SOCIAL ASPECTS OF MALTESE NICKNAMES

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The subject of my lecture this evening is Maltese nicknames — a subject which covers a very wide field of which we can only give a broad outline in the time at our disposal. It is a subject which, taken seriously, leads to interesting results and conclusions that make it all the more fascinating. It is a pity that the evidence of these living documents — for such are nicknames in reality — has not been studied as it has been in other countries by our historians, our lexicographers and our social workers. In the form in which they have come down to us, Maltese nicknames reveal the many responses of the popular mind and bring back to life the world in which our forefathers moved and lived. They become instinct with meaning and charged with social significance once we understand their language and read in them the people’s reactions to travel, to population movements, to national events and vicissitudes. For these nicknames may be related to past events and explained in terms of human qualities, defects or failings — a labour of love digging up, as it were, the psychological archaeology of the people of Malta.

One often hears that in the villages of Malta and Gozo people are much better known by their nicknames than by their Christian names or surnames, which are only used for registration purposes. This at once leads us to consider the motives behind these nicknames. The Christian name originally given to a person is frequently augmented by an epithet derived from some good or bad quality, personal peculiarity, some deed, or a favourite expression of the person on whom it is bestowed. The employment of the lagam, which is the Maltese word for nickname, is in part due to the popularity and frequency of certain Christian names which render the name insufficiently distinctive. Besides, it seems to be a primitive human instinct that nomina sunt omnia (names are omens) — hence the accepted principle of the significance of names prevailing among Semitic peoples and, to some extent, among all people. A Maltese proverb says Skond ghamlek lagmek, i.e. “according to your nature your nickname”. So intimate becomes the relation conceived between the individual and his nickname that the latter comes frequently to be used as an equivalent of the former: “to be called” means “to be”, the name being equated with the object, or even identical with it. The fact that some names take the status of surnames does not alter the truth of this principle, as the underlying idea is the same. Thus the Hebrew name Edom, meaning red, the Maltese l-Ahmar, still current as a nickname, English surname Redman, Latin Rufus and Italian Rossi are all variations of the same epithet expressing the same characteristic.

To us in the 20th century it seems hard to believe that there ever was a time when people had no Christian names or surnames. Yet that is precisely what we find in early times. Hebrew names, for example, seem to have been suggested by particular circumstances attending the child’s birth, e.g. Jacob (the supplanter), or else made up of adjectives denoting personal characteristics, e.g. Esau (Hair), Agar (Wanderer), Baruch (Blessed), Laban (White), Noem (Pretty), Ruth (Friend). We also read that both the Hebrews and their neighbours, the Canaanites, assumed the names of animals as proper names, e.g. Caleb (Dog), Jonas (Dove), Zeb (cf. M. Dib) meaning “Wolf”, or, less frequently, of plants, e.g. Susan (Lily). Trades and natural phenomena also gave rise to proper names, e.g. Obed (Servant), Anna (Grace), Barac (Lightning), Samson (Sun). In the first three centuries
of our era the Christians did not distinctly differ in their names from the pagans around them, any more than they did in dress or in language, and they continued to call themselves after colours, e.g. Albanus (White, with which cp. M. nickname L-Abjad), Rufus (Red — cp. M. L-Ahomar), or after numbers — Tertius, Septimus and so on. But by the 4th century Christians sometimes adopted the name of a saint or a spiritual hero who had helped them, and the cult of the saints developed this practice in the Middle Ages. A certain impetus to the use of Biblical names started in the 7th Century throughout the West. The use of nicknames with Christian names was prevalent in the Middle Ages until, between the 13th and 14th century, the legal acceptance of surnames finally incorporated several nicknames into the class of surnames that have survived to this day.

Against this background we can now consider the main elements which make up the nickname material of Malta and Gozo, and attempt a workable classification assessing their social content. The subject has been almost completely neglected by our scholars, for with the exception of Annibale Preca, who devotes a chapter to its study in his Malta Cananea (1904), the only writer who turned his attention to the subject was the Italian professor Luigi Bonelli who visited these Islands in 1895 to conduct a linguistic and folkloristic survey of the Maltese Archipelago. These writers could not treat the subject adequately for want of sufficient material, but their pioneering work deserves our gratitude.

The use of nicknames has been prevalent in Malta at all ages, and although very few records have survived prior to the 16th century, one can still trace earlier instances of popular nicknames in these Islands. We read in Abela’s Descrittione di Malta (1647) that Donna Margherita Aragona, wife of Giacomo Pellegrino di Malta, flourished between 1370 until her death in 1418 and that her riches earned her the nickname of The Witch (p. 449). The mention of one Cosmo Bell’Huomo in 1528 (p. 469) is evidently a translation of Is-

Sbejjah, still used as a nickname. Giovanni Surdo, who was treasurer of Notabile in 1512, suggests also a translation of Il-Truż (Deaf, Il sordo) which is a common nickname in Malta and Gozo to this day. We read also of one Matteo, known as Mazzu, c. 1440, from whom the Cassar family originated in Malta. Of his sons one, Bernardo, was known as Muccu (p. 475) which is the Maltese baby word for “rabbit”. Vincenza Nava was known as Nuazzu about 1534, while in 1528 we come across Giovannello Vella whose son Nicolo was known as Sandar, a nickname inherited by his son Jacob Nobili Jacobus Vella dictus Sandar (p. 541). And, of course, we all know about Mattia Preti, the Calabrian painter who was known in Malta as Il-Kalabriż. Also well known is the name of Ċensu Borg, nicknamed Brared, a pro-British Maltese patriot who first raised the British flag in Malta. But such nicknames are isolated and it is in the Electoral Registers that one must look for more details to study the whole field of Maltese nicknames. For some reason or other the 1939 List included far more nicknames than any other published before or since, and we have therefore based our survey on that list.

Maltese nicknames are formed by prefixing the definite article in to a noun or an adjective, e.g. L-Ghannej (The Singer), Il-Gerrej (The Jockey), L-Ahomar (The Red-faced). In general it may be said that this type of nickname denotes the first person to be so called; his descendants or relatives retain the same nickname, adding the prefix tal- (of the), examples being Tal-Kutu (Of the quiet one) and Tal-Bdot (Of the Pilot). This form may also indicate a calling or occupation, e.g. Tal-Hazix (The Greengrocer) and Tal-Hut (The Fishmonger). In some nicknames the simple particle ta’ denotes family descendants, recalling such Biblical names as Joshua, “the son of Nun”, David “the Son of Jesse” and Isaiah “The Son of Amos”. To the present day in Malta people describe themselves, and are known by their comrades, by their descent, e.g. Ganni ta’ Pawlu (John, son of Paul);
Indri ta' Gakbu (Andrew, son of Jacob). The particle ta' here has the same function as the suffix -son in English Johnson, Thomson and Harrison, of suffix -sén in Scandinavian Petersen, Andersen, and the suffix-vich in Slavonic names Mitrovich, Milhailovich, Serafinovich. A few nicknames stand apart without any preformatives, but showing power of multiplication by means of diminutive suffixes. For example, the chauffeur of a busy medical practitioner at Tarxien was known as Tabibu. To this type belong also the nicknames Jannaru (January), Haddu (Blacksmith), Mazzitu (Blood pudding), Berquu (Apricot) and Fazolu (French Bean).

I shall now deal with the main types of nicknames recorded in the 1939 Electoral List for Malta and Gozo, showing, whenever possible, how they indicate little-known aspects of ancient folk-life or tradition. I must warn you, however, that as there is no limit to the eccentricity of nicknames, their interpretation is often a matter of conjecture. To avoid un-English translations the ta' preceding nicknames is left out in the examples given.

Personal Nicknames form the first group which we shall consider. These may be either (a) adult names preceded by ta' (of), as we have just said, or (b) pet-names, generally shortenings of adult names. Adult names, which are sometimes arbitrarily corrupted in the process, may be male, e.g. Ta' Lajzar (Rosario) at Luqa, and Ta' Naforju (Onofrio) at Gharb, Gozo; or female, examples being Ta' Minka (Dominica) at Mosta and Luqa; Ta' Kansula (Consolata) at Qala, Gozo. Clear examples of pet-names or diminutive forms of adult names are the following: Ta' Staf (Salvatore) at Sannat, Gozo; ta' Gmaxju (John Mary) at Marsa; Tal-Wanni (short for Guarni, John) at Mosta. A few of these are taken from baby-language, examples being Tal-Vavu (Baby) at Attard; ta'-xejju (Stc. sciccu, donkey) at Mosta and Tal-Bambu (Shoes) at Lija.

Metonymies, in which the name of the mother appears instead of the father's, are more common in Gozo than in Malta. The presence of these metonymies may be due to several factors. They may either indicate survivals from a matriarchal form of society in which the female was considered more important than the male, or they may indicate that the offspring was not legitimate. But although this may be true in some cases, yet it is not invariably so. The mother may have been a widow, and the son born after the father's death; the father may have migrated, or led a seafaring life. A more plausible explanation is that in marriages outside one's native village, the local social group continues to refer to the offspring as belonging to the wife in the case of the female, and vice-versa in the case of the father. I know quite a few cases where the same person is known, for example, as Ta' Ruanna in the mother's village and as Ta' Ganni in the father's birthplace.

Professor Weekley says that "every family name is etymologically a nickname" and almost immediately he adds a warning that it is a mistake to account for obvious nicknames as popular perversions of surnames. In Malta there is evidence that quite a number of surnames originated as nicknames. Their permanent adoption as surnames took place either as a result of their inclusion by notaries in legal documents or, following Mgr. Duzina's visit in 1757, because all births, marriages and deaths had to be properly registered in the parishes. The following are examples of surnames which obviously started as nicknames: Ebefner (pl. of ghabura, a year-old ram), Fenech (rabbit), Misoua (wicked, stale), Gristol (timid, reserved), Psalit (dim of basla, onion), Suzana (queen), Teuma (garlick), Zahra, (orange blossom). On the other hand some apparent nicknames are but popular perversions of surnames. Such are Ta' Polpa (Barbara) at Tarxien, Ta' Zappart, at Siggiewi, obviously a corruption of Azzopardi, a surname of Jewish origin denoting a Sephardi Jew. To this category belong also others derived from little known or uncommon surnames which stir the people's
imagination, examples being Kalabardi, at Rabat, after Garibaldi, the great Italian patriot who spent a few days in Malta in March, 1864 and who was heartily detested by the peasantry for his anti-clericalism; Il-Makaj, at Valletta, obviously a perversion of Eng. MacKay, and Tal-Vandomu, at B’Kara, which recalls the Grand Prior of France, Vendome, who in 1716 constructed batteries and other fortifications at M’Xlokk and at St. Paul’s Bay.

An interesting group of nicknames is of geographical origin. These nicknames may be either Maltese place-names or names of foreign localities, examples being Tal-Pwales, at St. Paul’s Bay; ta’ Barbarija (Barbary States) at Siggiewi; Tal-Marokk (Morocco) at Zejtun; Ta’ Malvi (Amalfi), at Qala, Gozo; and ta’ Hortona (Cortona) at Nadur, Gozo. A subdivision of this group is made up of nicknames referring to the inhabitants rather than to the localities, e.g. Tal-Koppija (woman from Kirkop) at Lija; Tal-Gudjett (man from Gudja) at St. Julian’s; tal-Ghawdzi (The Gozitan) at Mellieha; ta’-Malti (The Maltese) at Munxar, Gozo; Il-Germani (The German) at Munxar, Gozo; Tal-Inglita (English woman) at Victoria, Gozo; Tal-Iqalliti (The Sicilian) at Attard; Tal-Masri (The Egyptian) at Sannat, Gozo; Tal-Milkan (The American) at Gharhur; Tal-Gurjotti (The Man from Corfu), at Valletta; Ta’ Brejku (from ebrayju, Jew) and Ta’ Dobra, given by Stumme as referring to the Russians, at Siggiewi, and many others.

These nicknames originated as a result of population movements in search of work outside the village, or following marriage or migration. It is easy to imagine how the fact of one’s being a native of Gozo becomes significant only when one settles in Malta, and vice-versa. Hence we find that such nicknames appear in villages other than the birthplace of the persons bearing a particular local nickname. Foreign place-names in this group reflect the various contacts which people of the lower classes establish with foreigners, as well as the early migrations of the Maltese to the North African Coast and other Mediterranean lands during the 19th century.

Physical nicknames are by far the most expressive, at times exceedingly crude and offensive. They are taken from some aspect of the personality, whether physical or external. They indicate something conspicuous or abnormal in the feature singled out for attention, revealing the habits of observation and the gift for describing conspicuous features which are to be noticed in the rustic and lower classes of all nations. History books teem with examples of such nicknames, that were common among kings and noblemen. We all remember Ethelred “The Unready”, Edmund “Ironside”, Harold “Harefoot”, Henry “Beauclerk”, Richard “the Lion-Heart”, John “Lackland”, Edward “Longshanks”, Richard “Crookback”, William “the Conqueror” and William “the Sailor”. From Roman History we learn that Caius Caesar was known to his dying day as Caligula (little boots), the name given to him by his soldiers at Cologne; other Latin examples being Caracalla (Gallic Cloak), Scipio (Staff), Scapula (Shoulder-blade), Agricola (Husbandman), Fabius (Bean), Lentulus (The Slow), Cicero (A Vetch), Piatius (The Flat-footed) and Ovidius Naso (The Long-nosed). Small wonder, therefore, that we find a wide range of this type of nickname in these islands, referring sometimes to parts of the human body, such as Ta’ Gedduma (The long-chinned) at Birżebbuġa, Tax-Xuri (The bareheaded) at Marsa and at Victoria, Gozo; Tax-Xoffa (The heavy lipped) at Żebbuġ and Għasri, in Gozo. Subdivisions of this category of nicknames denote:

(a) beauty and loveliness, e.g. Tal-Heľwa (The Lovely) at Qala; Ta’ Bedda (The Beautiful) at Sannat, Gozo, bedda being Sic. for It. bella; and Tal-Pupa (The Doll) at Luqa;

(b) complexion, including colour-names, e.g. Il-Ginger (red-haired); Tax-Sewda, at Xagħra, Gozo, with its Romance equivalent Tan-Nigra at Rabat, meaning “black, dark”; Tal-Ahmar (The Red-faced) in various localities;
(c) height and stature, e.g. Butwila (The Tall); Il-Gerbubi (round and plump) at B’Kara; tal-Pikkolin (The Tiny) from It. piccolino at B’Kara;
(d) corpulence and obesity, e.g. Tal-Hoxnija (The Fat), at Mosta; Tal-Prim (The Well-Built) at Rabat, and Tan-Niezef (The Lean) at St. Paul’s Bay;
(e) health, strength and disease, e.g. Ta’ Sansun (Samson) at Gudja and Imqabba; Tal-Giant (The Giant) at Gharghur and other localities; Tal-Pes:a (The Plague-stricken) at Rabat; Tal-Bullar (Leprosy) at B’Kara, and Tal-Tondu (The feeble-minded) at Lija and St. Julian’s, from Sp. tonto or Sic. tontu;
(f) physical and other defects, e.g. Tan-Nan, (The Dwarf) at Kirkop and Siġġiewi; Tal-Partas (The Bald) at Lija; Tal-Iskwinter (Squint-eyed) at Marsa; In-Nemai (The Freckled) at Mellieha; Tat-Trux (The Deaf) at Mellieha; Tat-Zopp (The Lame) at Victoria, Gozo and L-Aghwar (The Squint-eyed) at Victoria, Gozo.

An important group of nicknames deals with moral qualities, with virtues and defects. The material falling under this heading is so vast that the best way to bring out its salient points is to classify it under various headings. The main subdivisions of this class are:

(a) holiness, religion etc., e.g. L-Appostlu (The Apostle) at Cospicua; Ta’ Qdejdes (Little Saint) at Siġġiewi; Ir-Xellugi (Leftist, anti-clerical) at Xewkija, Gozo; Tas-Settier (Member of the Sect, Freemason) at Ghajnsielem, and Tar-Rumi (The Christian) at Luqa, with which cp. M. placename Wied ir-Rum (Valley of the Christians);
(b) moral behaviour, evil deeds, etc., e.g. Tal-Kaprić (The Capricious) at Xagħra, Gozo; Tal-Ingann (Deceitful) at B’Kara; Ta’ Vergonja (Disgraced) at żebbuġ;
(c) cruelty, quarrelsome disposition, e.g. Tal-Harza (The Fierce) at żejtun; Ta’ Katlett at żebbuġ and Tal-Gellied, at Naxxar, meaning “quarrelsome”; Ta’ Xewwex (Troublemaker, subversive) at St. Paul’s Bay;
(d) timidity, quiet disposition, e.g. Tal-Bajju (The Fool) at Rabat; Tal-Griet (The Timid) at Gharghur; Tal-Twafjeb (The Good-natured);
(e) pride, garrulity, e.g. Il-Miniha (The Proud) at żebbuġ; Ta’ Paċpaċ (The Talkative) at Siġġiewi;
(f) negligence, rashness and foolishness, e.g. Karinwala (Foolish), Tal-Hajju (Feeble minded) at żabbar; Tal-Izdingat (The Negligent) at Xewkija, in Gozo.

(g) verbal and other idiosyncrasies e.g. Tal-Verigott (from Eng. “very good”) at Sannat, Gozo; and Ta’ Porsku (from the word perkasu, for example) at Nadur, Gozo.

Another class of nicknames derives from plants and trees, including bulbs, roots, fruits and seeds. One notices here that nearly all the trees and fruits mentioned are found in these islands. The main subdivisions of this class are:

(a) trees and plants, examples being Ta’ Harruba (Carob Tree) at Ghaxaq; Tas-Simara (Common Rush) used for a profitable trade in brooms in the past, at Ghajnsielem and Siġġiewi;
(b) fruit and vegetables, such as Tal-Bajtar (Prickly Pears) at Mellieha; Ta’ Frawla (Strawberry) at Mellieha; Karfis (Celery) at Rabat, and Tal-Parsott (a kind of fig popularly derived from Jean Parisot de la Valette) at Sannat and Nadur in Gozo, and at Rabat in Malta;
(c) seeds and crops, for example Il-Qanbu (Hemp) at żebbuġ, Gozo; Ta’ Kemmun (Cumin) at Xaghra, Gozo; and Tajjara (Cotton Wool) at Cospicua — all three associated with ancient Maltese crafts and industries;
(d) flowers, such as Tal-Bukkett (Bouquet) at Ghaxaq.

Fish-names form another important group of nicknames. They include the fish most commonly caught in Maltese waters, ranging from tal-Makk, which is the name given to sardines, red mullets and other fish when they are almost in their larval stage, at Mosta and at żebbuġ, Gozo; and Tal-Burgax (Rock Fish) with its diminutive Il-Brejgex at Luqa.
and B'Kara, to the ever popular Il-Kavall (Mackerel) at Gharb, Gozo, and Ta' Lampuk (Coryphene) at Nadur. The bigger fish appear as Ta' Denjil (Dolphin) at Xaghra and Ta' Gabdoll (White Shark) at Gharb, in Gozo. The two nicknames Tal-Mazzun (Gudgeon) with which cp. Eng. surname Gudgeon and Fr. Goujon, and Ta' Sargu (Sargus), both from Melleha, though obviously connected with fish, are sometimes used in a derived sense to mean a gullible and a sharp-witted person respectively, from the marked traits of character of these fish. The above nicknames show that fishing was and still is an important industry in Malta. Several others are more specifically connected with fishing methods and fishing craft and they will be considered later on under trades and callings.

Birds and Poultry offer on every side easily understood comparisons and we find quite a few nicknames falling under this heading. Pets, domestic poultry and seasonal game-birds all figure here. We have, for example, Tal-Bibeli (a kind of lark) at Gharb and Żebbuġ; Tal-Pespus (a little bird) at Sannat, Gozo; and Tal-Gardell (Goldfinch) at Żejtun; Summienu (Quail) very popular during the gaming season, at Melleha, and Tal-Bukkaċċ (Woodcock) at Nadur. Chicken breeding gave rise to Tal-Fittele (Chickens) at Xewkija, and a few others, while less common members of the feathered kingdom appear as Tal-Wiżju (Gander) at Xaghra; Il-Gruna or Logruwa (Crane) at Xaghra; Tal-Ghorab (Crow, Raven) at Gharb, and Tal-Hawwiefa (Swallow) at Melleha. Of particular interest is the nickname Garnajga, found at Nadur, Gozo. The word garnajja, from It. or Sic. carnagia, in Maltese denotes the number of animals in kind that the farmer was bound to give to the lord over and above the rent for the land — a relic of the feudal system in these Islands.

Names of Animals have given rise to numerous nicknames. They are related to ancient and modern folk-life which, in this respect, still preserves several features of the social life of two or more centuries ago. Apart from a few obsolete words, such as Ta' Dorbies (Lion) at Siggiewi, these nicknames provide a rich field for those interested in the social aspect of language. This large group naturally refers to bovines, ovines and equines. The Maltese greatly prize their cattle, their sheep and goats and their horses and mules which, besides providing transport and helping farm work, gave rise to important local industries. The following are a few examples of animal names: Tal-Fahal (Stallion) at Gharghur; Tal-Kisba (Stud Bull) at Kerċem, Gozo; Tal-Ghjabjjar (Year old Rams); Ta' Gelluxa (Young Bull); Tax-Xagra (Reddish goat) and Il-Felwa (Filly) at Gharb, and Ta' Dib (Wolf) at Gharghur. Connected with the meat industry are the two nicknames Tar-Robb (Quarter) at Luqa and Il-Caċeġ (Butcher's Blocks) at Nadur.

Other animal names refer to rodents, e.g. Ta' Żarmug at Nadur and Tal-Muċċu, at Żebbuġ, both meaning young rabbit; Tal-Fenek, (Rabbit) at Victoria, Gozo; Tal-Gurđien (Rat) and its diminutive Il-Grejden (young rat) at Ghajnsielem, with the Romance equivalent Tas-Sorċi at Rabat; and In-Nemis (Ferre) at Attard. Quite a few insects and parasites have given rise to nicknames, examples being Dubbinuwa (Housefly) at Birgu; Ta' Xidja (Horsely) at Kerċem; Tan-Nemusi (Mosquito) at Ghasri; Ta' Hanfusa (Beetle) at Siggiewi, and In-Nahl (Bee) at Gharb. Related to this class are some names of lepidoptera, e.g. Tal-Farjett (Butterfly) at Munxar, Gozo, and others such as Ta' Ghakrez (Snail) at St. Julian's and Xewkija, Gozo.

Food and Drink have given rise to a good number of nicknames, e.g. Tas-Soppa (Soup) at Gharb and Ghajnsielem, Gozo; Ta' Xappap (from xappap, to dip bread in oil, etc.) at Kirkop; Tal-Ponċ (Punch) at Nadur, Gozo and Lija; Il-Legliegi (The Drinker; The Quaffer) at Valletta and Ta' Gnibru (Gin) at Siggiewi. A greater variety of nicknames appear to have been derived from drink than from food. Related to these are a few names of kitchen utensils and
others connected with table service, e.g. Tal-Lida (Pestle) at Gharb, Gozo; Tat-Tigan (earthen stewing-pan) at Qrendi; Ta’ Terrina (Tureen) at Rabat; Ta’ Qnanet (Pitchers) at Żebbuġ, Gozo; and Kwiener (hearth, fireplaces) at Cospicua.

Other nicknames show FAMILY RELATIONSHIP, married state etc. Such are Tal-Parent (Parent) at Imqabba; It-Tewmi (Twin) at Żejtun, Żabbar and Gharb, Gozo; L-Armel (Widower) at Gharb; and Ta’ żafżott (Youngster) formed of żafżo, dimin of the first syllable of żaghżagh + suffix ott, augmentative, instead of ett, from Italian diminutive suffix etto, at Siġġiewi. Special mention must be made of nicknames referring (a) to sterility, e.g. Tal-Battala, (lit. The empty one) at Floriana and Il-Hawli (Sterile, fruitless) at Ghasri, Gozo, and (b) to fertility, such as Ta’ Fakonda (Prolific), from It. feconda, at Xagħra, Gozo; Tal-Ghammiel (The Fertile) at Buskett; and Il-Buhames (Father of Five) at Qala, Gozo, possibly suggesting the rare occurrence of quintuplets.

We now pass to the Maltese nicknames of OCCUPATIONS, which are by far the most numerous. They range over a wide field of human activity and recall both old and new trades and callings. There is nothing more natural than that a man should be nicknamed from the object most closely associated with his daily work. Some of them are hereditary nicknames; a few are undoubtedly very old, handed down from generation to generation. Others, however, are of recent formation and with the growing complexity and multiplicity of occupations nowadays, they will probably die out after a generation or two. The sons may not inherit their father’s calling; they will get a sobriquet of their own which likewise will be temporary and may again be changed according to the humour of their neighbours and acquaintances. But the majority of nicknames indicating old trades and occupations is hereditary and in some cases there must have been a special significance in the accepted nickname, which either indicates the family’s origin or some important incident in the family history, such as a successful trade venture or enterprise. Before the break-up of the old system of folk-arts and crafts every member of a trade held his particular calling in high esteem. Several trades were to a large extent in the hands of particular families — the sons of the village bakers, and millers, or of the quarymen and fishermen became in their turn millers, bakers, quarymen and fishermen, and consequently the name of the trade carried on for some generations by a family adheres to it even though a good many of these trades are now obsolete. Our forefathers were a stay-at-home people, passing uneventful lives at work on their own fields, which frequently remained in the hands of the same family for several generations, or in the towns and villages where their fathers and forefathers had lived before them. They were but little affected by the political factions of their times; nor were they troubled with “high vaulting” ambitions, and few cared to wander from the vicinity of their birthplace. From the stationary condition of their lives and from the nature of their pursuits and surroundings they acquired a solidarity of character reflected in the long persistence of occupational nicknames which sometimes have come down to us in the same locality and in the same social circles.

The main professions are all there — the doctor, the priest, the architect, lawyer, and midwife. Then there is a group showing rank and position such as Il-Pjantun (Constable on his beat), Tal-Kaptan (Captain) at Victoria, and L-Izkawun (Sailor) at Żabbar, with which compare M. surname Schiavone. In this connection one notices the tendency to qualify the wife or domestic servant of an officer of high dignity by the feminine gender of the husband’s or the master’s rank. Thus we have Il-Prezidenta and Il-Ministri at B’Kara. Related to these are a few nicknames of older origin denoting feudal titles, or dignitaries of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. We have Tal-Barun (Baron) at Kerċem;
show rank and position on board, such as Tal-Mozza (from Mt. mozzo, cabin boy) at Gharb; Tal-Patrun (Owner of boat) at Gharb and Sannat; Tal-Bdot (Pilot) at Zebugh, Gozo; Tal-Bahri (Sailor) at Xewkija and Kerċem in Gozo and at Hamrun in Malta. A few other names are connected with fishing methods, examples being Tan-Nassi (Fish Nets); Tatt-Tartaru (a kind of fishing net) at Ghajnsielem, and Tal-Kawwâr (circular cloth padding worn on the head to support heavy weights by fishvendrors and others) at Ghaxaq. It is worth mentioning that most nicknames connected with seafaring and fishing come from Gozo.

Quarrying and building, which are old occupations in these islands, are responsible for a small group of nicknames. The following are a few examples: Tal-Mingura (Dressed Stone) at Nadur; Taż-Zonqor (Hard Stone) at Qala; Tas-Saqqaż (Roof Constructor) at Imgarr; Il-Bajjâd (White washer) at Luqa; Ta' Kahhalu (Plasterer) at Xaghra, and Il-Mannâr (Stone-axe worker) whence M. surname Manara, at Xaghra and Kerċem in Gozo and at Rabat in Malta.

Another old occupation which has inspired several nicknames is that connected with flour-mills and bakeries. Every town and village in the old days had its millers, and the square one-storied buildings, with a circular tower surmounted with the sails of the windmill, are still seen in many of our villages. The manufacture of bread was a vital domestic occupation. The grinding of the corn at the miller's depended on the wind; bread was kneaded at home and if not baked at home was taken to a public bakehouse. Sufficient quantities were baked to last a whole week, for the exigencies of domestic and farm work were many and left no time for daily preparation of bread. The various stages in the preparation of bread appear in such nicknames as Tal-Mîtha (Windmill) at Naxxar and various other localities, Tat-Tahhana (Corn Grinder) at Kerċem, Gozo; Tad-Diq (Flour seller) at Attard; Il-Furnar (Baker) at Attard and various other localities; Tal-Hâmi (another
name for baker); Ta' Mahluta (a kind of bread made from wheat mixed with barley) at Imqarr and Tal-Hobż (Bread seller) at Żejtun.

A number of nicknames refer to small occupations and callings that rarely, if ever, called for more than a few persons in each village or centre. These are the sort of callings that one would expect to find hereditarily in a quiet village community — the blacksmith, the carpenter, the wheelwright, the decorator, the tinsmith, the potter, the saddler, the cotton beater, the undertaker, the basket weaver and the cobbler.

A special class is formed by street vendors and other small dealers who play an important part in Maltese economy. Itinerant dealers sell, for example, still manage to earn a living and the nickname Tal-Meilh is found in several villages. It is the same with oil vendors, ice-sellers, tobacconists and the dealer in straw. The owner of an hotel earns for himself and his family the nickname Tal-Lukanda, and in like manner the person operating a new bazaar becomes known at Ghajnsielem in Gozo as Tal-Bażara. Even such a limited seasonal occupation as the preparation of Easter cakes appears in the nickname Tal-Figolli at Żejtun.

Dress names form a small group of nicknames. They range from the old weaving loom process in Tan-Newt at Imgabb, to Tal-Gżewer (pl. of geżwira, a striped gown or kilt formerly in general use) at Luqa and Il-Hajjat (Tailor) at Gharb to the modern sounding Tal-Modzi (Fashionable) at Siggiewi. Other examples of costume nicknames include references to neck-wear and head gear, defensive armour, offensive arms and obsolete costume.

An interesting group of nicknames is derived from transport vehicles and from education. Examples of the former include, besides the recent name Tax-Xujić (Chauffeur) at B'Kara, older means of transport such as Tal-Karr-rettun (Horse Cart) at Qala; Il-Kuciet (Cab Driver) at Cospicua and the now extinct It-Tram at St. Julian's. Before the spread of education among the masses one could easily rise above the average with a little schooling — I mean rise sufficiently to earn a lasting nickname as a scholar. Only a few such nicknames were recorded in 1939, examples being Il-Qarrej (The Reader) at St. Julian's; L-Awurtur (The Author) at Siggiewi; Tan-Nuna (Nursery School) at Gharb and Is-Surmaż (Schoolmaster) at Cospicua.

Hobbies have provided some interesting nicknames. A few refer to folk-singing, such as Tad-Daqqaq (The Guitar Player) at Ghaxri and at Ismaida, and l-Ghannej (The Singer) at Ismaid and St. Julian's. Others are connected with horse-racing, examples being Tal-Galopp (Gallop) at Mosta, and Tal-Georrej (Jockey) at Kerem. Others again refer to bird-hunting, such as Il-Kaċċatur (The Hunter) at Lija, or to magical practices, examples being Is-Saħhar (Wizard) at Mellieha and Cospicua; Il-Masku at B'Kara and Tal-Magun at Nadur and Qala, Gozo, the two latter meaning magician, from It. magico and mago respectively. Closely related are the games and entertainments recorded in nicknames. A few are children's games, such as Ta' Gardinawi (Eng. game "Guard come out" or, possibly, derived from Gardiman, a N. African place-name on the Algerian frontier, where a Maltese settlement was formed in the 19th Century) at Rabat, and Tat-Tula (Hide and Seek) at Mellieha. Tal-Likk is derived from the adult game of bowls, while dance and musical instruments are evident in such nicknames as Ta' Ballu (Ball, Dance) at Gharhur; Tuc-Cirrimella (Bagpipe) and Tuc-Cimbli (Cymbals) at Gharb.

Names of part-time occupations, often performed after normal work, form our last subdivision of trade nicknames. To this category belong such names as Fanul (Street Lamp Lighter) at Żejtun, Lija and Tar-xien; l-Orjunist (Organ Player) at Balzan; Taz-Siggijiet (The man in charge of chairs in churches) at Żejtun, and...
Social Aspects of Maltese Nicknames

figure in Maltese Folklore, but perhaps one may here refer to the part played by these two months in Maltese Folk Tales. In one tale, called The Gift of the Months, the twelve months, sitting round a table eating, ask a poor man what people say about January in Malta. He answered: “It is a month of rain and plenty. Vegetables grow and all that your heart can desire”. He also repeated three rhymes one of which runs as follows:

Qamar Jannar
Hareg ix-xebbit mill-ghar
Hasbuh bi nhar

(The January moon brought the girls out of the cave, for they thought it was daylight). This rhyme recalls the times when Maltese were still living in caves, as described by the Jesuit Father Kircher in 1637 and as one can still see at Għajn Ħejtuna and Il-Manikata. It also recalls the days of the Moslem corsairs in the xiv-xvi centuries, for in Gozo people will tell you that the girls went out of the caves to do their washing by moonlight and were carried away by the Turks. March figures in many weather sayings, and in a Maltese folk-tale recorded by Fr. Magri is known as Marzu t-Twil (Tall March). This is a long way from the two nicknames Ta’ Marzu and Jannar, but it shows how nicknames can set in motion a train of thought touching on various aspects of ancient folk-life and tradition.

An interesting group of nicknames consists of those relating to money, wealth and poverty. A few are derived from English coinage, for example Is-Sold (The Penny) at Mosta, or Tax-Xelin (Shilling) at Qrendi and Għajnsielen. Others refer to the old Maltese coinage which was legally supplanted by English currency in the 1830’s but which survives in shopping and everyday transactions, especially those connected with the fish and the meat industries. Such are Ta’-Iskud at Nadur, one skud being equivalent to 1/8d.; Ta’ Patakku at Għajnsiela and Luqa, one

Tar-Rizzi (The hawker of sea urchins) at Żejtun. Two unusual nicknames Tal-Kakotta (Cocotte) and Tal-Massara (housewife, from It. massaia) survive at Nadur in Gozo and at Marsa respectively.

To complete the section on Trades, here are some nicknames derived from tools and implements: Ta’ Ghariel (Sieves) at Rabat; Taċ-Ċik (a wooden instrument used in cotton beating) at Burmarrad; Tal-Minġel (Sickle) at Ġharb, Gozo; Ta’ Raddiena (Spinning wheel) at Kerċem, Gozo; Ta’ Delu (Millhopper) at Rabat; Taċ-Ċana (plane—a carpenter’s term) at Għajnsiela, Gozo; Ta’-Mekkuk (Weaver’s shuttle) at Nadur, Gozo; Ta’-Marden (Spindle) at Żebbuġ, Gozo; Ta’ Berrina (Gimlet) at Mosta, and Meħriesu (Mortar) at Lija.

A few nicknames are derived from the names of the months, the seasons and from the weather. They show close familiarity with seasonal cycles. We have for example Tax-Xitwi (Wintry) at Luqa and Żebbuġ, Gozo; and Taċ-Haraj (Autumn) at Ġharb, Gozo; while Summer has given rise to the two variations Taċ-Sajj at Ġharb and Is-Sajj at Siggiewi. The sultry Scirocco wind figures in the nickname Taċ-Xlokk at Rabat, and we meet the North Wind in Taċ-Tramuntana at Iż-Żurrieq. Picturesque nicknames associated with winds come from Nadur, in Gozo, where we find Taċ-Ziffa (Breezy) and from St. Julian’s where one meets with Taċ-Venven (Strong blowing wind). The moon, which according to folk belief has great influence over health as well as on the success or failure of human enterprise, appears in the nickname Taċ-Qamar at Mellieha, but I have not come across any referring to the equally important planet—the sun. It is surprising to note that only two out of the twelve months are recorded. These are January, which occurs in the forms Ta’ Jannar at Siggiewi and Qala, and Jannar at Lija; and March, which we meet at Kalkara and Mellieha as Ta’ Marzu. It is difficult to account for the omission of the other months, which all
pataka being equivalent to 6d; Ta ċinkwina at Żebbuġ, one ċinkwina being worth five grains; taz-Zekkin at Nadur and Mellieha, from zecchino, equivalent to 3 skuit and 4 rbajja, i.e. 5/6d.

Related to money nicknames are those indicating wealth and affluence, examples being Tal-Ghani (Wealthy) at Ghasri; Ta’ Karusu (Money Box) at Rabat and Żurrieq; Munitu or Tal-Munita and Flusu, both meaning wealthy, rich, at Qrendi, Sannat and Xaghra, in Gozo, with their Romance equivalent Ta’ Danaru at Ghasri; and Tat-Tajjeb (Well-to-do) at Żebbuġ. Others indicate a spendthrift disposition, such as Ta’ Harbat (The Wrecker) at Qrendi; Ta’ Hilelu (Wasteful) at Valetta; or a tendency to obtain money by evil means such as Meesses (To embezzle) at B’Kara.

Quite a few nicknames, on the contrary, indicate poverty and stringency, examples being Ta’ Marsusa (In straitened circumstances) at Hamrun; Tal-Kastig (The Miserable One) at Qala; Ta’ Qaxqax Ghadma — a composite form rare in Maltese nicknames, meaning “Bone gnawer” at Naxxar, and Ta’ Karestija (Scarcity, dearth) at Xaghra. Whilst on this subject we may as well record the names of precious stones such as Il-Malakit (Malachite) at Ghajnsielem and Id-Djamant (Diamond) at Rabat. Żebbuġ and Gharb, in Gozo. Nicknames based on other minerals or precious stones are properly speaking trade-names and are considered under the nicknames of occupations.

So far we have considered personal nicknames. We shall now turn our attention to corporate nicknames — epithets, that is, given to groups of individuals, such as clubs or villages or even whole societies.

Maltese towns and villages figure in traditional nicknames which often contain uncomplimentary references. Some of these names, which ridicule certain villages, originated at a time when villagers hardly, if ever, left their birthplace and knew very little about neighbouring towns or villages. The general attitude was one of narrow patriotism for their own birthplace and decidedly hostile towards the foreigners beyond the parish boundaries. It is well known that to this day the lack of cordial relations between one village and another sometimes develops into free fights at annual feasts where these old nicknames provide the leaven of village animosity.

A few village nicknames originated from trades and callings associated with particular localities. Up to the 18th century arts and crafts in Malta were distributed among the various villages according to a traditional pattern. Goat rearing was, and still is, the main occupation of many Tarxien villagers; the best master masons came from Luqa and quarrymen from Imqabba, which is a quarrying area. Plasterers and white-washers generally hailed from Ghaxaq and Gudja, and stevedores from Żejtun. Sailmakers were mostly confined to Kalkara since the days of the Knights, and pottery and broom making was a Birkarra speciality. Żebbuġ was renowned for its weaving looms, but the beating of cotton before weaving was carried out at Żurrieq. Qormi was so famed for its bakehouses that it was officially known as Casal Fornaro. Within the capital, Valetta, the same specialisation of trades in particular districts was evident. Cotton dealers were grouped in the upper part of St. Paul’s Street while blacksmiths were confined to a part of the bastion overlooking the Grand Harbour. These various occupations are reflected in such nicknames as Tal-Fuhhar and Tal-Gummar, both applied to Birkarra residents; Tal-Mazzit, recalling the famed blood puddings of Luqa, and Tar-Rebus, connected with goat and sheep rearing at Tarxien. Incidentally, this latter nickname was the cause of a minor commotion at Pawla in 1947. Normally the goatherds of Tarxien accept the nickname in good humour. But in 1947 they were so provoked that they retaliated with violence.
The occasion was the feast celebrated at Pawla, the neighbouring town with which they engage in keen rivalry as regards outdoor festivities. The Pawla band club, like so many others in Malta and Gozo, have a special march which they play for the feast. A certain part of the march, however, was compared to the bleating of goats, and the Tarxien people who were present took exception to the playing of this piece, especially when a certain section of the Pawla Club partisans followed the tune of the march by repeating in a loud voice the word Baa! whenever this particular piece was heard. Feeling ran high on both sides and the Police had to intervene to prevent a public disturbance.

Some village nicknames have a historical origin. The people of Pawla are known as Il-Midjunin (The Indebted). When Grand Master De Paule (1623-1635) decided to encourage the formation of a new village round his country residence overlooking the Marsa, he granted the inhabitants the right to exemption from the payment of debts for a period of time—a sort of moratorium. Hence the nickname Il-Midjunin, which has survived to this day.

Other nicknames are derived from physical or moral characteristics peculiar to some localities. The people of Zurrieq are credited with blue eyes, and they are known as T’Għajnejhom Zoroq. The villagers of Zejtun are referred to as Ta’ Sieqhom Catta (The Flat Footed) and it is believed that when St. Paul preached to them during his three months’ stay in Malta they were the only villagers who would not embrace the new Faith. To emphasize their attachment to the old gods they stamped their foot firmly and even threw stones at the Apostle. Seeing this St. Paul laid a curse on the inhabitants whereby they are now born with flat feet. The people of Rabat and of Zebbug are reputed to be extremely sharp-witted and they are rather difficult customers. Hence the saying that Rabtu u Zebbugi jaghmu Lhudi, i.e. a man from Rabat and a man from Zebbug are worth a Jew. Qormi villagers are known as Is-Sakranazzi in an old folk-song. Most of them are bakers by trade; they work at night, drink heavily during the midday meal and then sleep all the afternoon. A Gozitan is not to be trusted; hence the saying that Għawdxi tajjeb aħarqu aħseb u ara ħasin! i.e. A good Gozitan, burn him; let alone a bad one". But beware also of a Maltese, for Il-Malti u l-far turiż il-bieb tad- darr, i.e. A Maltese and a rat let them not enter your house. During the War the Italians were ironically referred to as Tal-Makaroni (Macaroni eaters). Sicilians are known as Tal-Ċobon, after a kind of Sicilian cheese which is widely used in Malta. And I have heard Tal-Ġoxun (Fr. Cochon “pig”) applied to Frenchmen, Far Eastern people, especially Chinese and Japanese, are known as Ta’ Wileć Wiehed (People with one face) because they all resemble one another.

The last century or so has seen the emergence of the band club as a force in Maltese social life. By 1880 band clubs were springing up like mushrooms and this process has continued until now there is hardly a village that does not have two, or at least one band club on which centre all social activities in the town or village. Village factions are grouped round these clubs, especially where there are two rival clubs standing for the two main religious feasts celebrated there. These clubs have their official names, more often than not connected with some saint or important dignitary. But to the masses these official names might as well not have existed at all, for it is the sobriquet, the unofficial or popular name that prevails in discussions, in café conversations, on buses and elsewhere. The keen rivalry between the two main clubs of Valetta repeats itself with as much heat in the villages, where several clubs take the nickname from one or other of the Valetta ones. Here the La Valette Club is popularly known as Tal-Ajkla, from the arms of Gr. Master La Valette...
which included a silver eagle, while the King's Own Band Club is known as *Tal-Istilla*, the star symbolising their patron saint St. Dominic, in whose parish the club originated. But there is also a psychological motive for these nicknames. Both the star and the eagle stand for the high level of excellence of the band's performances: the eagle soars high up over and above everything else, but however high it soars it can never reach as high as the star. This interpretation is contained in the last two lines of folk-song which I heard some years ago, i.e.

> U tasew li l-Ajklia toghla:  
> 'Ma hdejn l-Istilla qatt ma tasal.

(It is true that the eagle soars high up; but it can never reach anywhere near the star).

These two names, *Tal-Ajklia* and *Tal-Istilla* occur also in several villages, such as Zebug, Ghaxaq and Luqa. At Luqa these nicknames took the place of the earlier ones *Tal-Faham* (The Coal Heavers) and *Tas-Surtun* (Morning Dress) which brought out the social distinction between the early supporters of the two clubs. Equally expressive and socially significant are the following nicknames: *Tal-Laqx* (Chips) applied to the Beland Band Club, Zejtun; *Tad-Dar tal-Maddiema* (Labour Club) by which name the Zejtun Band Club originally a Labour Party Club, is known; *Tat-Tamal* (Of the Dates) which is the name given to St. Gaetano Band Club whose first premises at Sda. Reale Hamrun had been vacated by one Gabriel — a dealer in dates. A few band clubs inherited the nicknames of their founders or of their first conductors. At Vittoriosa the Prince of Wales Band is known as *Ta' Lanzitu* (The one with the Bristles) after its first conductor Lorenzo Grima (c. 1891). The Mater Mariæ Gratiae Club at Zabbar is known as *Tal-Baqra* (Of the Cow) after its first conductor Giuseppe Micallef (1833) whose nickname was *H-Bagrambu*. At Rabat one finds the L'Isle Adam Band Club referred to as *Ta' Nāri*, after its first conductor Andrea Borg (1870).

Other nicknames refer directly or indirectly to the patron saint of the village concerned. At Naxxar the Peace Band Club is known as *Tal-Vitorja*, after the feast of Our Lady of Victory which is celebrated there on the 8th September; the St. Gabriel Band Club at Balzan is known as *Tal-Arkanjla*, after St. Gabriel, who figures in the feast of the Annunciation, which is celebrated there. At Zurrieq the St. Catherine Musical Club is better known as *Tal-Palma* — an obvious allusion to the patron saint St. Catherine, as the palm is the symbol of martyrdom. In the same village, one of the band clubs was formerly known as *Tal-Kavalier*, after the Noble Carlo Zimmermann Barbaro, its first President, who was a Cavaliere del Papa. At Birirkaraka the Duke of Connaught Club is known as *Tal-Ghama*, after its founder, who was blind. At Qormi the rival clubs are the St. George's and the Pinto Band Clubs. These are known by two romantic names — the first as *Tal-Werqa* (Of the Leaf) and the second as *Tal-Qalba* (Of the Sprout). These nicknames contain in a nutshell the story of the respective origins. Up to 1893 there was only the Pinto Band Club at Qormi, founded, it is claimed, in 1862. Some of its members left the club in 1893 and formed a rival organisation. To emphasize seniority the supporters of the Pinto Club said "Well, the leaf shoots forth from the sprout", and this gave rise to the two nicknames. At Zabbar the St. Michael Musical Club is known as *Tal-Bajda* (Of the White Flag) because when it was formed they hoisted a white flag to show their independence of the rival village club. The Count Roger Club at Rabat is known as *Tal-Lifgha* (Of the Viper). The epithet is well chosen considering that the club's supporters have St. Paul for their patron Saint and the nickname links up with the incident of the viper leaping out of the flames and fastening itself to the
Apostle’s hand as described by St. Luke in the Acts. At Victoria, in Gozo, the Stella Band Club was formed in 1881 a few weeks before the rival club Il Leone Band Club. Originally the former club’s official name was La Stella Vincitrice (The Winning Star) and Il Leone Club was so named not, as some people think, after Pope Leo XIII, but to show that they were not afraid of the Winning Star and that no one can stand up before the lion’s might. Incidentally, the Leone Club is also known as Ta’ Abbinu, after Albino Lanzon who was one of its first conductors, or as some say, Ta’ Binu, after Giorgio Tabone the leader of a small group of musicians who later formed the Leone Band.

Football teams and political parties have added their quota to the nickname material in these islands. Since the early years of soccer in Malta different teams and their supporters have been known by different nicknames. One of the earliest in the field was the Cospicua team, which was known by the obscure and uncomplimentary name of Il-Hallelin (The Thieves) an allusion to the unlawful possession of a cup. The “old firm” of Maltese soccer—Sliema and Floriana—have received the sobriquets of Tax-Xelin (Of the shilling) and Tal-Qaghaqa (Of the Ring-Cake) respectively. The former refers to the attempts of the 19th century Protestant missionaries to proselytise the Maltese. They gave a shilling to those who attended their preaching at Sliema. Since the War soccer nicknames have been taken from the storm centres of international politics. Thus the Valletta team have been known for some years as Tal-Palestina, or more briefly, as Tal-Palt, an allusion to their quarrelsome disposition comparable to the troubled state of Palestine before the creation of the State of Israel. For some months the Valletta partisans retaliated by calling the Sliemites Tal-Korea while the war in Korea lasted, but for the past two seasons they have referred to the Sliema team as Tal-Gapan a cleverly camouflaged jibe at the number of base-born children of mixed Maltese Service marriages whose general resemblance is comparable to that of the Japanese, known in Malta as Ta’ Wiċċ Wieħed (Of the same face).

With the grant of Self-Government in 1921 the main political parties earned distinctive nicknames mostly derived from the badges of the respective parties. The Nationalists became known as Tal-Maduma from the square brick-like shape of their badge; the Constitutionals, who had a circular badge, were dubbed Tal-Buttuna (Of the Button) and the Labour Party sobriquet was Tal-Mazza (Of the mace, mallet). The Constitutionals were also known as Tal-Lembubba (Of the Truncheon) — an allusion to the fact that Lord Strickland, their leader, had authorised the Police to use their truncheons. A Labour splinter group earned the nickname Tal-Gilati (Of the Ice-Cream) from its colours—red, white and yellow.

One last word before I conclude. Earlier in this paper I mentioned the rich lexical material surviving in Maltese nicknames. In preparing this paper it has struck me that this unsuspected source opens up great possibilities for a study of word-formation from existing roots. Archaic or obsolescent words and unusual composite forms here seem to take a fresh lease of life. The language is seen in a continuous process of expansion and new patterns of word-building swim into our ken as we scan the vast horizon of the popular nicknames we have been speaking about. We have included some of these uncommon words in the examples we have given, but the subject calls for deeper study and I am mentioning this in the hope that someone with the necessary philological experience and qualifications will take up its study in earnest.

**Works Consulted**


BOOK REVIEW


The Very Rev. Father Peter Lumbereras has been for about thirty years a Professor of Moral Theology in the Dominican Pontifical Institute "Angelicum" of Rome and has acquired a well deserved reknown as a great moralist. He is a Member of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, a Theologian of the Apostolic Datary and was quite recently appointed by the Holy Father a Canonist of the Sacred Penitentiary.

His lectures at the "Angelicum" take the form of a commentary into the text of the Angelic Doctor: his object is the Secunda Pars of the Summa and consequently his treatises are more theoretical and speculative than the ordinary manuals of Moral Theology. Father Lumbereras has condensed his comments into twelve small volumes, the first one of which was published in 1935 and only two are now waiting publication. The following list, according to the systematic division of St. Thomas, shows the plan followed by the Author:

I. De fine ultimo hominis (I-II, 1-5), Madrid 1954.
II. De actibus humanis (I-II, 6-48), Rome 1950.
III. De habitibus et virtutibus in communi (I-II, 49-70), Romae 1950.
IV. De vitis et peccatis (I-II, 71-89), Rome 1935.
V. De lege (I-II, 90-108), Madrid 1953.
VI. De gratia (I-II, 109-114).
VII. De fide (II-II, 1-16), Rome 1937.