

THE TRILITERALITY OF QUADRILITERALS IN SEMITIC MALTESE

by ERIN SERRACINO-INGLOTT

AFTER the development of the monosyllable in pre-Accadian speech into the dissyllabic and trilateral word formations necessitated by a wider need for improved expression, it seemed that the Semitic world of languages, from Aramaic to modern Arabic, was content to rest from further development, seemingly for three very good reasons:

(1) the sufficiency of the number of possible trilateral formations with an alphabet that had, within itself, doubled at least certain consonantal sounds, such as the pharyngeal fricatives, the emphatic sibilants and the plosives;

(2) the sufficiency of the increased vocabulary in respect of the literary and commercial intercourse of the people; and, finally,

(3) the conservative atavistic reluctance of the East to vocalic expansion.

Moreover, the natural need to inflect the verb, which has always been the basis of all root-words in Semitic linguistics, in order to facilitate the distinction between active and passive voice, reflexion and reciprocation, and other nuances of expression, had already led the people to encumber their trilaterals with preformative and other additions, involving in some instances certain consonantal and vocalic rearrangements due to phonetic incompatibilities. However, none of these additions affected the base which, for all intents and purposes, remained trilateral in essence if not in effect.

The few instances of further development of the trilaterals into what became known as the first quadrilaterals were mainly restricted to the gemination of certain onomatopaeic base-surds intended to underline continuity or repetition of the sound or action conveyed by the original. Even more isolated were the instances of 'further development' of such geminations by the 'dissimilation' of one of the geminated consonants, intended to underline a variant in the meaning of the reduplicated radical.

This was the first instance where, for some reason unknown, but surely not due to an over-knowledge of the intricacies of Semitic word-building, morphologists and etymologists of the time chose, wrongly to my mind, to consider these newly-born quadrilaterals as 'original emanations', which

they were not, and consequently to enumerate them in their word-lists as separate bases, irrespective of the stem of which they were actually the branches. The result was that later philological research work became much more arduous.

The pity of it all lay in the fact that, for the most part, the work of delving into the depths of the origin of root-words in these languages was not undertaken, as a rule, by scholars whose mother-tongue was Semitic. As a matter of fact, whilst the Semites themselves, having once fallen into the torpor of complacency engendered by linguistic self-sufficiency, tended to remain blissfully disinterested, the dissection of their vocabularies was taken up, more often than not in a very amateurish way, by alien scholars who were in the unenviable position of having to learn as they went about their work!

It is true that scientific philology has not had enough time to grow hoary, but it is, meanwhile, obvious that this work of harnessing back the dispersed quadrilaterals to their true fold has still to be undertaken. And it is here, as I see it, that the knowledge of Semitic Maltese, as it is today, enjoying as it does among its kindred tongues a sort of primacy in the adoption of quadrilaterals, becomes practically indispensable.

The Maltese language, originally pure Semitic, has developed into such a blend of neo-Latin and Arabic that it can no longer be called a dialect of the latter; nor could it ever be classified as a branch of Sicilian because, despite its evolution within the compass of that primary post-Latin speech, its basic morphological and syntactical structure has remained typically Semitic.

As it is, Maltese may safely be considered the *trait-d'union* between the neo-Latin block of languages in Europe, from which it has consistently received its linguistic blood-transfusions ever since the conversion of these Islands to Christianity, and the Semitic group, as represented by Arabic which, for several hundred years during the Islamic occupation of the Mediterranean littoral, had grafted the decrepit Phoenician-Carthaginian oak-tree of these Islands, already in the process of being suffocated by the all-pervading latinity of the new culture, with the rejuvenating sap of its exuberance.

Indeed, there are still abundant traces of this overall grafting in practically all neo-Latin languages of the peoples spread over the Mediterranean coast-line wherever the Arabs once held sway; but, whereas elsewhere natural incompatibility became an ally of what may be termed the 'cultural resistance movement', in Malta the grafters were in their element, and the new sap made the old oak-tree revive in a wonderful 'new look'. And when the Arabian flood receded from Europe and the grafting

ceased, it was Maltese only that reaped the full benefit and could blossom forth as an exotic plant in the Mediterranean garden.

It is for this reason that, whilst the Arabs, re-entrenched in their Islamic shell, lost all interest in the further evolution of their tongue, the strengthening of the religious, cultural and commercial ties between Malta and Sicily made it possible for Maltese to push forward the evolution of Semitic quadriliteralism.

This task became relatively easy because of three obvious favourable circumstances:

(1) We had become familiarised with the *latinus bassus* of Livy's successors, particularly with its evolution in Sicily into something that was linguistically new. It is common knowledge that the Latin verb had loaded itself with infixed elements called 'determinants' or 'formatives' that varied its meaning; e.g. *cano* (to sing) bred *canto* (to sing loudly) and again *cantito* (to sing often), *cantillo* (to sing softly) and *canturio* (to chirp). A formula was thereby produced, namely $I+D+B+D+I=W$, where the letter B stands for *base*, D for *determinant*, I for *inflexion* and W for *word*. The importation of this 'development', from its place of origin (Sicily) to our shores, soon made us realise that vocables could, after all, be stretched without any apparent harm to coherence in speech;

(2) We already had in Malta, at our disposal, a rich heritage of easily assimilable pronominal, prepositional and substantive particles (e.g. the letters H, B, F, X, M and others), and we had acquired the experience of how to utilize them in a form that was perhaps even more laconic than in Arabic;

(3) The Maltese people had developed into a thriving community, living on its own, but eager, nay, anxious to make itself understood by Europeans; and, unfettered as our language was by the artificial idiom of men of letters, we soon found we could sow the seed of our linguistic evolution in a natural bed, with Sicilian vocables taking to Semitic rootings and inflexions, and with Arabic verbs and substantives blooming forth with neo-Latin preformative and postformative trimmings.

This new turn in our linguistic body-building was also the outcome of a deeply-felt need to modify the meaning of certain verbal vocables of a definite Islamic veneer which was blatantly discordant with our Christian feelings. What could then be more natural for us than to apply the already known system of 'quadriliterating' trilaterals in exceptional cases, on a larger and wider scale, and by other means than the now simple inflectional preformatives or the crude onomatopaeic geminations above mentioned, that is by adapting the *latinus bassus* formula to the Semitic verbal vocables that were ours?

This is, of course, only an assumption of mine of how matters linguistic may have developed in Malta in those dark days when no record was kept of what was going on, also because although Maltese was generally spoken it was not written at all. But, even if my assumption were to be proven a fallacy at some future date, the fact remains that, with all its further Europeanization, the Maltese language still contains today the richest collection of quadrilaterals extant, a collection that is not to be found in any other branch of the Arabic family tree from Andalusian to Lebanese.

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The following is a panoramic synopsis of the normal quadrilaterals in Arabic proper, all present in Maltese, which have not lost their status as an evolution of the trilateral base; and of the special quadrilaterals of the extra-inflectional preformative type, as well as of the infixed dissimilating non-geminated type, practically non-existent in known Arabic, and so typical of Maltese.

I. NORMAL QUADRILITERALS

Under this heading are given also, for the sake of clarity, such formations as are not real quadrilaterals but merely inflated trilaterals.

Stem Q-T-L

Note: For the sake of brevity, where possible, only 'perfect' stems are quoted, surds and weaks being left to the intelligent imagination of the scholar.

A. FROM FORM I:

- (a) *Active* (transitive and intransitive):
- (i) QaTaL – HaTaF = to snatch;
 - (ii) QaTeL – QaTeL = to kill;
 - (iii) QeTaL – FeTaH = to open;
 - (iv) QeTeL – QeReD = to destroy;
 - (v) QiTeL – KiSeR = to break;
- (b) *Passive*:
- (vi) QoToL – HoLoM = to dream.

I. *With medial radical gemination* (Form II), having transitive, intransitive, iterative or intensive force:

- (i) QaTTaL – FaRRaK = to pulverize;
- (ii) QaTTeL – HaMMeG = to soil;

- (iii) **QeTTaL - FeTTaH** = to stretch;
- (iv) **QeTTeL - FeRReX** = to spread;
- (v) **QiTTeL - KiSSeR** = to break to pieces.

Note: When $\sqrt{2}$ is an aspirate, the first supporting vowel becomes IE in replacement of gemination, thus from Form I: **FeHeM** (to understand) we get not **FeIHeM** but **FieHeM** (to explain).

II. *With preformative 'N-'* (Form VII) having a passive/reflexive force:

- (i) **nQaTaL - nHaTaF** = to be snatched;
- (ii) **nQaTeL - nQaTeL** = to be killed;
- (iii) **nQeTaL - nFeTaH** = to be opened;
- (iv) **nQeTeL - nQeReD** = to be ruined;
- (v) **nQiTeL - nKiSeR** = to feel snubbed;
- (vi) **nQoToL - nHoLoM** = to be dreamt.

III. *With preformative 'ST-'* (Form X) having a tentative non-terminative force:

- (i) **staQTaL - staGhDaR** = to feel stagnant;
- (ii) **staQTeL - staHreG** = to investigate;
- (iii) **steQTeL - steNBeH** = to awake;
- (iv) **stiQTeL - stiENeS** = to get used to;

Note: Where $\sqrt{1}$ is *ie*, representing the Arabic ئ , the first supporting vowel 'i' is left out, by the rule of haplogy, thus we have *stienes* and *stieden* rather than *stiienes* and *stiieden*.

It should be also noted that Form X, so widespread in Arabic, has found very limited root in Maltese.

IV. *With infixed '-T-' after $\sqrt{1}$* (Form VIII) having a passive/reflexive force as in Form VII but applicable only to stems whose $\sqrt{1}$ is phonetically incompatible with the preformative 'N-':

- (i) **QtaTaL - StaBaT** = to be slammed;
- (ii) **QteTaL - NteFaH** = to swell;
- (iii) **QtTeL - RtiFeS** = to be trodden.

Note: The special Maltese form of verbal inflexion which involves the incorporation of both II and IV above in one verb at one time, belongs here, viz:

- (iv) **nQtaTaL - nStamaT** = to get scalded;
- (v) **ntQaTeL - ntGhameL** = to be made.

In this curious 'corporate' form, it is morphologically easy to recognize the verb as pertaining to either Form VII or Form VIII. If the infixed T appears as preformative it is 'abnormal', and the verb so coined belongs therefore to Form VII; if, on the other hand, the T is normally infixed, the verb clearly belongs to Form VIII.

B. FROM FORM II: (see A, I, above)

I. With preformative 'T -' (Form V) having an additional passive/reflexive force to those of Form II:

- (i) **tQaTTaL - tFaRRaK** = to be or become pulverized;
- (ii) **tQaTTeL - tHaMMeG** = to get soiled;
- (iii) **tQeTTaL - tFeTTaH** = to be stretched;
- (iv) **tQeTTeL - tFeRReX** = to be spread;
- (v) **tQiTTeL - tKiSSeR** = to be broken to pieces.

Note: This preformative is subject to assimilation in cases of phonetic incompatibility with $\sqrt{1}$.

II. With preformative 'ST -' (Form X) having an additional tentative non-terminative force to those of Form II:

- (i) **stQaTTeL - stHaRReG** = to investigate minutely;
- (ii) **stQeTTeL - stKeRReH** = to consider repulsive;

Note: This form is very rare in Maltese.

C. FROM FORM III which has an active reciprocal force, but is, in the main, used with ordinary Form I force, though stressing the relation of the action to a person. This form, too, is very rare in Maltese. Examples:

- (i) **QaTaL - QaRaR** = to hear confessions (priest);
- (ii) **QaTeL - HaReS** = to look after (someone);
- (iii) **QieTeL - BieReK** = to give your blessing to;

With preformative 'T -' (Form VI) having a passive/reflexive reciprocal force, the preformative being subject to assimilation with $\sqrt{1}$ as at B.I above:

- (i) **tQaTaL - tHaBaT** = to exert oneself;
- (ii) **tQaTeL - tQaTeL** = to fight to the death with;
- (iii) **tQieTeL - tWieZeN** = to rest one's weight on;

The 'reciprocal' effect of the action in these verbs is definitely more evident when used in the plural, thus:

- (i) **tHaBTu** = to share exertions;
- (ii) **tQaTLu** = to kill one another;
- (iii) **tWieZNu** = to be of help to each other.

D. FROM FORM IX, which is taken, instead of Form I, by verbs of adjectival origin, to express the acquisition of a particular colour or defect:

- (i) **QTaL - QSaR** = to become short;
- (ii) **QTieL - HZieN** = to go bad;

I. With medial radical gemination, as in Form II, to give the verb an active force. Vide AI;

II. With preformative 'T -', as in Form V, to give the verb a passive/

reflexive force. Vide B I.

It should be borne in mind here that none of the verbal formations given so far is in reality a quadriliteral. Not so, however, with regard to the following which are fairly common, also in Arabic.

E. FROM FORM I: Stem: Q-T-T—Surds, having an active or passive force:

- (i) QaTT — DaRR = to cause a sense of sickness;
- (ii) QeTT — BeXX = to sprinkle (with liquid);

I. *With medial radical gemination* (Form II):

- (i) QaTTaT — DaRRaR = to make others feel sick;
- (ii) QeTTeT — BeXXeX = to sprinkle repeatedly;

II. *With dissyllabic gemination* with transitive or intransitive, iterative intensive force, as in Form II;

- (i) QaTQaT — DaRDaR = to cause revulsion;
- (ii) QeTQeT — BeXBeX = to dawn or darken slowly;

In the case of these verbs with dissyllabic gemination we come across, for the first time, not only in Maltese but also in Arabic, with stems where $\sqrt{3}$ of the surd is dropped to give room to a duplication of the rest. I am strongly of opinion that, in classifying these geminated bases as a separate stem, old-time etymologists erred badly, for, from the construction of the radicals as well as from the evidently close connexion in meaning with the basic surd, it should have been clear to anyone that these geminated quadrilaterals are nothing but offshoots of the trilateral stem.

Consequently, Arabic verbs such as شَرَشَر and بَطَبَطَب should properly be classified in the dictionaries under the roots شَرَّ and بَطَّ respectively, and not given separately, as has been the case so far with the majority of lexicographers.

It is probably due to this misconception that morphologists have not classified these geminated surds under Form II which enumerates the derivatives of Forms I and IX, and their inflected form with preformative T—under the subsidiary Form V, which gives the passive of Form II. This has gone against the grain all along, because these geminated surds, as all the 'special' quadrilaterals that now follow, for that matter, besides being fully and truly the offshoots of the respective trilateral stems, do not follow any special rule of inflexion or conjugation of their own (that might perhaps have in a way justified such a treatment), but simply those of Form II and Form V, which is all as it should be.

Having so far disposed of the ordinary trilaterals and their more normal quadrilateral offshoots which have met with no untoward treatment, except in the one instance just mentioned, we now come to the *special* quadrilaterals that are at the core of the present summary study. The panoramic

synopsis that follows is all the more interesting and deserving of the most careful study inasmuch as these formations are very little known in Arabic proper, whereas in Maltese they assume a role of major importance, and form the nucleus of that new development of modern Arabic which should have but did not come about, and which we may now consider, with just pride, as the direct contribution of Maltese to the furtherance of modern Semitic linguistics.

The formation of these special quadrilaterals consists of three kinds:

- (i) Bases with preformatives;
- (ii) Bases with postformatives;
- (iii) Bases with dissimilation of geminated radicals.

As will be readily understood, the first two are formed from the stem as it appears in Form I, whilst the third builds upon the stem as it appears in Form II.

II. SPECIAL QUADRILITERALS

I. Stem Q-T-L: Bases with formatives on Form I.

A. BASES WITH PREFORMATIVES.

(i) With preformative 'B-':

This preformative is a substitution of the prepositional particle 'B' or 'Bi', and, by and large, involves modification of the original meaning of the stem to the extent of conveying its prepositional value to the verbal noun thereof.

Note: Where no Arabic characters and meaning are given, it is implied that the vocable and its meaning are Maltese.

(a) BaQTaL

BaGhTaR = to walk in mud. From **GhoToR** = to walk with difficulty.

BaGhBaS = to fumble. From the IV Form of **GhaBaSa**— *عَبَسَ* avoir la queue couverte de saletés, d'urine et de fiente qui ont séché — se dit des bestiaux (Kazimirski). The quadrilateral, as in Maltese, is to be found in Arabic, *بَغَبَسَ* *toucher le cul, la queue* (Tun.) (Beaussier). And this meaning is subsidiary also in Maltese.

(b) BeQTaL

BeRBaQ = to spend lavishly. From **RaBaGha**— *رَبَعَ* = to lead an easy life; *mener une vie aisée, une vie de délices* (Kaz.)

Note: There are several instances in Maltese of the pharyngeal plosive replacing the pharyngeal fricative (Q for Rghajn) and viceversa.

(c) BeQTeL

BeRFeL = to add strings etc. to a dress and, figuratively, to one's behaviour. From **RaFaLa**, *رَفَلَ* = to let one's dress trail; *Être maladroit ou*

ne pas savoir faire quelque chose p. ex. porter un habit, ne pas le mettre comme il faut; laisser descendre jusqu'à terre et traîner sa robe en terre; marcher en agitant les bras ou tout son corps. (Kaz.) Incidentally, the past participle in Maltese: *Mberfel* means also 'one whose strange attitude and gestures show that he is not "all there"'

BerBeX = to profit from disorder. From **RaBaSa** - رِبَسَ *frapper avec la main; mêler; mélanger* (Kaz.) This quadrilateral بِرَبَسَ (with X for S) already exists in the Arabic of North Africa (Berber): *fouiller, en mettant en désordre; griffonner; chercher à savoir, à connaître; picoter* (Beaussier).

(d) **BiQTel**

BixKeL = to complicate. From **XiKeL** = to shackle.

Note: The neo-Latin *bascula*, from which our *bixkilla* (wicker basket) derives, is known to be of Arabic origin. Presumably, so is the English verb quoted as its meaning above.

(ii) *With preformative 'X-':*

This preformative is a substitution of the prepositional particle 'X' or 'Xi', and, by and large, involves modification of the original meaning of the stem accordingly.

(a) **XaQTal**

XaNDaR = to make publicly known, to broadcast. From **NaDaR** = to observe, to keep under one's eye, in good view.

CaQLaQ = to move from a place. From **QaLaQa** - قَلَقَ = to be restive; *se dit en parlant d'un cheval qui, par inquiétude, ne se tient pas en repos quand il est sous le cavalier* etc. (Dozy-Suppl.)

Note: In Maltese, as in Berber, and even in Sicilian for that matter, the sound X is interchangeable with Ć. In Arabic, the latter is represented by ش which is quite a common sound in North Africa.

(b) **XaQTel**

XaQLeB = to fold. From **QaLeB** = to tum over.

(c) **XeQTal**

XeMNaQ = to spurn. From **MaNaGh** = to hold back prohibitively.

Note: For the Q and Gh interchange, see (i) (b) above.

(d) **XeQTel**

XeNGeL = to put aslant. From **NaGaLa** (NaQaLa) - as pronounced in Berber, with a hard Q: نَقَلَ = to remove, transporter, porter d'un endroit à un autre (Beaussier).

(iii) *With preformative 'F-':*

This preformative too is a substitution of the prepositional particle 'F'

or 'Fi', and similarly involves modification of the original meaning of the stem within the limits of that variation.

(a) **FaQTaL**

FaRTaS = to cause hair to fall thereby rendering practically bald (through illness). From **RaTaŽa** = to fall down through weakness; **رَطَنَ** *se dit de celui qui, lorsque il veut s'asseoir, se laisse tomber soudainement à terre* (Dozy-Suppl.)

(b) **FeQTaL**

FeRNaQ = to agitate itself (flame), to crackle (fire.); From **RaNaQa** - **رَنَقَ** to be agitated; and, in the II Form, to clap wings without flying (bird); *être troublé; II. battre des ailes et les agiter sans voler* etc. (Kazimirski)

(c) **FeQTeL**

FeKReN = to walk with short quick steps. From **QaRaNa** **قَرَنَ** | to step with hind legs in the track of the fore legs (horse, camel etc.); *marcher de manière que les pieds de derrière posent dans les traces des pieds de devant, cheval* etc. (Kazimirski).

Note: The changes from Ž to S and from Q to K and viceversa in the roots are not typical only of Maltese. They may be encountered, with no inconsiderable frequency, also in the Arabic of North Africa.

(d) **FiQTeL**

FiXKeL = to trip up, and fig. confound. From **XiKeL** = to shackle.

Note: For another verb built on the same root see (i) (d) above.

(iv) *With preformative 'M-':*

This preformative is a substitution of either (a) the particle of place and instrument, particularly the latter (Arabic 'Mim' = **م**), which is the prefix of substantives conveying such meaning; or (b) the same letter when used as prefix of the past participle.

(a) **MaQTaL**

MaQDaR = to disparage. From **QaDaR** = to give a verdict on.

(b) **MeQTaL**

MeRŽaQ = to spout out, squirt, irradiate. From **RaŽaQa** = **رَذَقَ** = to distribute food etc; *pourvoir quelqu'un de choses nécessaires à la vie, de pain quotidien; nourrir quelqu'un; donner à manger; accorder, donner quelque chose à quelqu'un.* (Kazimirski).

(c) **MeQTeL**

MeRŽeB = to hammer down in place. From **RaŽaBa** - **رَذَبَ** = to hold firm in place; *tenir à une place y être, en quelque sorte, collé, cloué, n'en pas bouger* (Kaz.)

Note the noun *مَرزَبَة* (*marzebba* in Maltese), which is a *barre en fer, maillet en fer pour écraser les mottes de terre*. It is the 'mimared' name of instrument, from the trilateral, which has given origin to the quadrilateral verb.

MeSKeN = to pity the poor or ailing. From **SaKuNa** - سَكُنَ to be poor and miserable; *être pauvre, misérable* (Kaz.)

Compare the Italian *meschino* deriving from this Arabic source, and similarly therefrom the Maltese *misikin*.

(v) *With preformative 'T-':*

This preformative is a substitution of the prefix T- of verbal nouns from derived forms.

(a) **TaQTaL**

TaNBaR = to beat a drum (as a warning etc.). From **NaBaRa** - نَبَرَ : to warn off; *chasser quelqu'un, l'éloigner à force de cris*. Note also the noun of unity *نَبْرَة* = *cri poussé par un homme; élévation de la voix* (Kaz.)

It may be contended that this quadrilateral verb derives directly from the noun *tanbur*, Arabic: *طَنْبُور mandoline, instrument de musique* (Kaz.)

It would then have to be taken as a quadrilateral formed by dissimilation of the geminated middle radical from Form II *طَبَّر*. But this II Form verb has a different meaning in Form I under the root T-B-R whilst its Form II is not known in Arabic. Again, the quadrilateral *طَبَّر* is given separately by Dozy-Suppl. For this reason, I feel that the right lesson is the one given by me under this section.

Note: There is no doubt that if the Maltese noun owes its origin to Sicilian *tamburu*, the latter, as well as Italian (*tamburro*) and French (*tambour*) owe theirs to Arabic.

(b) **TeQTeL**

TeNFeX = to loosen the stuffing (of a cushion etc). From **NaFaXa** - فَخَسَ to loosen tufts of cotton etc. by fingering; *séparer la laine, le coton avec les doigts* (Kaz.)

TeNTeX = To remove single hairs from a textile. From **NaTaXa** - فَتَخَسَ = to pull a hair off one's skin, to extract a thorn, from one's foot etc.; *tirer, extraire quelque chose, arracher par exemple une épine, le poil etc.* (Kaz.)

B. BASES WITH POSTFORMATIVES

(i) *With postformative '-B':* (see II, A, i)

(a) **QaTLaB**

KaRTaB = to walk heavily and unsteadily being badly shod. From **KaRaTa**

– كَرَبَ : to roll, make a somersault; *dégringoler, rouler* (Dozy-Suppl.)
Note: Kazimirski gives the derived form of this quadriliteral under a separate root, with the meaning *se retourner contre quelqu'un pour l'attaquer*.

Compare also the Maltese verb **KaRWaT** given later.

(b) **QaTLeB**

HaNDeB = to press an object between two weights. From: **GhaNaDa** – غَنَطَ : to be pressed on by events etc.; *affecter quelqu'un, causer beaucoup de peine à quelqu'un, affaire, événement* (Kaz.).

Note: The interchange of these almost identical fricatives is common in Maltese as in North African Arabic.

(c) **QeTLeB**

GerBeB = to roll a thing on itself. From **GaRaBa**, orig. **KaRaBa** – كَرَبَ : to pack tightly, to use a roller (baker); *serrer plus fort les liens, les cordes etc; se servir d'un cylindre pour la pâte (boulangier)* (Kaz.).

Note: We have here again the hard pronunciation of the ج as in Berber.

(ii) *With postformative '– X'.*

It is to be noted that the same rule of consonantal interchange between X and Ć, mentioned earlier, applies here.

(a) **QaTLaX**

QaRDaX = to card, comb (wool etc.), to brush down (horse) etc. From **QaRiDa** – قَرَدَ : to fall off, wool etc. (from sheep): *tomber, se dit de la laine qui tombe de la brébis et qui est de la plus vile qualité; être rongé par les vers, se dit du cuir* (Kaz.) Compare قَرَدَ : *poilu, velu, L. pilosus* (Dozy-Suppl.). But the Maltese quadriliteral also exists in Arabic and is given, as a separate root, with the same meaning: قَرَدَشَ *carder* (Dozy). The Arabic trilateral is found with the same meaning in English, French and Italian, but in the latter also from the quadriliteral as *cardassare* with no variation in meaning.

(b) **QaTLeX**

HaRBeX = to be inconsiderate in doing a thing, more often than not, spoiling it. From **HaRaBa** – حَرَبَ : to despoil (house etc.); *saccager, piller (maison)* (Kaz.).

QaRMeĆ = to crunch, to grind noisily. From **QaRaMa** – قَرَمَ to grind dried objects with one's teeth; *ronger, croquer, commencer à manger etc des choses sèches* (Kaz.). But Dozy-Suppl. gives also the Maltese quadriliteral, as a separate root, with an X for Ć, and with the meaning *manger une chose qui n'est pas liquide, comme des pois chiches ou des fèves*. For the change of the Q into a hard G note the other Maltese II Form verb **GerReM** with a connected meaning, but without the post-

formative; also **QaRReM** with a meaning akin to Arabic.

(c) **QeTLEx**

GeRFEx = to mix, confuse by fingering or clawing. From **GiReF** – to scratch with one's nails.

BeRMeĊ = to roll between finger and thumb. From **BaRaM** – to twist, roll a thing on itself.

(iii) *With postformative '-N'*:

This postformative is a substitution of the 'tanwin', which is taken, as commonly in Maltese as in Arabic, *inter alia* by verbal nouns of action, predominantly those with intransitive values.

(a) **QaTLaN**

SaRDaN = to pass a baby repeatedly from hand to hand or from one person to another. From **SaRaDa** – سَرَدَ 'to make prolonged use of a thing'; *continuer de se servir de quelque chose, faire continuellement usage de quelque chose* (Kaz.)

Note: Dozy-Suppl. gives the meaning of *cribler le grain* to the II Form and adds that this verb is formed from the root **S-R-N-D** which, he adds, is given in the *Vocabulista* as **S-R-D-N**. He gives the latter under a separate root: سَرَدَنَ with the same meaning of 'to cribble'; to support which he quotes Alcalá's 'çarandar'. See also under سَرَدَدُ as a noun, which he derives from Persian. The fact, however, that the meanings of the quadriliteral and the triliteral tally, coupled by the fact that from the triliteral 'sarda' (سَرَدَدُ) there derived also the neo-Latin 'sardine', would seem to corroborate my theory that this is a case of 'tanwin' addition to the root, as has happened in many other instances.

ŽaRĠaN = to branch forth and start entwining (vine). From **SaRaĠa** – سَرَجَ : to interlace (hair); *tresser, les cheveux* (Kaz.).

Compare the Maltese II Form verb **SaRRaĠ** – to weave its web (spider) etc.

Note: In this case we have the interchange of **Ž** for **S** which is a common occurrence in Maltese (Compare **Žabbar** for **Sabbar** and **Žebbieħ** for **Sebbieħ**).

(c) **QaTLeN**

QaRBeN = to administer Holy Communion. From **QoRoB** – to approach, to come to someone.

HaXKeN = to besiege, to encircle, to fill up all round. From **HaXaKa** – حَضَدَ : to assemble, to fill, to be full; *se réunir, se rassembler; être chargé de fruits, de dattes (arbre)* (Kaz.). Also: *remplir une boîte en pressant fortement les choses qu'on y met* (Dozy-Suppl.), which is exactly the meaning which the Maltese quadriliteral has in the phrase

ħaxken bwietu (he filled his pockets to the utmost). But the quadrilateral is purely Maltese.

(c) **QeTLeN**

ĠeLBeN = to well up ready to flow (tears in one's eyes etc.), to swell, ready to open (buds). From **ĠaLiBa** – جَلِبَ : to gather, throng in one place from all sides; *se réunir, se rassembler, affluer de tous cotés chez quelqu'un* (Kaz.).

(iv) *With Postformative '-F'*

This is also the prepositional particle **F** or **Fi**, being used with modified values of a syntactical nature, as in the case of **B(i)** above.

(a) **QaTLaF**

QaRTaF = to eat off the top ends of foliage (goat etc.), to circumcise a baby. From **QaRaTa** – قَرَطَ : to snip, cut off little bits from something; *couper en petits morceaux etc.* (Kaz.) *diviser, séparer* (Dozy-Suppl.). It is to be noted, with regard to the second Maltese meaning of this quadrilateral, that the Arabic *Qurt* (قُرْطٌ) has also the meaning of *vèrge, pènis chez un petit garçon* (Kaz.).

(b) **QaTLeF**

ħaXLeF = to be rough in usage (broom, brush, pen etc.), to be second rate. From **ħaXaLa** – خَشَلَّ immaterial whether **ħ** is **ħ** or **ħ** – to be of an inferior quality (object): *règarder comme de peu de valeur*, and **ħaXila**: *être usè (se dit d'un vêtement)* (Kaz.).

* * *

The above are only a few examples of the abundant preformative and postformative quadrilaterals extant in Maltese. There are, of course, other formations in both types, with letters such as the preformative 'W-' (e.g. 'werden' from the trilateral 'raden' of which we have the II Form 'radden') and the preformative 'Għ-' (e.g. 'għasfar' from the trilateral 'safar' of which we have the III Form 'siefer') and the postformative 'T-' (e.g. 'ħarbat' from the trilateral 'ħareb' of which we have the II Form 'ħarreb'), and others which give room for further analysis and research. In the cases above quoted as examples, it would seem that the first two developments from the trilaterals owe their origin to the Arabic IV Form (non-existent in Maltese) where both **W** and **Għ** may be taken as the substitute of the initial **ʔ**; whilst the third would appear to be the heritage of the definite plural addendum to female nouns ending in 'a' (cfr. the Maltese suffix '-iet'). As these examples, however, are in such abundance as those liberally quoted in detail this mere mention thereof should, to my mind, suffice.

Before coming, however, to the last kind of 'special' quadrilaterals

built from Form II bases with dissimilation of the geminated radicals, I feel I should give here one or two examples of another possible kind of built-up quadriliteral which I do not yet dare to classify, when known examples are so few. Moreover, the construction thereof may ultimately turn out to be due to other reasons, when more is known about what I give here as only a tentative etymological solution.

I refer to such quadrilaterals as seem to have been formed on bases with the help of a 'repeated' radical other than the geminated $\sqrt{2}$. Something of the kind is known to have existed in Accadian, but it does not appear that any of the examples given here could, by any scientific reasoning, be connected therewith. The four examples that follow should therefore be considered for what they are worth.

BASES WITH REPEATED RADICALS

(i) *With $\sqrt{1}$ repeated:*

(a) **QaTQaL**

QaRQaĀ = to deprive of all moisture; to dry up and tum to cartilage (what was fat). From **QaItaXa** – فرش to crackle; *croquer, gruger* (Dozy-Suppl. who adds the example '*qaraxa ġhala adrasu*': قَرَشَ عَلَى أَصْرَاسِهِ: *grincer des dents, en parlant d'une personne qui est en colère*). It is to be noted that Dozy himself gives the quadriliteral, as a separate root (with an X instead of the Maltese Ā): قَرَشَ with the same meaning of *croquer*, and thereunder adds the corresponding Arabic to the Maltese '*qarquċa*' – cartilage.

(b) **QeTQeL**

GeRGeZ = to offend, disgust others with one's rudeness etc. From **GiReZ** – to be plaintive, to complain helplessly.

(ii) *With $\sqrt{2}$ repeated:*

(a) **QeTLeT**

GeLBeL = to sieve (corn, rice etc.); from **QaLeB** with a hard G for the Q where **QaLeB** means 'to turn over'.

Note: As, however, this verb is also pronounced '*gerbel*', one is not sure which is the right spelling; and the connexion may therefore be with the other verb '**GhaRBeL**', with almost the same meaning. In this case, there would be a clear connexion with old Italian *gherbellare* and Sicilian *garbulari*, whence the French *cribler* and English *to cribble*, all deriving from Arabic. But even this connexion may be misleading because Kaz. gives the quadriliteral: **KaRBaLa**: كَرَبَلْ (as a separate root-word) with the meaning of *vanner, nettoyer le blé* adding the significant *Voy. عَرَبَلْ*).

In any case, the Maltese quadriliteral would still be liable for classification here.

(iii) *With √3 repeated:*

(a) **QaTLeL**

QaNĊeĊ = to be sordid, niggardly; to use up one's goods or wealth with exaggerated parsimony. From the root Gh-N-X (غنش) under which Kaz. gives the built-up word 'Ghunxux' غُنْشُوشُ with the meaning *une reste insignifiante, le peu qui reste des biens etc.*

Note: The consonantal variations between Arabic and Maltese in these examples have, of course, already been explained.

* * *

II. *Stem Q-T-(T)-L: Bases with dissimilation of the medial geminated radical.* (With a modified meaning as a variant of Form II)

Two groups of consonants may serve as buffers for the radicals in medial dissimilated gemination: (a) the liquids and (b) the weak or semi-consonants.

(a) *With Liquid Dissimilation:*

Of the 'liquids', only L and N serve a useful purpose, being the more assimilable with the rest of the consonants; and of these two, N is predominant.

M is generally avoided in consonantal combinations (compare 'qanpiena' (bell) and 'tanbur' (drum) for 'qampiēna' – Ital. *campana* – and 'tambur' – Ital. *tamburo*). The other 'liquids': R and Gh are hindered from functioning freely in this capacity as 'buffer letters' because of their dual role also as pharyngeal fricatives.

(i) *Preceding √2*

(a) **QaNtAL** (or **QaLTaL**)

GhaNqaD = to bunch together retaining individuality; to turn into a bunch
From **GhaQqaD** (II of **GhaQaD**) – to join in one mass. The quadriliteral is given as a separate root in Arabic dictionaries, but not the verb.

QaNtaR = to weigh like a ton, to be heavy, to press down. From **QaTTaR** (II form of **QaTaR**) = to drip, drop with pressure (liquid). In Arabic the quadriliteral is given separately: **QaNtara**: *sèjourner longtemps chez quelqu' un, être pour ainsi dire sur ses bras, pèsér sur lui* (Kaz.) Dozy-Suppl., who gives also the Maltese meaning *le poids d'une chose devint un*, قَنْطَار, *un quintal*, makes the connection with the trilateral **Q-T-R** clear, when he adds *Renverser, faire tomber with dans la langue ancienne* قَطَرَ (*qattara*).

QaNZaH = to strain (at stooling etc.). From **QaZZaHa** (II Form of **QaZaHa**):

فَرَجَ - lâcher un pet (Dozy); jeter, laisser échapper son contenu par gouttes - marmite en ébullition quand elle commence à déborder (Kaz). The 'iterative' second form of this Form I is not given by the dictionaries.

HaNXaR = to press roughly, and even cut, someone's vocal cords; to use the violin bow harshly on the strings; to cut with a rough edge (blade). From **HaĠĠaRa** (II Form of **HaĠaRa**): حَجَّرَ - to stop from flowing, from passing through (air, liquid): arrêter; empêcher de couler etc (Beauss); ôter à quelqu'un la faculté de disposer de (Dozy). It is, however, evident from Arabic dictionaries that this root has been much twisted about, as it is not only the X that has turned into Ġ but also the R into L, as may be seen from the connected quadrilaterals حَنْجَرَ (**HaNGaRa**) and حَنْجَلَ (**HaNGaLa**) as well as from the confusion between one H and another. It would not therefore be out of place to quote here also the Arabic root H-X-R حَشَرَ where the meaning *insérer mal à propos; serrer le bouton à, and fig. presser vivement sur une chose*, lends colour to the belief that the Maltese quadrilateral may be a blend of both.

(b) **QaNTeL** (or **QaLTeL**)

HaNFeS = to irritate, to anger. From **HaFFaSa** (intensive of Form I **HaFaSa**): خَفَسَ : to mock, to deride: railler, se moquer, prendre en derision (Kaz.); but the Maltese quadrilateral is given as a separate root also in Arabic by Kaz. with the meaning *avoir de l'aversion pour quelqu'un et le fuir*.

QaNFeD = to ruffle one's hair. From **QaFFaDa** (intensive of Form I **QaFaDa**): فَفَدَ); *frapper quelqu'un légèrement sur la nuque ou le derrière de la tête avec la paume de la main* (Kaz.), of which the second form (not given by the dictionaries) is found, as a variant, in the II Form of the quadrilateral (as given here in Maltese), and given as a separate root by Kaz. with the meaning *frapper quelqu'un avec un bâton tout le long de son corps comme on frappe p.ex. un hérisson que l'on tue*. To these meanings Dozy-Suppl. adds, under the quadrilateral in the II Form 'qanfada', the Maltese meaning *se hérissier*. Compare the noun 'qanfud' = hedgehog. To this, one may add the meaning given by Kaz. to the noun 'qafad' (فَقْدُ) from the original stem: *manière de nouer le turban en ramassant les bouts sous les plis du turban au lieu de les laisser pendre derrière la tête*.

QaNDeL = to lift heavy weights. From the trilateral Q-D-L- (قَدَلَ) which is also written with $\sqrt{2}$ ذ conveying the basic meaning of 'large head' and, verbally, *frapper sur la partie de la tête appelée قَدَال* (Kaz.) Although there is no form II in Arabic of this trilateral, the connexion

is clear, when reference is made to the quadriliteral, as in Maltese (**QaNDaLa**: قَنْدَلٌ) which Kaz. gives as: *avoir une grosse tête* and also *marcher d'un pas lent etc.* Actually, the meaning of the Maltese verb is also 'to go about under the weight of something heavy, even if it is part of yourself', hence, presumably, also a large head. The noun 'qandul' means 'something dangling'.

(ii) *Following* √2:

(a) **QaTNaL** (or **QaTLaL**)

QaRNas = to feel the pinch of poverty; to have to put up with hardships; to be featherless (bird). From **QaRRas** (II Form of **QaRaS**): to pinch repeatedly or continually (all senses).

(b) **QaTLeL** (or **QaTNeL**)

GhaFLeĠ = to tread on puddles of water, on soaked earth etc. From: **GhaFFeĠ** (which has no I Form in Maltese) = to tread heavily on a thing.

(c) **QeTLaL** (or **QeTNaL**)

MeSLaH = to rub off damp dirt badly. From **MeSSaH** (II Form with intensive meaning of **MeSaH**) = to clean, rub on something repeatedly.

(d) **QeTLeL** (or **QeTNeL**)

XeBLEK = to entwine itself criss-cross fashion on a wall (vine, ivy etc.). From **XeBBEK** (which has no Form I in Maltese, although it has the noun 'xibka' – net, mesh) = to enmesh, to make nets etc.

(b) *With Weak Dissimilation*

Of the two weak or semi-consonants W and J, the former is more commonly used, as is the case with the replacement of the 'alif-hamza' (IE). (Compare the II Form verb **WeNNeS** from the root IE-N-S.)

(i) *Preceding* √2

(a) **QaJTaL** (or **QaWTaL**)

HaJDaR = to leave, go away unobserved. From **HaDDaRa** – هَدَّرَ : to push on by rolling slowly; *rouler, faire avancer en roulant* (Dozy-Suppl.) from I Form **HaDaRa**: هَدَرَ : *s'en aller en pur perte; être vain, inutile (se dit de toute chose)* (Kaz.).

ĈaJPaR = to render dense (air, mind etc); to render misty, foggy, to make a thing lose its transparency. From **ĠabBaRa** – جَبَّرَ (II Form of **ĠaBaR** with an intensive meaning, also in Maltese): to consolidate; *raffermir, consolider* (Kaz.).

Note: In Maltese, this verb is, strictly speaking, a derivation of the noun **ĈPaR** (mist, fog, air density) from the Arabic جَبَارٌ with equal meaning. The change of the initial Ġ and Ĉ being natural, here brings

in its wake the change of the hard B into its softer counterpart P, because of the rule of 'close proximity assonance'.

(b) QaWTeL (or QaJTeL)

HaWTeL = to bustle about when at work, to apply oneself with industry to one's work. From **HaTTaLa** (II Form – not given by the dictionaries – of the I **HaTaLa** حَطَلَ – to find ways and means; *pretexter une chose* (Dozy-Suppl. who seems to doubt the correctness of this meaning). but compare the adj. derivatives given by Kaz. under this root.

HaWSeL = to feed the young (mother bird); to push little morsels of food down one's throat. From **HaSSaLa** حَصَلَ: to procure for self or others: *acquérir, procurer, ménager* (Dozy), but evidently the Maltese verb is derived from the noun under this root: **HaWSLa** with meaning in Maltese as in Arabic: *gèsier, èstomac des oiseaux* (Kaz.). Both the II Form Verb **HaSSeL** and the I Form one **HaSaL**, exist in Maltese.

Note: For once, Kaz. gives the verb **HaWSaLa** under this trilateral with the Maltese meaning of *remplir son gèsier (oiseau)*.

(c) QeWTeL (or QeJTeL)

XeWLaH = to throw off one's clothes carelessly, to hurl away from one. From **XaLLaHa** – شَلَحَ to force one to disrobe; *dèpouiller, ôter les habits a quelqu'un* (Kaz.).

Note: In Maltese we have also the verb **ÇeWLaH**, a variant of the above quadrilateral, with the meaning of 'being careless in dress'. The substitution of the Ç for X has been explained.

MeJLaQ = to sharpen a blade, razor etc. From **MaLLaQa** مَلَقَ (II form of **MaLaQa**): to render a surface smooth: *donner la surface unie à quelque chose, mur, sol etc.* (Kaz.) Dozy-Suppl. gives the quadrilateral as a separate root (مَبَلَقَ) with the meaning *essayer les métaux*, but Beauss. gives the noun as in Maltese: 'mejlaq' (whetstone) under the trilateral M-L-Q.

(d) QeWTeL (or QeJTeL)

HeWDeN = to rave, to be delirious. Possibly from **HaDDaNa** (II Form of **HaDaNa**) هَدَنَ *adoucir la colère* (Dozy) with an inverted meaning as often happens in a good many verbs. But possibly also from **HeWWeD** (II Form of هود) which, apart from its meanings, is used, according to Dozy-Suppl. *chez le vulgaire pour HaWWaTa* – هَوَّتَ *crier*. In this case, the Maltese verb has an added 'tanwin' and would come to be classified under B.(iii) (c).

Note: The quadrilateral, as given in Maltese, is also given as a separate root by Dozy-Suppl so: هَوَّدَنَ (**HaWDaNa**): I c.a. et II *dans le Voc. sous perplexus*.

(ii) *Following* √2:

(a) **QaTWaL** (or **QaTJaL**)

KaRWaT = to grind coarsely; to eat voraciously; to cut through the air, cleave the waters at great speed (rocket, ship etc.). From **KaRRaTa** - كَرَّتْ (II Form of **KaRaTa**, see under B.(i)(a)): to carry away adroitly; *éconduire, éloigner quelqu'un avec ménagement, adroitement* (Dozy-Suppl.)

(b) **QaTWeL** (or **QaTJeL**)

HaXWeX = to rustle (leaves, paper, heavy silk etc.). From **HaXXeX** - to make copious use of dry leaves, etc. (for any purpose).

(c) **QeTWeL** (or **QeTJeL**)

HeRWeL = to make impetuous, impulsive; to fluster. From the root H-R-L, under which, for once, Kazimirski gives the quadriliteral as in Maltese (هَرُول) with the meaning *marcher rapidement*. So does Beaussier. As, however, there does not seem to be any particular meaning in Arabic attached to this trilateral, I cannot exclude the possibility that the quadriliteral may here be derived from the root H-W-L-, I. هَوْل - *étonner, surprendre par quelque chose d'extraordinaire, en parlant soit de ce qui est effroyable, épouvantable, soit de ce qui est agréable, beau* (Dozy-Suppl.) with the II Form meaning *inquiéter, troubler* (l.c.). Beaussier comes very near to the Maltese meaning of the quadriliteral with the II of H-W-L meaning of *déranger, distraire* etc. In this case, the quadriliteral would come to fall under II (a) with R exceptionally replacing the more common liquid N.

GeZWeR = to enfold, to cover up completely in cloth, in paper etc. From **ĠaZZaRa** (جَزْر - a sort of II Form of **ĠaZaRa**, with the hard G of North Africa, which form, however, is not given by the dictionaries): to ebb, tide, presumably leaving an island of dry land (whence the noun 'gzira' - island): *tomber, baisser, décroître - se dit de l'eau, surtout de la marée* (Kaz.). Beaussier gives (to my mind, wrongly, unless he meant جَزْر for the simple كَسْوَر) the quadriliteral as a separate root with K-S-W-R: كَسْوَر, where his passive Form with the prefix T- is given to mean, as in Maltese, *se draper dans ses vêtements*.

Under a separate root Dozy-Suppl. gives the Maltese nominal derivative 'Gezwira' in Arabic characters, جَزْ وَبِرْ with its plural جَزْ أَوْرْ and says *dans le dialecte de Malte, petit jupon en toile à raies bleues et blanches et à petits plis; il est ouvert d'un côté, et attaché avec des petits rubans*. In his *Dictionnaire des Vêtements* he quotes Vassalli in giving it, and describes the dress as explained to him by Amari. But in his *Supplément* he commits the mistake of deriving the word from the Ital. *giustacuore* which, as *gistakor* with us, is quite a different habiliment.

He queries this, and well for him he does so, for there is no doubt that the origin is Berber, as confirmed by Beaussier.

* * *

Although my list of 'special' quadrilaterals ends here, their classification is by no means complete. Several other verbs belonging to this category exist in Maltese, which, by reason of their being farther removed etymologically, cannot be readily harnessed. Among these I may quote **KaBRaS**, **GarZaM**, **KeRČaM**, **QaSDaR** and **KaGhBaR**, to mention only a few. For each and every one of these (and others) I have, of course, given what I consider a scientifically reasonable philological solution in my Dictionary of the Maltese Language (Il-Miklem) which is still in manuscript. Their enumeration here would take up more space than is justifiable in such a Review, and they will therefore have to wait to form the subject of another essay on this interesting subject.

A final set of 'quadrilaterals' there still exists in Maltese which does not come into the pattern at all, although, for all intents and purposes, they follow in tow, so to speak. These verbs, among which, for example, '*bandal*', '*kamrad*', '*kečner*' and '*čempel*', were the first imports from Sicilian, when the new verbal formation of '*imbotta*', '*indokra*', '*iddobba*' had not yet developed. Deriving as the former do from the Sicilian '*pindulari*', '*cucinari*', '*cimbalari*' etc., they cannot be reduced, obviously, to trilaterals, and are therefore to be reckoned as the first 'true' Quadrilaterals in our language, to be dealt with grammatically as in the case of Form II, of course, but to be held definitely outside the sphere of the groupings which are embodied in this essay.