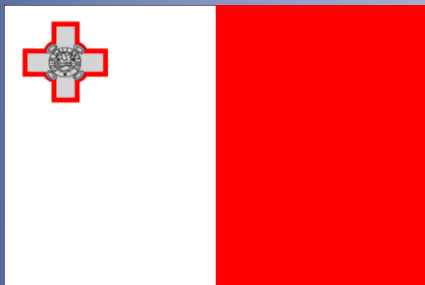


G#ILM 3 Conference
on Maltese Linguistics
Malta



The Sfaxi (Tunisian) Lexical Element in Maltese

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➤ Introduction

- The City of Sfax

- The Classification

of the Tunisian Dialects

➤ Aquilina's Sources

➤ Etymological Samples

➤ Conclusion



• Tunis

Lat: 36.803 - Long: 10.180 - Alt: 700 km
TACEO.com NOAA Goddard Space Flight Center





Annaba

Tunis

Isola di Pantelleria

Tebessa

Sfax



- **North-East:**
Tūnis, Binzart, Cap Bon
- **North-West:**
Al-Kāf, Bāja, Ṭabarqa, Silyāna
- **Coastal:**
Sūsa, Monastīr, Mahdiyya
- **Sfaqs**
- **South-East:**
Gafṣa, Tūzir, Naṭṭa
- **South-West:**
Gābis, Midnīn, Ṭāṭāwīn

Erin Serracino-Inglott

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Vol. 1. 1975 – Vol. 9. 1989,

Vol 10. (Addenda) 2003

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❑ D.R. Woodhead, W. Beene

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1998 (pp. 795)

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Le Dictionnaire COLIN d'Arabe Dialectal Marocain
1993 (8 vols.)

Etymological Samples:

A. Old Arabic

B. Beaussier

C. Incomplete Etymologies

D. Semitic Etymologies

E. Semantically Skewed Etymologies

F. Local Formations

G. Dubious Etymologies

H. No Etymologies

A. Old Arabic

1. SĠR:

Mal. <sigra> 'tree'

Sf. *sažra* 'tree'

Mor. (Fes) *sžār* 'trees'

Aq. < OA *šağara* 'tree' (Hava)

2. SLĠ:

Mal. <silġ> 'ice'

Sf. *silġ* 'coldness, chilliness';

sliġ 'to become cold'

Mor. *talġ* 'snow; artificial ice'

Aq. Etym. < OA *talġ* 'snow' (Hava)

3. ŠMŠ:

Mal. <xemx> ‘sun’

Sf. *šamšiyya* (variant of *šamsiyya* and *samsiyya*)

‘a small circular window in the upper sections of houses or mosques, made of white plaster and decorated with geometric or floral shapes, for ventilation and for the penetration of sun rays.’

Mor. *šəməš* / *šəms* (pl. *šmūš* / *šmūs*) ‘sun’

Aq. Etym. < OA *šams* ‘sun’ (Hava)

4. 'FY:

M. <ghafja (tal-mewt)> 'the lucid intervals before death (said of the temporary return of good health of a dying man); good fortune, prosperity; safety, welfare'

Sf. *'āfya* 'full health'; cp. *zihrit 'alīh l-'āfya* lit. 'health appeared to him', said about a sick person showing signs of recovery

Aq. < Ar. عافى *'āfā* 'to preserve s.o., to restore to health; عافية [sic] 'good health' (Hava)

5. FTT:

M. <ftit> ‘small amount of, few, not many, not much’

Sf. *ftayta* ‘a little of something’;

one says: *stannā ftayta* ‘wait a bit’

Mor. *ftīyta* ‘a little bit, a bit, a touch, or drop of’

Aq. cf. Ar. غتبت [sic] ‘pain en miettes’ (Kaz.) –
for semantics, cp. use of It. *briciolo*; *ftejta* loc. dim.
form.

6. KSH:

M. <kiesaḥ> ‘full of affectation, one who tries to be smart; impudent’

Sf. *kāsaḥ* ‘hard (land); obstinate; bold’, hence *rāṣū kāsaḥ* lit. ‘his head is hard’ and *rāṣū ’aksaḥ min zrūṣū* lit. ‘his head is harder than his molars’, i.e. ‘hard-headed, stubborn’;

Mor. *qāṣaḥ* ‘hard, harsh, cruel, honest and hard (in words); *ṛāṣo qāṣaḥ* ‘he is stubborn, he will not listen’; *qalbu qāṣaḥ* ‘he has a hard heart’; *klāmu qāṣaḥ* ‘he utters hurtful words’; cp. Alg. *qāṣiḥ* ‘id’ < OA *qāsiḥ*

Aq. قساحة ‘hardness’ (Dess.)

7. LQM:

M. <tilqim> ‘nicknaming’ – the entry <laqqam> is missing in Aquilina

Sf. *laqqam* ‘to call someone by the surname’, hence *talqāma*

Mor. Not attested

Aq. < Ar. لُقَب *laqab* ‘nickname’; *laqqaba* ‘to nickname s.o.’

8. NDY:

M. <niedi> ‘moist, damp, wet, dewy’;

Sf. *nādi* ‘something which has not dried up completely, damp’

Mor. *nādi* ‘humid (land, house)’

Aq. < Ar. ندى *nadīj* (Wehr)

9. ŠRF:

M. «xieref» ‘tough (meat) as opposed to *tari* (tender)’

Sf. *šārif* ‘old (of animals, including birds, and their meat)’

Mor. *šārəf* ‘very old (living creatures)’

Aq. *šārif* ‘old she-camel’ (Hava)

10. ŠFQ:

M. <xefaq> 'horizon'

Sf. *šfaq* 'the redness on the horizon at sunset'

Mor. *šfaq* 'the horizon which reddens, in the east,
before dawn, and in the west, after
sunset'

Aq. < Ar. شفق 'evening twilight; shore' (Hava);
'dusk' (Wehr)

11. ŞNDQ:

M. ‹senduq› ‘a chest’

Sf. *şandūq* (pl. *şnādaq*) ‘a decorated trunk containing the dowry of a bride’

Mor. *şandōq* ‘a chest with flat lid; a big rectangular wooden chest where one keeps clothing, precious objects, documents, money, jewellery’

Aq. < Ar. صندوق ‘box, chest, safe’ (Hava)

B. Beaussier

12. BŠQ:

**M. <bexxaq> ‘to keep (door, window, etc.) ajar,
to open half or slightly’**

Sf. *bəššaḡ* ‘to open the door ajar’

Mor. Not attested

**Aq. cp. Ar. بشق baxaqi [sic] ‘écarter, ouvrir les
jambes, la porte’ (Beaus)**

13. TFTF:

M. <teftef> ‘to peck at one's food, to eat sparingly and in small quantities’

Sf. *taftaf* ‘said of someone who is not in the mood of eating, but just eats a little of whatever is presented to him’

Mor. *təftəf* ‘to pick at one's food, to nibble’

Aq. < Ar. تفتف ‘... chercher sans y voir à tâtons. Tâtonner, palper’; *teftif* < تفتيف ‘petit profit’ (Beaus.)

14. ŠLF:

M. <xlief> 'fishing, angling-line'

Sf. *šlīf* 'the thread of the hook; the thread, the hook, and the lead weights (of a fishing line)

Mor. *šlīf* (rural) 'a bale of fleece packed in a net'

Aq. < شليف > 'balle de laine arabe, Nombre de cent toisons de laine' (Tun. Beaus.)

C. Incomplete Etymologies

15. DĠS:

M. <dġhajsa> ‘boat’

Sf. *dġīsa* ‘a kind of sailing boat used in Sfax for commercial purposes, and which linked this city with Eastern Mediterranean ports’

Mor. Not attested

Aq. “The only dictionary that records this word is Dozy who gives the Sp. Ar. دَغِيَّس (دَغِيَّص) *duġajjas* (*duġajjaṣ*) ‘barque, barca, carina”

16. KSKS:

M. <kusksu> 'North African dish of granulated flour steamed over broth, frequently with meat added' – Aq. also gives *kuskus*

Sf. *kisksū* 'couscous, better known as *kisksī* across most of Tunisia. The word *kisksū* is still used by some Sfaxi families.

Mor. *kaskso* 'couscous; food made of semolina mixed with flour and cooked on vapour'

Aq. < Ar. كسكسي *kuskusī*

17. NNY:

M. <ninni> impv. of <ninna> 'to sleep' (baby lg.)

Sf. *ninni* 'sleep!' (baby lg.)

Mor. *nīnni! nīnna!* 'sleep' (baby lg.)

Aq. < It./Sic. *ninna* [no meaning]; It. *ninnare* 'to lull, to sleep'

18. ŠŠY:

M. <ćići> 'sit down (baby word)'

Sf. *šišši* 'sit down' (baby lg.)

Mor. *šišši* 'meat' (baby lg.)

Aq. cp. Sic. *cicci* voce fanciullesca, per dire dolci, confetti

D. Semitic Etymology

19. BWQ:

M. <bewwaq> ‘to make hollow; to pull two adjacent things apart in order to leave a hollow space in between’

Sf. *bawwaq* ‘to swell, puff up (paper, paint, wood, plaster)’

Mor. *buwwaq* ‘to crinkle, to warp, make blisters (lime or plaster on wall)’

Aq. “Derived from the primary M. meaning of hollowness ..., which is unknown in other Ar. dialects but occurs in the Heb. fem. n. *būqā* ‘emptiness, devastation’”

E. Semantically Skewed Etymologies

20. SRĚ:

M. <sireġ> 'to shine strongly (sun in summer);
<deni jisreġ> 'a very high fever'

Sf. *sriž* 'to have a fever (a baby); to be hot (a house);
to fume with rage'; *srāža* 'rising flame; high fever;
very hot air'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. < Ar. *sariġa* 'to be beautiful (face)' (Hava)

21. 'NKBT:

M. <għanqbut> 'cobweb' (*brimba*)

Sf. 'ankabūt 'cobweb' (*rifla, rəffīla*)

Mor. 'ankabūt 'cobweb' (*rtīla*)

Aq. < Ar. عنكبوت 'ankabūt 'spider',

the Ar. phrase for 'cobweb' being

نسيج العنكبوت *nasğ al-'ankabūt* (Hava)

22. 'WD:

Mal. *⟨għad⟩ 'to say'

Sf. *'ād* 'he said'

Mor. *'ād* 'to tell, recount, narrate' (poetic), thus:

'īd-li 'tell me!'

Aq. Etym. < OA *'ād* [sic] 'to repeat' (Hava)

F. Local Formations

23. BNN:

M. <bennen> ‘to rock (a baby) in a cradle; to dandle, dance (a baby) in one's arms.’

Sf. *bannan* ‘to pat, caress, stroke (a child) so as to sleep’ (but *benniena* is not attested)

Mor. Not attested.

Aq. *Bennen* and *benniena* are two very interesting words, both local. < ? Daṭīna (Yemen) *bannana* ‘élever un enfant’

24. BWR:

M. <buri> ‘mood (good or bad, but usu. bad)’,
<bil-buri> ‘in a bad mood’

Sf. *būri* ‘violent anger’; hence:
‘*andu l-būri* ‘he is very angry’ and
ṭala’lu l-būri ‘he got very angry’

Mor. *būri* ‘sudden fit of madness that sometimes
takes hold of negroes’

Aq. loc. pl. form. It. *Boria*/Sic. *Buria*; *buruż* < It.
borioso/Sic. *buriusu*.

25. ҺRŞ:

M. <ħares - iħares> 'to look (at), watch'

Sf. *yḥārəş* < *yiḥris* 'to look at something and follow it; said also of eyes which have not been overtaken by drowsiness, notwithstanding the late hour'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. loc. III form.

26. NQR:

M. <naqra> 'a small quantity of something'

Sf. *nagra* 'a small amount'; *qadd ən-nagra* 'the size of a *nagra*'

Mor. *nəqra, nəgra* 'a light blow'

Aq. *Naqra* in the sense of a little of s.th. is a loc. form.

G. Dubious Etymologies

27. LḤLḤ:

M. <laḥlaḥ> ‘to rinse’; <mlaḥlaḥ> ‘tipsy, drunk’

Sf. *laḥlaḥ* ‘to wash oneself; to wash utensils, or clothes, with a little water’;
mḥlaḥlaḥ ‘in the initial state of drunkenness’

Mor. Not attested

Aq. < Ar. لخلخ ‘agiter, branler, ébranler, brandiller; remuer’ (Beaus)

28. ŞYĤ:

M. <sejjieħ> ‘rubble wall, such as enclosed areas of fields in Gozo and Malta’

Sf. *şayyāħ* ‘stones placed on the edges of a roof, in two continuous rows, without using mortar, to prevent thieves from scaling the walls’

Mor. Not attested

Aq. < Ar. *siyāħ* ‘travaux de construction en boue, and < Ar. *siyā*’ ‘boue mêlée de paille (Kaz.)’

29. ṬWB:

M. <tuba> 'clod'

Sf. *ṭūba* 'a clod of lime, mud, or sand'

Mor. *ṭōba* 'a clod of earth, an untreated brick'

Aq. < Sic. *tubba* quantità di terreno il quale non è altro che rena di varia grana un poco impietrata (Mort.)

30. WTY:

M. <wīeta - iwīeti> ‘to be/prove beneficial, to benefit (food)’

Sf. *wāta* - *ywāti* ‘to agree; be fit, adequate, suitable’

Mor. *wāta* ‘to be suitable, appropriate’

Aq. cp. Ar. *وتى* ‘faire mal’ (Beaus);

cp. OA *يواتي – واتى* ‘to be favourable, propitious, convenient’ (Wehr 1047)

H. No Etymologies

31. BDL:

M. <biddel> ‘to put on clean [clothes] or new ones
....’

Sf. *mbaddil* ‘someone wearing new, or clean
clothes’

Mor. *tābdīla* ‘all clothing and linens which one
changes every week’

Aq. No etymology

32. HḌR:

M. <aḥdar> ‘envious, malicious, jealous, cruel’

Sf. *ḥḍārət* ‘*ayneyh biš-šarr* lit. ‘his eyes became green with evil > hunger’

Mor. *klām ḥḍar* ‘words uttered without reflection’;
ḥḍōra ‘inconsiderate, thoughtless remark’;
fīh la-ḥḍōra ‘He does not think before he acts’

Aq. No etymology

33. SQ':

Mal. <seqi> 'chilblains'

Sf. *siq'* / *şıq'* 'severe cold; the swelling and reddening of the fingers due to coldness; a cold-natured person'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology [in entry SQY]

34. 'MR:

M. <gḥamara> 'furniture'

Sf. '*māra* 'dowry and furniture, including mats, chairs, cushions; small children'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology

35. FRFR:

M. <farfar> 'to shake off/brush off the dust from'

Sf. *farfar* 'to dust off'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology

36. FŞŞ:

M. <fossa> 'stone of a ring'

Sf. *fişş* (pl. *fşūş*) 'gems mounted on a ring'

Mor. *fəşş* (pl. *fşōş*) 'precious stone (on a ring, jewellery), stud'

Aq. No etymology

37. KSR:

M. <kisra> 'a piece of bread'

Sf. *kisra* 'a slice of bread'

Mor. *kəsra* 'a slice of bread'

Aq. No etymology

38. MLH:

M. <tmellaḥ> 'to be frivolous, to trifle with'

<mur tmellaḥ> 'go to Jericho / go to hell',

<x'nitmellaḥ!> 'I could not care less'

Sf. *tmallaḥ minnu* 'he showed indifference towards him'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology

39. QṢR:

M. ‹qasir› ‘shallow (sea)’

Sf. *qṣīr* ‘shallow (sea)’

Mor. *qṣēr* ‘shallow (well)’

Aq. No etymology

40. QNZḤ:

M. ‹tqanzaḥ› ‘to strain oneself, to make a strenuous effort’

Sf. *qanzaḥ* ‘to groan, moan (when working or due to an adversity)’

yitqanzaḥ fī dfū’ il-flūs ‘he finds it difficult to pay the money’

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology

41. W'D:

M. *«wegħda»* 'a vow'

Sf. *wi'da* 'a vow'

Mor. *wa'da (m'ā)* 'a vow, a conditional promise made to a saint'

Aq. No etymology (only etymologies related to promises)

42. ZNZN:

M. <žanzan> 'to wear a dress for the first time; to use, display s.th. for the first time'

Sf. *zanzan* 'to wear a dress, or use utensils, for the first time'

Mor. Not attested

Aq. No etymology

Conclusions:

- The need to carry out research into the linguistic links between Maltese and the Maghribi, particularly Tunisian, dialects
- Thorough revision of the etymological sections in Aquilina's *Maltese-English Dictionary*
- Regular updating