chag Hali fustigari per loca publica solita et consueta huius civitatis Victoriosae. Datum in Palatio Sancti Officii, die 29 Februar' i 1648. A. Pignatellus". A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 94, f. 450r-v.

(105) "Io giudicavo che quell'infedele ricorrevva dal demonio il quale gli mostrava come curasse". *Ib.*, n. 94, 13 Nov. 1647, f. 437v.

(106) "In quel tempo non sapevo niente di questo". *Ib.*, n. 45, 11 March 1647, f. 219r.

(107) A.I.M., *Prattica per procedere*, ff. 34-35.

to do a formal abjuration, but only 'de vohementi' or 'de levi' according to the quality of the persons and the impulsive causes. Considering the fact in its concrete terms, they indeed believe only in the material effect they are expecting and do not go further in" (107).

The sole intention of the Maltese Inquisitor, at least during that period, was to regain the sinners back to their faith. Pignatelli strove to show the mercy of the Church in the pronouncement of his sentences. On many occasions, he just gave warning for the future. Moreover, all those who humbly sought the Inquisitor to obtain absolution from their fault were given only medicinal penances. For example, Joseph Deguara, in his sensual passion, had four times invoked the devil to help him; the Inquisitor, however, absolved him from any excommunication or censure that he might have incurred and pronounced this decisive sentence which is the model of so many others: "In order that you might more easily receive the mercy of the Lord and the remission from your sin, we bind you for the next two years to go to sacramental confessions four times a year, and upon the advice of your confessor to receive the Holy Communion on the four solemnities of the Church, namely, at the commemoration of the Lord's Resurrection, on Whitsunday, on the feast of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and on Christmas day; and during this period you are bound to recite the Rosary every saturday" (108).

For those who were suspected of heresy because of superstitions the sentence was even milder. For example the sentence passed on Barberina Gregh, who had used some magic words out of hatred, was the following: "in order that you may more easily receive the mercy of the Lord and the remission for your sin, as salutary penances, we bind you for the coming two years, to fast once a month, and, during this period, recite the Rosary beads every saturday" (109).

In superstitions concerning love and in those concerning remedies for illnesses and against the evil-eye, the Holy Tribunal of that period never inflicted any physical penalty upon a Christian. Mercy and compassion were exercised even towards those of higher dignities, who were expected to be the leaders of the Christian community.

Sentences continued to vary from simple admonitions to four years of prayers and penance; their penalty, however, was always spread at intervals, as seen from the typical sentences quoted above.

For the preservation of personal honour and safety, the names of the accused and of the witnesses were always kept secret. A suspected person was sued in front of the Inquisitor without telling him why he had been summoned (110). In the meantime, anyone who knew the faults which directly or indirectly concerned apostasy or heresy was obliged to refer everything to

(108) A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 13, 15 Jan. 1647, f. 60v.

See also the typical sentence in the appendix.

(109) "Per doi anni prossimi per ogni mese digiunare una volta et per detto tempo ogni sabbato recitare la corona". *Ib.*, n. 9, 3 Jan. 1647, f. 39v.

(110) "Interrogatus an sciat vel suspiciet causam suae carcerationis et presentis examinis, respondit: Io non so la causa, ne mi la posso immaginare". *Ib.*, n. 94, 16 Jan. 1648, f. 441r.

the Inquisitor; but at the same time, the witnesses were prohibited to divulge among others the defects of the persons denounced. Each denunciation or self-accusation concluded with the following words: "He was obliged under oath to keep silence, and to sign his name" (111).

#### 10. EPILOGUE: Superstitions in Malta and the mentality of the twentieth century.

As we have examined, in Malta we had only ordinary superstitions. The cases of grave witchcraft and sorcery are very rare. Superstitions in the past had a very great influence on our Religion, but to-day most of them left no trace. It is interesting to study about them solely for their historical importance in order that we might trace the evolution of our modern beliefs.

Nevertheless, some others are still quite common. For instance, with the passing of some three hundred years, one might think that strange occurrences and beliefs concerning the evil-eye, so common at that time, would be extinct to-day; but there are signs and survivals that point out to the contrary.

Some facts common in the seventeenth century were very similar to processes in vogue also in the twentieth century. Some decades ago, Fr. Magri describes in all their particularities a lot of superstitious fumigations which were commonly used in Malta: "The person carrying out the fumigations must walk three times round the person believed to be suffering the effects of the evil-eye. If the burning olive-leaves turn black, it is an 'evil-eye' (daqqa t'ghajn), but if the leaves turn white, there is nothing to worry about (112).

Today, as well, we can still observe women who, having burned on coal-fire some olive-leaves distributed in the church on Palm Sunday, scurry about the house with the smouldering leaves, praying God to free their dwelling from the evil-eye. There are some others who, imagining themselves passed by a wicked person, sign themselves hurriedly and quicken their footsteps. Then, there are those, among whom many may be included who, while conversing with a suspected person, stealthily and unnoticed, hold their fingers in a forked position to disarm the malevolent influence of an evil-eye!

What can we say today about amulets and magic words which were so frequent in the past? If we look around us, don't we still observe the existence of some amulets? "It is still very common to see the horns of a bull on the outside of farmhouses or meatshops and in the decorations of other buildings. Ivory horns are also used as pendants in watch-chains to protect the wearer from an evil-eye" (113). We would like to add, however, that the horns of a bull or a horse-shoe, so often found nailed to doors, carts, and buses, are used not only to ward off the malevolent influence of an evil-eye, but also as a lucky charm.

Besides, the abuse of certain devotional practices in our Religion may also amount to superstitions. If we cling to a saint or to relics in an inordinate

(111) "Quibus habitis fuit ei iniunctum iuramentum silentii et ut se subscribat".  
*Ib.* in any denunciation.

(112) Cf. M. MAGRI, S.J., *X'Jghid il-Malti*, 1921, p. 62. The English translation is taken from J. CASSAR PULLICINO, *An Introduction* . . . p. 14, where we can also find similar examples about the Maltese folk-lore.

(113) CASSAR PULLICINO, *An Introduction*, p. 17.

manner, such devotion for our generation would take place of the amulets and magic formulas of the past. It is an inordinate devotion when some people cling to a Saint more than to God himself; but rather than superstition such cult should be considered as an effect of ignorance. The practices, however, of some country women in Malta, though they might seem ridiculous to others, are not superstitious. Some country women dearly carry on them holy objects to be preserved from any sort of evil. Nevertheless, they do not expect the good effect from the things themselves; regularly, they consider them barely as a protection for the intimate relation that they bear to God. The following is a typical fact: "Country women usually hang a small bag round the waist, containing a small cross, a piece of candle used in the Church on Maundy Thursday (*wemgha tat-tniebbri*) and some olive-leaves blessed on Palm Sunday (*Hadd il-Palm* or *Ghid iż-Żebbuġ*) which they believe, will ward off evil" (114). With the lapse of time, the stronger we grow in our conviction in the Christian Faith, the more we realize the nonsense of superstitions. Today, besides, the world is becoming more and more critical. Everything is based on reason. Consequently, the only danger is that we go to another extreme: the despise of all things that are not according to the course of nature.

Finally, superstitions are the product of fear and the correlative expectation of luck; but in Christians fear is to be combined with hope. Hope in fear, luck in spiritual and physical misery cannot be sought in those objects which in themselves are endowed with no power. Security must be fetched in God and in the natural means with which we are provided.

## APPENDIX

## I

*An act of devotion mixed with superstitious practices.  
From the self-denunciation of Fr. Philip Farrugia.*

Die XXII Mensis Aprilis 1648

Coram Illustrissimo Domino Antonio Pignatello, Inquisitore et Assistente Domino Assessore.

Comparuit sponte personaliter R.dus Don Philippus Farrugia Presbyter Melitinus cui delato Juramento de veritate dicenda, tacto pectore more sacerdotali, pro exoneratione suae conscientiae denunciavit infrascripta:

Tre mesi sono Michele Bisbilli mi mostrò un quinternetto di carta scritto di 19 fogli in ottavo, qual'incomincia 'vatindi in saragoza' e finisce 'un puoco di sango d'un gatto nero', quale esibisco, et alli 20 del presente io, il detto Michele, Fra Michele Carmelitano, Fra Carlo Carmelitano, et un giovane Maltese, figlio d'un barbiero francese sopra la galere, secondo l'avvertimento dato nell'ultimo foglio, et è il penultimo avvertimento, entrassemo nella pre-supposta grotta del detto avvertimento, et accesa la candela delle tenebre, da me portata solamente, io e li detti Frati per devotione dissemo il simbolo di S. Atanasio 'Quicumque' e poi non havendo fatto altro, se non scavato un poco in un lato della grotta, siamo usciti fuori.

(A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 129, f. 656)

## II

*The contempt of superstitions from the denunciation of  
Andreana Martin.*

Die XXIII mensis Decembris 1647

Coram Illustrissimo Domino Antonio Pignatello, Inquisitore, assistente Domino Assessore.

Comparuit sponte personaliter Andreana uxor Pâuli Martin galli super naviglio Domini Aguzzini, de Burmula, etatis annorum 14, cui delato iuramento de veritate dicenda, pro exoneratione suae conscientiae denunciavit infrascripta:

Un mese fa in circa, venne una Giudea nell'entrata di mia casa, donna giovane di giusta statura, ne grassa ne magra, argentina, quale va vendendo per le strade e vedendomi la pianta della mano, mi disse che mio marito fra tre mesi doveva arrivare in Malta con molta comodità, del che io me ne risi,

essendo m'io marito qui in Malta. E poi prese un vaso con acqua, dentro del quale mise un po d'oglio susurrando, e ci disse che il marito de Giovannella mia sorella doveva venir in Malta fra un mese, il quale già è passato; e ci disse che le tre galere che eran andate in Messina fra cinque giorni dovevano ritornare, però il tutto noi habbiamo fatto burlando della detta Giudea senza dargli credito alcuno; e per scarico di mia conscientia sono venuta a far detta denontia senza passione alcuna.

Quibus habitis, fuit ei iniunctum iuramentum silentii et ut faciat signum Sanctae Crucis loco subscriptionis.



A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 101, f. 501 r.

### III

*An abjuration from light suspicions of heresy on account of  
superstitious practices.*

Io Caterinuzza Napulù, vedova relitta del quondam Giovanni Napulù, maltesa habitante in questa città Vittoriosa, dell'età mia di anni 28 in circa, costituita personalmente in giuditio, et inginocchiata avanti di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima e Reverendissima Monsignor Anton'io Pignatello, Inquisitore Generale di quest'Isola di Malta, et Apostolico Delegato, havendo avanti gl'occhi miei i Sacrosanti Evangelii, quali tocco con le proprie mani, giuro che sempre ho creduto, adesso credo, et con l'aggiuto di Dio crederò sempre per l'avenire tutto quello tiene, crede, predica, et insegna la Santa Cattolica et Apostolica Romana Chiesa; ma perchè da questo Santo Offic'io, per le cose confessate da me nella mia comparsa fatta sotto li 10 giugno prossimo passato, sono stata dichiarata lievemente sospetta d'heresia, e d'haver creduto che la libera volontà dell'huomo si possi sforzare per mezzo di sortilegii; per tanto dovendo io levare dalla mente de fedeli questa lieve sospitione contro di me concetta, abiuro, maledico, e detesto le dette heresie, e generalmente ogni e qualsivoglia altra heresia et errore che contradica alla Santa Cattolica et Apostolica Romana Chiesa; prometto e giuro di non incorrere mai più in questi o simili errori e di non haver familiarità o prattica con heretic'i, o che siano sospetti d'heresia, et se conoscerò alcun tale di denuntiarlo a questo Santo Officio, o vero all'Inquisitore o Vescovo del luogo dove mi troverò; giuro anco e prometto d'adempire tutte le penitenze impostemi da questo Santo Officio, et se per l'avvenire io contravenessi alle dette mie promesse e giuramenti (del che Nostro Signore mi guardi) m'obbligò, e sottometto a tutte le pene da Sacri Canoni e Constitutioni Generali e particolari contro simili delinquenti imposte, e promolgate. Così Iddio m'aggiuti e questi suoi sacrosanti Evangelii quali tocco con le proprie mani.

Io Catherinuzza Napulù suddetta ho abiurato, giurato, promesso, e mi sono

obligata come di sopra, et in fede del vero, per non saper Io scrivere, ho fatto un segno della Santa Croce nella presente cedola di mia abiuratione di propria mia mano.

In Malta, nella cammera secreta del Santo Officio il dì 14 Ottobre 1648.



A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 135, f. 688 r-v.

#### IV

*The questioning of a slave who had been accused of spreading superstitious remedies among Christian women.*

Die XVI mensis Januarii 1648.

Coram praefato Illustrissimo Domino Inquisitore et assistentibus Domino Assessore et Domino fisci Promotore.

Constitutus personaliter supradictus Chag Chut infidelis cui delato iuramento de veritate dicenda per Deum vivum.

Interrogatus de nomine, cognomine, parentibus, patria, etate, et conditione.

*Respondit:* Io mi chiamo Chag Hali, detto Chag Chut, figlio del quondam Chatset da Damiata; sono d'anni 81, mahomettano schiavo della Religione e travaglio nelle nuove fortificazioni.

*Interrogatus:* an sciat vel suspiciet causam suae carcerationis et praesentis examinis,

*Respondit:* Io non so la causa, ne mi la posso immaginare.

*Interrogatus* an ipse constitutus fecerit aliquid spectans ad hoc Sanctum Officium,

*Respondit:* Non ho fatto cosa alcuna.

*Interrogatus* an aliter fuerit carceratus in hoc Sancto Officio, et quomodo fuit expeditus,

*Respondit:* Sono stato due altre volte carcerato in questo S. Officio, e la prima volta in questo cortile mi foro dati molti colpi di nervo, e l'altra volta fui frustato per questa città Vittoriosa con ordine che non dovessi entrare in casa di donne, si come ho eseguito.

Et ei dicto quod Sanctum Officium inquirat contra sollicitantes ut Christiani apostatent a fide Christiana, contra impediens ne infideles baptizentur, et contra sortilegos, ideo dicat an ipse cognoscat aliquam talem personam.

*Respondit:* Io non conosco nessuno di questi, ne io sono tale.

*Interrogatus* et benigne monitus ut dicat veritatem an ipse constitutus fecerit aliquod sortilegium, et ad quid,

*Respondit:* Signori, no.

*Interrogatus* an a novem mensibus circiter circa ipse constitutus accesserit ad casale Sigelivi,

*Respondit:* da un anno in qua non sono stato mai in nessun casale.

Quibus habitis fuit dimissum examen omnium.

A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 94, ff. 440r-441r.

## V

### *A definite sentence against superstition*

Invocato dovunque il nome di Nostro Signore Giesù Cristo, della sua Gloriosissima Madre sempre Vergine Maria, e di S. Pietro martire, nostro Protettore, nella causa e causae surtenti (!) tra il Dottor Gio. Battista Farrugia, Promotor Fiscale di questo S. Ufficio da una parte, et te Giuseppe Scarso sudetto reo, sponte comparente et confesso per l'altra, per questa nostra diffinitiva sentenza, quale, sedendo pro tribunali, proferiamo per questi scritti, diciamo, pronon-tiamo, e dichiariamo che tu Giuseppe Scarso sudetto per le cose sudette da te confessate ti sei reso a questo S. Ufficio vehementemente sospetto d'heresia d'haver creduto che la libera volontà dell'huomo possi esser sforzata con sor-tilegii, e che il sacrificio della Messa, l'Evangelio, et il nominare la S.ma Trinità possano deservire a pravo fine, e conseguentemente puoi esser incorso in tutte le censure e pene da Sacri Canoni, Constitutioni generali e particulari contro simili delinquenti imposte e promolgate, e per tanto sei obbligato ad abiurare le dette heresie, e generalmente ogn'altra heresia et errore, che contradica alla Santa Cattolica et Apostolica Romana Chiesa nel modo e forma che da noi ti sarà data, doppo la qual abiura, siamo contenti d'assoleverti a' cauthela dalla scomunica, nella quale per le cose sudette e da te confessate puoi esser incorso, et acciò che da Nostro Signore Iddio ottenghi più facilmente misericordia e perdono di questi tuoi peccati, per penitenze salutari t'imponiamo che per quattro anni prossimi ti debbi confessare sacramentalmente quattro volte l'anno, e di consiglio di tuo confessore comunicarti nelle quattro solennità di Santa Chiesa, cioè per la Pasqua di Resurrezione, per la Pentecoste, per l'Assontione della Beatissima Vergine, e per il Natale del Signore; e per detto tempo debbi ogni sabbato recitare la corona, e digiunare quattro volte in pane et acqua.



Così diciamo, pronontiamo, sentiamo, dechiariamo, e penitentiamo in questo, et in ogni altro miglior modo e forma che di ragione potiamo e doviamo.

A. Pignatellus Inquisitor et Delegatus Apostolicus.

A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, n. 125, f. 651 r.v.

## VI

### *A denunciation about a magic script.*

#### A.

(The documents that we are publishing here are of the greatest importance for any study about inquisition trials. The reader immediately comes to a conclusion that it should be paid a very great attention before giving credit to whatever he comes across in each trial. In fact the following documents are full of contradictions and manifest falsities. We are publishing it in a complete way. The first part is a denunciation against another person; the second part is a self-accusation. The fact refers to a magic script of which we here reproduced a photograph.

n. 208.

Die XXVIII mensis Maii 1649.

Coram Perillustrissimo et Reverendissimo Domino Don Petro Francisco Pontremolo, Sanctae Inquisitionis Officii Vice-Inquisitore.

Comparuit sponte in hoc loco examinis Jacobus Tonna, filius Ambrosii de insula Senglea, etatis annorum 25 circiter, cui delato iuramento de veritate dicenda prout iuravit tactis Sacrosanctis Scripturis, et pro exoneratione suae conscientiae denuntiavit infrascripta:

Giovedì che foro li 27 del corrente mese verso le 4 hore doppo mezzo dí, essendo io andato in casa di Vittorica, figliola di Isabellica detta "ta' S'nen" maltesi, sita nella città Valletta, vicino la polverista, et mettendo la mia mano dentro la bursa d'una faldetta di detta Vittorica, quale stava su il letto, io ho trovato questa carta scritta, quale incomincia... et finisce... segnata A, piegata; et essendosi accorta la detta Vittorica della detta carta che havevo in mano, mi la volse prendere con dirmi se io l'havevo preso dal Crocifisso, e che era bullettino della sua confessione; però io non gli la volsi dare, et essendo uscito fuori et aperto detta carta, l'ho trovato scritta del modo che le Signorie Vostre vedono; onde ho pensato che fosse cosa cattiva et percò son venuto ad esibirla come l'esibisco a questo Santo Officio, per scarrico di mia coscienza, senza passione alcuna; anzi l'istesso giorno, io ritornai dalla medesima Vittorica, et gli ho detto che per scarrico di mia conscienza l'havevo portato in questo Santo Officio, e lei mi rispose che non havea timore di questo, perchè l'havea trovata in piazza nella Vascella stretta, e che non sapeva che cosa fosse. Quibus habitis, iniuncto sibi iuramento silentii. (!)

Die XIII mensis Septembris 1649: Congregatio censuit quod dicta Vittorica corripiatur.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 في يوم و ليلة كذا في ليلة و ليلة  
 ام نوا و اسر ح س ال ل ل ل و و و  
 و ن م ا و ي ال ا ر ص ح م ي ع ا  
 م ا ال و ن ن ي ن و ل ن ك م  
 و ل ا ي ن ال ل و ن ي ن ك م  
 ا ن ا ع ر ي ن ح ك م و و ال و  
 و ل و و ا و ل ا د ح و و ع ا ي ن س ا  
 ي ا ن ن س ن ل ي ك ا ح و  
 ا د ا ل ا ي ا ن و ن و ن و د و ح  
 ن د و ح ن د و ح ن د و ح و ا د م  
 و ن ح و ال و ل م و ال و ح

*The magic script handed by the infidel slave Haisa to Vittorica nicknamed "Ta' Sinen" from Valletta, who with its occult power expected to be reconciled to her beloved.*

(A.I.M., *Processi*, ms. 61, f. 1044 r.)

## B.

Die secunda mensis Junii 1649

Coram Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Domino Carolo Cabal-  
letto, Inquisitore Generali Melitensi, assistente Admodum Illu-  
strissimo Domino Don Petro Francisco Pontremolo, Sanctae  
Inquisitionis Officii huius Sancti Officii Assessore.

Comparuit sponte in hoc loco examinis Vittorica bona fide filia quondam Ber-  
nardi, habitatrix civitatis Vallettae prope Polveristam, etatis annorum decem  
et octo circiter, cui delato iuramento de veritate dicenda, prout iuravit tactis  
Sacrosanctis Scripturis, et pro exoneratione suae conscientiae denuntiavit in-  
trascripta:

Otto mesi sono in circa, essendosi disgustato meco il mio amico lascivo et  
essendomi trovata di questo disgustata, Haisa, schiava infedele vecchia, quale  
è partita per il suo paese tre mesi sono, venne in casa mia, e trovandomi in  
quel modo, mi disse di volermi portar una tal cosa che il mio amico fosse  
riconciliato meco; et essendomi io contentata, di la tre giorni mi portò una  
carta piegata, e m'impose che l'havessi portata adosso per l'effetto sudetto, sì  
come io ho fatto; però poi, essendomi risoluta a presentarla a questo Santo  
Officio, poichè dal principio che mi fu data, l'ho presa per scanda'lo, e perciò  
la mesi nella sacoccia per detto effetto, quale poi non l'ho trovata, ne so se  
l'ho persa, o mi è stata tolta; e volendomi io ritirare per vivere da Christiana,  
son venuta a far questa denuntia per scarrico di mia conscientia, senza passione  
alcuna.

*Interrogata* an credat vel crediderit liberam hominis voluntatem sortilegis  
cogi posse...

*Respondit:* Io non credo, ne ho creduto mai tal cosa.

*Interrogata* an sciat vel suspicetur se esse praeventam...

*Respondit:* Io non so ne ho sospetto alcuno; però son venuta a far questa  
denuntia per scarrico di mia conscientia.

Quibus habitis, fuit sibi iniunctum iuramentum silentii.



Die XIIIa mensis Septembris 1649, Congregatio censuit quod dicta  
Victorica corripatur.

Die 14 eiusdem mensis; supradicta Victorica fuit vocata et correpta.

## VII

*A Summary of all the denunciations that refer to superstitions.*

1. All the facts very briefly mentioned here are taken from the trials during the period of Mgr. Anthony Pignatelli (Dec. 1646—May 1649). The original manuscript (*Processi* n. 61) is kept in the Inquisition Archives at Mdina (Malta). The number refers to the progressive one of the trials; the folios refer to numeration of the whole manuscript.
2. We do not mean to include all the persons who were in some way or another accused of superstitious practices. We limit ourselves only to the Maltese persons against whom the Tribunal proceeded. Many other persons could be recorded, but they are of minor importance because they are connected to the others mentioned.

No.	Names	Quality of Denunciation	Remarks
3 ff.9r-14v	Angela Gregh of Valletta	She administered love potions to regain her beloved.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
4 ff.15r-24v	Magdalena De Stephani of Valletta	She practised exorcisms to regain her beloved.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
9 ff.37r-42v	Barberica Gregh of Vittoriosa	She practised exorcism to regain her beloved.	Counselled by a Maltese.
13 ff.59r-62v	Joseph Degue- nara of Valletta	He invoked the devil together with other superstitious actions for the sake of dishonest relations with a married woman.	On his own initiative.
15 ff.77r-80v	Natale Barbara of Qrendi	He leaves his cap on the bed while he goes to another woman so that his wife may not awake while he is away.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
	Don. Angelo Mallia of Mqabba	He keeps a ring through which he obtains whatever he wants.	On his own initiative.
	John Paul Car- uana of Qrendi	He fetches illicit practices to ward off the evil influence of an evil-eye.	Counselled by a slave.
23 ff.115r-116v	Martin Pace Maltese	He uses a magical magnet to befriend himself to others.	On his own initiative.
40 ff.223r-226v	Aloysetta 'la Cal- zettara' of Val- letta	She throws on her bed diverse objects for the return of her beloved.	On her own initiative.
44 ff.243r-248v	Jacobina De Lan- go of Valletta	She uses a magnet, various ointments, and exorcisms for the sake of love.	Counselled by a slave.

No.	Names	Quality of Denunciation	Remarks
45 ff.219r-222v	Philip Bonnici of Vittoriosa Vincent Mangion of Vittoriosa	Both of them experiment the recipes found in a manuscript for the sake of love.	On their own initiative.
50 ff.257r-258v	Thomas Corcòp of Żebbuġ (Gozo)	He tries to experiment the value of a magical script.	On his own initiative.
51 ff.259r-264v	Clare Delia of Vittoriosa	She administered potions to restore to health another person.	Counselled by a slave.
53 ff.265r-266v	Angelutia Vella of Burmula	With a mouthful of water and the recitation of some prayers she experiments whether her husband was about to return.	Counselled by a French.
55 ff.269r-274v	Catharinutia Sac- cano of Valletta	She burns diverse objects as experiments for love.	Counselled by a slave.
56 ff.275r-280v	John Mary Zam- mit of Birkir- kara	He gives away clothes worn by his wife to experiment whether she has been bewitched. He hands to a sorceress a paper on which he has written his name and the name of the woman that he desires. He uses illicit practices for the sake of d'shonest relations.	Counselled by Maltese, and Sicilians and by Slaves.
62 ff.292r-293v	Laurence Fenech of Attard	He is in possession of an object used for the sake of love, and to ward off the influence of an evil-eye.	Counselled by a slave.
63 ff.294r-297v	Fr. Paul O.F.M. Obs. of Malta	He used a magical magnet to obtain the friendship of an important person.	Counselled by one of his confreres.
64 ff.298r-299v	Grace Caruana of Senglea	She receives a magical script through which she may escape from home.	Counselled by a slave.
70 ff.336r-339v	Pauline Hagius of Siġġiewi	She cleans her face with some mixtures to ward off the evil-eye.	Counselled by a slave.
71 ff.340r-341v	Mattheola Men- tuf of Valletta	She keeps on a magical script to bring back her lover.	Counselled by a slave.
72 ff.342r-343v	Domenica Dar- manin of Val- letta	She administered a potion with a mixture of wine and menstous blood for the sake of love.	Counselled by a slave.
73 ff.344r-345v	Leo de Mura of Senglea	He says strange magical words in front of women that he desires.	Counselled by a slave.
74 ff.346r-347v	Mary de Mari of Senglea	She concludes (after an experiment) that an individual can bring harm on her through his evil-eye: she burned a paper on fire, and observed some clear black spots on the paper burned.	Counselled by a Maltese.

No.	Names	Quality of Denunciation	Remarks
79 ff.356r-357v	Pauline Vella of Attard	She tries to cure her daughter from an evil-eye through superstitious practices.	Counselled by a slave.
81 ff.38r-391v	Flaminus Zammit of Senglea	He pronounces illicit words together with superstitious practices for illicit love. Among other actions, he writes on a paper the name of four demons and swallows the paper.	Counselled by a renegade Christian.
94 ff.437r-454v	Pauline Hagijs of Siggiewi	She murmurs some words together with superstitious actions to ward off the evil-eye.	Counselled by a slave.
95 ff.455r-458v	Jerome Zarb of Gadir (?)	He practices superstitions to begin again to offer his services to a Knight.	Counselled by a slave.
100 ff.497r-500v	Salvus de Nicolaci of Valletta	He practices ointments and fumigations for the recovery of his wife.	Counselled by a slave.
108 ff.548r-551v	Augustine Vial of Mdina	He administers potions to his wife to regain her affection.	Counselled by a slave.
123 ff.624r-627v	Antonetta Calleya of Valletta	She uses diverse mixtures that she throws in the street for the sake of love.	Counselled by a Maltese.
124 ff.628r-631v	Magdalenica ta' Ċirami of Valletta	Superstitious practices without any determined intention.	On her own initiative.
125 ff.648r-653v	Joseph Scarso of Valletta	He writes on his hand the name of four demons together with that of a woman for the sake of love.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
129 ff.656r-657v	Fr. Philip Farrugia Fr. Michael O.C. Fr. Charles O.C. the three of them Maltese Michael Bisbilli of Valletta	They light a candle, recite some prayers, and dig in a cave to free it from the devil.	On their own initiative.
131 ff.660r-670v	Margaret Cosbor of Gozo	She puts salt on fire and invokes the devil for the sake of love.	Counselled by a Gozitan.
134 ff.682r-683v	Antonia Lati of Vittoriosa	She puts salt on fire and whispers some magic words to regain her lover.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
135 ff.684r-690v	Catharinuzza Napulù of Vittoriosa	She writes the name of her lover on a bone and burns it on fire together with three magical scripts to make him come back to her.	Counselled by a slave.
144 ff.723r-724v	Sperantia Rugger of Vittoriosa	She wears on a magical script as a precaution against the danger of being murdered.	Counselled by a slave.

No.	Names	Quality of Denunciation	Remarks
145 ff.725r-726v	Salvo Pulis of Senglea	He wears on a magical script for illicit love and as a precaution against physical danger.	On his own initiative.
165 ff.875r-877v	Grace Greg of Burmula	She practices exorcisms to regain her beloved.	Counselled by a Sicilian.
188 ff.988r-941v	Mariuzza Spiteri of Vittoriosa	She throws salt on fire for the return of her beloved.	Counselled by a Maltese.
194 ff.950r-955v	Rinalda Torrenti of Valletta	She murmurs words and practices some superstitious actions. It is a singular case in which the intervention of the devil seems to be manifest. She makes her bed in which a sorceress calls the devils; then she keeps the room closed under lock and key, and, strange to say, the bed is found spoilt and disordered. All this was for the sake of love: all those who were to know her lasciviously in that bed would become fond of her.	Counselled by a slave.
208 ff.1043r-1047v	Vittorica Ta' Sinen of Valletta	She uses a magic script to regain her lover.	Counselled by a slave.
209 ff.1048r-1055v	Fr. Paul from Malta O.F.M. Obs.	He procures for himself illicit remedies to cure his leg.	Counselled by a Greek.

### ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.M.	: Archivium Inquisitionis Melitensis.
A.S.V.	: Archivium Secretum Vaticanum.
Arch. Stor. Malta	: Archivio Storico di Malta.
Barb. Lat.	: Fondo Barberino Latino.
Bibl. Linc. Roma	: Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei, Roma.
Bibl. Vat.	: Biblioteca Vaticana.
Borg. Lat.	: Fondo Borgia Latino.
E.B.	: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
E.M.K.	: Encyclopaedia of Modern Knowledge.
E.R.E.	: Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
Instr.	: Istruzioni.
Mel. Hist.	: Melita Historica.
Misc. Franc.	: Miscellanea Franciscana.
Ottob. Lat.	: Fondo Ottoboniani Latino.