A SHORT NOTE ON THE DATING OF ħ, Għ AND X

A standardised Maltese alphabet was only officially adopted in 1924. Of course, historical factors, such as the lack of a fully functioning printing press in Malta until mid-18th century, or politico-practical decisions, such as the adoption of the Italian language as the language of the administration as from 1530, did contribute to this delay. However a real problem faced by Maltese intellectuals was the rendering of the Arab sounds in the Maltese language. It took centuries to finally agree on a standardized and uniform alphabetic code.

In this short note, I intend pushing back the present believed date of introduction of the ħ and the digraph għ in the Maltese alphabet, whilst contrasting with the vicissitudes of the x which, though appearing as from the earliest texts in the Middle Ages, ended up being quite unsettled during the 19th century, when the Italian digraph sc was being proposed as its alternative.