

# LAW AND LAWYERS IN MALTESE PROVERBS

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People everywhere have a poor idea of human justice and, naturally, distrust advocates and the Law Courts. This distrust of human justice is more pronounced among the illiterate and semi-illiterate communities who have to rely on the counsel or expensive patronage of better off people, especially lawyers. This distrust of human justice and the Law Courts is pithily expressed in the sayings *Il-ligi saret għall-banavolja* or *brikkun* (prov. 26); *'k tidhol il-Qorti int tiekol sardina u l-avukat jiekol gallina* (prov. 47), and *ahjar tiswija hazina minn sentenza tajba* (prov. 51). Of the 55 M. proverbs included in this section, which is taken from my unpublished work *A Dictionary of Maltese Proverbs*, not one extols the virtue of the Law or the majesty of Justice. The people's mind is more full of the fear of injustice than of confidence in justice; is more sensitive to the relativity and unreliability of human judgement than to the majesty of the Law as an expression of the Roman legal maxim *suum cuique dare*.

The distrust of the human laws and the Law Courts and of lawyers in particular is universal as one could easily establish from a comparative study of proverbs on this subject in different languages. Such distrust is so well-founded that it was also expressed by no less a person than St. Francis de Sales himself who, in one of his letters to Persons in Religion, wrote: "To go to law and not be out of one's mind is scarcely granted to the saints". The same distrust of lawyers is expressed by Langland (1325-1400) in the following lines:—

Ye who plead for the poor, and take money at their hands,  
Ye lawyers, ye advocates, be sure of this:  
When ye draw near to death, and pray for pardon,  
Your pardon at your parting hence will be but small.  
Saint Matthew bids me tell you this, and if I lie, blame him.

One additional cause of such widespread distrust in the case of Malta, though there is no proverb which refers to it, is the fact that up to 1934 Italian and not the people's language was the official language of the Law Courts. This in practice meant that the illiterate and the semi-illiterate plaintiff and defendant who had to have recourse to the Law Courts to get a just settlement of their real or imaginary rights developed an instinctive distrust of lawyers as a shrewd and tricky jargon-speaking class when these conducted their cases in a language they did not understand. As a matter of fact, a demand for the adoption of Maltese as the language of the Law Courts of Malta came from local popular movements and was very strongly opposed by a large majority of the lawyers. But, of course, the greater fear of Law and lawyers is due to the fact that to poor men everywhere justice is expensive and lawsuits long drawn out.

The major codes of the Laws of Malta are, like the Laws of Italy and France, originally based on Roman Law modified in parts by Canon Law and customs, while Criminal Procedure is largely influenced by British Law.

The legal vocabulary is inevitably of Romance, that is of Sicilian or Italian origin, such being words like *qorti* 'law courts', '*avukat*', 'advocate' *magistrat* 'magistrate' etc., the two exceptions being *imhallet* 'judge', and *haqq* 'right' as in *kulhadd jiehlu li haqqu* 'everyone gets what he deserves', but Maltese *haqq* indicates a moral and not a legal right, the Maltese word for the latter being *dritt* from Italian *diritto*.

Though the morphology of the language and the basic vocabulary are Semitic, the legal vocabulary shows no influence of Arabic legal origin. The only Maltese word for law is *ligi*, from Italian *legge*, completely unknown being the Ar. *hukm* (pl. *'ahka:m*) and the other words connected with the enactments of Divine Law which betray the overlapping nature of Moslem Law at once religious and civil like Roman law, such being words like *sunna*, *šarf*, *farā*, *qa:šida*, *na:mu:s*, *qa:nu:n*<sup>1</sup>, *dastu:r*, *šada:la*, and *'insa:f*. Similarly unarabic are the Maltese words for lawful, lawfully, lawfulness, legal, legality, legalise, legally, lawgiver, lawmaker, lawsuit and lawyer. The Maltese word *xieraq*, from Ar. *šarf* 'to establish the law' in Maltese has no legal connotation, and means simply 'to be suitable or fit', the equivalent of Latin *decet*.

The proverbs which I have included in this article under section B are accompanied with similar and corresponding or similar proverbs in other languages. Strictly speaking, they are not technically juridical proverbs like the Eng. proverb, "He that bulls the cow must keep the calf" or It. *Ceuzi e muntuni/Menzi o massaru e menzi o patruni*, or Lat. legal maxims "The act of God does wrong to none; Hear the other side: The law does not concern itself about trifles".

Juridical proverbs have not been considered so far as part of the people's folklore. Prof. Raffaele Corso in his essay *Lo Studio Dei Proverbi Giuridici Italiani* published in his book *Studi di Tradizioni Popolari* (1956), writes: "Comunque, i proverbi giuridici non sono stati nè raccolti, nè curati dai folkloristi; e basta sfogliare qualcuna delle innumerevoli collezioni di proverbi, che le diverse regioni possiedono per rilevare che non esiste una rubrica per il diritto, o è rara. Recentemente, l'americano Archer Taylor ha rimediato alla lacuna, trovando un posto, nel suo libro sui Proverbi, per gli 'adagi legali' di cui ha illustrato esempi interessanti, richiamando su di essi l'attenzione degli studiosi".

Of the proverbs which Prof. Corso gives in his study there is one, again hardly a juridical proverb, which agrees with a similar proverb in Maltese. This is the saying: "*Bisogna fari testamentu e dunazioni/Quannu si mangia sasizzi e maccarruni*". The Maltese say, "*It-testment aghmlu meta tkun ghadek tistlah tiekol l-imqarrun*", 'make your will when you can still eat macaroni'. To understand the historical origin of the Italian saying which seems to be the original source of the Maltese one, according to Professor Corso, "*dobbiamo richiamare alla mente un'antica consuetudine, che prescriveva che il testatore, prima di disporre dei suoi beni, passasse a cavallo, armato di scudo e di lancia, un corso d'acqua. In tale maniera, presso i Germani, egli indicava la sua sanità fisica e morale, prima di spogliarsi degli*

(1) A.E. Caruana in his *Vocabolario Della Lingua Maltese* (Malta 1903), explains disused '*qanun*' *regola, norma, imposizione fissa e regolare; volg. ciò che si paga annualmente per il godimento di uno stabile, l'enfiteusi d'un fondo. Hallas il-qanun tar-raba', pagò il canone del campo.*

*averi. La giurisprudenza popolare siciliana, invece della bardatura di guerra, ricava il concetto della sanità da un abbondante pasto di salsiccie e di maccheroni*" (ibid.).

A comparative study of Maltese paremiology dealing with Law and Lawyers, Justice and Injustice provides the basis of comparative folk-sociology based on what one might describe as the univalence of human experience affected by two quasi-dichotomic complexes — a sense of justice on the one hand, and a sense of injustice on the other hand, one at conflict with the other. Hence the recurrence of these two themes has its verbal by-products in proverbs and sayings which are corresponding or similar, the equivalence being either verbal as in the case of loan-translations (Cf. M. prov. no. 16) or one of mere feeling or reaction expressed through different imagery. Such are sayings and proverbs which convey the same idea or motif by means of different imagery born in different places of similar circumstances, each with its own distinct, social and cultural climate.

Using *M* for Motif and *F* for Form, that is for the verbal arrangement and use of imagery, these and other proverbs fall either under

*Formula No. 1: M+F* (these being proverbs which agree in motif and form presumably original in one language and loan-translations in one or more other languages, these loan-translations being (i) *strictly literal* or (ii) *freely literal*, the original source being ascertainable in both cases by historical and/or linguistic criteria; or under

*Formula No. 2: M-F* (these being proverbs inspired by the same feeling but using different imagery — more likely native products).

The following examples are taken from Section B illustrating Formula No. 1.

(i) *Strictly Literal Translations:*

- (1) M. prov. 2 — Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, English, German.
- (2) M. prov. 9 — Sicilian.
- (3) M. prov. 15 — Italian.
- (4) M. prov. 16 — Arabic, Italian, Sicilian, Sardinian, Albanian, German.
- (5) M. prov. 17 — Arabic.
- (6) M. prov. 21 — Latin, German.
- (7) M. prov. 22 — Arabic, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, German, English.
- (8) M. prov. 26 — Latin, Italian.
- (9) M. prov. 28 — Turkish (first part only).
- (10) M. prov. 37 — Latvian.
- (11) M. prov. 41 — Italian.
- (12) M. prov. 51 — Italian, French, Spanish (Latin, Italian, English and German) which seem to be the original replace *ħazin* [bad] with 'lean' and *tajjeb* [good] with 'fat'.
- (13) M. prov. 52 — Sicilian.

(ii) *Freely Literal Translations*

- (1) M. prov. 9 — English, Swedish.
- (2) M. prov. 17 — Sicilian.
- (3) M. prov. 49 — Latin, Italian.

- (4) M. prov. 51 — Latin, Italian, English, German (Cp. M. prov. 51 under (i) above).

The following are examples illustrating Formula No. 2. Maltese examples being from Section B, and those non-Maltese from Section A.

- (1) Chinese 2 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 44, 45.  
4 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 27, 28, 31.
- (2) Czech. 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.  
2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24.  
3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25.  
4 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 27, 28, 31 (for further cross-reference cp. Chinese 4, above).
- (3) English 1 = Cp. M. prov. nos. 44, 45.
- (4) French 2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51 (cf. German 3 below).  
4 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cf. German 2 below).
- (5) German 2 & 3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cf. French 4 above).  
5 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51 (cf. French 2 above and Rumanian 3 below).  
6 = Cp. M. prov. No. 25.  
9 = Cp. M. prov. no. 52.
- (6) Greek 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25 (cf. Czech 3 and German 6 both above, Hungarian 1 and Persian 7 below).
- (7) Hungarian 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 25 (cp. Greek 6 above).
- (8) Italian 2 = Cp. M. prov. no. 24 (cp. Czech. 2, French 4, and Persian 6).
- (9) Kashmiri; 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.
- (10) Persian 2 & 4 = Cp. M. prov. no. 26.  
6 = Cp. M. prov. 24 (cf. Italian 2).  
7 = Cp. M. prov. 25 (cf. Hungarian 1, Greece 1, Czech 3, German 6).  
8 = Cp. M. prov. no. 1 (cf. Polish 1 below and Spanish 6 below).
- (11) Polish 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 1 (cp. Persian 8 above).
- (12) Rumanian 3 = Cp. M. prov. no. 51.
- (13) Spanish 6 = Cp. M. prov. 1 (cf. Polish 1 and Persian 8 above).
- (14) Welsh 1 = Cp. M. prov. no. 28.

#### SECTION A

The following list of proverbs and sayings from different countries taken from S.G. Champion's book *Racial Proverbs* (1950) provides the basis for a comparative study of common motifs in international paremiology:

CHINESE: (1) Law makers — Law breakers; (2) A piece of paper blown by the wind into the law-court may in the end only be drawn out again by two oxen; (3) Win your law-suit and lose your money, [the Maltese say: *Min jidhol il-Qorti dejjem tellief*, 'he that goes to Court is always a loser']; (4) It doesn't matter whether you are right or not, if you have no money you are wrong.

CHUANA (Bantu): Forensic arguments are all acceptable.

CZECH: (1) One often goes to the judge in the right and comes away in the wrong; (2) The law has a nose of wax; (3) The law is like a cobweb:

a beetle breaks through, but a fly is caught; (4) A pocketful of right needs a pocketful of gold.

**DANISH:** (1) Where law lacks, honour should eke it out; (2) With law must the land be built; (3) One goes to law with one case and returns home with two.

**DUTCH:** (1) A lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit; (2) 'Mine' and 'thine' is the source of all lawsuits; (3) The better lawyer, the worse Christian.

**ENGLISH:** (1) Kick an attorney downstairs and he'll stick to you for life; (2) A friend in the court is as good as a penny in the purse. [This corresponds to M. proverb which replaces 'court' with 'market' (*suq*)] (3) It is at courts as it is in ponds, some fish, some frogs; (4) Law cannot persuade where it cannot punish; (5) A penny-weight of love is worth a pound of law; (6) The mill stands that wants water (said of lawyers who work only for payment); (7) A man who keeps a wife is like a man who keeps a monkey, he is responsible for her mischief (*legal proverb*); (8) He that bulls the cow must keep the calf, i.e. illegitimate child (*legal proverb*, dating from Henry IVth's time).

**ESTONIAN:** (1) Law is three days older than the world; (2) The law on the table, justice under the table; (3) A lawyer's ink writes nothing until you have thrown silver into it.

**FINNISH:** (1) The law is as it is read (i.e. it is read in nine ways and always right). [The Maltese say: *Il-liġi kulhadd jifhimha kif irid*, 'everybody understands the law as he wants to (as it suits him)'].

**FRENCH:** (1) If you have a good case, try to compromise, if a bad one, take it into court; (2) Who goes to law should have three bags, one of papers, one of money and one of patience; (3) Nothing is so damaging to laws as their numbers; (4) Laws have wax noses; (5) A good lawyer is a bad neighbour; (6) One may steal nothing save a lawyer's purse; (7) Liberty is the right to do whatever the law permits.

**GERMAN:** (1) Two words to a bargain (*legal proverb*); (2) Justice has a waxen nose; (3) He that goes to law for a sheep loses his cow; (4) The law has a nose of wax, one may turn it as one pleases; (5) Law separates, compromise conciliates; (6) Laws are like spiders' webs, bumble-bees fly through them but flies are caught; (7) A lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit; (8) Who will win in a lawsuit must have three sacks: one with briefs, one with gold, and one with luck; (9) A lawyer and a cart-wheel must be well greased; (10) Lawyers are bad Christians; (11) One must not knock on the lawyer's door with an iron hammer; (12) The lawyers purge the purse, the doctors the stomach, the parsons the soul; (13) Ambition and the belly are the two worst law-givers.

**GREEK:** (1) Laws are like cobwebs, the small flies are caught and the great ones break through; (2) A lawsuit does not accept an excuse, nor does friendship.

**HEBREW:** Make a fence round the law.

**HINDI:** A meagre agreement is better than a fat lawsuit.

**HUNGARIAN:** (1) Law is a spider's web; big flies break through but the little ones are caught; (2) The law moves on golden wheels.

**IRISH:** (1) If you go to the court, leave your soul at home; (2) A good denial — the best point in law (*Farney*); (3) Neither break a law nor make one.

**ITALIAN:** (1) Better a lean agreement than a fat judgement (lawsuit); (2) Justice is made like the nose which goes whichever way to will it; (3) A lawsuit is a fair tree in a lawyer's garden, that takes root and never dies; (4) The robes of lawyers are lined with the obstinacy of suitors.

**KASHMIRI:** (1) For quarrelling, a heap of money, plenty of friends, and abundance of food are required (i.e. money to bribe and pay court fees, friends to swear falsely and to back you up, and food to nourish and strengthen in these troublous times).

**LATIN:** *Jurists' law maxims* (1) Things adjudicated are considered true; (2) Concealment is one thing, silence is another; (3) The act of God does wrong to none; (4) Hear the other side; (5) Consent makes law; (6) The law does not concern itself about trifles; (7) Where the law is uncertain there is no law; (8) When the reason for the law no longer exists, the law ceases to exist; (9) Bad custom makes good law; (10) Good laws spring from bad morals; (11) Rights are forfeited by disuse.

[N.B. — Latin proverbs, or more correctly 'maxims', reflect more the mind of the jurist than the reaction of the ordinary people to the laws of Rome]

**MALAGASY:** Love and law lose money.

**MONTENEGRIN:** Better a meagre settlement than full justice in the court.

**NEGRO:** (1) First word, go to law (Creole); (2) Good lawyer, bad neighbour (Jamaican); (3) Lawyer look upon nigger with one eye, but he look upon his pocket with two (Jamaican); (4) Lawyer-house built upon fool head (Jamaican).

**NORWEGIAN:** "Virtue in the middle", said the devil as he sat between two lawyers.

**NZIMA:** Those who do not honour the law praise those who break it.

**POLISH:** (1) A good advocate is a bad neighbour; (2) He who goes to law over a hen will have to be content with an egg.

**ROUMANIAN:** (1) Justice is as the rulers make it; (2) The man who goes to law often loses an ox to win a cat; (3) Thieves increase with the making of new laws.

**RUSSIAN:** (1) Set foot into court and your hand goes into your pocket; (2) The court is straight but the judge is crooked; (3) Harsh law creates guilt; (4) Law is a flag, and gold is the wind that makes it wave; (5) The law is like the shaft of a carriage — you can turn it wherever you please; (6) Laws are spiders' webs; hornets pass through them, but flies are caught; (7) God wanted to chastise mankind so He sent lawyers; (8) A woman is no witness against her husband; (9) Fear not the law, but the judge.

**SARDINIAN:** When two are in a lawsuit, one remains in his shirt and the other naked. (cf. Serbian).

**SCOTTISH:** (1) Show me the man and I'll show you the law (i.e. to show the want of impartiality in Scotch judges at that time); (2) Abundance of law breaks no law (i.e. those who know the law best are least likely to break it); (3) All law is not justice; (4) Law licks up all; (5) In a thousand pounds of law there's not an ounce of love; (6) Law's costly; take a pint and agree; (7) One lawsuit breeds twenty.

**SERBIAN:** (1) Oh! that I was as wise when going to law as I was when coming away; (2) The more laws, the less justice; (3) After the lawsuit one party is naked and the other in his shirt (cf. Sardinian; S. Croatian).

**SLOVAKIAN:** Custom and law are sisters.

**SPANISH:** (1) At the end of the year the deceased eats more than the living (i.e. fees paid for lawyers, etc.); (2) God grant that disputes may arise that I may live (Legal proverb); (3) A pennyworth of lawsuit costs half-a-crown worth of paper; (4) May you have a lawsuit in which you know that you are in the right (Gipsy curse); (5) A good lawyer is a bad neighbour.

**SWISS:** A lawyer devours a horse for breakfast.

**TAMIL:** Litigation is a pole planted in mud.

**TUMBUKA:** A lawsuit is like the wax of the bees's hive (no one can hope to escape trouble just as there is no honey without the waxcomb).

**UKRAINIAN:** The goat sued the wolf, and all that was left of him was his beard and horns.

**WELSH:** (1) The forlorn one is common in Court; (2) The houses of lawyers are roofed with the skins of litigants.

## SECTION B

The above list throws light also on the psychological context of the following Maltese proverbs and sayings for which I have provided the general literally corresponding proverbs and sayings in other languages such as by their nature fall under formula No. 1.

Explanation of abbreviations in brackets:--

**STRAFF** = Strafforello, G., *La Sapienza del Popolo, ovvero Dizionario universale dei Proverbi di tutti i Popoli*, 3v. Torino, 1883.

**VASS.** = Vassalli, M.A., *Motti, Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi*, Malta, 1828.

**MBCH.** = Mohammed Ben Cheneb, *Proverbes Arabes de l'Algerie et du Maghreb...* 3v. Paris, 1905-6.

**AGIUS.** = Agius de Soldanis, G.F., *Damma tal Kliem Kartaginis mscerred fel fomm tal Maltin u Ghaucin*, 4v. Royal Malta Library Ms. 143.

**CHAMP.** = Champion, S.G., *Racial Proverbs: a Selection of the World's Proverbs arranged linguistically*, London, 1950.

**TEZ.** = Tewfik E. Zureik, *Select English and Arabic Proverbs and Sayings*. Acre, Palestine, 1939.

**RASSIM.** = Ahmed Rassim, *Chez le Marchand de Musc (Proverbes populaires arabes)* (s.l., s.d.).

1. **AVUKAT 'k ma jehdux Alla jieħdu x-xitan**, "If God doesn't take the lawyer away the devil will."  
Cp. Matthew, "Woe unto you, lawyers!, for ye have stolen away the key of knowledge"; Fr. "Si l'enfèr n'est plein, jamais il n'y aura d'avocat sauvé"; Eng. "Fair and slowly as lawyers go to heaven".
2. **IL-BŻONN m'ghandux liġi**, "Necessity has no law"; Var. *Il-bżonn ma tafx x'igaghlek tagħmel*, "You never know what necessity may drive you to do".  
Cp. L. "Necessitas non habet legem"; Gr. "Deinies anagkes ouden ischucin peon"; It. "Necessità non ha legge"; "La fame non conosce legge"; Sard. "Lu fame non hat lege"; Fr. "Nécessité n'a point de loi"; Sp. "La necesidad carece de ley"; Eng. "Necessity has no law"; Germ. "Not kennt kein Gebot".
3. **Iċ-ĊOMB ighum u t-tiben (ir-rix) jegħreq**, "Lead floats and straw (feathers) sink". The idea is that worthless or undeserving people are favoured at the expense of others possessing better qualities.
4. **Id-DINJA mxattra**, "The world is lop-sided", i.e. there is no justice in this world. VASS. gives the following fuller version: *Id dinja mxattra, il-ġhajnejn tibri; din l-art hamra u l-firien tigri*, "This world is uneven, eyes are prying; this earth is red and rats scurry about".
5. **Id-DRITT m'hemmx isbaħ minnu**, "There is nothing better (*lit.* more beautiful) than straightforwardness".  
Cp. It. "La via diritta è la più breve".
6. **Aghmel id-DRITT u tibza' minn hadd**, "Be straight and fear none". Cf. prov. No. 49.
7. **Tal-ĠLEKK jekk jerfghu jaqla', u jekk ma jerfghux jaqla' wkoll**, "The man in the jacket story gets beaten whether he picks it up or leaves it on the floor." Var. *Jekk tigbor il-ġlekk taqlaghha, jekk ma tigbrux ukoll*, "If you pick up the jacket you get beaten, if you don't, you get it all the same". This proverbial saying seems to have a story behind it in which a man gets beaten both when he sees a jacket on the floor and picks it up and when he leaves it there. The idea is that you can never please an unreasonable man, whatever you do for him. In Maltese there is also the proverbial phrase *bħal tal-horġ*, "like the man with a knapsack", with the same meaning as the proverb under review.
8. **Min IDDARRIH irabbi l-ġost**, "Let a man get used to something, and he will claim it as of right".  
Cp. L. "Consuetudo facit legem"; It. "L'uso fa legge"; Rom. "L'us e fă lez"; Gen. "Uzo fa legge".
9. **IL-ĠUSTIZZJA sabiħa, imma hadd ma jridha f'daru (wara bieb), "Justice is a good thing, but no one wants it in his own house".** Var. *Il-Ħaqq (Pulizija) kulhadd wara bieb haddioħor iridu (iridha)*, "Justice (the Police) is always wanted at other people's door".



Sic. "A nuddu piaci la giustizia davanti la so porta"; "E' bedda la giustizia ma non davanti la nostra porta"; "Tutti vulemu la giustizia a casa d'autri". Cp. It. "Giustizia, giustizia, ma non per casa mia"; "Ognuno ama la giustizia a casa altrui; a nessuno piace a casa sua"; Sp. "Justicia, mas (or) y no, per mi casa"; Eng. "Justice pleaseth few in their own house"; Swedish "Everyone prizes justice but shuts the door when it comes" — (Champ.).

10. **IL-ĠUSTIZZJA fis-sema**, "Justice is found in Heaven only".
11. **IL-HAQQ ghand Alla**, "Only God is just" (lit. "Justice is with God").
12. **IL-HAQQ wis-sewwa hargu minn fomm Alla**, "Justice and truth issued from the mouth of God". VASS's briefer version (No. 765) is *Is-sewwa harget minn fomm Alla*, "Truth issued from the mouth of God".
13. **IL-HAQQ Alla jghaddih 'il quddiem u jharisna minnu** (AGIUS: *Damma*), "May God promote justice but keep us away from it".
14. **Alla jzomm il-HAQQ imma jehlisna minnu**, "May God preserve justice but keep us away from it". Variant of No. 14.
15. **IL-HMAR il-maghqur (maghkus) idur ghalih id-dubbien**, "Flies attack the ulcerous donkey (the sorely oppressed donkey)". Misfortune falls to the lot of those already sorely oppressed.  
Cp. It. "A caval magro vanno le mosche"; "Ai cani e ai cavalli magri vanno addosso le mosche".
16. **Ma setax mal-HMAR, dar ghall-berdgha**, "Because he couldn't overcome the donkey, he attacked the pack saddle." This proverb is said of a person who, unable to avenge himself on his enemy, etc., torments a member or friend of his enemy's family.  
Cp. Ar. "Ne pouvant maîtriser l'âne, il se vengea sur la selle"; "Ne pouvant rien contre sa belle-mère, il s'en prit à sa femme" (RASSIM, Nos. 326, 238); It. and various dialects: "Chi non può battere il cavallo, batte la sella; "Si batte la sella per non battere il cavallo"; "Chi non può dare all'asino dà al basto"; Sic. "Cui nun po' all'asinu e dunnu a la vardedda"; Sard. "Qui non podet iscuder ad su caddu, iscudet ad se sedda" Alb. "Because he cannot beat the ass, he strikes his saddle (CHAMP)"; Germ. "Chi non può batter l'asino batte il basto (STRAFF).
17. **La l-HMAR tieghi m'ghandix nirkeb wara**, "Once the donkey is mine I must not ride in the rear". Var. *Il-hmar tieghi u nirkeb wara*, also *fuq denbu!*, "The donkey is mine and I ride behind!"  
Cp. Ar. "L'âne est le mien et je monte en croupe"; i.e. je suis le maître et les honneurs me sont dus (MBCH, No. 673); Sic. "Cu' havi l'asinu e va a pedi è un gran sumeri"; "Ed hai l'asinu a vai a piedi?"
18. **Tghabbix il-HMAR iktar milli jiflah**, "Do not load the ass more than it can carry".

19. **II-ĦNIENA kienet u tkun, inkella m'hemmx iżjed dinja**, "There always was and there must always be mercy, otherwise the world will not continue to exist".
20. **Kulhadd irid il-ĦNIENA, u l-Ħniena fit-Triq tar-Rabat**, "Everyone expects mercy, and there is mercy only in the Rabat Road". In Xewkija, Gozo, on the way to Rabat there is a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy (*Tal-Ħniena*). The proverb means that it is quite useless to expect mercy from man.
21. **II-ĦUTA minn rasha tinten**, "The fish starts stinking from its head".  
Cp. L. "Piscis primum a capite foetet"; It. "Il pesce comincia a putir dal capo"; Germ. "Der Fisch stinkt am Kopf zuerst."
22. **II-ĦUTA l-kbira tiekol iż-żghira**, "The big fish eats the small one". Var. *Imhabba l-huta l-kbira tbat i-żghira* (AGIUS: *Damma*), "On account of the big fish the small fish suffer".  
Cp. Ar. "The large fish will eat the small" (TEZ., No. 20); "Comme les poissons de la mer: les grands mangent les petits" L. "Pisces magni parvulos comedunt"; Piscem vorat maior minorem"; It. "Il pesce grosso mangia il minuto"; "I pesci grossi mangiano i piccini", with many variants in the It. dialects; Fr. "Les gros poissons mangent les petits"; Sp. "Los peces mayores se tragan los menores"; Germ. "Grosse Fische fressen die kleinen"; Eng. "Men live like fish: the great ones devour the small".
23. **Min JAHDEM l-iżjed, jiekol l-inqas**, "He that works most eats least". This is the idea expressed also by the Dutch proverb: "He who plants the tree rarely tastes the fruit" (CHAMP).
24. **II-LIĠI tiggebbed (tal-lastiku)**, "Laws can be stretched (are made of rubber, i.e. are elastic)".  
Cp. It. "La giustizia è fatta come il naso, che dove tu lo tiri viene"; Fr. and Swiss "Tutte le leggi hanno il naso di cera".
25. **II-LIĠI taqbad il-huta iż-żghira**, "The law catches the small fish".  
Cp. Turk. "La legge piglia le mosche e lascia pescare i mosconi" (STRAFF).
26. **II-LIĠI saret għall-banavolja (brikkun)**, "Laws have been made for scoundrels".  
Cp. L. "Lex justo non est posita, sed injustis"; Gr. "Laws are not made for the good" (DAV); It. "Le leggi sono fatte per i tristi"; "Da' mali costumi nascono le buone leggi"; "La legge nasce dal peccato"; Sp. "La ley es hecha para los transgresores".
27. **II-LIĠI mhix għas-sinjur**, "The law is not made for the rich".
28. **II-LIĠI għall-fqar qiegħda**, "The law is made for the poor only".  
Cp. Turk. "La legge è soltanto per i poveri, il diritto soltanto per i ricchi" (STRAFF).

29. **IL-LIĠI jew għal kulhadd jew għal hadd**, "The law must apply to all or to none".
30. **IL-LIĠI għal kulhadd xorta**, "The law must be equal to all".
31. **IL-LIĠI mhux għal kulhadd xorta**, "The law is not equal to all".  
Cp. Eng. "One law for the rich, and another for the poor".
32. **Min jikkmanda jagħmel il-LIĠI**, "He that commands lays down the law".
33. **Issa għamiltni, hej, MAKKUWA,  
Jekk ninzel 'l isfel ticolni żabrija,  
U jekk nitla' 'l fuq tiġi għaliġa l-gawwija.**  
"Now you have made a little fish of me! If I go down the black-tail fish eats me; if I go up the gull swoops down on me".
34. **L-aktar MAGHFUS imur minn taħt**, "The person worst hit suffers most".
35. **Min ikun man-NIES jew bla saħħa jew bla ġieħ**, "He (she) that works for other people either loses his (her) health or his (her) honour." The reference is usually to maid-servants who perform domestic duties in other people's houses.
36. **Min ma jridx ibusek (ma jhobbokx) iġhid li fommok JINTEN**, "He that does not want to kiss you (does not love you) says that your mouth stinks".  
Var. *Min ma jahmlekkx iġhid li tinten*. "He that does not like you says you stink".
37. **Min toqogħdlu JĠHABBIK**, "He to whom you submit will load you".  
i.e., if you take it lying down you'll have to expect worse treatment. Also, if you encourage people to take advantage of your generosity they will not hesitate to do so without any regard for you.  
Cp. Latvian "The ready back gets all the loads".
38. **Alla jerfa' u n-nies TĠHAMMES**, "God uplifts and man oppresses".
39. **Li tagħmel daqqa ta' PINNA ma tħassrux daqqa ta' fies**, "A stroke of the pen will not be undone by the stroke of a pickaxe". This is a reference to the binding force of a legal document.
40. **Bla QADDISIN ma titlax il-Ġenna (is-Sema)**, "You can't go to Heaven without saints". The idea is that you can't get what you want (whether you deserve it or not) without the help of influential persons. Var. (i) *Bla xaħam ma tvarax*. "You can't launch a ship without grease", (ii) *Bla mġietah ma jinġethux b'wieb* (VASS, No. 113), "Without keys no doors are opened".  
Sp. "El que no tiene padrino no se bautiza"; Eng. "When it pleaseth God, saints can do little. Sic. "La varca senza sivu nun camina"; "Lu sivu fa varari la varca".
41. **Għan-niżla ('l isfel) kull QADDIS iġhin**, "In going down every saint helps".  
Cp. It. "Al venir giù ogni santo aiuta".

42. **IL-QATTUS ahrax isib il-qattus dgħajjef**, "The fierce cat looks for (attacks) the weak cat". This is said of bullies who vent their anger on persons unable to stand up to them.
43. **IL-QORTI habib tal-brikkun (halliel)**, "The Law Courts are friendly to scoundrels (thieves)". This proverb generally expresses the discontent of those who are not satisfied with the judgment of the Courts against them.
44. **IL-QORTI fiha bieb mnejn tidhol u le mnejn toħroġ**, "A Law Court has got an entrance but no exit". This is a reference to the protracted Court cases which sometimes drag on for years.
45. **IL-QORTI għatba taż-żift: tmidd sieqek fuqha tehel**, "The Law Courts have got its threshold smeared with pitch: you get stuck as soon as you place your foot on it". Var. *Il-Qorti għatba taż-żift: kull ma jidhol ġo fiha jehel*, "The Law Courts are like a threshold smeared with pitch: whoever enters gets stuck".
46. **IL-QORTI l-għatba ta' l-Infern**, "The Law Courts (are like) Hell's threshold".
47. **'K tidhol il-QORTI int tiekol sardina u l-avukat jiekol gallina**, "If you go to Court you'll eat a sardine and your lawyer a woodcock", i.e., your lawyer will fleece you.
48. **Min għandu SEBGHU dritt (subghajh shah) m'għandux mniex jibza'**, "He that has got a straight finger (all his fingers) need have no fear". For the use of *sebgħu dritt* (straight finger) in the sense of "right, just, honest", cp. It. "Man diritta e bocca monda può andar per tutto il mondo"; L. "Manus recta, osque rotundum transire faciunt loca quaecumque remota"; Fr. "Main droite et bouche ronde fait aller par tout le monde"; Germ. "Treue Hand, Geht durch's ganze Land".
49. **Min jagħmel is-SEWWA jsib is-sewwa**, "He that acts righteously shall find justice". Cf. prov. No. 6.  
Cp. L. "Viro bono, bona dat Deus"; "Qualia quisque geret, talia quisque feret"; It. "Come farai, così avrai"; "Chi fa, bene, bene aspetta" (STRAFF); Fr. "Comme à autrui fait tu auras, d'autrui enfin tu recevras"; Sp. "Donde las dan, las toman". Eng. "You shall have as good, as you bring"; Germ. "Wie man's treibt, so geht's".
50. **Min ma jridx bis-SEWWA jeħtieġlu jrid bid-dnewwa**, "He that won't submit (or do something) willingly will have to do so. unwillingly (willynilly)".
51. **Aħjar TISWIJA hażina, minn sentenza tajba**, "Better a bad settlement than a good sentence", i.e., you had better reach an agreement, for the law is costly.  
Cp. L. "Melior tutiorque est certa pax, quam sperata victoria"; It. "Meglio un magro accordo, che una grassa sentenza"; Fr. "Mauvais accommodement vaut mieux que bon procès"; Sp. "Más vale mala avenencia,

- que buena sentencia"; Eng. "Lean compromise better than fat lawsuit"; Germ. "Besser ein magrer Verleich, als ein fetter Prozess".
52. **Ix-XEBGHAN** ma jagħdirx lill-ġewħan, (AGIUS: *Damma*), "The sated man does not pity a man who is hungry".
53. **L-IŻBALJI** tal-kbar ibatuhom iż-żgħar, "The mistakes of the superiors recoil on their subordinates".
54. **IŻ-ŻGHIR** qatt ma jaħseb tajjeb fil-kbir, "The little man never trusts the big one", i.e. the people (subordinates) generally distrust their leaders or superiors. Cp. Proverb No. 22 above.
55. **Int TIZRA'** u haddieħor jaħsad, "You sow and someone else reaps".  
Cp. L. "Alii sementem faciunt, alii metunt"; It. "Uno semina, e un altro raccoglie"; Fr. "Tel sème, qui ne recueille pas"; Sp. "Uno siembra, otro coge"; Eng. "One sows, another mows"; Germ. "Einer sät, der andere emtet".

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