

THE DEMONSTRATIVE IN MALTESE

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THE study of Maltese linguistics within the field of the Arabic dialects presents some problems that are both interesting and baffling. This has long been affirmed by serious scholars, such as Carl Brockelmann who, in his book *Semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, remarks that the Maltese language has developed independently of the other dialects of Arabic and has fallen very early under various alien influences from which they have been spared. It must be presumed that he was referring to Italian and Sicilian, perhaps even to English, all three of which belong to other language families.

But even as interesting and more baffling still are the problems that the linguist delving into the Maltese language has to face and try to solve within the Semitic language-family itself. I am referring to several phenomena occurring in Maltese which, though definitely Semitic, seem to be unexplainable if referred only to Classical Arabic, and without parallel in the modern dialects. In his essay 'Maltese as a mixed language', Prof. J. Aquilina thus comments on such phenomena: 'Maltese has hundreds of Semitic words which, as far as we can say now, are local formations but some of which may as well be semantic residues of a previous Semitic vocabulary.' The existence of these phenomena has given rise to the most extravagant theories on the Phoenician origin of modern Maltese, theories to which hardly any scientific value is nowadays attached. Jean Cantineau, before giving a bibliography of linguistic works on the Maltese dialect in his essay 'La Dialectologie Arabe', finds it necessary to remark that 'ce parler a attiré depuis longtemps l'attention des orientalistes, en particulier à cause de certains traits puniques qui sembleraient s'y être conservés.'

In the following essay I intend to make a close study of one of the above-mentioned phenomena (or 'erratic blocks', as Stumme prefers to call them) of Maltese – the demonstrative, which several linguists have found worthy of a considerable attention. Brockelmann, Aquilina, Preca, Nöldeke and others have all expressed varying and at times contrasting opinions on the etymology of the Maltese demonstrative. Another recent attempt has been the work of Wolfdietrich Fischer who, in his book *Die Demonstrativen Bildungen der Neuarabischen Dialekte* (1959), has given

us the most exhaustive treatment of the subject. However, Mr. Fischer has, in my opinion, missed the crux of the problem when he tried to explain the present demonstrative only through analogy with the other Arabic dialects and the internal development of Maltese, thus virtually excluding all possibilities of influences or residues from other Semitic sources. Moreover, Fischer has made an excellent use of the insufficient data available to him, which led him sometimes to conclusions that are far-fetched.

The Maltese demonstrative, as in other Semitic languages, may be of two kinds: that denoting a near object and that denoting a distant object. The following are the forms of the demonstrative pronoun which indicates a near object:

Singular: m. *dā dān dāna hedān(a)*
 f. *dī dīn dīna hedīn(a)*
 Plural: c. *daṽ daṽn daṽna hedaṽn(a)*

For a distant object:

Singular: m. *dāk dāka hedāk(a)*
 f. *dīk dīka hedīk(a)*
 Plural: c. *daṽk daṽka hedaṽk(a)*

The above words, besides being the normal pronominal forms, are also used as adjectives. As such, they stand in front of the noun they qualify, which takes the definite article, thus:

dān il-barmīl, dīk il-mara, daṽn it-tfāl, dīn it-tarbiyya.

According to Fischer, the forms *dāna, dīna, dāka, dīka*, found mostly as independent substantives, are seldom used attributively in front of a noun, the forms *dān, dīn, dāk, dīk* being preferred. Personally, I would rather say that the two forms are used in different contexts, *dāna* etc. being considered more elegant and refined. Thus *dāna l-bniedem* is a more formal way of saying *dān il-bniedem*.

The singular forms *dān* and *dīn* may assimilate with the article thus:

dān il-qamar > dal-qamar dīn il-firda > dil-firda
dān is-seḥer > das-seḥer f'hēdin il-gżira > f'hedil-gżira

As for the plural *daṽn*, it may also assimilate with the article in current speech, giving phonetically a form *da* which is easier and shorter to pronounce:

daṽn il-kelmiet > dal-kelmiet daṽn is-siġar > das-siġar
daṽn in-nies > dan-nies

The forms *bedān, bedāk* etc., showing initial *be* as prefix, are nowadays very rarely used. Vassalli, however, writing almost two centuries

ago, notes that the prefixed forms are quite frequent, but adds that no substantial difference in meaning is thereby indicated. For Cremona, the prefix adds in emphasis to the demonstrative particle. I agree with Sutcliffe and Fischer who comment that these forms are only used in literary language, such as poetry, elevated prose and sermons, as forms that are stylistically high-flown on account of their antique flavour. May I add, besides, that even in this context they are tending to disappear, hence acquiring unfavourable connotations of mimicry and imitation of pomposity.

One word on the accent. In all the forms given above the accent falls on the syllable introduced by the consonant *d*, thus: *bedān*, *bedtka*, *dáyna*. But, in the cases where in current speech the attributive demonstrative is phonetically considered as part of the noun, the main accent shifts from the demonstrative to the noun, according to the rules of accentuation: *dar-rāḡel*, *dal-bieb*, *dil-qasriyya*, leaving at most a secondary accent on the *d*-syllable of the demonstrative. This is the general rule whenever the demonstrative adjective is in elision with the article.

I shall now proceed to compare the forms of the Maltese demonstrative with those of Classical Arabic and with parallel formations occurring in the other modern dialects. In Classical Arabic we find a basic demonstrative particle *dhā* (f. *dhī*, pl. 'ulā), meaning 'this' or 'that', to which affixes are joined to give the desired connotations of proximity or remoteness. A particle *kā*, related to that used for the 2nd person singular and plural (Ar. *ka*, *ki*, *kumā*, *kum*; M. *k*, *kom*), is suffixed to the basic demonstrative to denote a distant object. A prefix *hā* is added to give further emphasis to the demonstrative.¹ This fundamental demonstrative

¹ This particle *hā* has a very important role in the rendering of the demonstrative in Semitic Languages. It serves as definite article prefixed in Hebrew and suffixed in Aramaic (Heb. הַבַּיִת *habbait*; Aram. בַּיְתָא *baitha* > *baitā*). It is used as prefix to reinforce the demonstrative in Arabic, Aramaic and Syriac (Ar. *hādhā* etc., see above; Aram. הַרְיָן *hādhēn*, הַרְא *hādhā*, הַרְהוּ *hāhū*; Syr. ܗܳܐܳܗܳܘܳܐ *hān(ā)*, ܗܳܘܳܐܳܗܳܘܳܐ *hād(ē)*, ܗܳܠܳܠܳܗܳܘܳܐ *hāllēn*, ܗܳܘܳܐܳܗܳܘܳܐ *hāy*, ܗܳܘܳܐܳܗܳܘܳܐ *hāy*). In modern Arabic it is still used as interjection and is given the name of *hā* 'at-tānbīh. It occurs in various dialects and is used in the sense of 'Here is ...', 'this is ...'. In Palestinian Arabic, for example, it takes the form *hej* (*hejy*-) and is joined to personal suffixes (*heini* 'here am I'). In Egyptian Arabic the *h* has fallen and the remaining *a* vowel is joined to a 3rd person suffix, forming *aho*, *ahi*, *ahom*, though the gender distinction is frequently disregarded. (Fēn kitābī? Aho kitābek.) In Maltese, this particle is still used, though it has been disregarded or misinterpreted in our grammars. Grammarians, in fact, usually give it as a variant of the Imperative singular *hū* from the verb *hā* (Ar. 'akbadha). But, although in some cases it may have a meaning equivalent to that of *hū*, a careful examination of such expressions as: 'Isma', *ħa!* (Come over here), 'Ħa, *ħudha*' (Take

is inflected and hence the following forms result:

'this':	dhā	hādhā	
	dhī (ū)	hādhī (hādhīhi)	
	'ulā ('ulā'i)	hā'ulā (hā'ulā'i)	
'that':	dhāka	dhālika	hādhāka
	tāka, tīka, (dhīka)	tilka	hātāka, hātīka, (hādhīka)
	'ulāka, 'ulā'ika	'ulālika	hā'ulāka, ha'ulā'ikā

All the modern dialects follow two or more of the above schemes more or less closely, with the exception of the plural forms, for which new formations derived from the singular have been adopted.

Thus, Iraqi Arabic, always notably close to the Classical, has: *hādhā*, *hādhī*, *hādhōl*, where the singular forms, when used attributively, assimilate with the article and contract to *hal*. For the demonstrative 'that': *hādhāk* (*dhāk*), *hādhīk* (-č), pl. *hādhōlak* are used.

In the dialect of Syria, the *dh* of the Classical changes as usual to a simple *d*, thus forming: *bāda* (*bā*), *bādi*, *hadōl*, where all the three forms, used adjectivally, may contract to *hal*. To express remoteness, *hāk* is used for all genders and numbers, though an alternative *ha(i)dāk*, *ha(i)dīk*, *hadōlik*, is permitted. In the Lebanese dialect we find the same usages with a few variants: *hāida*, *hāidi*, *hāudi*; *hāidāk*, *hāidīk*, *hadōlik*.

Egyptian Arabic may be considered as the most independent dialect as far as the demonstrative goes. Here the *hā* particle is missing altogether as prefix. The forms of the pronoun 'this' are: *dā*, *dī*, *dōl*. For 'that', *dīk* or *dāk* is used for all genders and numbers, though another unusual form exists: *dukha*, f. *dikha*, pl. *dukhamma*, *dukham*, where the *hā* particle strangely becomes a suffix, instead of a prefix as in the other dialects. Also peculiar to Egyptian is the fact that the above forms are placed after the noun when used attributively:

el-kursī dā, *ež-žiyāra dī*, *el-gawab dāk*.

The Western or Maghrebinic group of Arabic dialects, comprising those of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, offer roughly the same forms:

it, here!), 'Ara, ħa, fiex ġejna!' (Just see, what a situation we are in, now), 'Mela m'intix tarah, ħa!' (Aren't you seeing it, right here before you!), 'Ħa, xi ġmiel ta' xogħol' (Look, what fine craftsmanship!), will clearly indicate the demonstrative function of this particle and will show the connection with the Arabic *hā* 'at-tanbīh. In this sense, the particle is used in Maltese especially when the speaker wants to draw the hearer's attention to some object he has right under his eyes, or to a situation in which he finds himself at the moment. Hence, the abundant use of this particle with certain verbs in the Imperative: *ħu* (take), *ara* (look, see), *isma'* (hear, come).

hāda	dā	hādāk	dāk
hādi	dī	hādīk	dīk
hādu	dū	hādūk(a)	dūk

In Algeria, the demonstrative of proximity, when used as adjective, takes the form *bād-el*, which holds good for all genders and numbers. Besides the regular form *bādū* for the plural, we may also meet an alternative form *bādūna*, *bādūn*, occasionally *bādūm*, which occurs in the dialects of several towns from Libya to Morocco. According to Fischer, this plural form has evolved from the root *bād-* of the singular by the addition of the regular plural suffix *-ūna* of Classical Arabic nominal forms.

From what has been said above, it seems quite clear that the Maltese demonstrative forms have much in common with those of the North African dialects. With Maghrebinic *dā*, *dī*, *dū* we may confront Maltese *dā*, *dī*, *day*, as also the subsequent forms enlarged with the prefix *ba-* (M. *be-*), or with the suffix *-k*, or with both in the form *badāk*. We may also compare N.Afr. *badūn(a)* with M. *bedayn(a)*. However, even after comparing Maltese with Maghrebinic, as well as with the other dialects, we are still left with some unusual phenomena which seem to be unexplainable within the limits of Arabic dialectology. The possibilities of explaining these anomalies are two: they are either (i) local formations or modifications of the Arabic forms, or (ii) they are residues of a pre-Arabic Semitic vocabulary or the result of foreign influences outside the Semitic language family.

The presence of the odd final *-n* in the Maltese demonstrative of proximity has been noticed and discussed by several linguists, and most have found it necessary to trace it back to a Semitic origin outside the Arabic language group, and exactly to the group of Semitic languages denoted as the North-Western or Canaanitic group (which comprises Canaanitic, Phoenician and Punic, Hebrew, and Aramaic). Others have tried to explain it through analogy occurring inside the Maltese language or even through analogy with Romance languages.

But here one important question arises on which the solution of the whole problem depends. Was the original form *dā*, *dī*, *day*, to which a suffix *-n(a)* was later added, or was it *dān(a)*, *dīn(a)*, of which the final *n(a)* particle may be dropped?

Roudanovsky, in his 'Quelques Particularités du Dialecte Arabe de Malte' (1909), considers the form *dā*, *dī* as the basic form, and draws the reader's attention to the 'curious fact' that out in the country in Malta you always hear *dā*, *dī*, while cultured persons write *dān* and *dāna*, *dīn* and *dīna*. But Roudanovsky fails to give an explanation of this fact which, he comments, 'Allah seul est en état de comprendre'!

Barbera takes the problem up where Roudanovsky has left and gives what seems to me a very fanciful and improbable solution. He derives it from the suffix *-ni* which is sometimes joined to certain pronouns in Sicilian. Thus, for *iu* (It. *io*, 'I') Sicilians in some parts of the island say *iuni*, *sòni* for *so* (It. *suo*, 'his'), *cani* for *ca* (It. *qua*, 'here'), *stuni*, *stani* for *chistu*, *chista* (It. *questo*, *questa*, 'this' m. & f.), etc. He argues that, through political and commercial relations existing since the Norman Conquest of the island (1090), the Maltese men of letters began to adopt this romance consonantal ending and to join it to the semitic demonstrative pronoun, while the peasant population continued to use the pure Arabic demonstrative *dā*, *dī*. The existence, at such an early period, of a body of men of letters strong enough to create a literary jargon and to make innovations of the sort and transfer them to the language of the people is quite improbable. Besides, at least for this detail of information, Barbera seems to be fully dependent on Roudanovsky, as he had never been on the island. Any Maltese could tell that the choice in the use of these two alternative forms depends not on the erudition or less of the user, but rather on the grammatical function of the demonstrative in that particular phrase (i.e. whether it is used adjectivally or pronominaly). Hence, I can perceive no difference in the frequency with which both forms occur, out in the country, in the villages, or in the cultured conversation of learned persons.

Both Brockelmann and Nöldeke consider the *-na* suffix as an old semitic particle. The former holds it is the same element with which the plural form of the demonstrative pronoun is formed in Spanish Arabic: *baulīn*. Nöldeke, however, assigns to it an even older origin, considering it as an old determinative particle which is lacking in Classical Arabic.

And this brings us to the theory that is most common, that which considers this particle as a residue of a pre-Arabic semitic element from the Canaanitic group of languages. In semitic languages, besides the two demonstrative particles *dh*, pl. 'l and *ba* (which we have already met, joined together in the sequence *hādhā* etc. of Classical Arabic and its modern dialects), we find another demonstrative element *n*, which is specially conspicuous in the Canaanitic group. This has been mentioned by several linguists, but has never been studied thoroughly in connection with the odd *n* of the Maltese demonstrative. In the following paragraphs I intend to make a short review of the important cases where this demonstrative element *n* appears in Semitic languages. This will go to prove that there is a long tradition of this suffix *n* acting as a demonstrative particle, and that consequently one should be very cautious before considering the *n* in *dān* as an unimportant letter inserted into our

demonstrative merely for euphonic purposes or by a freak of the people's fancy for analogy.

To begin with, old Phoenician distinguished not only between a near object זֶה *ze(b)* 'this' and a distant object הוּא *bu* 'that', but also between an object of immediate proximity and one that, though near, stands at a considerable distance from the speaker. Thus, for 'this one here' old Phoenician uses the form זֶן *žn* for the masculine, of which the feminine form is not recorded.² This form, however, is rather unusual and is limited to the inscriptions of Byblos and Ur. Here are some examples taken from these inscriptions:

זֶן חַחַח תַּחַת זֶן *tḥt žn* 'under this one here'

זֶן נַחֲשֶׁת חַמְצוֹזַחַח הַמְזוֹזַחַח *hmžbh nḥšt žn* 'this copper altar here'

זֶן פַּעֲלַח לִי הַמְשַׁכַּח *fʿlt ly hmškv žn* 'I have made me this resting-place here'

Note that here the demonstrative adjective follows the definite noun it qualifies. The vocalization of this bi-consonantal demonstrative is still obscure, but Friedrich thinks that, considering the Aramaic form *dēn*, one may suppose the full demonstrative to have been *žēn*.

The same demonstrative element *n* can be found in Aramaic and its various dialects. In Western or Biblical Aramaic (which St. Jerome called 'Chaldaic') the demonstrative is *denā(b)*, (< *dēnā*; in Aramaic, the first of two vowels is frequently rendered short – Brockelmann), f. *dā*, pl. *illēn*, דְּנָה דָּא אֱלִין . Besides the above, the form *dikēn* m. & f. meaning 'that' also occurs, where the *n* is suffixed also after the normal form of the demonstrative of distance *dēk*, f. *dāk*. The demonstrative may be used pronominally or adjectivally. As adjective, it usually follows the noun it qualifies, but in some cases it may also precede it. Here are some examples from the books of Daniel and Esdras:

עַל דְּנָה *ʿal denā(h)* 'concerning this'

דְּנָה הוּא *denā(h) hū* 'this is it'

מִלָּה כְּדְּנָה *millā(h) khidenā(h)* 'a matter like this'

(Note: the use of the masculine demonstrative with a feminine noun)
Cases of the demonstrative preceding the noun:

²The passage from Hebrew /ž/ to Arabic /dh/ and consequently to /d/ in the modern Arabic dialects, including Maltese, is quite common. Example: Hebr. אִזְן 'žn, Cl. Arabic أذن 'dhn, Maltese *widen*.

דְּנָהּ כְּנִינָא denā(h) vinyānā' 'this building'

דְּנָהּ חֶלְמָא denā(h) ḥelmā' 'this dream'³

In the Aramaic dialect of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim we find the masculine adjectival forms *bān*, *bābān*, *bābēn*, *bādbēn* דְּבָן, דְּבָבָן, דְּבָבְעָן, דְּבָדְבָעָן; in the dialect of the Targumim of Onkelos and Jonathan, only the form *bādbēn* appears. For the pronominal form, both dialects have *dēn* דְּנִין with feminine *dā* דָּא and plural *hāl(l)ēn* הַלִּין. Once again, as one may see, the *n* suffix is present and plays an important part in the rendering of the demonstrative.

As it also does in Syriac, the principal representative of the Aramaic dialects of the Eastern group. The Syriac demonstrative forms are: m. *bān(ā)*, f. *bād(ē)*, pl. *bāllēn*, مَبَان , مَبَا , مَبَاي , مَبَا , مَبَاي . The masculine form originates from the older form *bādenā*, by a very early development: *bādenā* > *bānā*. The demonstrative particle *n* appears also in phrases like: *iaḡmān(a)* 'today', *tammān* 'there'.

From the above exposition one can easily see how frequent and how important the *n* suffix is within the Canaanitic family of Semitic languages in the function of a demonstrative particle. Nor is it only in this group: also the other two main groups offer forms attesting its presence.

To begin with the Oriental group, both Accadian and Assyrian have a demonstrative in *n*, which is declined like nouns, as in Romance languages:

m. *annū*, f. *annītu*; pl. m. *annūtu*, f. *annātu*
(Ass. *annūti*, *annāti*)

As in Syriac, the demonstrative particle *n* is found in junction with other words such as Assyrian *ašrānu* 'there', *aḡanna* 'over there', *ininna* 'now'.

As for the South-Western or Arabic group of Semitic languages, it is quite surprising that the *n* suffix is missing in the demonstrative of Classical (or North) Arabic. However, it does show up at least in a couple of important adverbial formations, namely *hunā* هُنَا 'here' (cp. M. *haun(a)*), with its derivatives *bāhunā* هُنَبَا 'here', *hunāka*, *hunālika* هُنَاكَ 'there', and *hannā* هُنَا , هُنَا , 'there' (cp. Hebr. הַנָּהָה M. *binn*, *binni* in Gozo) with its derivatives *bāhannā*, *hannāka*, *bāhannāka* هُنَبَا , هُنَاكَ , هُنَبَاكَ 'there'.

In Southern Arabic the presence of the final *n* is much clearer. Sabean inscriptions give the demonstrative forms *dhn*, f. *dht*, 'this', with plural 'ln, 'lt. Also Himyaritic has a suffix *n* which is joined directly to the

³ The reader should know that the Aramaic article is affixed at the end of the noun to which it refers, as already noted above.

noun it qualifies: *מזנרן mžndn* 'this monument', *משלמן mslmn* 'this stone'. In many cases the demonstrative pronoun *רן dn* is placed before these nouns: *רן מזנרן dn mžndn*, *רן מכנין dn mbnyn* 'this building'. In Ethiopic, the language of a South-Arabic population, mainly Sabean, that emigrated to Abyssinia, the demonstrative is further strengthened by the suffix *-tū*, thus forming the pronouns *žentū*, *f. žätti*, pl. *m. ellöntū*, *f. ellāntū*, which, used as adjectives, precede the nouns they qualify.

Nöldeke, in 'Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft', notes that Islam has caused a great movement among the Arabs and has scattered even people from the heart of the Yemen in different regions, thus spreading over the areas of expansion several traces of the old Sabean language. In this way many peculiarities have found their way into, and are now shared by single dialects outside the Yemen. Such would be, according to Nöldeke, the Maltese demonstrative with its odd final *n*, which he compares to that in the question-word *aīna*, *ēnu*, *-a*, *-hom* (Syria), *ēna*, *ēnabu* etc. (Tunis), *enbū*, *enbi*, *enhum* (Egypt) meaning 'which', and also to *ba^qdēn* 'after that' and *kamān* 'as well'. All these words must be formed of a Classical Arabic stem plus the suffix *-n* which is a residue of South Arabic and which is missing in the Classical.

The first linguist to comment on the analogy of the Maltese demonstrative with that of the North-Western Semitic languages has been A.E. Caruana in his treatise 'Sull'Origine della Lingua Maltese' (1896). Likewise Annibale Preca, in his 'Malta Cananea' (1904), derives *dāna* 'questo' from Chaldaic *denāb* 'questo e quello', and *dāk* 'quello' from Chaldaic *dāq* or *dōq* 'questo'. Preca, one must admit, could fetch up Hebrew and Chaldaic etymologies for any Maltese word, but this time, perhaps, he hit quite near goal.

Saydon, in the comparative essay included in 'The Development of Maltese as a written Language ...' (1928), notes the resemblance of the Maltese forms with those of Aramaic, but is of the opinion that the singular 'may have been influenced by the regular dual or by the plural *dayn*, where the final *n* is also found in some of the North African dialects'. The same opinion is expressed much later (1953) in his article 'Bibliographical Aids to the Study of Maltese'.

In the essay 'Maltese as a Mixed Language' (1958), Aquilina gives the forms '*dā* or *dān*, also *dāna*', comparing them with the Arabic, Aramaic and Sabean. Again, in his 'Structure of Maltese' (1959), he draws the corresponding forms in Sabean and Biblical Aramaic as having a similar ending in *n*. But he never goes any further.

An interesting and stimulating attempt at explaining the historical

development of the Maltese demonstrative has been the theory forwarded by Wolfdietrich Fischer in his treatise on the demonstrative formations of the modern Arabic dialects. Fischer, fully conscious of the similarity between the Maltese forms and those of South Arabic and Aramaic, excludes a priori all possibilities of any connection of these forms with the Maltese, on the grounds that, if the *n* attested in the Maltese demonstrative were a residue of these old languages, one should then expect similar phenomena in other modern dialects of Arabic, the formation of which had already been closed in its basic features when Malta was arabicized. Fischer, in fact, considers *dā*, *dī* as the original demonstrative forms, from which the forms *dāna*, *dīna* developed later by addition of the suffix *-na*. From *dā*, *dī* the plural *daṅ* was formed by the addition of the *ṅ* characteristic of the plural, as in the plural verbal forms *araṅ* (<*ara*), *qraṅ* (<*qara*), *ibdeṅ* (<*ibda*). Only then did the suffix *-na* enter on the thus developed forms. Fischer proceeds with his syllogism in this way: a final *n* is rendered silent in several Maltese words (*ʿalseyn* > *alsey*, *ʿfeyn* > *fey*, *mneyn* > *mney*, *yumeyn* > *yumey*, *baṅn* > *baṅ*). In the last example the Arabic original is *bāhunā*, in which the final vowel, being long, may be retained (*baṅ*, *baṅn*, *baṅna*; cp. also *yien*, *yiena*). On the forms *baṅ*/*baṅna*, existing simultaneously, the forms *daṅ*/*daṅna* were formed by analogy, the *-na* ending being felt as suffix. Thus originated the forms *daṅ*, *daṅn*, *daṅna*.

In considering impossible a connection between the forms of Maltese and those of South Arabic and Aramaic, Fischer was obviously excluding the commonly held theory of a Semitic substratum in the Maltese language dating back to a time much earlier than the Arab domination and possibly even to the Phoenician colonization of the island. According to this theory, the first Arabs who arrived in Malta must have found some form of Semitic dialect of the Canaanitic group already existing on the island and spoken by at least a part of the population. The Arabic language succeeded without great difficulty in supplanting the previous Semitic dialect and in spreading firm roots, but could not prevent that some of the peculiarities of the former tongue survive in the new Maltese dialect. Such may be the demonstrative with its odd final *n*, which may be a particle existing already in the pre-Arabic Semitic demonstrative. If such be the case, then Fischer's contention that the original demonstrative was *dā*, *dī* from which *dāna*, *dīna* developed later by the addition of the *na* suffix will prove false. But this has still to be proved. However, the addition of the suffix *na* to the original Arabic forms just by the force of analogy seems to me very improbable. This would be contrary to the general tendency towards simplification attested in the particles of

Semitic Maltese. So much more, when we consider the complication of the forms *dān il-*, *dāna l-*, *dīn il-*, *dīna l-* (instead of the original *da l-*, *di l-*) resulting from such an addition, and this in a particle in such a frequent colloquial use as the demonstrative adjective. Maltese tends rather to elide a consonant standing between two vowels in such a position, as can be seen, for example, in *bħal* (Ar. *biħāl* بِحَال), which when used in front of a definite noun loses the final radical of the word, or in *minn* (Ar. *min* مِنْ):

bħal it-tabīb > *bħat-tabīb* *minn it-tabīb* > *mit-tabīb*

The formation of the plural *dāu* by the addition of suffix *u* indicating the plural seems to me equally impossible. This plural suffix *u* occurs in Maltese only in verbal forms. Fischer himself found no other examples but the verbal forms *arau* (<*ara*), *qrau* (<*qra*, sic.), *ibdeu* (<*ibda*) to support his theory. Again, I have never met with a noun or nominal form forming the plural in *u*, which is the standard plural for verbs. To say that analogy has occurred between the pronominal demonstrative form and the verbal forms would be carrying the process of analogy too far, when we consider that this process presupposes a certain homogeneity, at least in the phonological function, of the different words among which it occurs.

Another weak analogy seals Fischer's theory. He noted quite rightly the similarity between the forms *bau*na (*bau*n, *bau*), and *dau*na (*dau*n, *dau*), but has, in my opinion, interpreted it erroneously. According to him, the particle *na*, being felt as suffix because of the co-existence of *bau*na and *bau*, was joined through analogy to the plural form of the demonstrative *dau*. It is true that the *n* suffix in both cases is the same demonstrative particle, but its transference from one word to another at a post-Arabic period by mere analogy seems to me improbable. Besides, such an analogy could explain at most only the plural; but what about the singular? Isn't it even more difficult to conceive that the suffix was subsequently transferred from the plural to the singular forms?

At this point, the reader might say: You have explained the theories of others, finding fault with and criticizing most of them. But what is your solution to the whole problem? I shall expose my theory in the briefest terms and submit it to his approval or further criticism. I am fully aware that I shall only be adding another possible solution to this difficult linguistic problem which perhaps is destined to remain, like so many others even in our language, covered by a thick veil of historic mystery.

I consider the theory of the Semitic pre-Arabic substratum as possible and quite tenable. The existing forms of the Maltese demonstrative suggest to me an original form derived from the Canaanitic group, and in

particular something like *denā* or *dēnā* as in Aramaic. Let us examine words with a similar syllabic formation in Arabic, and follow their development into Maltese. In Maltese, all long vowels are accented; so the long final syllable would be accented. But Maltese cannot have a final open syllable that is accented.⁴ What happens in such cases is that the accent is carried back to the penultimate syllable, whose vowel is long if followed by one consonant and short if by two. In this way, the Arabic words: *bunā* هُنَا , 'anā أَنَا , 'salā عَلَيَّ , *humā* هُمَا , 'allā(h) اللَّهُ have developed into Maltese: *háyna*, *jiéna*, *gháala*, *húma*, *álla*. In the same way, *denā* has developed into Maltese *dāna*. Subsequently, the final *a* vowel, now in a weak post-accent position, may fall (and has fallen definitely in some common words) unless it serves some definite purpose. So, we get both *baýna* and *baun*, *yiena* and *yien*, 'sala and 'sal, as in other cases like *fūq* (<Ar. *fauqa* فَوْقَ), *taht* (<Ar. *tahta* تَحْتَ) But the final *a* has not fallen in *alla*, where it was sustained by a final *b* in the original, and in *hūma*, where the *ā* originally served to indicate the dual. This change explains satisfactorily the disappearance of the final vowel in *dān(a)*, which presents us with two alternative forms *dān* and *dāna*. On the demonstrative thus formed, the Arabic forms *dā*, *dī* (with their variants *bādā*, *bādī*) seem to have entered. They immediately settled in the language of the people, being so very similar to the original Maltese demonstrative, giving a whole series of different demonstratives: *dā*, *dān*, *bedān*, *dāk*, *bedāk*, etc. Whether the form *dā* existed even before the coming of the Arabs, as an alternative form evolved from *dān*, is different to tell, but I am inclined to think that it did not. A final *n* is dropped in many Maltese words (*šey*, *fej*, *yumey*, *au*) as Fischer rightly observed, but all these words have a diphthong just before the final *n*, and not a long vowel as in *dān*. Another difficult question regards the feminine and the plural. Was the feminine *dīn*, *dīna* already in existence before the arrival of the Arabs, and what was the plural? As for the feminine, the long-existing masculine forms *dān*, *dāna*, as well as the syllabic formation of the new demonstrative of distance *dīk*, *dīka*, may have suggested an analogy on which the feminine *dīn*, *dīna* were formed on the new Arabic demonstrative. Or, perhaps, the form *dāna* used to serve for both masculine and feminine, as we have seen it used in Biblical Aramaic, and the genders were only later differentiated by the the different vowelings of the Arabic stem. The existence of both forms *dā*, *dī* and *dān(a)*, *dīn(a)* together is explainable by the facility of using

⁴ This rule applies to Semitic Maltese, but not always to Romance loan-words, cf. M. *età*, *umiltà*, *menù*.

the Arabic form *dā*, *dī* adjectivally, that is, elided with the article, and, when it is used alone as pronoun, the need of a final consonant on which the long vowel may rest.⁵

As regards the plural, I agree fully with Nöldeke that it is of more recent formation. The form *badūn(a)* seems to have been imported from North Africa and to have settled alongside the masculine and feminine singular forms, following their development. *Hedaḡna* thus gave *bedaḡn* and consequently *bedaḡ* (by analogy with the singular and by the regular disappearance of the final *-n* consonant when preceded by a diphthong, cp. *haḡñ* > *haḡ*). One should remember that the forms *badūn* and *badū* occur also in North Africa. The question relating to the existence in Maltese of the diphthong *aḡ* in all the full plural forms in place of the Maghrebinic long vowel *ḡ* is difficult to answer. Maltese has a tendency to retain the diphthongs of Classical Arabic in many words which in various modern dialects are pronounced with a long vowel (cf. Cl. Ar. *ṣaḡm*, M. *saḡm*, Dialects *sōm*; Cl. Ar. *ḡā'u*, M. *ḡeu*, Dial. *gū*; Cl. Ar. *ghayr*, M. *ḡayr*, Dial. *ghēr*). But this explanation is not convincing. The reason perhaps lies in the long vowel of the singular *dān(a)*. In forcing itself into the old form of the demonstrative with a long vowel *ā* closed by the final consonant *n*, the N.Afr. *badūna* has adapted itself by accepting the *a* vowel. The attraction of Maltese for diphthongs helped to standardize this use. The same did not occur in the other dialects because the *a* vowel of their singular forms stood in a weak final position in an open syllable and was eventually supplanted by the long vowel of the plural suffix *-ūna*. I may also mention that Semitic Maltese stress rules exclude the possibility of a final accented vowel in open syllable, as in *badū*, but may have a final accented syllable ending in a diphthong (cf. M. *arāy*, *eyyéy*, *saqāy*, *meššéy*, *kréy*).

In this treatise I have endeavoured to make a close but brief study of one of the many interesting peculiarities that the linguist comes across in his study of our language. I only hope that it will be of some help to those who will choose to carry their studies of this and other subjects further.

⁵ This need for a final consonant after a long vowel in an accented open syllable is attested also in such loan-words as M. *skrūn*, pl. *skreyyen* (<English *screw* (*propellor*)), M. *blūn*, with derivatives *blūni* and *blūna*, (<Eng. *blue*), as also in sporadic cases, as in the folk-poem 'L-Gharusa tal-Mosta' where the word *bašān* (<It. *pascià*) occurs for modern usage *bašā*.)

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