

## BOOK REVIEWS

~~BONELLI Luigi, *Saggi del Folklore dell'isola di Malta*, (con prefazione di G. Pitrè). Palermo, con tipi del 'Giornale di Sicilia', 1895.~~

~~[In 1954 Dr. W. Schlums, of Leipzig (now of Hildesheim), favoured the Editor, J. Cassar-Pullicino, with the following translation of H. Stumme's review of Bonelli's work which appeared in *Zeitschrift für Afrikanische und Oceanische Sprachen* II, p. 139 (Berlin, 1896, Dietrich Reimer).~~

~~After commenting on de Castries: Les Gnomes de Sidi Abd er-Rahman el-Medjedoub, Stumme refers to Bonelli's *Saggi*.]~~

~~"The little pamphlet by Dr. Bonelli brings us most welcome samples of most genuine Maltese folklore under the following headings: I and II: *Canzoni, ritornelli, motti, indovinelli*; III: *Voci Infantili*; IV: *Fiabe e leggende*; V: *Voci Infantili, Facezie di Gahan*; VI: *Grida di venditori, locuzioni storiche o superstiziose; usi e superstizioni; maldicenze paesane*.~~

~~We know products of Maltese writers in plenty; the publication of Dr. Bonelli, however, provides us with the first real examples of the genuine tone of the 'folk' of Malta. The *Voci infantili*, especially, bring new lexical material in plenty. It is to be regretted that the *Fiabe e Leggende* and the *Facezie di Gahan* are only given in Italian translation. The Street and Children's Songs which are found under heading I remind us vividly of the Tunisian ones given above (by de Castries); however the frequent invocations of Holy Mary, of St. Lawrence and of other saints show us distinctly that we are dealing with Christian Arabs. As a sample of Maltese "Nursery Poetry" we will quote here a fairy tale which is "cumulative" and partially rhymed:~~

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| <del>Darba kien hawn sultan</del>      | <del>Il-ward gewwa l-qasrija;</del>  |
| <del>Habat tintu mat-tigan;</del>      | <del>Il-qasrija trid l-ilma,</del>   |
| <del>It-tigan irid il-bajd,</del>      | <del>L-ilma go l-bir;</del>          |
| <del>Il-bajd ghand it-tigiega;</del>   | <del>Il-bir irid il-qannata,</del>   |
| <del>It-tigiega trid in-nuhhala;</del> | <del>Il-qannata trid il-habel;</del> |
| <del>In-nuhhala ghand il-furnar;</del> | <del>Il-habel tal-istoppa,</del>     |
| <del>Il-furnar irid il-flus;</del>     | <del>Il-qattusa tkakki</del>         |
| <del>Il-flus ghand l-istampier;</del>  | <del>U inti timbokka.</del>          |
| <del>L-istampier irid il-ward,</del>   |                                      |

~~Dr. Bonelli's collection is not voluminous — which, however, is not meant to be a reproach. But we are sure that lots of such material can still be collected in Malta. If one or the other of our countrymen on his way to East Africa in order to make collections in Vulgar Arabic or Negro dialects stops at Malta he should continue Bonelli's work and likewise oblige all Arabists and folklorists."~~

~~H. STUMME.~~

~~MALTESE METEOROLOGICAL AND AGRICULTURAL PROVERBS, by J. Aquilina. Offprint from the "Journal of Maltese Studies", Vol. 1, No. 1. Malta University Press, 1961. pp. 80.~~

~~In this masterly monograph Professor Aquilina brings together the vast corpus of Maltese husbandry and weather lore enshrined in 418 proverbs — an impressive list which "is the first of the kind collected from various authentic sources and from the living~~

language — direct from the *bdiewa*". Among these sources there are the pioneering studies in the same field by Fr. E. Magri (1900-1905) and A. Cremona (1922 and 1950) which are listed in the comprehensive bibliography placed at the beginning of this study.

To the collecting zeal of Magri and the diligent comparisons of Cremona, Aquilina adds his considerable philological apparatus and the fruits of his vast reading in the specialised field of comparative paremiology. The method of presentation is that devised for the author's *Comparative Dictionary of Maltċse Proverbs*, of which the present monograph forms but one section.

In the introduction Aquilina explains that he has followed the threefold method of (i) translation of text, with clarifications where necessary, (ii) comparisons, and (iii) etymological notes on certain words. The sayings are grouped together under eleven headings i.e. (1) the Sun, (2) the Moon, (3) the Stars, (4) Winds, (5) Clouds, (6) Rain, (7) the Sea, (8) Land Cultivation, Plants and Fields, (9) Animals, (10) the Seasons and (11) the Months. Under each heading the proverbs are arranged by key-words, which enabled the compiler "to bring together a number of proverbs of a kindred nature that would otherwise be scattered at odd places". Variants are also shown, in italics, after the main entry. The resulting monograph is in reality three studies in one — a successful exercise in comparative folklore and philology that one very rarely finds combined within the pages of a single volume.

In a way, this work fulfils the early promise of Aquilina's undergraduate days, when he wrote a delightful essay *Il-Qawl Malti* that has since found its way into school anthologies. The author started collecting Maltese proverbs in 1940, shortly after his return from his studies in London. What was originally intended as a supplement to M.A. Vassalli's collection of 863 *Motti, Aforismi e Proverbi Maltesi* (Malta 1828), however, gradually grew and assumed such proportions that Vassalli's original compilation now forms but a fraction of Aquilina's collection of more than 3,000 Maltese proverbs.

As a resident lawyer with an extensive practice in Gozo during the war years, and later with the help of a few informants from the villages of Malta, Aquilina had a unique opportunity to register the age-old wisdom and proverb lore of the agricultural sector before the silent revolution recorded by the University of Durham team in 1954-60 had crept in. In this sense, the proverbs which form the subject-matter of Aquilina's monograph supplement the findings of the Durham team which are reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Although the philological explanations contained in this study are not of direct interest to the folklorist, they help to punctuate and illustrate, up to a certain extent, the evidence of cultural contacts and influences provided by the comparisons with equivalent proverbs of other lands. Such comparisons are drawn from a wide area ranging from the Mediterranean countries to more distant lands like Germany and England, and sometimes they go back to classical times (Pliny and Theophrastus). The more important comparisons, however, are with the proverb material of Sicily, Italy, Spain, North Africa, Syria and Lebanon, which between them cover an area of intensive trading, cultural and historical give and take that has left its mark in other places of the Mediterranean.

From these comparisons the author concludes "that a proverb may refer to different months (*and, one might add, different saints*) in different places for obvious reasons of climate, but the main point is that such proverbs retain the basic structure and imagery". Compatible with this conclusion, however, one can also delineate an area of closer comparisons and of decreasing similarities as between Malta and other countries. In fact Aquilina listed the comparative material in a certain order that may be sum-

marised thus: Sicilian comes before Italian, which may be followed by (i) Spanish or (ii) French or (iii) English, German etc. Latin sayings normally precede Sicilian ones — possibly because they form the substratum of much common proverb lore, but occasionally Arabic ones are closer in wording and imagery and therefore take pride of place in the list of comparisons. This criterion, though not absolute, is quite logical, and by and large follows the historical pattern of the civilisations and contacts affecting the people of Malta and Gozo. Further work along these lines is bound to provide useful data on the incidence and intensity of paremiological contacts as compared with similar findings regarding folk-tales, riddles, songs and other forms of folk-literature.

Professor Aquilina has already produced two scholarly works on Maltese Linguistics, i.e. *The Structure of Maltese* (1959) and *Papers in Maltese Linguistics* (1961). The monograph under review, which is but a foretaste of what the complete work on Maltese Proverbs will be when completed, is equally important from a folklore point of view. The publication of Aquilina's collection of Maltese Proverbs will bring to all folklore students the fruit of his long years of research in this specialised field of studies.

J.C.P.

~~MALTA. BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPMENT, by H. Bowen Jones, J.C. Dewdney and W.B. Fisher. Department of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1961. pp. 356. 42/-.~~

~~This volume draws upon and presents condensed versions of the findings of research and observation carried out between 1954 and 1960, when members of the Department of Geography in the Durham Colleges, "in part commissioned by the Governments of Britain and Malta, in part conducting an independent academic exercise, carried out a varied programme of research in the Maltese Islands". The geographical survey was conducted on scientific lines and by its very nature most of the contents of this volume are of interest mainly to the specialist.~~

~~The authors explain in the introduction (p. 8) that although the project was primarily designed to cover the agricultural sector, "not only is it impossible to consider any element solely from the point of physical production; it becomes necessary to consider the wider and finally often more important factor such as, among others, social status, adaptability to change and mental as well as physical climate". Thus various other topics are considered, some of them closely related to Maltese folklore, though treated from a different angle.~~

~~The subject of dying peasant crafts, especially spinning and weaving, which are recorded in some delightful sketches in Maltese by Temi Zammit and others, receives careful attention in the present work (p. 124). We read that in 1861 there still remained almost 9,000 workers occupationally described as spinners and weavers and some 200 beaters and dyers. 96% of the total were women, and male labour was generally used only in the final stages of cloth preparation. "The industry included all processes from the growing of indigenous short staple annual cottons to the manufacture of cloth. The actual operations however were carried out almost entirely by individual workers in their own homes and were linked only by merchants specialising in this trade. In many cases the merchants advanced seed to the farmers on a crop-sharing basis. In all cases they bought the picked lint and then distributed quantities by weight to "out-work" spinners. These would return the yarn, which had been prepared by primitive traditional teasers and spinning wheels, and were paid by weight and fineness of the yarn. The village~~