LEXICAL MATERIAL IN MALTESE FOLKLORE

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In this study we are giving a list of archaic or obsolete words picked from the language of Maltese Folklore. They are words not very commonly used nowadays, but occurring mostly in old Maltese proverbs which have been handed down without any appreciable modification, as well as in folk-songs, popular riddles, charms and exorcisms, street-cries, children’s games and folk-tales. As far as possible the words have been taken down as uttered by peasants in their everyday conversation, but as regards those words which survive in old collections of Maltese proverbs and sayings we have had to rely on Canon Agius De Soldanis’s Proverbi ed apofegmi maltesi, in manuscript, preserved at the Royal Malta Library (Ms. 143) and published by Dr G. Curmi in Malta Letteratoria (1929) and on M.A. Vassalli’s Motti, aforismi e proverbi maltesi published in Malta in 1828. A few words included in the list are not found in dictionaries. For reference purposes we have consulted M.A. Vassalli’s dictionary Ktyb Yl Klyn Malti Mjysser bbl-Latin u bbl-Taljan (Rome, 1796), G.B. Falzon’s Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese (Malta, 1882), A.E. Caruana’s Vocabolario della Lingua Maltese (Malta, 1903) and G. Barbera’s Dizionario Maltese-Arabo-Italiano (4v. Beyrouth, 1939-40).

Many of these words still form part of the spoken language of our rural population, although it is the older people that have preserved the traditional expressions. And precisely for this reason they are of the greatest importance and interest in that they provide examples of a living and ever-changing language. These words and ways of expression peculiar to a former generation offer good ground for comparison with the present vocabulary in common use.

It is worth noticing that the greater part of these words occur only in everyday proverbs and weather-sayings. This is as it should be, inasmuch as the proverbs of any country embody the sum-total of a people’s experiences throughout a long period of existence, as memorised by a later

*This linguistic investigation is a joint work—the fusion of originally two separate articles by two students of the Maltese Language whose interests and approaches are different but intersecting. J. Cassar-Pulicino is interested principally in folklore and he is responsible for the folkloristic information and the relevant vocabulary, while J. Aquilina is principally interested in the language as such, and is responsible for the etymological and linguistic annotations thereon.
being phonetical.
(c) Words corresponding (i) to North African, or (ii) to Syrian words;
(d) Two words the meaning of which is more directly borne out by corresponding words in Hebrew;
(e) Words of Latin origin introduced into the language through Arabic, and finally
(f) Maltese words of Sicilian origin adapted to Semitic Maltese patterns.

Such words in the following six groups show, in brackets, the number of the corresponding folklore passage in which they occur.

Under heading (a) we include the following words: baqqa, 'to water (plants)' (7); bimija, 'construction' (34); dura, 'small house' (30); jarza, 'a shelf' (75); ġibra, 'a collection' (78); ġbris, 'stubble' (38); ġwej, 'hunger' (76); godda, 'new' (27); ġirma, 'conical stone construction' (77); ġelò, 'to waste' (47); ġiebb, 'to be loved' (48); ġinkle, 'otherwise' (29); ġinstab, 'to be crucified' (9); ġlejemi, 'rainy' (83); ġluna, 'misfortune' (54); ġiħax ġmohqaga, 'a riddle' (23); ġmsirka, 'a spoon, a quill' (22); ġmsan, 'leftovers' (18); mizzuż, 'squeamish' (60); għaljiena, 'sorrowful' (28); għaxa, 'supper' (41); għobra, 'moe' (44); gqżaţ, 'fe' (86); sisija, 'begging' (66); tikir, 'misery' (87); wejda, 'little hand' (4); xittura, 'little rain' (3); xtabba, 'to require' (73).

Under (b): ġanar, 'to command' (32); asab, 'stronger' (33); buq, 'a hollow reed' (74); darr, 'to injure' (35); dell, 'a shadow, omen' (36); gerga, 'a draught' (21); ġodd, 'new' (27); ġraija, 'a little jar' (5); bajna, 'malicious' (50); batem, 'seal, ring' (49); btrieg, 'scoorching wind' (79); bmm, 'griefs' (40); irrabbaħ, 'a person that has been brought up' (70); ġlejimes, 'the day before yesterday' (84); ġlib, 'incensé' (15); ġmegħda, 'promisele' (83); M'rbaux, 'how cheap it is!' (56); miel, 'estates, riches' (57); mady, 'napkin' (82); miriġi'b, 'windy' (38); maddi, 'wetted, moist' (80); mġuql, 'told' (59); muna, 'provisions, victuals' (81); mskuma, 'hand to mouth' (52); nasa, 'to be in one's agony' (62); ġslelt, 'to deceive' (42); ġsemm, 'cattle' (43); ghar, 'disgrace' (39); ghemmus, 'paternal uncle's' (40); ghella, 'dissease' (44); ġwjafljar, 'a small cave' (2); qara, 'to study' (8); qbar, 'graves' (16); Rabbi, 'lord' (64); surrence, 'wrestling bout' (20); siha, 'piracy' (65); tarr, 'to lay eggs' (67); tibh, 'cooking' (68); teliet, 'to triplicate' (70); terah, 'to dissolve, melt indigo or paint' (69); tifrigħ, 'emptying' (88); titriġiha, 'to be grazed (field)' (89); tqajba, 'a small hole' (6); ubdum, 'by ourselves (alone)' (25); waddaj, 'slng' (19); widah, 'ear wax' (71); widake, 'fatty substance' (71); wied, 'peg' (91); xiegbej, 'to employ' (72); żerqa, 'blue' (26).

Under (c) (i): bqla, 'impetigo' (12); dhorra, 'honest' (46); bżazz, waist girdle' (51); garinza, 'serenaders' (24); qfejja, 'small basket' (1); qfjapi, 'restless' (63); rega, 'to charm' (11); żenbil, 'large basket' (90);
(ii) habar, 'death knell' (45); namar, 'abundance' (61); nteffa, 'a little piece of' (1); rega 'to cure jaundice' (11).
Under (d): bewaqt, 'to hollow out (a reed)' (74); diltel, 'long hair' (13);
Under (e): mindil, 'napkin' (82).
Under (f): iet, 'to cheat' (37); izzitna, 'to circle over' (10); lilil, 'finery' (55); liissja, 'lye' (55); tutemb, 'a truce' (31); vaits, 'short verse' (9); żorba, 'sorb tree' (17).

A. RIDDLES, SONGS, TALES, FOLK-PRAYERS, Etc.

(i) Diminutives

Nominal and adjectival diminutives in Maltese are formed chiefly (a) by the insertion of -ej, -ejj, -ajj, or -ajj between the second and third radicals of the word, e.g. tjaejj from tjejel, 'boy'; fajjar from faqir, 'poor';
(b) by introducing w, which is often the second radical of the word, immediately after the first consonant, e.g. dwejj from dar, 'house', originally from ḥaRwR; ruejfa from rub, 'soul', originally ṣRwhR; or (c) by adding the female suffix a to the masculine form, e.g. bieba from biyb, 'door'; fiessa from fies, 'pickaxe'; senduqa dnom senduq, 'chess' (Vide E. Sutcliffe, A Grammar of the Maltese Language, London, 1936, pp. 31-33, also A. Cremona, Tagblim fuq il-Kitta Maltesa. Part II, Third Edition, Malta 1944, p. 138).

Another form of Maltese diminutive, however, may be noted in such words as geduda from gedda, 'kid', formed by the repetition of the last consonant d, preceded by a long u. In other examples the u seems to express endearment and affection: thus bedulu, 'good luck', heard in children's games; bażżu, 'darling', a term of endearment used by mothers, ċekkunu, 'very small', common in baby language; żaqqa, 'small belly', and simuna, 'small tooth', from żaq, 'belly', and sima, 'tooth', respectively, also heard in baby jargon; garqoqa, 'cartilage, or small remnants of meat after the fat has been melted down', from garqi, 'to dry'; qarmuqa, term applied to small children, from qarm, 'a rusk or biscuit'.

Words in italics in the following examples illustrate one or other of the above-mentioned forms of Maltese diminutives.

Translation

(1) Twil imtawwal
Aqta' u dawwar;
Fut t' nteffa
Aghmel ġol-qaqija.
The answer to this still current riddle is 'La Gasużja'.
Nteffa, n.f. 'A little piece of'. Diminutive of M. nitfa, 'a small part or a

particle of'. It is found in Vassallli and Falzon only. With M. nitfa in tab nitfa (bobba, etc.), mainly current in Gozo, cp. A. ġejna ċandi ġejna d-dar, 'he gave him a little of' (Hawa). With the adverbial use of nitfa in M. nitlobok tasal nitfa d-dar, 'I ask you to come home for a little while', cp. Syrian biğragguq tasal nisf 'al-bašt. Feghali, who gives this example in his Syntaxe des Parlers Arabes actuels du Liban (p. 30), illustrates its various uses with further examples which agree with Maltese. With M. stenna nitfa cp. Syrian niter nisf, 'await a little'. With the M. diminutive cp. Syrian nisjav (Feghali, ibid., p. 477). M. and Ar. nitfa derives from NTT, 'to pluck (the hair)'. For semantics cp. M. fit, 'a little', from NT, Ar. ḫaṣṣa 'to crumble with the fingers'; M. hafna, 'much', from hafan, 'to grasp'; wissq, 'a great deal of', from Ar. ḫaṣṣ 'to contain (a thing)', to load (a camel); M. bosta, 'a great quantity of', Ar. ḫaṣṣ, 'extent, capacity', from Ar. ḫaṣṣ (unknown in Maltese) to widen, to stretch (the arm). The M. word nitfa in its recorded meaning is mainly Syrian. Beausserin gives only its literal meaning 'picėće de poils, de cheveux arrachée'.

Qefía, n.f. 'Small wicker basket'. Diminutive of sing. qofa, pl. qiefl, with which cp. Ar. ḫaṣṣ, whence also Ir. cafla. For the M. diminutive cp. N. Afr. Ar. ḫaṣṣ pl. wafla 'pett couffin' (Beausserin). Another diminutive form qofjija, 'small wicker basket for shopping', is made up of qofa + ina, Romance diminutive suffix.

(2) (a) Sant'Anna u San Michael Ġejjin mill-għawjar ta' Coming from the small cave of Bethlem...

An exorcism to ward off the evil eye heard at Xewkija, Gozo.
(b) San Ġużepp dal-h għawjar (St Joseph went into the small cave Biex jadura l-Bambin fajjar... To worship the poor Child...)

Fragment of an old Maltese Christmas carol heard at Qormi, Malta.

Għawjar, n.m. This is a regular Maltese diminutive formation of ghar, 'cave', Ar. ghar. The pattern gijjel, on which this word is formed, is shared by diminutive and plural formations. As a matter of fact, għawjar is explained as a plural formation by Vassallli. Other similar Maltese plurals are fijjjar, from fitra, 'pancake', and bżajjar, from basira, 'mat'.

(3) Ġx-xita u x-xem U l-għasfur inaggi l-qemb! And the bird pecking at the grain Ġx-xita u x-xituta The rain and the small rain Ġn-nanna tahr ir-tuta. And Granny under the mulberry tree)
time. The above version comes from Munxar, Gozo.

Xittara, n.f. 'A drizzle', lit. small, used only in the above thyme. Diminutive of M xita, 'rain', Ar. ٍلا 'rain' (Hava). With the interesting M. diminutive obtained by the addition of suffix uita after the elimination of final a cp. Ar. ٌلا (also ٌلا), diminutive of ٍلا (M. ghaxija) meaning 'nightfall' Ar. ٌلا, diminutive of ٍلا 'sons', pl. of ٍلا, M. iben. (Vide Wright: Arabic Grammar, Vol. 1, p. 175, Third ed.).

(4) (a) Abbi l-wejda! (Kiss the little hand.)
Baby language.

(b) Ara jahra il-wejda. (Mind you won't burn your little hand.)
A street cry peculiar to vendors of baked chestnuts.

Wejda, n.f. Irregular diminutive formation from M. id, 'hand', Ar. ٍلا, with which cp. M. jeda, 'right', a translation of the legal word manus of Roman law. With the M. diminutive cp. Ar. diminutive يد. Beaussier gives diminutives يد for يد, and يد. The M. diminutive seems to have developed from the N. Afr. variant يد, which, by dropping the first consonant d becomes yedda, whence wejda by change of initial j into w and dialectal variation of the diphthong aj into ej, whence ultimately wejda. The M. form is assimilated to the diminutives of nouns from verba primae w, which reject the first radical taking the feminine termination o but which, in exchange, resume the w in their diminutives as Ar. ٌلا, diminutive of ٍلا, meaning 'a promise', from ٌلا (M. uteghbed, 'to promise').

(5) Bil-qajra l-qajra tintela l-
  grajra. (Many a mickle makes a muckle.
Lit. 'Drop by drop the pitcher is filled'.)
A Maltese proverb.

Grjara, n.f., 'a small or little jar'. Diminutive of ٍلا, Ar. ٍلا 'earthen-
ware jar', pl. ٌلا (Dozy) M. ٍلا, following the diminutive partern qajra, of such words as bbajra, 'a lake', from babar, 'sea'; tajra, 'a maiden', from tifla, 'girl'; stajra; 'small or pretty seaside', from xatt, 'shore', with which cp. Ar. fem. dim. pattern ٍلا with the medial Ar. vowel between the first and second vowels dropped in Maltese.

(6) Bil-kelma t-tajra wohog il-far (The soft word brings out the rat
mit-taja. from its hole).
Another Maltese proverb.

Tajra, n.f. Maltese diminutive of tajba, 'a hole', from tajab, 'to pierce',
Ar. ٍلا, 'to pierce', whence Ar. ٍلا (M. tajba, 'a hole' (Hava).

(ii) Archaic Verbs

The following is a list of verbs that are very few in number and are but rarely, if ever, used outside folklore. Their chief interest lies in furnishing examples of lost meanings or words, and unusual forms of derived verbs.

(7) Angla bella,
Isaqqi i thuqqi: (Lovely Angelina,
Kemm-il wena fih
Il-hbaq ghazzii? How many leaves are there
In the basil plant?)

This is the first part of a popular rhyme in dialogue form, presumably between a young man (a Prince) and a young woman who is watering a pot of basil on the balcony. Formerly a pot of basil on the window sill showed that in that house there were girls of a marriageable age—a hint to young men in search of a wife.

Baqq, pp. mbaqqi (m), + jat(f), whence tbaqqi, 'you water or irrigate'. Cp. Ar. ٌلا to pour an abundant rain; cloud' (Hava); to spout from the mouth (Spri Bey, who gives also ٌلا, 'mouth' (cf. Lat. bucca, 'cheek'). Of a heavy rain pouring in bubbles we say ghamlet xita boqoq or tal-boqoq, boqoq, 'bubbles', being the pl. of boqqa, 'bubble'—a Maltese formation. Catana gives boqqa ٍللا, 'a baby's mouthful of sucking', from ٍللا, 'mother's breast'. A.E.C. wrongly lists boqqa (n) and baqq (v) under different radicals.

(8) Int Sultan, u bin is-Slaten,
Tikteb u taqi: (O thou king, son of kings,
Kemm-il kewkba fih
Is-sema l-ghalii? Continually writing and reading;
In the high heavens?)

The girl's answer to the previous quatrain—an example of a primitive 'brains trust' or riddle contest. Both this and the preceding thyme were heard at Luqa, Malta, during World War II. They are also found in L. Bonelli's Saggi del folklore dell'isola di Malta, Palermo, 1895, p.10.

Qara, v.t. Third form of qara, 'to read' (Ar. ٍلا). Not in the Maltese dictionaries and unknown in the spoken language. The corresponding Ar. form ٍلا means 'to study; to read with' (Hava). This form does not occur in Beaussier.

(9) Vrajeez u vragh inghid:
L-ikkar ghoda tas-Salib;
min ihobb il-Bambin cjejken
Imat u jinstalab fih. (A small verse and a verse I have
recited:
The greatest Rod is the Cross;
He who loves the little Child
Shall die and be crucified on it.)
The opening lines of an old folk-prayer recited by peasants before going to bed. It was heard at Xagha, Gozo, in the summer of 1941.

Vrajes, vrajset, n.m. Short verse. Two obsolete diminutive forms of vers, from Sic. versa or It. verso. Vrajseti is doubly diminutive in Maltese, being made up of vrajes, shorter form of vrajjes, + Italian suffix etto (It. versetto). For a similar diminutive formation from Italian cf. M. Brätju, from It. Verbo, which is the name of a popular folk-prayer all over Italy (Cf. P. Toschi, La Poesia Popolare Religiosa in Italia, Firenze, 1935, p. 97).

Nstlab, v.int. To be crucified; also, to fall down with the arms stretched out in the form of a cross, the latter meaning being still common. This is the VIIth Form of Maltese radicals S-L-B-. Ar. اَنْكَبَطُ, 'to provide (a bucket) with two crosspieces', also 'to crucify' whence M. salib, 'a cross', and sellab, 'to crucify', or 'to make the sign of the cross frequently', Ar. انْكَبَطْ. The VIIth form is a local formation.

(10) Id-dragun... malli wasal izzintla rubu fuq (xint). (The dragon... on catching up with them, circled above the ship to swoop down upon it.)

Quotation from the Maltese folk- tale known as L- 3- Erba Snajjja' (The Four Trades) collected by Fr. M. Magri (Hreejef Missierijietta in Kotba tal-Maghi da taż-Zmien, No. 18, 1902, p. 30).

Izzintla, v.int. To circle overhead (hawk, etc.) Not in the Maltese dictionaries but still used by quarrymen in the expression spiera xibrejn zinlul, 'a stone pit two spans in diameter'. Fr Magri (op. cit., p. 32) explains izzintla rubu, 'to fly in a circle, as a hawk does before swooping down on its prey'. An archaic form of current icčentra, 'to centralize, to place in a central position', with z for lt. t and l for r. For correspondence of archaic Romance Maltese z to lt. t cp. M. zuntier, 'a churchyard', formerly used as a burial place, from sic. cimiteriu (Modern Maltese ċimiterju) and It. cimitero. For the interchange of l and r cp. dialectal M. pitlorju (for more current form pitlorju) from It. petrollo, M. artal, from It. altare. For the verbal pattern of izzintla cp. idditrka (lt. discolo), 'to lead a dissolute life'; iddittrta (lt. diritto), 'to straighten'; illittja (lt. allerta), 'to be on the alert'. This is generally the pattern followed by Maltese verbs from the Italian, Sicilian or English. Examples from the English language are iddajija, 'to dive', illandja, 'to land', niparkja, 'to park' and fllittja, 'to fit'.

Nirqik, nerqa 'nirqik I exorcise you and will do so again.
Sa naqtaghekk l-eqgħuq li fik. Till I cut your roots out.)

An exorcism recited to cure oneself of ringworm. An oil ointment, in which a live cowrie (M. babba) has been previously put, is rubbed over the affected part of the skin while the above words are recited. Vassalli records the practice of exorcisms and explains kijem ir-riqi as 'verba superstitionis, seu ontio sacra simul profana cui occultum aurosius virus tribuitur'. Besides Ringworm, other diseases such as Pterigium (M. qarinta) and Jaundice (M. sufejra) are believed to be amenable to cure by exorcism. The above lines appeared in L. Bonelli's Il Dialecto Maltese, published as a supplement to Archivio Glottologico Italiano (Torino, 1891-1897, p. 69).

(b) Qarinta, ja qarinta, (O Pterygium, Pterygium,
Irrijetek w aktar imqar;
Naqtaqhekk bl-eqgħuqu u x-xammixel... I have exorcised you and will do so again;
I'll cut your roots out.
Nixhek ġol-bahar fejn konja. And flinging you back into the sea.)

An exorcism recited to cure Pterygium, an eye-disease locally known as Qarinta (lit. 'octopus'). Connected with this practice is the use of a small silver ring with an octopus engraved on it. This ring is called Il-Hatem (the signet) and the man or woman who passes it over the afflicted eyes repeats the above lines, the meaning of which is very clear to a Maltese to whom Qarinta means both 'octopus' and 'pterygium'. These lines were still current at Kerċem, Gozo, in 1941.

Reqa, v.t. to cure jaundice, etc. The Maltese meaning must have originally been associated with charm and enchantment, which agrees with the definition given by Vassalli 'verba superstitionis', with which cp. Ar. كِرْمِي 'to give a charm to, to enchant'. In meaning the Maltese word agrees with Syrian ركيم 'avoir le jaundice', denominative from raiqan, 'jaunisse' (Barthélémy). For the idea of charm cp. Also N. Afr. Ar. رکم 'changer de la eau, un puits, en prononçant des paroles ou en crachant dessus'; also 'garantir quelqu'un contre les sorcelleries par des amulettes' (Beaussier).

(iii) Miscellaneous Forms

Among these are found some uncommon plural forms, archaic nouns and adjectives, etc.

(12) .......

Narra tiha bagla sewda (May she be plagued with Black spots
Timexxiilha manswitn That will develop into a chest disease.)
A specimen of vitriolic expression of hatred in a Maltese folk-song heard at Birkirkara, Malta.

Bagla, n.f. This is the name given to a kind of cutaneous eruption accompanying malignant diseases. It may be either baqla benna, 'Purple Spots', or baqla sweida, 'Black Spots'. Vassalli explains it as 'impeto'. Hava does not give this word as the name of a cutaneous disease. The Maltese word is semantically connected with Ar. ẞ́ Í³ Ɗ́ ƙó 'to be covered with down (face). For the specific disease-name cp. N.Afr. Ar. ƙ́ ì³ Ḯ ƙó 'coupe de soleil, insolation, fèvre, typhoide' (Beaussier).

Marsuittin, n.m. Tuberculosis; consumption, from It. mal sottile.

(13) (a) Holl dielek u ħib iz-żejt. (Loosen your hair and bring oil.)
(b) A Maltese proverb used as a warning that there is going to be trouble, enough time to comb your hair while the angry person is letting off steam. Barbera (Dizionario Maltese-Arabo-Italiano, Beyrouth, Vol. I, 1939, p.321) says of this proverb: 'questa frase fa ricordare l'uso del popolino in Sicilia ed anche a Malta di ravviare, accomaiare la capigliatura con dell'olio, per dare ai capelli il lucido ed anche per rinforzarli; uso arabo'.

(c) Hu il-mant u omxot dielek;
   Hu l-muftieh, izxu u kul;
   'Jiena ikel le ma niekol
   Qabel habli, il-Mosta, immur'.
   Before I return to Mosta, my village.

A stanza from the traditional ballad of 'The Bride of Mosta' (L-Għarusa tal-Mosta). First collected by Amabile Preca, a nineteenth century Maltese writer. This ballad was printed by Luigi Boeelli in Il Dialetto Maltese (1897 Supplement) and has since been extensively studied by local and foreign writers. Prof. Ettore Rossi, of Rome, is inclined to class it as a fifteenth century production - a period in which the pirates of northern Africa laid waste the island of Malta with frequent raids. In an eighteenth century manuscript diary preserved at the Royal Malta Library (No. 1146, Vol. I) it is recorded that the Turks raided and sacked the village of Mosta in 1526, 'under the famous corsair Rajjes Sinen, taking about four hundred prisoners... as well as a bride, together with the guests all dressed for the wedding, about whom (bride) songs are still heard'. The ballad, therefore, cannot be older than the sixteenth century. For further study of this ballad cp. Ettore Rossi, Scibila Nobili e la leggenda Maltese della Sposa della Mosta (extract from "Lares" sett. 1932, Firenze); Anthony Cremona, Is the Maid of Mosta a Myth? (Malta, 1934), and Raffaele Corso, La canzone della sposa rapita dai pirati barbaraschi, in 'La Rivista d'Oriente', (Napoli, Ottobre, 1935).

Diel, pl. n.m. Plural form of delli (Ar.  searchData

(14) (a) Narra l-għobra tghabbrek!
(b) Minn surtek tidher għobortok.

Two sayings given in Camunza's dictionary.

(c) 'ilbes, binti, ilbes,
   Hemm is-senduq, ilbes u żżejen'.
   'Nilibes? għobra għala wiċċi
   Waqajt isira għala dejjem'.
   'Woe unto me! How can I
   I have fallen a slave for evil!'

   'Oroq, binti, oroq
   Hemm is-soddha, ipoża, striej.'
   'Nipoża? għobra għala wiċċi-
   Waqajt isira ghand il-kleb'.
   'Sleep, my daughter, sleep,
   I have fallen a slave in the
    hands of the dogs (Turks)'.

Two stanzas from the Mosta ballad referred to above (No. 13 b). They were collected in 1942 and published together with all known stanzas and variants of the ballad. (G. Cassar Pullicino: L-Għarusa tal-Mosta, b'xi żieda, in 'Leben il-Malti', Nos. 133-6, 1942, pp. 26-9).

Għobra, n.f. Misery, distress. With the Maltese meaning of għobra (pl. għebitreri, given by Vassalli) in għobra għala wiċċi cp. Ar. ܩܒܪܐ 'tears', pl. ܩܒܪ�tܐ 'to shed tears', and M. ghabbar, ܩܒܪܐ 'to weigh coins' (Hava) (M. ghabbar, 'to weigh, to ascertain weight') whence the combined Maltese idea of (i) tears, and (ii) oppression, in the latter sense as when we speak of one being 'weighed down with sorrow'. The use of the Maltese word is otherwise local. For associated meaning cp. also Heb. ܢܘܐ ž̄ ܢܘܐ 'overflow, arrogance, fury'.
A folk-prayer recited by children before going to bed. The name Il-Libiena is still given to the first fortnight of November, when the weather is usually very fine and recalls that of Summer; hence its other name Saff ta' San Martin, 'St Martin’s Summer'.

Libien (but libien in Falzon) n.m. Frankincense. Now-a-days replaced by the Romance incens (lt. incenso). Cp. Ar. أَلْبِنَان 'olibanum; gum resin used as a frankincense' (Hava). With adj. libien (m), libienia (f), 'serene, fair (weather)' as in sena o xittu libienia cp. Ar. كَسْف 'burnt by thirst', and the noun جُمِّع 'burning heat, hot day'. Falzon gives also the noun libibien, pl. libbiniets, 'dryness, drought', also derived from لـه بـ. Therefore, orthographically M. libien in the sense of 'serene, fair' (weather) should be written lebbien (m) and lebbiena (f). In Maltese we call a craving for something lebba, which word is not found in Caruana or Falzon, and corresponds to Ar. كَسْف 'burning thirst. The cognate Maltese quadrilateral verb lebba, is made up of lebba + lebeb, with the omission of medial radical b and a reduction of vocalic sequence e - e to short e, whence the Maltese quadrilateral on the pattern QeTt+QeTt (e.g. tetem, 'to stutter', lelfej, 'to devour', gergert, 'to grumble'). Barbera and Dessoulay wrongly derive M. lebba from Ar. كَسْف 'which corresponds to M. lebbien, 'to flap (sail, flag)' and lablab, 'to prate'. For semantics cp. Lat. serenus, 'fair', unclouded (weather), perhaps cognate with Greek ἁρμός 'dry' Sanscrit kasyati, 'it burns', with which cp. Latin serescere, 'to grow dry' as in vestes serescre (Luctr. I, 307).

(16) Ila' ur fur   (Rise and overflow)
   bhalmia Kristu 
   Tala' minn ġol-qbur!

A propitiatory rhye, recited by bakers or other people engaged in kneading flour, to make the dough rise.

Qbur, n.m. Tomb, pl. of qabar, other plural forms being qbara (Caruana), qobra and oqbra. Cp. Ar. كَسْف pl. of كَسْف 'tomb'.

(17) Żorba w lajn (Eng. line) mejjet! (Within the square or on the line dead; i.e. the game is lost.)

Żorba (Luqa) or, in other localities, Fatt is the name of a children's game played on condition that the boy whose marble stops within the square marked on the ground, called Fatt, or on one of the lines forming the square, loses the game. Zożba means also 'sorb tree', of which there are only a few specimens in Malta, one of them in the fields 'Ta' Luzzjata', belonging to the Carmelite Friars, beyond Rabat, Malta. Waqfig żorba is a common expression meaning 'I have fallen down in a lump', denoting the helplessness and sudden onrush of physical collapse (lit. like a sorb) or of senile debility.


(18) 'Il dan (ziemel) quallu 'idilku shib; lill-ohrajn aghthim il-musan'.


Musan, adj.m. Undamaged, in good condition (grass, etc.) Participial adjective from absolute M. san, isun (Falzon), with which cp. Ar. لَصَح 'to preserve a thing' (Hava). The Maltese form regularly should be musun or misun (cp. Ar. ما سر 'guarded'). But the Maltese form has followed the participial adjectival pattern from verbs of the 1st form, like musfar, 'pale', and nubdar, 'greenish', from sfar, 'to grow pale', and bdar, 'to grow green' respectively. Magri explains the word as 'damaged, that which is not accepted by others'.

(19) '... qieghed ċagħka fil-wadaf (He put a pebble in his sling, swung tiegħu, xejjija dawra mejt u it around and let it off.)

A passage from the Maltese folk-tale Il-Ġgant u s-Sajjied tal-Ghasafar (The Giant and the Bird Catcher) given by Fr Magri in his X'lgħid il-Malti fuq Missirijietna u l-Ġganti (1904, p. 36).

Wadaf (more commonly wadab, or, in Modern Maltese, sbandola, from Sic. sbanndola or sbandola (Barbera)). Sling. Ar. كَسْف 'a sling', with which cp. كَسْف 'fronde' (Dozy) and كَسْف 'lancer des pierres avec une frodon' (Kazimirsy). For change of Ar. ف to M. b cp. M. bâra, 'to fear', Ar. كَسْف ; M. qabż, 'to jump', Ar. كَسْف.

(20) 'Issa immela baliq naghmlu (Let us then have a wrestling bout serriehba qabel ma nieklok.' before I eat you up.)

Another passage from the giant story mentioned in (19) above.
Serriegha, n.f. A wrestling bout. Verbal noun from disused verb saragh, with which cp. Ar. ضر ع 'to wrestle, to fight a duel with' (Hava), whence مرت أ ع 'prostrating his adversary' (Hava), whence also مرت أ ع 'a wrestling place', with which cp. M. misrah, 'an open space before a village church, so called because it originally may have served as a playground for demonstrations of village prowess – a place for village recreations, display of athletic, etc. Final h in misrah corresponds phonetically to unvoiced Ar. ع. With the M. verb issara, 'to wrestle' cp. N. Afr. ع (VIIIth form), 'lutter, combattre' (Beaussier).

(21) 'Li ma ghedtlix sahha, qaltiu, ('If you hadn’t wished me good health' she said, 'I would have ingereghgheh gergha'.

A passage from the Maltese folk-tale Bin il-Mara l-Gharfa ջ Gib il-Ghassfur igĦanmi (The Wise Woman’s Son brings the Singing Bird) contained in Fr Magri’s Hrejjej Misseriżietna I, 1902, p. 43). These words are repeatedly uttered by three people whose help the Wise Woman’s Son asked in his quest for the Singing Bird.

Gergha, n.f. Noun of unity from ġer, to digest; to swallow up, and, figuratively, 'to tolerate (something unpleasant); 'to stand (a difficult or unpleasant man). Cp. Ar. ġer to swallow in one draught, and ġer (IIInd form) 'to cause one to swallow (water)', whence ġer also ġer 'draught or a mouthful' (Hava). The second form ġer, 'to digest', fig. 'to stand (a person)' is still used.

(22) ' ... Ghando din ġm-imerkja (I have this needle-case containing labar, fiha mitt waħda ... a hundred needles.)

A passage from the Maltese folk-tale Bin il-Mara l-Gharfa ջ Gib ix-Xebba tal-Gmiel (The Wise Woman’s Son brings the Maiden of Beauty), one of the series figuring the Wise Woman’s Son, who may be compared to Hercules in his difficult tasks. (Cp. Fr. Magri op. cit., Vol. I, p. 51). Mserka, n.f. A quill; a kind of weaver’s bobbin. According to Magri in the context of the story mserka labar means a ‘needle-case’ (Modern Maltese stocċ, from It. astuccio). Mimated noun of instrument from obsolete verb sirek, which cp. with Ar. إل 'to wind off (thread)', whence إل 'spun thread'. The Maltese mimated form is a local growth created by the local weaving industry. Note the interchange of Maltese and Arabic r and l. The masculine form misrek is still used of a lean man. Mserrek, ‘to ply frequently between one place and another’, which is a denotiveative verb from mserka, like meslab, ‘to splutter’, from mselha, ‘a broom’, from √SLH, is still heard in Gozo.


Mobga, p.p.f., A riddle, a puzzle. Morphologically this word is a participial adjective developed from an obsolete verb of the IXth form. Cp. M. musfa, 'pale', fem. adj. from sfar, 'to grow pale'. Actually, the Ar. verb is ġin to 'overcome in a dispute', whence the IIIInd form ġin to 'to agree, to bargain', and ġin to 'to afford arguments', and ġin to 'argument, plea', and ġin to 'litigious' (Hava), whence M. mobga, thing the meaning of which is disputed, hence 'a riddle'.

(24) Qarinza, Qarinza, Qarinza, Ġejt nitolbok wara bieberk: (Qarinž, Qarinž, Qarinž! I have come to beg at your door: Is-Sena t-taġba, A good New Year, L-ghatba mbajjada, The doorstep is whitewashed, Bajj createStore is-Sultan; The King has whitewashed it for you; Issa hu jrid zi haqa Now he expects something from you Imur itiha 'I dawk it-tal. To give it to those children.)

A rhyme which is still heard on New Year’s Day in some villages in Gozo. Qarinža was the name given to the serenades heard on New Year’s Eve, sung by carollers in front of the homes of the well-to-do. When someone appeared at the window and threw them coins, the carollers sprinkled lime on the doorsteps as an augury of good wishes and prosperity for the new year. But if no coin was thrown to them imprecations were uttered against the inmates while the walls of the house were befouled. This custom is by no means extinct. Our villagers still show their displeasure by throwing dirt at walls and doors. Up to some time ago the word survived in the nickname Ta’ Qarinža. To-day only the memory of the Qarinža remains, but lime is still sprinkled on the floor of market stalls at the Valletta Market on New Year’s Day, and at Luqa, up to the Second World War, it was customary for the village sexton or some other villager to sprinkle the doors of the villagers with lime before daybreak on New Year’s Day. In Gozo there is the tradition that the Qarinža was discontinued about a hundred years ago, when one of the company, who was feigning Death during the ceremony, actually died and it was then decided not to revive the custom.

Qarinža, n.f. The Maltese word seems to link up with Algerian قرينة 'mandoline' (Beaussier). Cp. also مرندة 'guitare' – Turkish or Algerian
An excorcism heard at Luqa, Malta. It is a popular belief in Malta that the evil eye may be caused by the three predominant colours of the eye, namely, blue (żerqa), red (hama) and black (sewda). The belief in the magical influence of the eye is also testified by the following saying: l-għajnejn żorq jisirqa n-nies m-torq (blue eyes steal away people from the streets). In this connection it is interesting to note that in Morocco fair eyes inspire much fear among the Arabs of the plains, where such eyes are rare, and if a blue-eyed person looks at you it is just as if he killed you. At Andija when a person is suspected of having been hurt by the evil eye they use an incantation containing the following passage: A’ūgħi bi llabb m-l’ain żżarqa u m-l’ain l’għarqa u l’ain żeġ ma lat-sallżi ti ‘ddla rasillż l’llabb. 'I take refuge with God from the blue eye and from the deep eye and the eye which does not pray for the apostle of God'. (See Westermarck: Ritual and Belief in Morocco, 1926, Vol. 1, p.420).

(Dozy). Rather puzzling is the change of Ar. d into M.  đ.

(25) Tabilhaq li aħna uħudna (It is true that none else but ourselves Sallabnieh 'il-ibn tiegbej; have nailed your son to the Holy Cross; Fuq l-imqaddes is-salih, A crown of thorns on his head...)
Fuq l-imqaddes is-kuruna...

The above lines, heard at Xagħra, Gozo, in the summer of 1942, form part of a folk-prayer called Salve Regina tad-Duluri ('Salve Regina' of Our Lady of Sorrow) recited by peasant women. In the last two lines the construction of the adjective and noun, both preceded by the definite article, is very unusual, the usual construction being the noun preceded by the definite article and followed by the adjective with or without the definite article. This unusual order heightens the poetic effect of the lines. Uħudna, adv. By ourselves, alone. Common Maltese form is weħudna.

The word is made up of uħud (Ar. pl. ʾūḥud but N. Afr. Ar. pl. ṣawud) and -na (Beaussier) + pronominal suffix na, 'us', first person plural (Ar. ʾinā).

L-għajn il-hamra (May the red eye go away with the sand; Tm ur mar-nalma! the black eye with the wave and the L-għajn is-sewda! blue eye vanish like lightning!)
L-għajn is-sewda! Tm ur mal-mewgal!
L-għajn iz-żerqa!
Tm ur bhal berqa!

A fish-market cry peculiar to herring vendors.

Ghod, adj. (Modern Maltese gud), plural of gud, 'new'. With this plural form cp. regular Ar. pl. ʾuḏuḏ of sing. ʾuḏuḏ, 'new'. The Maltese plural gud is a local formation by analogy with the plural noun and adjective pattern gud, like pl. tobba, from sing. tabb, 'doctor', and qadma, from sing. qadim, 'old'.

(28) Filomen kemm hi għajjena (How sorrowful is Filomel, Għas Peppu marilha l-Kafiel! Because her Pepp (Joseph) has gone away to Cairo.)


Għajjiena, adj. (Modern Maltese ngħollija, or asdaspjucuta, from lt. asdispecedere). Maltese adjectival formation from għala, jaghli, pp. ngħolli (m) + ja (f), 'to boil', as in Arabic. But the adjective is a purely Maltese formation and its figurative meaning, 'sorrowful' seems to have been influenced by lt. bollire, literally 'to boil', as in Arabic and as figuratively 'esse in agitazione, in sussesto' (Zingarelli). In Arabic عيان also means 'cali, bull' (Hava).

(29) Hanini ġrajni smajjar, (My beloved is a dark young man, Inklelej ġaraw għajnejn). O, else that's how my eyes see him.)

Lines from a Maltese folk-song heard at Munxar, Gozo.

Inklelej. conq. Otherwise. The more common form is inkella and the less common jekkella. According to Dessoucéy 'De Sicy proposed to read ɣičkellj, for Maltese jekkella'. A better explanation is that inkella is made up of in, with which cp. Ar. ʾiḏ, 'if', + kell, shortened from ikīn (Ar. ʾikīn) 'it be' (final ʾ becoming l by regressive assimilation) + le, Ar. ʾl 'no' literally 'if it be not so'. This word is a local formation.

(30) Dura durella! (Little, little hut! Qasba żgarrgella, A yard of ribbon Rija l-Abbassija, My brother in the orphanage Bil-maktur tal-mustaxija! With a crepe handkerchief! − Axxa! − A-tisho! Missieri masmulxaxxax! My father is a carpenter!)
Children's doggerel recited during a ring dance. Axxa is a meaningless word added to rhyme with mastrudaxxa in the last line and recalls the third line of the English game-rhyme Ring a ring o'rosies.

Duea, n.f. This word conveys a diminutive meaning of dar, 'house', is peculiar to Maltese, and sporadic. A toy house built of little stones by children. It is also the name of a semi-circular construction about three or four feet high, built of rubble stones and used by bird catchers as a watching place.

Durella is doubly diminutive by the addition of the Italian suffix -ella.

Tutemb!

A word used in children's games, meaning 'a pause!' or 'a truce!'. In some games, by crying 'tutemb' or 'tutemba' one is allowed to go out of play for a short time, thus preventing the gattus, 'cat'.

Tutemb, adv. Bonelli says that this is a hybrid word for Italian 'a tempo'.

Phonetically a more acceptable explanation is that this word is made up of Sic. to, 'your', + temp, short for Sic. tempu, 'time'. The voicing of final p, as one can see in the variant tutemba, is a result of its phonological junction at the end of a word with preceding liquid m. Tutemb, which in the original Sicilian meant 'your time, your turn', took the general meaning 'to be one's turn; to be out of the game' because the grammatical meaning of the possessive to was not appreciated by the Maltese-speaking children. No tutemb given by Bonelli stands for 'no to temp', not your time (turn). For further usage of Maltese no in children's games also with Semitic verbs cf no qaadini, 'You haven't caught me'.

B. PROVERBS AND OTHER SAYINGS

These have been grouped under two headings, i.e. (i) proverbs of everyday life, and (ii) weather-proverbs and sayings. Grammatical explanation is given only in some cases of unusual plural or verbal forms. We have retained the traditional forms given by Vassalli, De Soldanis or other early collectors of sayings, as the modemised form may have been slightly modified in the course of its passage to our generation.

(i) Proverbs of everyday life

(32) (a) Il-amar u s-smigh bhad-daqqa u l-boss

(Order and obedience are like a beat and its sound.)
dellu tqil, lit. 'his shadow is heavy', seems to be a Western superstition. The Maltese dell is a sort of ʃark, the like of which Westemman seems to have recorded in his work 'Riual and Belief in Morocco'. The Maltese meaning seems to be derived from that of the Latin umbra, whence Eng. 'The Shades', meaning 'The Abode of Spirits, Death', and the Italian 'le ombre'.

37 (a) Il-għadu biex ġisetke biesek, (Your enemy kissed you to cheat you,  ǔ int biex tfru, aqēb le fuqu. And you, to cheat him, will turn against him.)

(b) Wisq darbi l-fomm ifut (Very often the mouth betrays the heart)

Fiest, ifut, v.t. To cheat. Dessoluav wrongly derives the Maltese verb from Ar. ʃark 'to miss', and ʃark 'to cause to miss'. It derives from Lk. fūt, Latin futuo, 'to cheat, to have sexual intercourse with', which agrees with the meaning this verb has in Maltese. Fotta, ifotta, having the same meaning, is a modern loan word, its Semitic equivalent besta, jathsi, meaning, like fiet and fotta, 'to cheat' and also 'to have sexual intercourse with', which is their original meaning in Italian and Latin.

39 Ir-ragha fil-ġbis ma jsemmix (Feeding on stubble will not fatten the cattle)

Gbis, n.m. Stubble (Falzon and Caruana). According to De Soldanis, quoted by Vassalli, ġbis is 'terra che si trova circolamente nella creta, e con cui i creta danno luogo a loro vasi non cotti'. Cp. Ar. ʃark 'to become dry' (Hava), whence ʃarki 'pain sec, pain azyme' (Kazimiski and Hava). Maltese ġbis and Ar. ʃark share the idea of dryness, but the M. word is applied to dry straw or stubble, whereas the Ar. indicates dry bread. The M. word, though written with an s as the third radical, should really be written with a š. In Maltese voiced consonants at the end of a word are unvoiced and this explains why Maltese lexicographers have written the word with a final s.

39 (a) Qaghad id-dar ma fihx ghar. (Staying at home brings no shame.)

(b) Għall-għera u l-ġbar il-fiq jirrekken ġewwa d-dar. (On account of his poverty (lit. nudity) and shame the poor man hides himself at home.)

(c) Il-ġhajb ġiħajjeb u l-ġbar iġħassar. (Equivalent to 'It's a case of the pot calling the kettle black', lit. disgrace disgraces and shame shames')

(d) Il faqar mhuxxiex għar. (Poverty is no shame.)

These four proverbs show the prevalence of the fear of shame or disgrace in life.

Għar, n.m. Shame, disgrace. Cp. Ar. ʃark 'shame, disgrace, vice' (second radical š), Hava. With the Maltese plural għwar, occurring in the proverb it-ťfal jikku l-ġwaru, 'children betray secrets', cp. the Ar. plural ʃark, in which note the interchange of M. w and Ar. š; and for the opposite phenomenon cp. M. qaċċem, 'to awaken', second form of Ar. ʃarak, 'to rise'. The M. word għar occurs generally jointly with kass, forming the complete word għarukassa (għar + u + kass), 'disgrace, cause for scandal'. Kass is used as a verb in the sixth form only, ikkass, 'to express (generally self-complacently) astonishment at someone else's shortcomings', whence the Maltese proverb min jikkaža jaga' fil-kass, 'he who affects surprise at his neighbour's shortcomings will himself fall short of perfection' (lit. 'fall into disgrace'). The Maltese verb seems to be connected with kass, and kass, 'detractor, and 'suspicious' (Dozy), whence the basic idea of the M. verb ikkass, that is, the scandal-monger's mischievous whisperings. Kass and ikkass are otherwise local formations. An interesting example of mixed Maltese is the adjective każajr, 'one who self-complacently expresses astonishment at his neighbour's shortcomings', also 'one who is impermissibly inquisitive'. The word is made up of the noun kass + Romance adj. suffix aż, from It. arro.

40 Fin-niket u fil bnum (Friends and relative indeed are known in times of distress and need.)

Bnnum, n.m. Griefs, worries. Plural of bnum. Cp. Ar. ʃr 'anxiety, care', pl. ʃr (Hava), whence ʃr (M. bnumm), 'inquieter' (Beaussier). Hava gives the fifth form ʃr, 'to be anxious about, to search a thing'.

Bnnum, n.m. (Modern Maltese zijiet, irrespective of the maternal or paternal side) plural of għamm, 'paternal uncle'. Cp. Ar. ʃr having the same meaning, pl. ʃr the feminine of which is ʃr (M. ghammit), 'paternal aunt', made up of fem. sing. ghamma and surviving ì marbuta) Ar. pl. ʃr (M. pl. ghammiet).

41 (a) M'għandux għaxa ta' lejla. (He can't even afford a night's supper.)

(b) Għax ittieqel ghal ġaru Baqqa' bla għaxa l'dar. (Because he counted upon the assistance of his neighbour he had to sleep without his supper.)
Ghaxa, n.f. Nomen unitatis from M. verb ghax 'to live', also used in the sense of 'a livelihood, a living', is a local growth. With ghaxa, which according to the more common Maltese pattern should be ghaxja, also heard, cp. M. zieda, 'an addition', from zed (or zied), iżżid, 'to add', Ar. ġuże 'living' and ġużż 'food' (Hava). Examples of the more common M. nominal pattern from hollow verbs are sejbja, 'a treasure trove', from sab, 'to find'; bajda, 'an egg', from bad (or bread), 'to lay eggs'; saijra, 'a good cooking', from sar, 'to cook'; and tajra, 'a foul', from tar, 'to fly'.

(42) Dak li jħobb jisxob l-ilma (He who likes drinking water only
ma jagħtekk fil-kilma) won't utter the word.)

Ghalet, v.f. To commit a mistake; in modern Maltese ġbaliż, from It. zbagliare. Cp. Ar. l-li 'to commit a mistake, a slip' and laš (M. ghallat, 'to deceive, to attribute a mistake to'; laš (M. ghilt, 'mistake') 'a slip, a mistake, lapse', and laš 'a slip, a mistake' (Hava). Elias gives the third form of laš (Egyptian) in the Maltese sense of ghallat (second form) 'to swindle, to cheat'. Dozy quotes also the fifth form meaning 'errare' from Schiaparelli's 'Vocabolari' (Florence, 1871), corresponding to its Maltese equivalent 'to deceive oneself' or 'to be deceived'. The form is also given by Hava in this sense (dialect of Syria). One still hears the expression mexta bil-ġbit, 'he used foul means'.

(43) Il-għana mill-għanem, u (Wealth from cattle, and cattle pro-
q-għanem iżż il-għana. duce wealth.)

Għanem, n.coll. Herd, drove, cattle. The word corresponds to Ar. ṣaw 'sheep, ġwes, goats'. Caruana gives għanem instead of għanem, which must be a misprint.

(44) (a) Malt-żmejtem b'xli għilla. (There must always be some cause
b xli għilla. for death.)

(b) Kulhadd b'xli għilla. (None without trouble.)

Għilla, n.f. Disease, Cause. Cp. Ar. laš 'misfortune', from laš 'to be ill'. In Maltese we have ghaller, 'to devitalise, to weaken', and ġghal-
ler, 'to grow weak, to lose energy', whence M. pp. mgghall, 'devital-
ised, weakened', forms which are not recorded in the Maltese diction-
aries. With the meaning of the Maltese second form cp. the Arabic
fourth form laš 'to afflict with a disease'. Cp. also laš 'to adduce pleas,
excuses' and laš 'efficient cause, illness' (Hava).

(45) (a) Želaq darba, bareg ħabr u mad-dinija. (He slipped once, and soon everyone
mad-dinija. came to know of it.)
(b) Ġhali, Malej is-sabar sa-
daq il-ħabar. (Give, o Lord, patience until death-
knell.)

Ħabab, n.m. Rumour, death-knell. For Maltese meaning of death-knell cp. Syrian Ar. ᶠبشر pl. ħabbar pl. ħabbar pl. 'nouvelle de la morte' (Barthélémy). For the other Maltese meanings cp. also Ar. ṣawā 'information, news, notice' (Hava). Maltese ħabar in the sense of death-knell is presumably the original word used before it was replaced by modern agnija, and like other Semitic Christian words such as qarr, 'confession', ħgarr, 'communion', etc., was very likely originally introduced into Malta by Maronite missionaries.

(46) (a) Ħijjar imqattugħa u bōrra (Better an honest girl in rags than a
inkella ghanja u morra. rich but evil-looked one.)
(b) Fiż-żwieġ tittaq is-sorra. (In marriage do not ask for the
Hu tiża fjira u bōrra. bundle (riches, wealth), but choose a poor and honest girl.)

Ħorra, adj.f. Honest, unpolluted. Cp. Ar. ṣaw 'free-born, generous, pure,
in MIX at' also 'frank, speaking plainly' (dialect of Syria; (Hava) which, in N. Africa, may also indicate the virtue of legitimacy of birth, from Ar. ṣaw 'to be freed' (slave); to be free-born (man) (Hava). With the Maltese meaning cp. N. Af. Għ. ṣaw 'libre, bien née, vertueuse' (Beaussier). Spiro Beu explains ṣaw as 'a respectable woman'. In Arabic one describes a ṣaw (+' fem.) anything that is pure or unmixed such as gold, language and one's birth.

(47) Min ma jraqqja jofla f'daqqja. (He that does not mend comes to ruin
quickly.)

Ħela, v.t. To come to ruin. Cp. Ar. ṣaw 'to become destitute or poor'. The
Maltese verb in form corresponds to Ar. ȹ qq 'to become vacant (place)' (Hava), and, in the dialect of N. Africa also 'dévastés, dépupier' (Beaussier). The better known meaning of M. ħela, 'to waste or to squander', is local.

(48) ... 'L-unied
Jekk ma jekkบbux (Were it not for love
Ma jittabbusx. it would not be easy to
bring up children.)

Ħiebb, v.int. To be loved or cherished. Eighth form of Maltese-Arabic ṣaw t.v., 'to love or to cherish'. The eighth form is a Maltese growth not found in other Arabic Dictionaries.
(49) (a) Ghad illi marri l-hwiitemt (Though the rings have gone yet the fingers remain.)
   (b) Ghall-hwiitemt u ghall-imsielet (In order to buy rings and ear-
   lium baqghet xejn ma kielet. rings to-day she remained without her meal.)

The hatem is also associated with the popular exorcisms recited to cure the eye disease called Pterygium, hence the Maltese name Hatem tal-
Qarnita (Vide No. 11 (b)).

Hatem, pl. hwietem, n.m. Seal, ring. In Modern Maltese we use ċurkett,
It. cerchietto, 'annelino' (Zingarelli). The Maltese word corresponds to Ar. pair (pl. حارض), 'a ring, or signet-ring'.

(50) Il-hażin il-għablu l-hajna. (With an evil person use deceit.)

Hajna, n.f. Deceit, fraud. This word looks like the feminine adjective of ħajjen, 'malicious' (Ar. غائياً) used nominally. It derives from M. han (m. pp. mehejūn, (+ a, f.) 'to deceive, to cheat', corresponding to Ar. ُخاه 'to betray, to embezzle', whence غائيا 'a perfidy, breach of trust', with which cp. M. hijena, 'malice'. In the dialect of Gozo a half-witted man who is easily taken in or fooled is described as bla ħijiena, 'silly', (lit. without malice).

(51) Mhx kull bżzà tistor il-bażwa. (It's not every rug that hides a rapture.)

Bżżà, n.g. Girdle, drawers. The Maltese word corresponds to N. Afr. Ar. بُجْز pl. بُجْز (M. bżżoż), 'couisse de la cuirasse d'un pantalon' (Beaussier). Dessoulay derives it from Ar. بِذْذ 'a reduction of بذذ 'as explained in Freytag. Dozy in his Dictionnaire Détailé du Noms des Vêtements chez les Arabes (Amsterdam, 1845, p. 139) writes: 'On sait que بذذ désigne en arabe la cuisse par ou passa la بذذ c'est-
à-dire la cuirasse qui sert à attacher le caïlon. À Malte, le mot bżżà au pluriel bżżas (not in Maltese dictionaries which give bżżoż, cp. idiom donnoch bżżà, said of a shabbily dressed person) a reçu une acception plus étendue; il y désigne de nos jours le caïlon avec la cuirasse' (Voyez Vassalli, Lexicon Melitense, col. 262).

(52) Hajja dejjem imxuma abjar (Better death than a life of privations.)

Maquma, pp.f. Full of privation (poor man's life). With the Maltese word cp. Ar. ماًقمة 'inauspicious', from Ar. شاء 'to draw ill luck upon' (Hava).
purchase something cheap'. Literally *merhbu* means 'What can one buy cheaper than this?'. Only a few other examples of this grammatical form survive in Maltese, i.e. *M'isbaħ l-indafal*, 'What is more beautiful than cleanliness?'; *M'akbek*, Malej, 'How great thou art, o Lord!', and *M'isbahna ghal min jaf jaranal*, 'What a fine figure we cut for anyone with an eye to see'; *M'isbah is-siktal*, 'How delightful is silence'! Sutcliffe (op. cit. p. 109) considers these expressions as curious survivals of the fourth derived Form of the verb. He says: 'In spite of the resemblance in form to the comparative the addition of the nominative suffix shows that this cannot be a comparative... On account of its resemblance to the comparative this form has come to be treated as such, e.g. *M'isbaħ l-indafal*, 'what a fine thing is cleanliness'. Hence it may be said that in this construction in Maltese the word is used in a comparative vocalization, and a verb in its ability to take pronominal suffixes'.

(57) (a) Abjar ġherfeq min *muielek*. (Better your wisdom than your riches.)

(b) Dari dari, u darek darek, *Miel mieli, u mielek mielek*. house is my house and your house is your house;

My property is my property and your property is your property.)

The proverb embodies the idea contained in the Latin maxim 'unicuique suum tribuere'. According to Caruana, a street in Rabat inhabited by the rich and the noble was known as 'Ta' l-imwiejli' (lit. the street of the rich). Miel, n.m. pl. *muiejl*. Estates, riches. Cp. Ar. ُمَيْلَ 'flocks, wealth'. This word occurs also in *ras il-miel*, 'capital whereon interest runs', a very archaic word which has not died out altogether (cp. Ar. ُمَيْلَ). Maltese place-name *Bormla* seems to be made up of *Bur*, 'uncultivated land', (Ar. ُعُرْ) + *mula*, from Ar. ُمَلَا 'meaning Lord' from ُمَلَأَ and therefore has no connection with *miel*. But cp. also ُمَلَأَ pl. of ُمَلَأَ rich, wealthy man, or sing. fem. gender.

(58) (a) Mejju *mirjbuah*, b'kull deni. (May is windy; look out for all sorts of harm.)

(b) Mejju *mirjbuah*, jaqleb il-wiċċ u l-iqegh. (May is so windy that it overturns both the surface and the bottom.)

*Mirjbiż*, adj.m. Windy. The corresponding Arabic word is ُمَرْجُ 'windy (day)' (Hava), but the Maltese form follows the pattern *meqTiel*, the participial descriptive pattern from verbs of the ninth form like *middieli*, 'withered', from *abiel*, 'to wither', (Ar. ُقَطَ) and like *misnieb*,

*rancid* from *smieb*, 'to grow rancid' (Ar. ُمَخْسَضَ), indicating the acquisition of a quality which may be good or bad.

(59) Kull miktub keen *moqul*. Sata’ jkun midgub u mirqum. (All that is written has been said before; it could have been invented and embellished.)

According to Vassalli, this proverb implies disbelief.

*Moqul*, pp.m. of *qal*, 'to say', which is defective, used only in the third person singular masculine and feminine, in the third person plural of the perfect, and in the seventh form, its omissions being supplied by the verb *għad*, 'to say' (Cp. Ar. ُقَلَ 'to repeat'). The corresponding Ar. ُقُلَ is regular in Classical Arabic. With M. *moqul* cp. Ar. ُقَلَ and Hava ُقُلَ 'said, word' (Hava).

(60) L-ismużi ma fihx bajr. (A squeamish person makes unpleasant company)

*Mużi*, adj.m. Nauseating. From *MZz*, 'to be smelly', whence the other form of M. *mezzi*, 'having a disagreeable smell' like duck's flesh. The Maltese verb links up with Ar. ُزَجَ 'to be sour (bitterness)', whence the Arabic adjective ُزِجَ (m.) ُزَجَ (f.) 'sour' (Maltese *mezzi* (m.), *mizzu* (f.)). The adverbial pattern of *mużi* is a local formation.

(61) (a) Fih kemm in-namar Allu. (There is an innumerable quantity.)

(b) Il-żin għamel in-namar Allu is-sena. (This year figs are abundant.)

*Namar*, n.m. Abundance, a great number of. In the dialectal Arabic of Egypt and Syria we find ُنَمَار 'to number', a verbal formation from Latin *numerus*. This word, which is not recorded by Beaussier, may have reached Malta through Syrian Arabic.

(62) (a) Dejjem *inazi* u qatt ma jmut. (He is always at the last gasp but never dies.)

(b) Waqt in-nizi, jekk ikollon dan il-veq. (At one's last gasp, if one has time.)

*Nuħa*, v. ind. 'To be in one's agony'. Etymologically the Maltese verb should be written with final *gh*, Cp. Ar. دُرَّ and ُقَتَ (third form) 'to be in the pangs of death', whence Ar. ُقَتَ 'pangs of death' (Hava). With the Maltese phrase *waqt in-nizi* or *fin-nizzi* cp. Ar. ُقَتَ 'à l'agonie' (Beaussier). As the Maltese verb occurs in the saying *dejjem inazi u qatt ma jmut*, the verb follows the conjunction of the third form of verbs with final *j* like *qari* (No. 8) and *immiż*, 'he contradicts', that is to say, the Maltese verb, dropping final radical *gh* (Ar. ُقَتَ), has been
assimilated to verbs of the third form having \( j \) for a third radical.

(63) Ġurdien qluqi qatt far ma jsir.  
\( \text{A wandering mouse will never become a rat.} \)

Qluqi, adj.m. Fidgety, unstable. Adjectival form from Maltese qileq, with which cp. Ar.  CoreData 'to be restless' (Hava), and Tunisian quloq, 'être ennui'. Dozy gives CoreData 'inquirer'. En parlant d'un cheval qui par inquiétude ne peut se tenir en repos quand il est sous le cavalier'. The Maltese form is given by Beaussier with inter-consonantal \( a \) between the first and second radicals, meaning 'impatient, irritable, restless'.

(64) (a) Hsibt u rajt bejn i bejn Rabbi.  
(\text{I have thought and decided between myself and my Lord.})

(b) Rabba jaqmel!  
(\text{The Lord's will be done.})

Rabbi, n.m. Grammatically the meaning is 'My Lord', the word being made up of obsolete rabb and first person singular pronominal suffix. Cp. Ar.  CoreData 'the Lord, master'. The word is recorded by Vassalli in his collection of proverbs, where he says: 'detto in oggi raro, e sim-piazzato da 'Jaqmel Alla'. Rabbi, dizione araba, forse portata da qualche schiavo venduto in campagna. Altrementi sarà ebraica, e vale 'il maestro faccia'. Quando io la udii per la prima volta, mi fecse sensazione, ma il senso era per il grande artefice'.

(65) (a) Il-ħidma fil-btala  
iġiż  i-n-sibha u l-bala.  
(Work on feast days causes min and waste.)

(b) Barrani jażālik, ħewwienna  
jisbik.  
(An outsider nuis you, but a relative enlists you.)

Sibha, n.f. Slavery, enslavement. With Maltese verb sibha, jisbi, 'to enslave, to ruin', cp. Ar.  CoreData 'to take captive' (Hava), with its cognate nouns  CoreData and  CoreData. Misba, 'pirate lair', given by Camana, seems to be a local formation.

(66) Dak li jidra jgbix biz-sisija  
Abjar minni biż-żewġ bil-Hemsija.  
(He who gets used to live on charity fares better than the farmer who owns a double plough at Hemsija.)

Sisija, n.f. Barbera wrongly derives this word from Maltese saqsa, 'to ask', Ar.  CoreData 'interrogator' (Beaussier), while Dessoulay links it up with  CoreData 'a beggar' (Roland de Bussy) whence M. sisija, adding that 'formerly there was sought with the Persian ساسان 'a beggar', thus connecting with the tale of the founder of the Sassanian dynasty. It is now taken to be a reduction from a noun from istaqsa. But the proposed reduction of sisija from saqsa, 'to ask', is phonetically unsatisfactory. If the word is Semitic at all, one may suggest a possible connection with Ar.  CoreData 'to manage an affair', whence  CoreData 'politics'; also 'habilité' (Dozy). Beaussier gives the phrase  CoreData 'doucement, tout beau'. Semantically, the connection may be explained on the ground that begging is very often considered as an attempt to live by one's wits at other people's expense. For a Semitic Maltese form cp. bimaqja (Vide No. 34), 'a place where hens lay their eggs', and tasiżja, 'an admonition'.

(67) Iggorr, iggorr, sa l-bajda ttorr.  
(\text{It (bird) carries (the straw) till it lays its eggs.})

Tarr, v.t. 'To lay eggs, push them out'. Cp. Ar.  CoreData 'to drive away' (Hava), rebuter, repousser (Beaussier). Cp. also  CoreData 'to fall from a terrace, to grow forth, plant, mustache (Hava).'

(68) Tbib imsaħħan jinjaraf minn  
(You can tell warmed-up soup by its taste.)

Tbib, Verbal noun from tebab, 'to dress meat, to cook' (Falzon), with which cp. Ar.  CoreData 'cooking of a dish; cooked food' (Hava), from  CoreData 'to cook meat'.

(69) Hajja din ta' kul u ixrobl,  
orqod u ttebab.  
(\text{This life is just eat and drink, sleep and stretch yourself (in bed).})

Terah, v.t. To dissolve, melt indigo or paint; to stretch out; to cripple. Cp. Ar.  CoreData 'to fling or cast away', and Syrian  CoreData 'miscarried' (cp. Maltese bajda mitrab, 'a prematurely laid egg'; also it-tigiega titrab il-bajda, 'he lays her eggs prematurely'). With the Maltese noun terba, cp. Ar.  CoreData 'Persian mantle', with Maltese terrieba cp. Ar.  CoreData 'square mattress'. With the Maltese mimed noun mitrab, 'Mattress', cp. N. Afr. Ar.  CoreData 'mattelas à une place' (Beaussier) which, in non-dialectal Arabic, means 'a place where a thing is thrown'.

(70) Armel u mrabbab ma fihx  
x'ittiletit.  
(\text{A widower with step-children is not worth marrying for the third time.)}

Imrabbab, pp.m. of rabba, in Arabic, 'to bring up a child'; hence imrabbab means 'a person that has been brought up'. This word is an active participle meaning 'one that has brought up children'. In Arabic ربوب (M. ṭiḥ) means 'a stepson or stepfather'.

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Teltet, v.t. To make threefold, to triplicate. Cp. Ar ܐܹܰ polarization 'to triplicate' (Hava).

(71) Il-kromb bla widek bhal
widna bla widah. (Turnips without meat-fat are like ears without wax.)

This proverb emphasizes the importance of fat in making the local variety of meat-soup called kawilata (lt. cavolo + ata: local formation). Widek, n.m. Any greasy substance. Cp. Ar ܢܹܥ 'grease, gravy' (Hava). Widah, n.m. Ear wax. The Maltese meaning agrees with Ar. ܢܥ 'saleté' given by Dozy. Otherwise the usual Arabic meaning is different.

(72) Alla jxiegbel il-battal. (May God provide work for the idle.)

Xiegbel, v.t. To employ; to divert (the attention). Third form Maltese verbs having (ﾒ) or (ܒ) for a second radical are incapable of reduplicating their radicals. They can adopt the third form instead, which corresponds to Ar. second form. With Maltese xiegbel cp. Ar. ﻢ 'to give much work to' (Hava); 'donner de l'occupation' (Beaussier).

(73) Fid-dar kollox jixtamba, sa
ra-mied tal-kennun. (There is use for everything in the house, even the ashes.)

Xtamba, v.t. To be needed, or in demand. This verb is a curious formation made up of indefinite pronoun xi (Ar. ﻦ 'thing') 'what' and the verb ambra, which in its turn is a reduction of ghemel (Ar. ﻦ) bi (Ar. ﺑ) 'to need, to make use of', literally, 'to do with'. Consonant t is the infixed of the eighth form as in xtewa 'to be roasted'. This verb is a local formation.

(ii) Weather Proverbs and Sayings

(74) (a) Mill-Milied il-fuq
Il-ľah jibda jaghți bil-buq. (From Xmas onward hunger strikes
with the staff.)

A Christmas saying.

(b) Haġa moħġaga:
Wieħed u mejn mhuma xejn, count for nothing; two or three
Tnejt u tlieta logħob u bliqqa count for a joke; from three on-
Minn tlieta 'il fuq jagħbu bil-buq. wards they strike with a stick.

The answer to this still current riddle heard at Birżirkara (Malta) is 'children'.

Buq, n.m. A hollow reed. I have also heard the word buq used in the secondary sense of 'eyelid' in the phrase il-buq tal-ġbajn (Munxar

Gozo), which is unknown in Arabic. The meaning of Maltese buq seems to be associated with the use of the reed (cp. M. ertzamara, Ar. ܠܹܪ 'a reed pipe') as a sort of fluteolet, with which cp. Ar. ܐܹܪ 'trumpet, bugle', whence Ar. ܐܹܪ 'to lie', (cp. It. trompetta and strambazzare, 'to boast publicly', from trombetta, 'trumpet') whereas the meaning of the Maltese fifth form buwqaw is derived from the primary Maltese meaning of hollowness, 'to become hollow', which is unknown in other Arabic dialects, but occurs in the Hebrew fem. noun ܐܹܒ 'emptiness, devastation'. The Maltese word occurs also in the idiom ma jfibwax minn daqq il-buq (or tabal), literally 'he is not afraid of the sound of the reed-pipe (or drum)', i.e. 'he is a brave, courageous man, not easily frightened'.

(75) La jiği l-Milied
Arfa' xlubettietek
Fuq il-farxa tal-bieb. (When Xmas comes, keep
your fowling-piece on
the shelf over the door.)

Farxa, n.f. Besides the meaning 'a board sustaining the door-post' recorded in the Maltese dictionaries, farxa indicates also a sort of wooden board or shelf on which the week's loaves are kept. Thus in Gozo one speaks of il-farxa tal-bobz, 'the loaves' board'; bobbza fuq il-farxa, 'his loaves are on the bread-shelf' i.e. he is well-off; and of a very tall man it is said filhaqba l-farxa', 'he reaches the bread-shelf'. In Arabic ܐܹܒ means 'bed, mattress', linking up with Maltese frix, 'bedding'. The Maltese meaning, 'wooden board', unrecorded in Arabic dictionaries, links up with the secondary meaning of ܐܹܒ 'to furnish (a house)'.

(76) Sal-Milied
La bard u lanqas ġwieb. (Up to Christmas there is neither
cold nor hunger.)

For a similar idea cp. proverb under No. 74a.

Ġwieb, (but etymologically ġwiegħ; pl. of ġwił (etymologically ġwiłh, Ar. ܠܹܠ 'hunger'). This Maltese plural form has been provoked by the necessity of assonance with Milied, 'Christmas'. It is otherwise unknown in spoken Maltese and in Arabic. The plural form also Sal-
Milied la brud u lanqas ġwieb, in which note the plural formation brud, also unheard in ordinary speech, from sing. masc. M. and Ar. ܠ 'cold'. The plural formation brud grammatically agrees with plural ġwieb in the same line.

(77) Meta tara l-beraq
Lesti l-girmna fejn tintebaq. (When you see lightning make sure
you have a shelter to go into.)
Girma, n.f. This word indicates an ancient conical construction built of unplastered and undressed stone. The *giren* (pl.) are very frequent in some parts of Malta and Gozo and in Sardinia, where such constructions are called *nuraghe*. The meaning of Maltese *gorna* or *girna* does not agree with Sicilian *gorna*, which indicates a 'ricettacolo d’acqua stagnante nel quale si pratica la macerazione del lino, del canape’ (Traina), a word which, according to Giacomo de Gregorio (*Studii Glot- tologici Italiani*, Vol. III) derives from Latin *urna* with initial addition of *g* as in the place-name *Grerna* from Sic. *rua*, and in the Maltese-Sicilian surname *Grima*, from Latin *rerna*. But the Maltese word seems to link up with *Ar. جيرنا* ‘a pestle, stone basin’ and in Syrian, ‘stone mortar’, from *Ar. جير* ‘to lay, lay in a heap’ (Hava), which provides the radicals of the Maltese word. *Cp. also أجرة* ‘threshing place, drying place for dates’ (Hava), linking up with Hebrew יֶּשָּׁב which besides ‘an open place at the gate of a city’ means also ‘a threshing floor, corn of the floor’. Grammatically *girma* is a noun of unity, literally meaning ‘a heap or pile of stones’, which is what it looks like to the passer-by.

(78) Marzu
Bl-il-ima xebghan,
Italla' g'hiert
U gozz ikbar ikun tat-tgham.

G'hiert, n.f. A collection, a quantity of. A noun of unity from Maltese *gabar*, to collect, but in Arabic it means ‘to set a broken bone, to restore one’s business’ (Hava). *مَكْرَب* means ‘leather bag’ (Hava and Beusselier). Maltese *gabar* agrees with *N. Afr. جير* ‘trouver, retrouver, rencontrer’ (Beusselier), and *جر* (fourth form) ‘recoeurver, acquérir de nouveau une chose qu’on avait perdue’; ‘conbrer lo perdido’ — Alcal (Dozy). Maltese *g'hiert* is a local formation from *gabar*, the meaning of which links up with *N. Afr. Arabian*. Other Maltese forms from *gabar* which are purely local are *magbra*, ‘a collection of money, etc.’, and *magbar*, ‘a great number or crowd of’.

(79) Tidrisx fl-ehtriq
Biex it-tibien ma jinbelieix.

Ehtriq, n.m. Verbal noun of eighth form from *baraq*, ‘to burn’. *Cp. Ar. بَرَاقُ* ‘burning, combustion’, from *برَق* ‘to burn, take fire’ (Elías).

(80) (a) Sajj immiddi — h'argha
In a wet summer expect a full mimlija.

(b) Il-qoton ma jibżaghx mix-xemx il-qawwija;
Jibża mic-épar bosta u mit-middiija.

(81) Sant Andrija
Nofs il-munuma mitmuna
U nofs il-miżirgha biżirgha.


(82) (a) April
Il-hobż wasal fil-mindil.
(b) April
Trid hobża kbira fil-mindil.

Mindil, n.m. (Modern Maltese *servetta*). The omenum; towel, a napkin.

The Maltese meaning ‘omenum’ is matched with that of ‘caul’ recorded by Elias, who gives مُكْرَبَِة* under *كَبْر* In this sense the Egyptian word is the synonym of *borgom*, *مَكْرَب* ‘veil’. For other Maltese meanings *Cp. Ar. مُكْرَب* ‘cowl, napkin, veil’ (Hava). According to Dozy Ar. مَكْرَب is *est le Latin mantile ou mantille et désigne comme ce dernier une serviette*.

(83) (a) Ix-xita tal-qigham megbuda.
(b) Ix-xita ta’ San Ġorġ megbuda.

These two weather sayings are based on the fact that rain usually falls in mid-April and when threshing floors are being prepared in the fields about the beginning of June.

Megbuda, pp.f. This is a more archaic form of the past participle of obsolete *wegbed*, ‘to promise’, now replaced by *wieghed* (third form), whence *muwegbda*.

(84) Kien il-hierah u kien lewliemas
I żala illum ghal ġewwa d-dwiemess.

(He was here yesterday and the day before yesterday, but to-day he will be carried away to his grave.)
(85) Meta Jannar tarah lewliemi
Ma tarax il-bidwi tant hieni.

(When January is too rainy the
farmer is not so happy.)

Leuwliemi, (m) + ja (f). The adjective presupposes the hypothetical quan-
ditiliteral verb leuwliem, 'to rain, pour (rain, water)', from ilma, 'water', a composite word made up of article il (Ar. ٍ) + ma (Ar. م water). This form is a purely local formation.

(86) Qoqżot, qoqżot ghaliq, Jannar!
Ghadejt bil-bard blaxita
U ballejmi bin-nagħaq fil-għar.

(Fie! Fie on you, January!
You have brought cold but not
rain, and you left me with my
sheep in the cave.)

Qoqżot, excl. This word seems to link up with QOŻŻ, Ar. كَر 'to loathe, to be affected with nausea', Ar. كِر 'he loathed, shrank from' (Sal-
monè), whence also Maltese qżeż, 'repugnance', Ar. كَر 'impartial' (Salmonè). Final unstressed ot does not seem to be the stressed suf-
fic of an abstract noun like ut in ghabjet, though this suffix is always stressed, unlike ot in qoqżot. One hears also goqżu in nnnu goqżu, a children's word for a very old man. The word may also be a loan-word of unknown origin as the form is non-Semitic. For similar form cp. Qorrot in Dablet Qorrot, a place-name in Gozo, in which Qorrot stands for Corrado, the name of a legendary saint.

(87) Iż-żahar fil-berwieq u t-tewm blā
Talsir,
Tama qawwija li l-biedja tkun
bębda titkhir.

(Asphodel in blossoms and garlic
tahsir,
without rot are a good sign that
the harvest will be plentiful.)

Titkhir, n.m. Want, misery. This Maltese word seems to link up with Ar. كُر 'to trouble', and كُر 'to be distressful (life)', whence كُر 'to be troubled' (Hava). In this sense Maltese titkhir stands for titkdr, with a metathesis of the first and second radicals. If that is so, the change of voiced d to voiceless t is explainable by its phonological junction with its preceding voiceless consonant k. As another rare instance of progressive assimilation instead of the usual regressive assimilation cp. žied 'to be increased' for žiied, eighth form of žied (Ar. طید 'to increase'. The word is given by Fr Magri who is uncertain about its meaning. But the word is proposed by him, maqas, ghaks, 'want, misery', suits the context.

(88) Mejju bla rih
Il-biedja bla titkhir.

(If May is windless the wheat will
not swell out.)

Titkhir, n.m. Ebbing away. Verbal noun from forogb, 'to ebb away', a passive form of faragb, the second form of which means 'to pour out'. Cp. Ar. گُر 'to be empty' (Hava), and its N.Afr. verbal noun of action تغريب, (Beaussier).

(89) Gmielk awar tas-silia li titriegha,
Jitfi minn qabel tghaddi ir-
Rebbiegha.

(Your beauty is like the blossoms
clover that is grazed, it fades
Away before Spring is over.)

Tirriegha, v. int. To be grazed (pasture land). Sixth form of Maltese ragha, Ar. رَك 'to pasture, to graze (the grass)'. In Maltese the third form (as well as the sixth form) is for the most part reserved for verbs which have gh (for ى or ى) or the weak aspirate h for their second radical and are therefore incapable of doubleting that radical as is re-
quired for the second form. The loss of this reduplication is compensated for by the lengthening of the vowel of the first syllable, which is the characteristic of this form. The third form is, therefore, prac-
tically an extension of the second and has the same meaning (Cp. Su-
cilfe, op. cit., p. 84(a) and explanation of xiegbel under No. 72).

(90) (a) Novembbru
Jażiegħu, ikissu
U żenbilu
(b) Min jermilek żenbilu
ghabbitu

(In November they cut and break
the olives and fill the baskets.)

Olives that are usually gathered in November are sometimes beaten with a piece of wood till they break; hence the street-cry Imkissir il-Malti (lit. the Maltese olives are broken!).

Żenbil, n.m. Cp. N. Afr. Az جنب 'panier en esparr en forme de sac long ouvert sur le côté; il sert à transporter les fardeaux à dos d'âne, on l'y place comme une besace. Panier double. Très grand sac en esparr, triangulaire, pour les marchandises sèches, amandes éponges, etc.' (Tunis: Beaussier). Note that the Maltese żenbil is largely used for olives. The word occurs also in Egyptian in the sense of 'straw bag' (Elia), 'large native basket' (Spiro Bey, who derives it from Persian).

(91) (a) Bejn t-tel-Qala u t-Milied
Itza' l-mohriet minn halq
il-wied,
Ix-xabieri tnik faq l-liied.

(Between Conception Day, i.e. 8th
December, and Xmas Day stop ploughing in the valley, and hang your fowling-pieces on the peg.)
The latter saying refers to two parties who cannot see eye to eye with one another.

Wited, n.m. pl. utied. Peg Cp. Ar. _sid plural of 🥈 or ۹ meaning 'stake, tent-peg' (Hawa).

THE VOWELS OF VERBS WITH THIRD WEAK RADICAL

By Edmund F. Setcliffe, S.J.

The first point that strikes the attention is that the first vowel in the perfect of many of these verbs long ago definitely established itself as _e_. Thus _beda_, _beka_, _bena_, _feda_, _fela_, _gera_, _beba_, _bela_, _hema_, _kera_, _lewa_, _mexa_, _nisa_, _gbeza_, _qeda_, _gela_, _reba_. These words are all so written today as they are to be found already in the dictionaries of Caruana and Falzon. On the other hand, verbs whose third radical letter is _ghajn_, have not attained the same stability. In the dictionaries just mentioned we find the spellings _baša_, _bašša_, _gama_, _naza_, _sama_, _tajra_, _zara_. Now Dun P P. Saydon lays it down as a rule that in all these words the first vowel should be _e_ 'Fi fuit kliem nistgha nghidu li meta l-aħħar konsonanti hi gh il-vokali tal-verb huma _e-ɑ_'. and then mentions the verbs cited, _Il-Malti_ (1939)98. At the same time he admits that usage varies at the present day: 'įžda nistqarru li aħna u nixaddu l-vokali _a_ u a f'ħafna verbi jinbidlu, u ghalhekk min ighid _sena_ u min ighid _sama_'. Similarly Dun Karm writes: 'Jiena sibt xi drabi min kiteb _sama_ (to hear) u xi drabi min kiteb _sena_'; xi drabi _tela_ u xi drabi _tala_; xi waqt _gema_ u xi waqt _gema_ u rejt_ _raja_; u bosna oħrajn', _Il-Malti_ (1938)67. These facts show that the present is a period of transition in regard to these verbs whose third radical is _ghajn_. Some writers still retain the original _a_ of the first syllable, others substitute for it the vowel _e_. These latter would seem to be influenced by the vowel _e_ that, as we have seen, has long been established as the first vowel of many verbs with third weak radical. But can a rule be laid down? Can it be said that the one way of speaking and writing is correct and the other wrong? Those who use the vowel _a_, can plead for their usage the form of the words previously current and the fact that this form is supported by Semitic analogy. They cannot be said to be in error. The worst that can be said of them is that they are conservative, if, indeed, it is bad at all to keep to the old ways. On the other hand, neither can those who follow tradition accuse of blundering those who write these words with _e_. And the reason is that language is not something for which immutable laws can be laid down for all time. Language is something living that cannot be restricted by the rules of a book. Only time can show whether the change will become universally adopted.