

SOME GRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF
THE PLACE-NAMES OF MALTA AND GOZO
IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

by

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It has already been shown by the present writer that, among the thousands of Maltese and Gozitan place-names of the period 1370-1600 recorded in extant documents, a few hundreds contain at least one non-Arabic word.¹ These could be either one or other of a select group of common descriptive words like *Stabal*, *Forn*, *Cens*, *Birgu*, *Mandra*. The majority, however, consist of non-Arabic personal nouns, surnames or nicknames referring to some former proprietor or benefactor of the area. On the other hand, an examination of the morphology of Maltese and Gozitan place-names of the same period shows an almost total lack of non-Arabic morphological elements among the common descriptive topographical words, and the syntax of the compound place-names is also almost completely Arabic, except for one particularly important feature which, though present in dialectal Arabic from elsewhere, does not seem to have affected Arabic place-names in the way it has clearly done in the Maltese islands.² The present study shall examine the mimated place-names and the diminutives, as well as the characteristics of composite formations. The particularly Arabic character of Maltese and Gozitan place-names should become amply evident.

THE MIMATED PLACE-NAMES

The Maltese language, like most of the Semitic languages in general and Arabic in particular, can form nouns of location by the use of the *m-* prefix. It is only to be expected that the medieval place-names of the Maltese islands contain innumerable examples. Several of them indicate the presence of water:

Tal-Maqghad, of the place where water collects:

tal machad, clausura in contrata tal Jauhar: 26.viii.1542, Not. Giuseppe de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 363.

L-Imnejqa ta' Bir Miftuħ, the small field, small enclosure or pond at the open well (Bir Miftuħ):

Jl Mineycha ta' Bir miftuħ, land belonging to the bishop near Casal Chircop: 1733, Cabreo of Bishop's Mensa, plate XX.

Ta' l-Imnejqat, of the small fields, enclosures or ponds:

talmineycat, clausura in contrata santa agatha: 24.xi.1530, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 169v.

Il-Mineq, the small fields or enclosures or ponds:

il minech, clausura in contrata bin hise: 6.iii.1500, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 33v; *tal minech*, clausura grande con alcune latere dentro circondato di mure vechi in contrata tal minech: 3.vii.1611, Not. Andrea Allegritto, NAV, R 16/24, f. 687.

Il-Maħsel, the washing place:

ilmahisel, territorium: 28.vii.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1;

L-Imħasel, the washing places:

lu mahasel, territorium: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *tal michasil*, clausura in contrata il guardie: 30.viii.1504, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 78.

Other mimated place-names refer to buildings and other constructions:

Tal-Maqbar, of the grave or cemetery:

tal macabar, one of a group of fields belonging to the bishop of Malta: 18.vi.1517, NAV, R 140/7, f. 99v.

Tal-Miġlis, of the sitting room or council chamber:

talmiġlis, galcula in contrata Hlantun: 6.xi.1503, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 19.

Ta' l-Imħazen, of the store rooms:

tal mibazin, domum: 18.iv.1541, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/8, f. 256.

Ta' Misged, of the synagogue (miskita, from Arabic *masgid*, mosque):

ta misged, galcula in contrata lahyfar: 17.x.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/5, f. 65.

Tal-Mithna, of the mill:

tal mithna, terra beneficalis: 23.x.1551, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, RA, vol. 4, f. 187.

Mqabba, the square building:

micabibe, casale: 1419-20 militia list; *micabibe*, casale: 22.x.1488, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/1.

Ta' l-Imsiekel, of the small subsidiary buildings (perhaps pig-sties or other small rooms for animals):

ta linsigkil, clausuncula in contrata il mirechel: 21.v.1539, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/4, f. 469v.

Ta' l-Imtamar, of the underground grain silos:

ta ilmitamar, galca in casali Tarxen: 30.x.1500, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *ta ilmitamar*, vigna in ta il mizeb (ta') rahal tarxen: 3.viii.1499, *idem, ibid.*

It is, of course, certain that the field referring to the Jewish synagogue merely belonged to the synagogue inside Mdina. It is possible that there was a similar relationship between the fields indicated by the other place-names recorded above and the buildings to which they refer.

Several other mimated place-names refer to pastoralism:

Il-Merħla, the sheep-fold, the animal yard:

ilmerħile, one of a group of fields belonging to the bishop of Malta: 18.vi.1517, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/7, f. 99v.

Merħlet il-Mogħoż, the goats' pen:

merħlet ilmohos, guardia ob scandalum pestis in suburbio maris: 1.vi.1523, Cath.Arch., Mdina, Ms. 36, f. 439.

Mriehel, the animal yards, sheep-folds, etc.:

mirachil; 1.x.1467, Not. P. Bonello, NAV, Ms. 588, f. 21v; *mirabel*, locum: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *tal mirehel*, contrata: 18.i.1525, Not. L. Hagijs, NAV, R 7, f. 5v.

Mriehel Lapsi, Lapsi's (nickname) animal yards or sheep-folds:

mirechel lapsi, contrata: 15.xii.1558, NLM, Treas. A 74, f. 10.

Ta' l-Imreħhliet, of the small animal yards or sheep-folds:

tha lImireychilet, quarta pars pheudi Episcopi: 14.i.1542, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, RA, vol. 3, f. 17.

Tal-Merħad, of the sleeping place:

talmerħad, galca in contrata casalis Luca: 1.viii.1525, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/10, f. 299.

Il-Mentina, the place of stench, the dunghill:

il. mentine: 22.iv.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *tal mentine*, contrata near Zejtun: 16.xi.1518, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8; *tal mentine*, contrata in casali micabibe: 28.ix.1525, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 9v.

Miżħbla, the rubbish dump, the town midden:

mizħbile, galca: 24.vii.1533, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 234v.

Miżbla tas-Saqqajja, the rubbish dump or town midden at Saqqajja:
misbile dela saccaya, contrata: 27.iv.1545, Not. Br. de Caxario,
NAV, R 175/15, f. 395v.

Tal-Miżbliet, of the rubbish dumps or town middens:
te miczbelet, clausura in Rabbato: 4.viii.1541, Not. Jul. Muscat,
NAV, R 376/4, f. 432v.

L-Imżejbla, the small rubbish dump or town midden:
ilmiczeibile, galcula in contrata ta bur mule: 30.xi.1528, Not.
C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 24.

L-Imżiebel, the rubbish dumps or town middens:
ilmisebil, clausura in contrata talmisebil: 5.i.1512, Not. C.
Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 103v; *misebil*: 1.vi.1523, Cath. Arch.,
Mdina, Ms. 36, f. 468; *lo mundizaro*, guardia ob scandalum pestis
in suburbio maris: *ibid.*, f. 439.

Mżiebel Simna, Simna's (name) rubbish dumps or town middens:
Jl mizebil simne, contrata: 22.xi.1544, Not. Gius. de Guevara,
NAV, R 224/3, f. 101.

The following are apparently of Romance origin but have been
assimilated so successfully that they follow closely the whole
Arabic pattern:

Il-Mandra, the animal pen or yard:
il mandra, galcula in casali Spital: 12.x.1519, Not. C. Canchur,
NAV, R 140/8, f. 80v.

Mnajdra, the small animal pen or yard:
minaydra, galketta: 5.iii.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Il-Mnadar, the animal pens or yards:
Jlminadar, tres clausurae: 27.iii.1540, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo,
NAV, R 196/3, f. 72 of 1st pt.

In Egyptian colloquial, *Mnadar* means 'reception parlours for male
visitors', but in Tunisian it means 'threshing floors', for which
andar was the word used in the Maltese islands in the fifteenth
century and *qiegħain* in more recent times.

Winter quarters for animals or ships were also indicated in the
place-names:

Mixta, the wintering place:
la mixta, galcula in qua est specus: 19.vi.1456, Not. A. de
Beniabin, copy of 1633 in Not. D. Portelli, NAV, R 399/7,
f. 284; *Jl mixte*, antrum cum mandrettis et clausunculis et petiis
terrae in contrata hain habdun, Gozo: 10.vii.1577, Not. Ferd.
Ciappara, NAV, R 185/3, f. 446v.

Il-Mixta ta' Kalment, Clement's wintering place:

la mixta di calmento, clausurettae in contrata ginen musfar: 21.ii.1572, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/6, f. 317 of 2nd pt.

Muxet, wintering places:

il. mixeti, lentiolae terrae in contrata ta zebbug, Gozo: 2.viii.1584, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/7, f. 815.

Marsa Muxet, the harbour of the wintering places:

cala marsa muxet: 24.xi.1468, NLM, Univ. 11, f. 2v; *Marsa mixet*, portus: 19.x.1523, NAV, Univ. 12, f. 341.

Bee-keeping, wine-making, fishing and harbour activity are suggested by the following:

Tal-Miġbħa, of the beehive:

tal miġbiħa, clausura: 17.viii.1500, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 46.

Mġiebaħ, beehives:

miegebaħ, mandrettae in contrata gebel guzara: 13.ii.1558, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/1, f. 124v of 2nd pt.

Mġħasra, the grape or olive presser:

mabasara, clausura in contrata casalis Lamanno: 17.i.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/20, f. 331.

Msidra, the fishing place or harbour:

Misidae, contrata: 22.i.1494, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *miside*, contrata: 4.iii.1495, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/1, f. 52.

Marfa, a landing place:

la marfa di Malta: 13.iii.1514, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 50.

Marsa, an anchorage, a harbour:

marsa, contrata: 13.vi.1376, official copy of 1644 in NLM, Univ. 206, f. 268; *marsa*, pheudum: 10.vii.1461, NLM, Univ. 11, f. 124v; *marsa*, territorium: 10.iii.1497, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2.

Some of the mimated place-names refer to natural topographical features:

Mejda, the tableland:

talmeyde, clausura in contrata gued hamir: 19.ii.1513, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 190v; *ilmejde*, clausura in contrata gued chamer: 2.xii.1529, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/5, f. 148v.

Mwejda, small tableland:

Jll muejde de Sant ermu (the small tableland of St. Erasmo):

pecia terrae in contrata gued sara: 19.x.1576, Not. Ferd. Ciapara, NAV, R 185/3, f. 63v.

Mwejjed, tablelands:

il mueyed, lencia terrae in contrata santa catherina tal Cabesa, Gozo: 9.x.1590, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, Ms. 836, f. 159.

Miġbla, a place of a lot of stones or boulders:

migibule, contrata: 16.ii.1502, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 145.

Minfes, a blow hole:

tal minfis, duae clausunculae in contrata Zucac iche.: 28.xi.1537, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/2, f. 289; *tal menfes*, clausura in contrata harhar: 3.xii.1558, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/57, f. 379.

Il-Mixraf, the elevation, height, hill:

Jl mixraf, clausura in contrata il mixraf il herbe: 7.viii.1549, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/5, f. 637v.

Mixraf il-herba, the elevation or hill of the ruin:

il mixraf il herbe, 7.viii.1549, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/5, f. 637v.

Ta' l-Imxieref, of the elevations, heights, hills:

tal mixeref, contrata: 19.viii.1593, Not. J.S. de Lucia, NAV, R 229/4, f. 1182v.

L-Imxieref iċ-Ċkejken, the small (district called) l-Imxieref:

Limsieref i Cichejchen, clausura del feudo Bulebel Minore: 25.xi.1781, NLM, Treas. A 138, p. 627.

Tal-Munxar, the saw edge (of a ridge above or below sea-level):

talmunxar, clausura in contrata casalis Gudie: 31.i.1519, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 32v.

Others refer to the openness or the closed nature of the locality:

Tal-Magħlaq, of the enclosure:

talmagħlac, contrata: 30.iii.1500, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 38; *magħlac*, recluserio: in contrata delimara: 5.xii.1504, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 104v; *magħlac*, galcula in contrata ta Jauhar: 1.vi.1519, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 115.

Il-Magħlaq ta' l-Gherien, the enclosure of the caves:

Jl magħlac tal giren, clausura in contrata tal biddini: 3.vii.1569, Not. Matteo Briffa, NAV, R 91/2, f. 1400v.

Misrah, an open area with a good view all around:

misrah, spacium: 22.xi.1499, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *tal misrah*, clausura: 13.iii.1529, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV,

R 464/4, f. 178v; 'taberna sita in dicta casali Luca in qua et in eius miserach sive platea...': 18.ii.1521, NLM, Univ. 12, f. 261.

L-Imsejrah, the small open space:

il miseyrach, clausura in contrata ta czuncul: 6.ii.1505, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 117v; *il miseyrac*, clausura in contrata Rocaya irum: 26.ii.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/21, f. 450; *el miseirah*, clausura in contrata ta giahuhar: 3.v.1611, Not. Andrea Allegretto, NAV, R 16/24, f. 684.

L-Imsierah, the open spaces:

ilmiserach, terra: 8.i.1520, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 29.

Innumerable mimated nouns, however, expressing other ideas can also be found among the place-names of Malta and Gozo. The following refer to tools and instruments with a real or fanciful connection with the locality:

Ta' Marżebba, of the beetle or large wooden mallet, probably a fanciful reference to the megalith in the area:

ta mersebba, duae clausurae in contrata tal gallis: 6.xi.1552, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/35, f. 322v; *ta Marzebba*, terre in contrata tal hallis: 15.viii.1727, NLM, Treas. A 166, f. 9v.

Ta' Mreżżba, of the small beetle or wooden mallet:

ta mireyzibe, clausura in contrata muiar, Gozo: 5.iv.1558, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/1, f. 170v of 2nd pt.

Ta' l-Ingħażqa, of the mattock:

ta ilmiasca, territoria in contrata sancti pauli: 13.viii.1490, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 94v; *tal muasca*, galca in contrata sancti pauli de la marina: 25.xi.1528, Not. Julio Cumbo, NAV, R 196A, f. 110; *michasca*, terri: 16.x.(1482), Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 87.

Tal-Muftieħ (modern standard pronunciation), of the key, perhaps originally Mifiteħ, an Arabic personal name:

miffiteħ, clausura in contrata ta luatan: 3.ix.1546, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/5, f. 1v of 2nd pt.; *tal miftach*, terra in contrata ta san nicolao: 5.ix.1558, Not. Barth. Haxixa, NAV, R 32/10, f. 6; *tal mifteh*, clausura in contrata il brexie: 16.ix.1584, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/8, f. 29v; *tal mostech*, clausura in contrata delli capuccini et anticamente della guardia: 3.v.1611; Not. Andrea Allegretto, NAV, R 16/24, f. 693.

Tal-Miġbid, of the beam by which the water wheel is turned:

ilmigibid, clausura in contrata casalis Tarxen: 18.iii.1506, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 9; *talmigibid*, duas lencias.

Ta' Miġbid l-Ghajn, of the water-wheel beam of the spring:
ta miġbid layn, clausura in contrata rachal seyeh: 13.ii.1558, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/1, f. 123v of 2nd pt.; *ta miġbud Jlhajn*, clausura in contrata seieg: 7.x.1545, Not. Giuseppe de Guevara, NAV, R 224/3, f. 62 of 2nd pt.

Tal-Mingel, of the sickle:

Ta yl mingel, territorium in contrata casalis Lie: 1522, Cath. Arch., Mdina, Libro delle Decime Decanali 1522, f. 49.

Ta' Misluta, of the ear-ring (nickname?):

ta mizilute, clausura in contrata Jlbur: 11.ii.1542, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/3, f. 37 of 4th pt.

Tal-Mismar, of the 'single pipe wood-wind instrument resembling the oboe', unless it is really **Musmar**, a nail:

musmar, clausura at xaret ilhadiri: 12.v.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *tal misimar*, clausura in contrata ta buleben, 18.vii.1536, Not. Ant. Rapa, NAV, R 141/2, f. 146v; *tal mismar*, clausura in contrata casalis pisalino (*sic*, for Pascualino or Bisqallin): 11.v.1560, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/62, f. 890; *tal mismar*, terrenum in contrata garbi, Gozo: 16.iii.1570, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/5, f. 224 of 2nd pt.

Ta' Mterqa, of the hatchet:

bita miterca, terra not far from ilgallis: 19.xi.1520, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/2.

Several of these mimated nouns indicating instruments really appear in the place-names as the nicknames of persons associated somehow with the locality of the place-name. Mimated nicknames do not, however, have to be names of instruments. Their number, in fact, is so large that they cannot all be given here, especially if one added those which were also used at some time or other as surnames in Malta or Gozo:

Ta' Mandi, cf. Mehedy bin Mehedy moro di Alessandri, 21.xii.1585: NLM, AOM 442, f. 247r-v:

ta mehdi, contrata: 9.xii.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *ta mecdi*, galcae beneficii Sancti Nicolai porte grecorum: 4.ix.1532, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 82; *Jl mechdi*, clausurae beneficii tituli Sancti Nicolai porte grecorum: 14.iii.1537, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, 1537, n. 42, f. 1.

Tal-Mahnug, of the hoarse person, cf. surname Mahnuq:

tal machnuch, contrata: 16.iii.1610, Not. Andrea Allegretto, NAV, R 16/22, f. 529.

Ta' Mawwija, Arab name, i.e. Mu'âwiyah:

ta mauye, tenimentum terrarum insulae gaudisii in contrata garbi: 12.iv.1497, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 35v; *ta mauya*, duae peciae terrarum in contrata garbi, Gozo: 13.ix.1575, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/6, f. 51 of 2nd pt.

Ta' Merzuq, Arab name, cf. Mihammet bin Merzuc moro gerbino, 17.xi.1632: AOM, 464, f. 321v:

de merzuc, galca in contrata bitacale territorii melitae: 27.iv.1486, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Ta' l-Imghawweg, the bent one, nickname:

tal mihauyg, pecia terrae in contrata beb xatibe: 5.i.1536, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/3, f. 88; *tal mihaug*, territorium in contrata il handac: 15.xii.1542, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/10, f. 117; *tal mihauweg*, terrae in contrata JI handac: 15.xii.1544, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/3, f. 129v of 1st pt.

Tal-Misilmin, of the Muslims:

bital misilmin, pecia terrae in contrata bitalbarrani: 15.xii.1527, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 70.

Tal-Mislem, of the Muslim:

tal misilim, pecia terrae in contrata Cortin Samat: 15.ix.1535, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/2, f. 395v.

Ta' Muḥammed, Arab name used as surname in Malta as late as the fifteenth century:

ta michammed, clausura in contrata uchandac: 26.ix.1500, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 52.

Other surnames, nicknames or Arabic names enshrined in Malta's and Gozo's place-names include the following: *Maḥluf*, *Maḥta*, *Mindbin* (Midinbin?), *Mdorbu*, *Merhubi*, *Merqi*, *Merzuqa*, *Mgġegħed*, *Mgħajjen*, *Mħabbel*, *Mħabhal*, *Midbuħ*, *Mifleg*, *Mifruḍa*, *Mifruq* (perhaps, however, it describes a divided field), *Mifruqa* (a divided field?), *Milfuq*, *Milwieħ*, *Minfuħ*, *Mintuf*, *Misbaħ*, *Mislaħ*, *Mislub*, *Mizangar* (fifteenth century surname), *Mizrut*, *Mqarqca*, *Mqaxxra*, *Mrabat*, *Musfar*. It will be seen that several of these and the preceding place-names really are past participles and their meaning has no direct relevance to the place to which they refer.

DIMINUTIVES

Although the Arabic internal diminutive formation is still fairly well known in modern Maltese, it tends increasingly to occur among village folk rather than townsmen, among the uneducated rather

than among those who have any pretensions to a regular education, except for the fossilized occurrences in everyday speech where the diminutive has been almost entirely lost. However, the place-names of Malta of the period 1370-1600 exhibit a great abundance of this formation:

Habel, a field-strip

Hbejjel, a small field-strip

as distinct from the diminutive formed by suffixes taken over by Maltese from Sicilian or Italian:

Il-Buskett, the small forest, derived from **Bosk**, a forest

Kemmunett, small Comino, the name of the tiny islet near **Kemmuna**

Gomerinu, small Ghemieri, a curial Latin version of the name of a fief at Ghemieri

Wied Insaldin, little Ansaldo's valley, the name of a valley in Malta at Ghajn Rihana now known as Wied Sardin!

The diminutives of Arabic type take various forms. When the singular has the form C v C v C, the diminutive is formed on the patterns of CCajjeC, CCajjeC, CcejjaC, CcejjeC. The orthography of the time, however irregular and inconsistent it might be, frequently seems to indicate quite strongly that the second vowel of the syllables *ajja*, *eje*, *ajje*, *ejja* was not pronounced, in this, therefore resembling the original Arabic formation of the diminutives.

Qsajjem, dim. of **Qasam**, a small fief, a small estate:

lu cusaym: 28.ix.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *il cbisaym*, clausura in contrata ta latmiet irric: 7.vii.1553, Not. Giuseppe de Guevara, NAV, Ms 778/1; *Ill cisayem*, territorium in contrata ta ramle, Gozo: 14.i.1578, Not. Ferdinando Ciappara, NAV, R 185/4, f. 323v.

Qbajjar, dim. of **Qabar**, a small grave:

il chubayr, clausurae in contrata ta tardin: 14.iii.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/21, f. 480v.

Rhajjel, a small village:

ta richayl, clausura in contrata tal guardie: 2.v.1518, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/7, f. 181v; *ta ribail*, clausura in contrata sancte lucie dila guardia: 15.i.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/12, f. 290.

Sbejjah; dim. of **Sabih**; sweet, pretty (nickname):

ta Sibeyah, locum rusticum in contrata ta Sannat: 13.vii.1581, Not. L. de Apapis, NAV, R 203, f. 156v.

Hbejjel, dim. of **Habel**, a small field-strip:

Ilchubeyl, clausura de feude sive territorio Episcopatus: 7.ix.1518, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 4v; *hubeyel*, lencia terrae in casali Curmi: 1.vii.1499, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 13v of 2nd quire; *il chubeyl*, lencia terrae in contrata casalis Sifleni: 8.iv.1527, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 113v; *il chubeyel*, clausuncula in contrata deyr saf: 8.v.1543, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/11, f. 498.

Dmejjen, dim. of **Dimna**, a small hut or cottage, a small ruin?

ta dimeyn, clausuncula in contrata casalis tartarni: 6.ix.1540, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/7, f. 14; *ydimein*, clausura: 17.xi.1542, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 22, item 11, f. 1 (*ta idimein*, clausura on fol. 1v).

Gbejjel, dim. of **Gebel**, a small hill:

il gibeyl, clausura in casali Axac also called in the same document *il gebel*: 17.viii.1515, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 168v; *il gibeyl*, galca in contrata xara ta czurric: 10.i.1517, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/7, f. 65; *Jl gibeiel*, clausura in contrata tal gudie: 26.x.1540, Not. G. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 100v; *il gibeyl*, clausura in contrata blat il hafrid: 30.iv.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/13, f. 541v; *Jil gibeyel*, mandrae sive recetti in contrata ta ferden, Gozo: 18.i.1588, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, Ms. 836, f. 118v.

Shejjem, dim. of **Sehem**, a small share or portion:

sibeym, galca in contrata carendi: 20.ix.1514, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 72v; *sibeym*, galca in contrata chandac: 28.i.1530, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 124v; *ta Sieym*, duae clausurae in contrata casalis Chirendi: 7.x.1538, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/2, f. 22v of 2nd pt.; *ysibeyem*, terrae in contrata ta lahfar: 12.ix.1558, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/57, f. 38.

Hrejjeb, dim. of **Herba**, a small ruin:

yl hyreyb, tres galcae in contrata hyseuy di birkircara: 17.iii.1535, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/2, f. 264.

Snejjed, dim. of **Sined**, a small hill-side patchy field:

ta czinehyd, quinque galculae in contrata sancti Michaelis: 30.iv.1506, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 14v; *Jsineied*, sinterium in contrata hain meddeu, Gozo: 25.i.1585, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, R 271/1, f. 138.

When the second radical is j or w the diminutive takes the following forms:

Wejjed, dim. of **Wied**, a small valley:

il. gueyd, galca in contrata Bir Czebuge: 18.x.1517, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/7, f. 128v.

Xwejjah, dim. of **Xih**, a little old man (nickname):

ta xueyac, clausura in contrata rachal JIchibir: 8.v.1539, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/2, f. 94 of 3rd pt.

Bwajjar, dim. of **Bur**, a small meadow:

tal buayar, clausura in contrata marsa cala: 17.i.1531, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 179; *tel buaiar*, clausura muro circumdato cum una cisterna in contrata casalis axac: 25.ix.1540, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/4, f. 41; *tal buaiar*, clausura in contrata casalis axac: 5.ix.1541, Not. Giuseppe de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 210v.

Bwajrat, pl. dim. of **Bur**, small meadows:

ta il. buayrat, terrae in contrata casalis bircalcara: 15.i.1501, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *tal buayrath*, clausura in contrata tal baccari: 13.iv.1513, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 199v.

Ghawejjen, dim. of **Ghajn**, little spring:

ta labueyn, clausura in contrata JIlippie: 29.i.1549, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/5, f. 236v.

Feminine nouns of three radical consonants in the singular have these forms: CCajCa, CCEjCa. If the first consonant is *għ* then it is followed by its own vowel even in the diminutive form:

Bqajla, dim. of **Baqla**, name of a plant or herb:

tal bicajle, galcula in casali Micabibe: 2.v.1509, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 88.

Gwejda, dim. of **Gudja**, a small hillock:

Jl gueyde, clausura in contrata JI guardie: 26.ix.1539, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/3, f. 9 of 1st pt.

Ghalejqa, dim. of **Ghalqa**, a small field:

la gulejca, vinea in contrata gued rum: 11.x.1514, NLM, Univ. 12, f. 92; *il guleyca*, galcula in contrata gued seude: 15.xi.1514, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 90v; *el ghuleica*, clausura in contrata di buleben: 5.ix.1542, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 368v.

Ghaqajba, dim. of **Għaqba**, a small hillock:

il bucaibe, clausuncula in contrata bubacra: 28.iv.1557, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/1, f. 43v of 1st pt.

Għatajsa, dim. of **Għatsa**,

ta bataysa, galca in contrata gudie: 30.x.1500, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2.

- Għorejfa**, dim. of **Għorfa**, a small upper floor room or hut:
tal gureife, clausura cum sua domuncula in casali attard: 1.ix.1537, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/2, f. 240v.
- Hbejqa**, dim. of **Habqa**, little basil (a herb), prob. a nickname:
Landar ta hubeyce, clausura in contrata ta bugħaJar: 9.ii.1556: Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/49, f. 1247.
- Hrejba**, dim. of **Herba**, a little ruin:
ilchreibe, galcula in contrata ta xerrec: 16.xii.1514, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 96v; *tal chireybe*, galca in contrata bir yl galca: 6.iii.1533, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 180; *yl hyreybe*, galcula in contrata rahal tabuni: 1.iii.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/4, f. 204; *il bireibe*, clausura in contrata ta sammut: 10.ix.1542, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/10, f. 18.
- Mrajga**, dim. of **Marga**, a small marshy meadow:
Jlmiraige, clausura in contrata miside: 27.iv.1541, NLM, Univ. 13, f. 210v; *il miraige*, clausuncula in contrata misida: 16.ix.1584, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/8, f. 29v.
- Mwejda**, dim. of **Mejda**, a small table-land or plateau:
Jll mueyde di Sant ermu (the small table-land of St. Erasmus), pecia terrae in contrata gued sara, Gozo: 19.x.1576, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/3, f. 63v.
- Mnejqa**, dim. of **Menqa**, a small enclosure of water or artificial pond:
tal mineyca la suprana, pars feudi de lu zeituni: 7.viii.1521, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/9, f. 19v.
- Mgajra**, dim. of **Migra**, a small stream or watercourse:
Jl MiJayra, galca in contrata handac: 9.xi.1540, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/8, f. 73v.
- Qlejgha**, dim. of **Qalgha**, a small fort or steep hill-top:
de aq[ui]lea, quoddam pheidum terre curie in eadem insula mediveti: 21.viii.1408, ASP, Real Cancelleria, vol. 44/45, f. 405 (*olim*, 350); *Jl culaya*, pecia terre in contrata de bungemma: 30.x.1467, Not. P. Bonello, NAV, Ms. 588, f. 39v; *culeya*, pheidum: 24.viii.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *choleya*, pecia terre in contrata zebbug, Gozo: 3.xi.1585, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, R 271/1, f. 627.
- Snejna**, dim. of **Sinna**, a small tooth, prob. a personal nickname:
ta sineyne, tres clausure in contrada rachal achirux: 23.viii.1538, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/2, f. 73v of 1st pt; *ta sineyne*, quatuor clausurette in contrata ta rachal achirux: 31.iii.1540, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/3, f. 420.

Trajga, dim. of **Targa**, a small step or stairway:

trayge, galca: 1.ix.1532, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 80v;
il chubeyel ta tirayge, clausura: 9.v.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario,
NAV, R 175/13, f. 562v.

Trajba, dim. of **Torba**, a small cemetery?:

ta traybe, pecia terre in contrata Cortin Samat: 20.viii.1534, Not.
G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/2, f. 90.

Wlejga, dim. of **Wilga**, a small field on a valley side:

il buyleyge, clausura in contrata casalis curmi: 16.xi.1497, Not.
J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *il guileige*, clausura in casali Gudja:
3.ii.1513, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 183v; *il buyleyge*,
clausura in contrata casalis balczan: 22.ii.1542, Not. Juliano
Muscat, NAV, R 376/5, f. 315; *il guileige*, clausura in contrata
sancti Antonj casalis cuderj: 7.ii.1556, Not. Br. de Caxario,
NAV, R 175/49, f. 1238.

Xghajra, dim. or **Xagħra**, a small area of scrub land, rough grazing
land:

xiayra, pecia terre in contrata gebel chantar: 30.iii.1498, Not.
J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 111v; *xabira*, contrata: 6.ix.1508, Not.
C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 29v; *xabayra*, clausura de feudo si-
ve territorio Episcopatus: 7.ix.1518, idem, NAV, R 140/8, f. 4v;
ixybayra, clausura in contrata ta sebbech: 5.ii.1586, Not. Ferd.
Ciappara, NAV, R 185/11, f. 554v.

Xhajma, dim. of **Xahma**, little fatty, little softy, a nickname:

ta xichayme, locum in contrata Nadur, Gozo: 29.xi.1575, Not. L.
de Apapis, NAV, R 203, f. 149; *ta xichayme*, clausura in contrata
dilo migiarro, Gozo: 16.viii.1577, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R
185/3, f. 543v.

Xbejka, dim. of **Xibka**, a small net, perhaps a nickname:

ta xibeyke, pecia terre in contrata tabrie: 26.ix.1533, Not. G. But-
tigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 280; *ta xibeiche*, clausura in contrata ta
tabarie: 7.viii.1554, Not. Bartholomeo Haxixa, NAV, R 32/1, f.
130 of 2nd pt.

Hmajra is, however, the diminutive of **Hmara**, a small donkey, a
personal nickname:

ta chumayra, clausura: 7.x.1530, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/6,
f. 30v; *ta humayra*, clausura in contrata ta liscof: 8.v.1543, Not.
Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/11, f. 498.

The following particular form should also be noted and carefully
distinguished from its normal plural:

Anejdir or more simply **Nejdir**, dim. of **Andar**, a small threshing floor:

luneidir, galcula in dicto loco casalis Lie: 5.v.1492, Not. B. Sil-lato, NAV, Ms. 1069, f. 31v; *lineyder*, galca in contrata casali zebug: 5.v.1529, Not. G. Cumbo, NAV, R 196/1, f. 30; *nejdir*, clausura in contrata casalis milleri: 19.xi.1495, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/1, f. 28; *illineyder*, clausura in contrata Wied Ghollieqa: 11.vi.1530, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/5, f. 260v; *il neydir*, territorio in contrata sancti Nicolai tal mirehil: 15.viii.1546, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, Prebenda 3, Archidiaconal tithes, f. 23.

The plural form is the following.

Anieder, pl. of **Andar**, threshing floors:

linedir ta ismundin, galculae (small fields) in contrata casalis pascualini: 23.vii.1530, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 155.

Not only would the corresponding Arabic forms make the distinction clear, but the descriptive language of the documents themselves gives a sure indication, *Nejdir* being always described as a single field, while *Anieder* is described as the name of several fields.

Place-names of the pattern CC \hat{C} C form their diminutive on the pattern of CCajjaC, CCajjeC, or CCEjjeC:

Blajjet, dim. of **Blat**, small rock or boulder:

tal bilait, clausura in contrata ta bein huirrad: 20.vii.1513, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/1, f. 78; *Jl bilaiet*, territorio in contrata delo sebec: 14.vii.1560, Not. Bartholomeo Haxixe, NAV, R 32/12, f. 510; *curtin* alias *Jlblayt*, contrata, Gozo: 22.vii.1569, Not. L. de Apapis, NAV, R 203, f. 127v; *il bilayet*, clausura in contrata sancti Andree: 1.xii.1585, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/11, f. 326.

Gnejjen, dim. of **Gnien**, a small garden, but cf. **Gnejna**, with the same meaning:

il gineyn, clausura in contrata gued gueli (Wied Wieli): 1.viii.1508, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 15; *el gineien*, viridarium diversis arboribus plantatum in contrata casalis carendi: 28.viii.1542, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 365; *Jl gineyn*, clausura in casali luca: 21.iv.1555, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, Ms. 778/1.

il gineyne, viridarium in contrata Ghajn Rihana: 21.ix.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *mandretta* seu *viniola* alias *il gineine* vitibus plantata in contrata lachfar: 6.x.1556, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/52, f. 134v.

N.B. Ġnejna can also be the diminutive of the Christian name Johanna, as in the following:

ta gineine, duae frustra terre in contrata isachaie, Gozo: 13.xii.1580, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/5, f. 302.

Sqajjaq, dim. of **Sqaq**, a small alley:

ta sicayac, territorium in contrata gar ilme, Gozo: 19.vii.1659, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/5, f. 366v; *tascayac*, clausura in contrata bir il gisire: 26.iv.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/21, f. 59lv.

Ta sucayac itigeg (the field of the little lane of the chickens), clausura in contrata Ta gar il Jobon: 22.i.1549, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/23, f. 728v.

The Semitic diminutive formation is so strong that a Romance word like *çens* also formed its diminutive in the same way:

Jćcineyes, clausuncula in contrata casalis bubacra: 4.iv.1586, Not. Andrea Alban, NAV, R 12/4, f. 181v.

In Maltese, as in Arabic, nouns of four consonants form their diminutives according to a slightly different pattern:

Brajtel, prob. dim. of **Bartal**, little Bartholomew:

ta bratel, clausura in contrata gued ensaldin: 21.iv.1611, Not. Andrea Allegritto, NAV, R 16/24, f. 669v.

Ġrajden, dim. of **Ġardin**, little garden:

Jl girayden, viridarium in contrata ta bin xible, Gozo: 7.ii.1581, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/6, f. 498v.

Brejbet, prob. dim. of **Barbat** (nickname or surname):

tel brejbet, animagium in hac Jnsula gaudisii in contrata Jl carb (Ġħarb): 14.xii.1586, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, Ms. 836, f. 72.

Brejgex, dim. of **Berqax** (surname or nickname):

breikex, clausura in contrata Jl harke il chamra (i.e. il-Ġħalqa l-Hamra): 3.i.1523, Not. J. Bondin, NAV, R 69; *tha il bureychix*, territorium conventus Sancti Augustini: 15.vii.1541, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, RA, vol. 3, f. 33v.

Frajtes, dim. of **Fartas**, bald headed (nickname):

tal fraites, clausura adjoining il bur tal fraites: 11.x.1621, NLM, Treas. A 74, f. 128.

Fnejdaq, dim. **Funduq**, a shop:

tal fineydaq, galcula in contrata casalis cadim: 3.ii.1523, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/10, f. 22.

Ġħasajfar, dim. of **Ġħasfur**, a small bird:

tal busajfar, clausura in contrata tal birulli: 9.viii.1507, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 109.

Mghajlaq, dim. of **Maghlaq**, a small enclosure:

tal migaylac, clausura in contrata casalis zuric: 3.iii.1540, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/5, f. 280; *il. migailac*, clausuncula in contrata tal chide: 15.iii.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/13, f. 463; *il. migaylac*, mandretta in contrata di hued Jnchita: 9. xi.1556, Not. Ant. Cassar, NAV, R 160/3, f. 113.

Mrejkis, prob. dim. of **Markis**, a small marquis (nickname):

ta mireykis, galca in contrata xihuki: 20.iv.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/4, f. 260v.

Mfejleg; probably dim. of **Miflug**; the little maimed or paralysed one (a nickname):

ta limfeilig, clausura in contrata tal guilig (Wileg): 14.vii.1539, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/4, f. 522v.

Mnejhor, dim. of **Minhar**, little nose (a nickname):

mineychor, contrata: 1.x.1543, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/4, f. 14 of 2nd pt; *babel ta mineybor* (Mineyhor's field-strip), territorium: 5.iv.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/4, f. 237v.

Msejrah, dim. of **Misrah**, a small open space, a small square:

il miseyrach, clausura in contrata ta czuncul: 6.ii.1505, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 117v; *tal miseyrac*, galca in contrata bubacra: 1.x.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/5, f. 50v; *tal miseyrach*, clausura in contrata casalis bircarcara: 26.iv.1560, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/61, f. 832.

Qrajten, dim. of **Qortin**, a small rocky bluff or hill-top:

tha curajtin, galca in contrata curajtin: 27.i.1520, Not. P. d'Alaymo, NAV, Ms. 779.

Slejlem, dim. of **Sellum**, a small ladder, a small series of terraced fields up a hill-slope:

isileylem, lencia terre in contrata il gkemune: 2.xi.1537, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/2, f. 275.

The following feminine quadriliteral (four consonant) place-names of the pattern CvCCCa form their diminutive on the pattern CCajCCA or CCejCCA:

Mnajdra, dim. of **Mandra**, a small animal pen:

minaydra, galketta: 5.iii.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *il. minaydra*, galcula in casali gargur: 3.vii.1527, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 131v; *il. minaydira*, clausura in contrata el merchile te xahara: 16.i.1542, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/5, f. 249v.

Mzejbla, dim. of **Mizbla**, a small rubbish dump or dunghill:

ilmiczeibile, galcula in contrata ta bur mule: 30.xi.1528, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 24.

As in Arabic, nouns, whether place-names or not, lose the last consonants after the fourth one in the diminutive form:

Mrejžba, dim. of **Maržebba**, a small beetle:

ta mireyzibe, clausura in contrata muir, Gozo: 5.iv.1558, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/1, f. 170v of 2nd pt.

It will be noticed that several of the above words are not themselves of Arabic origin; yet they have developed a normal Semitic diminutive form by internal rearrangement of letters and the addition of the normal -aj- or -ej- syllables, e.g. Brajtel, Ġrajden, Brejbet, Mrejkis.

Naturally the diminutives may themselves be in the plural: This is formed by the feminine termination in -at or -iet, whether the singular was a feminine noun or not:

Blejbiet, pl. of **Blejbla**, itself the dim. of **Bilbla**, small larks, a nickname:

tal bileyblet, tres clausurae in contrata casalis far: 22.viii.1558, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/56, f. 1111.

Blejġat, pl. of **Blejqa**, itself the dim. of **Belqa**, small dark-coloured goat, a nickname:

tal bileicat, clausura in contrata talkineys: 30.viii.1499, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 10; *talbileycath*, clausura in casali Luca: 22.ii.1515, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 121.

Bwajrät, pl. of **Bwajjar**, small meadows:

ta ilbuayrat, terre in contrata casalis bircalcara: 15.i.1501, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *talbuayrath*, clausura in contrata talbaccari: 13.iv.1513, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 199v.

Ċnejsiet, pl. of **Ċnejjes**, small census paying lands:

ichineysiet, clausura in contrata ta cata: 21.x.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/14, f. 99rv.

Ġbejliet, pl. of **Ġbejjel**, small boulder-lands (?):

gibeylet, territorium in (contrata) chabel xatt: 13.viii.1490, Cathedral Museum, Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 94; *yl gibeylet*, galca in contrata casalis bir kircara: 22.ii.1523, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 176v.

Ġnejniet, pl. of **Ġnejjen** and **Ġnejna**, small gardens:

gineinet ta Cacat, clausura in contrata megilbacher, Gozo: 1.ii.1565, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/3, f. 208v of 2nd pt; *il gineyneth*, tres calculae in casali zurric: 16.vii.1507, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 101; *il ginejnet*, tres lentiae sive clausunculae terrae in contrata ginen misfar, Gozo: 19.i.1582, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/6, f. 428.

Ghalejgat, pl. of **Ghalejqa**, small fields:

Jl guleicat tal fuhirat, tres clausurae in contrata casalis antun: 29.xii.1545, NAV, R 224/3, f. 150v of 2nd pt.

Hbejliet, pl. of **Hbejjel**, small field-strips:

il hubeylet, contrata: 1.viii.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1;

il cubeyliet, duas galculas: 9.ix.1508, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 30; *yl bybeylet*, galca in contrata casalis kibir: 28.i.1539, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/6, f. 193.

Hrejbiet, pl. of **Hrejba**, small ruins:

ilchireybeth, certas chirbas in contrata talbaccari: 16.vii.1509, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 94v; *Jl chureibet*, duae clausurae in contrata casalis Balczan: 23.ix.1517, Not. J. Bondin, NAV, R 69, f. 8v; *ilbireybet*, clausura in contrata matab: 17.i.1527, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 76v; *il bureybit*, clausura in contrata Chandac: 15.vii.1528, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 348.

Mrejliet, pl. of **Mrejha**, itself the dim. of **Merħa**, small animal yards:

dili mireihelet: 15.vii.1538, NLM, Univ. 13, f. 159; *tha Jlmieychilet*, quarta pars pheudi Episcopi: 14.i.1542, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, RA, vol. 3, f. 17.

Mnejqât, pl. of **Mnejqa**, small water enclosures, artificial ponds:

talmineycat, clausura in contrata sante agathe: 24.xi.1530, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/12, f. 169v; *ta mineycat*, duae clausurae in contrata capelle di bir miftuch: 7.ii.1544, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/13, f. 371.

Nejdriet, pl. of **Nejdir**, small threshing floors:

neydreth, clausura casalis Percop: 27.i.1503, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. ; *ilneydret*, duae galculae in casali Curmi: 2.iii.1512, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 120v; *nejdiret*, tres clausunculae simul coniunctae in casali Percop: 20.i.1522, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/2, f. 168.

Qlejghat, pl. of **Qlejgha**, small forts or small rocky hill-top bluffs:

ta ilculeyat, pecia terrae: 24.xii.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Wlejgiet, pl. of **Wlejga**, small hill-side fields:

luleyget, territorium coniunctum cum Il cophira, clausuncula: 1.x.1539, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/3, f. 11 of 1st pt.

COMPOSITE FORMATION CHARACTERISTICS

It is very rare indeed for Maltese place-names to consist of one single word. These would include the names of the four islands

that make up the Maltese archipelago: Malta, Għawdex (Gozo), Kemmuna and Filfla. With them one would have to include numerous names of foreign islands, countries, towns and other localities, e.g. *Sqallija, Spanja, Franza, Sirakuża, Katanja, Palermu, Ruma, Pariġi, Kreta, Ċipru, Tunes, Tripli*. However, numerous other foreign place-names not referring to towns or islands take the definite article in Maltese: *il-Greċja, il-Ġermanja, il-Libja, il-Palestina, il-Marokk, it-Turkija*. Minor localities within the Maltese islands themselves take the definite article always unless they are already rendered definite in some other way, e.g. *il-Melliġa, l-Imdina, il-Hamrun, il-Miżieb, iż-Żurieg*, but *Marsamxett, Marsaxlokk, Hal Balzan, Wied Żnuber, Għajn Tuffieħa*, where the relation between the two component elements (*Marsa Mxett, Marsa Xlokk*, etc.) is enough to express definition.

Compound formations are of various types. What seems the simplest is that consisting of a word indicating possession, like the modern *ta'* or the Late medieval *ħita* or *mita*. However in all such place-names there is a missing main component which is left to the context to supply. Thus *Ta' Briffa* stands for *Għalqa ta' Briffa* at Mriehel and *Habel ta' Briffa* at Ċaġħki:

ta briffa, clausura in contrata Mirahal: 20.ii.1497, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2

ta briffa, pecia terre in contrata chiaki: 1.ix.1541, Not. Br. de Caario, NAV, R 175/8, f. 110.

This is a very large class of place-names, being extremely common both in Malta and in Gozo. The missing component could be *Andar*, *Bir* (well), *Bur* (meadow), *Dar* (house), *Gebel* (hill-side), *Gnien* (garden), *Għar* (cave), *Għalqa* (field), *Habel* (field-strip), *Herba* (ruin), *Qortin* (bluff or brow of a hill), *Ras* (headland, top of a valley), *Rdum* (cliff), *Wied* (valley), *Wilġa* (valley-side field), *Xaġħra* (scrub, rough grazing land), with their plural formations, their diminutives, and the plurals of their diminutives. The full form is, of course, quite common, e.g. *L-Andar tal-Qortin* (the hill-brow's threshing field), *il-Bur ta' Randun* (Randon's meadow), *Rdum ta' Venuta* (Venuta's cliff), *il-Wilġa ta' Paola* (Paola's hillside field).

The word *ta'*, indicating possession in Maltese, is a corruption of the original Arabic *mtag*, *btag*. In fifteenth and early sixteenth century documents it is frequently still represented by *bita* or *mita*. Some 97 occurrences of the former and 12 of the latter have been found:

Ta' Aragona, Aragona's:

bita Aragona, terrae in insula gaudisii: 1.viii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Tal-Baghāl, the mule's, the bastard's (nickname):

bita il bibal, galca: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV R 494/1.

Tal-Barrani, Barrani's, the outsider's, the stranger's:

bita barrani, contrata: 15.xii.1527, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 70.

Ta' Bir Żebbuġa, Bir Żebbuġa's, at Bir Żebbuġa:

bita bir zebbuga, contrata: 16.viii.1428, Not. Nicolaus de Insola, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 28.

Tal-Għafriġa, Għafriġa's,

bita il chafande, pecia de terra in contrata casalis Sigeui: 16.iii.1529, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/4, f. 179.

Tal-Għarab, the Arabs':

bita charab, clausura in contrata chandac: 5.i.1527, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 74.

Il-Habel Ta' Santa Marija, the field strip belonging to St. Mary:

Ilchabel bita santa maria, lencia terrarum: 6.xii.1454, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 4, f. 220v, will drawn up by Not. Angelus de Fauzono.

Ta' Longubordi, the Lombard's:

bita longu burdā, contrata: 1486, Not. Bartholomeo Sillato, NAV, R 1069, f. 1v.

Ta' Mundrani, Mundrani's (presumably a surname, perhaps Jewish)

bita mundrani, pezza di terra nella contrata della chiesa di S. Andrea: 13.x.1474, Not. L. Sillato, item preserved in an eighteenth century note in NLM, Ms. 360, p. 923.

Ta' Hamed, Hamed's:

bita hamitu, tenimentum terrarum in Gozo, 14.vii.1399, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Real Cancellaria, Vol. 35, f. 241v. Perhaps *hamitu* would be better read *hamicu* as Gamicu was a surname still in fifteenth century Gozo and 'c' and 't' were frequently indistinguishable in the writing of the time.

Tal-Wileġ, of the valley side fields:

bita guilig, 5.iii.1539, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/4, f. 371v.

Il-Wilġa, Ta' Gullielmu, William's valley-side field:

ilbuilge bita gullielmi, tenimentum terrarum in contrata dar iczara: 6.xii.1454, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 4, f. 222, will drawn up by Not. Angelus de Fauzono.

At least 61 of the 96 known examples of the use of *bita* in Maltese late medieval place-names were written by Notary Graciano Vassallo between 1488 and 1531. Notary Jacobus Sabara recorded some 19 examples between 1486 and 1496; in his later deeds he always used *ta* instead. Notaries Luca and Bartholomew Sillato, Antonio Fauzono and Brandano de Caxario are responsible for only a few examples each. The last known use of *bita* occurs in 1539 in the deeds of notary Brandano de Caxario: On at least twelve other occasions *mita* was preferred to *bita* to indicate 'possession':

Ta' L-Andar, of the threshing floor:

mita landar, galcula at Mirechil: 22.ii.1463, Not. A. de Fauzono, Cathedral Archives, Mdina, CEM, AO, Vol. 1, f. 40v.

Ta' Bir il-Miġlis, of the well at the sitting room or council chamber:

mita bir ilmiġlis, galcula in casali Antun: 6.xi.1503, Not. C. Cancchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 18v.

Tal-Fies, of the pick-axe:

Mitafas, beneficium: 1436, De Mello's Rollo, seventeenth century copy in NLM, Ms. 721, item 2.

Ta' Ġorman, Gormaine's:

mita Jorman, galca in contrata bubacra: 13.vii.1450, Not. A. Fauzono, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 6, f. 261.

Ta' Ġewwa r-Roqġha, at Ġewwa r-Roqġha:

mita geuerocca, quarterium civitatis Malte: 1.ix.1502, Not. A. de Fauzono, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 4, f. 221.

Ta' Ghattar, Ghattar's, the apothecary's:

mita hattar, galcula in contrata casalis Pascualini: 1486, Not. B. Sillato, NAV, Ms. 1069, f. 1.

Tal-Ħaddedin, the blacksmiths':

motalchadedin, pecia terrae in contrata Fideni: 13.xi.1372, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Real Cancelleria, vol. 6, fol. 209v.

Tal-Ħadid (?), of the iron:

mita Jlchaded, galca in contrata Naxar: 9.xii.1461, Not. A. Fauzono, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 42, *ta caded*, *ta chaded*, animagium seu Jus patronatus in contrata Naxar: 5.v. 1539, *ibid.*, CEM. RA, vol. 2, f. 242v.

Tal-Misilmin, of the Muslims:

mita miselmin, clausura: 1.ii.1527, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/3, f. 80v.

Ta' l-Imsierah, of the open spaces, of the town or village squares:

mita Jlmiserah, pecia terrae in eadem contrata (i.e. of the same name): 15.v.1539, Cath. Arch. Mdina, CEM, RA, vol. 2, f. 243v.

Ta' Sgejriet, of the small trees:

mita sigeyret, pecia de terra: 11.iii.1477, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 76; *bita sigeyret*, clausura: *ibid.*, f. 76v.

Tas-Sigra, of the tree:

mjtasi gira, galcula in contrata bubacra: 13.vii.1450, Not. A. Fauzono, in Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 6, f. 260v.

Though there was an overwhelming disposition to prefer the use of *bita* to that of *mita* in the Maltese islands, the recording of *mita sigeyret* and *bita sigeyret* in one and the same document (another example is that of *mitalmiselm* and *bitalmiselm* by Graciano Vassallo in 1527) shows that persons were themselves sometimes undetermined which to use. Both words tended to be replaced by *ta*, i.e. the modern *ta'*, *ta il* or *tal*, well before the fifteenth century came to an end. Notary Paulo Bonello always prefers the latter form in his surviving deeds of 1467:

Ta' Xellule, Xellula's:

ta xellule, galca in contrata deyr issafisaf: 3.ix.1467, Not. P. Bonello, NAV, Ms. 588, f. 5.

Tal-Blat, of the rocky place:

ta ilbilat, galcula in senebu castri maris maltae: 5.ix.1467, *ib.*, f. 6v.

Ta' Hanfus, the beetle's (perhaps a nickname):

ta chanfus, galcula in contrata matab: 15.x.1467, *ib.*, f. 30.

Ta' Burga, Ambrogia's:

ta burge, contrata: 16.x.1467, *ibid.*, f. 31.

Tal-Ghawdxi, the Gozitan's, or Gauci's:

ta il gaudixi, pecia de terra in contrata beb il gisire: 23.x.1467, *ibid.*, f. 35v.

Not. J. Sabara, fl. 1486-1501, an occasional user of *bita*, uses *ta* at least just as frequently. Not. Graciano Vassallo himself tended increasingly to use the latter in his later years, but still seems to prefer *bita*. After 1539 the word *ta* remains in sole use. It is presumed that this written tradition in the use of *bita*, *mita* and *ta* reflects to a large extent their use in the spoken language, probably with a time-lag of a decade or two on average.

NOUNS IN THE CONSTRUCT STATE

Very often Maltese and Gozitan place-names consist of two nouns in the so-called construct state. Originally, when case-endings still existed, the second noun was in the genitive and the first in the nominative but without nunation, to show that it was definite. Late me-

dieval Maltese, of course, had no case-endings but the bond between the two words was still one indicating possession, and the first word's definiteness was still made clear, as nowadays, by the omission of the definite article. Normally, the first word element indicates the type of feature referred to, whether a hill, a well, a house, field, cliff, valley, etc., while the second element would refer either to a distinguishing feature (a tree, a house, a church, a well, etc.), a locality, or a person by name, nickname or surname. Only a few examples of each can be given here.

Gebel Ġakobb, Jacob's hillside:

gebhel iacob, contrata: 17.vii.1495, Not. B. Sillato, NAV, Ms. 1069, f. 58, *ta gibel yacub*, terrae in contrata vocata gebel yacub: 7.x.1500, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2.

Bir Żebbuga, the wild-olive tree well:

birzebuge, contrata: 27.x.1467. Not. P. Bonello, NAV, Ms. 588, f. 36.

Bir Merżuq, Merżuq's well:

bir merzuc, terrae: 9.i.1538, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/1, f. 82.

Bir Jahlef, Jahlef's well:

bir byabelef, contrata: 19.vii.1499, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 19 of 2nd quire; *bir yabilef*: 4.xi.1499, *idem*, NAV, R 494/2; *ta bir jachlif*, terrae: 12.xii.1502, Not. Julio Cumbo, NAV, R 196A, f. 29; *bir biabilif*, contrata: Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 64v.

Wied il-Qlejgħa, the valley at Qlejgħa:

gued il culeja, contrata: 22.x.1488, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/1, f. 21v; *gued il culaya*, contrata: 18.ix.1500, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2; *gued kleya*, contrata: 3.x.1533, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/1, f. 96v.

When the first element has the *Ta-marbuta* ending in its original Arabic nominative form (represented by a simple *-a* in Maltese), it takes an *-et*, *-it*, or even *-ot* ending when in the construct state:

Torbet Garfagna, Garfagna's (Gravagna's) tomb:

turbet garfagna, contrata: 27.vi.1498, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 124v.

Haġret il-Bies, the peregrine falcon's megalith (probably a nickname):

chagret Jlbies, octava pars feudali territorii sancti Nicolai in contrata casali chibir: 27.i.1531, Not. J. Bondin, NAV, R 69.

Hirbit il-Forn, the ruins of the oven (lime kiln):

chirbit ilfurn, beneficium! 22.ix.1467, Not. P. Bonello, NAV, Ms. 588, f. 19.

Għadiret ix-Xorraf, Xorraf's lake, or the lake at Xorraf:

għadiret Jxorraf, contrata: 8.iii.1564, Not. Matteo de Brincat, NAV, Ms. 767.

Hofrot is-Simar, the depression of the rusnes.

ta Hofrot J'ssimar, pecia terrae in contrata gued Jll melach: 16.iii.1587, Not. G.D. Formosa, NAV, R 271/2, f. 336.

Qalghet il-Għabid, the slave's fort:

calet il.ħabid, contrata: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; ras JI gued seu di *calit Jħhabid*, territorium: 15.vii.1520, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 120v; *calbit ilħhabid*, contrata: 26.ii.1529, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 464/4, f. 159.

Xagħret il-Għadir, the scrubland at the lake:

xaret il.ħadiri, contrata: 12.v.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *ta xarit għadiri*, lencia terrae near feudum buleben: 7.iii.1536, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/3, f. 147.

It should, however, be remembered that several Maltese place-names ending in -a do not take the Ta' marbuta, a characteristic which they share with their cognate Arabic words, e.g. Miġra, Marsa:

Il-Mentqa [Ta'] Miġra Ilma, the small strip of land at Miġra Ilma, the small strip of land at the watercourse:

il.mndica di migira ilme, territorium in contrata gebel chantar: 3.vi.1556, Not. Br. Caxario, NAV, R 175/50, f. 1822.

Marsalforn, the harbour at the limekiln:

cala marsalforni: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *marsa Jlfurni*, pecia de terra in insula Gaudisii: 29.ii.1520, Not. P. de Alaymo, NAV, Ms. 779.

It also sometimes happens that the construct state is carried through more than just two nouns. This occurs where one element itself consists of two nouns in a construct state:

Bwajjar Herbet Bakkar, the small meadow of Bakkar's ruin:

buayar herbet bacar, clausura in contrata casalis Sigeuj: 24.viii.1559, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/59, f. 1332.

Habel Bir il-Wilġa, the field-strip at Bir il-Wilġa, the field-strip at the well by the hillside field:

ħabel bir il.guilge, clausura: 1.x.1520, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 134v.

Ras Xuereb il-Għagin, the headland at Xuereb il-Għagin:

ras xuereb ilħagin, clausura cum sua clausuncula tal fartas: 16.xii.1541, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/8, f. 182v.

Rqajja' Habel Hemsija, the field patches at the Hemsija field-strip:

Rucaya ħabil.kimsie, clausura in contrata il musta: 20.xi.1534, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/1, f. 67.

Such names, closely knit as they are grammatically, cannot but prove to be more than a mouthful to pronounce with ease, and they tend to be somewhat rare. In some, the second element of two words in a construct state has coalesced so completely in the Maltese language that the two component parts are, and probably in Early Modern times were, already no longer felt to be two words. These are mostly compound personal names, sometimes attributes of the Deity:

Raħal Binsinjur, Binsinjur's village:

raħal binsinjur, contrata: 24.v.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Raħal Għabdirzeq; Għabdirzeq's village:

ta raħal bderzec, contrata: 13.iii.1541, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/1, f. 162v; *raħal dursec*, contrata: 27.i.1556, Not. A. Cassar, NAV, R 160/2, f. 310v.

Wied Bingemma, Bingemma's valley, or the valley of Gemma's son:

gued bengemma, contrata in terra gaudisii: 6.iv.1525, Not. L. Haġus, NAV, R 7, f. 18v.

Wied Bin Ljun, the valley of Leo's son:

gued bin liun, terrae in contrata dilo migiarro, Gozo: 27.viii.1582, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/6, f. 703.

Wied Birkirkara, the valley of the well near the limekiln:

gued birchircara, contrata: 24.iv.1547, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/19, f. 409v.

Wied Bufula, the white throated wren's valley (Bufula: Abu + fula):

gued bufula, clausura in contrata ta ilgebel: 12.ii.1500, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2.

This has been carried a stage further in the following example:

Wied Bir Għabdilla, the valley of the well of the slave of God, Għabdilla being a common surname in Malta:

te gued bir abdalla, contrata: 13.i.1542, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/5, f. 244v.

In most cases, however, the use of the construct state breaks down and a looser construction is preferred. Thus in the following example two pairs of nouns in the construct state are linked together by *ta'* instead of being related to each other by the further use of the construct state:

Rqajja' l-Mixta Ta' Għar il-Hasan, the patchy cultivation of the wintering place at Hasan's Cave:

ricaya ilmixte ta gar il chasan, territorium: 24.vii.1528, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 193v.

Qortin Sammat Ta' Bugibba, Sammat's rocky bluff at Bugibba.

Cortin Samat ta bu Jubbe, contrata: 10.xi.1540, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/3, f. 22 of 2nd pt.

A similar function is performed by *ta'* or *tal-* in the following examples:

L-Andar Ta' Bieb il-Merħla, the threshing floor at the entrance to the animal yard:

landar ta beħ il merħile, terra 24.x.1548, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/5, f. 88.

Il-Bur Ta' Hofret Ghajxa, the meadow at the depression at Ghajxa (personal name):

il bur ta hufurut hayxe, clausura in contrata ta hayxe: 3.iii.1536, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 48.

Il-Habel Ta' Turbit Garfagna, the field-strip at Garfagna's tomb:

il chabil ta turbit garfagna, lencia terrae in contrata turbit garfagna: 25.viii.1546, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/17, f. 711v.

Ċens Ta' Mwieġen Żurrieq, the census paying land at the Zurrieq reservoirs:

chens ta mwieġin zurriħ, clausura in contrata mwieġin zurriħ: 12. ix.1543, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/4, f. 4v of 2nd pt.

Habel Roqħa Ta' Ġawħar, the field-strip at the patchy cultivation at Ġawħar:

Chabel Roqħa ta Ġawħar, clausura in contrata sancto Nicolao ta xueħi: 16.iv.1537, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/2, f. 60v of 3rd pt.

Of course, with *Ta'* at the beginning of the place-name one must supply a missing word like *Habel*, field-strip, or *Għalqa*, field, as in the following examples:

Ta' Bir il-Hamiem, of the well of the bath-house:

ta bir il-chamem, lencia terrae in contrata casalis Joan: 16.xi.1508, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 49v; *ta bir il hammem*, clausura divisa in duabus partibus muro intermedio in contrata casalis joan: 25.xi.1558, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/57, f. 348v.

Ta' Għar il-Harruba, (the field) of the cave by the carob tree:

ta gar il. charrube, clausura in contrata xueħi: 22.viii.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/2, f. 814.

PREPOSITIONS

All the prepositions in use in these Maltese place-names of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are of Arabic origin. Those found

so far include the following:

bejn, <i>between</i>	ġewwa, <i>in, within</i>
fi, <i>in, at</i>	taħt, <i>beneath, below</i>
fuq, <i>on, above</i>	wara, <i>behind</i>

To these may be added 'ġenb', *beside*, though it is grammatically a noun not a preposition.

Bejn il-Gwiedi, Ta', (the area) of between the hillocks:

beyn il. guedi, contrata: 22.ii.1528, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/11, f. 166.

Bejn l-Eghlieqi, Ta', (the field) of (the area) between the fields:

ta beyn il. galekj, clausura in contrata talmuezib: 2.viii.1522, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/9, f. 112.

F' Ras il-Qortin, at the head of the rocky bluff or headland:

fi ras il. Cortin, contrata: 13.viii.1543, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/7, f. 492v.

Fuq il-Hajt, above the wall:

di fuc il. hayit, clausuncula in contrata gumerino prope ecclesiam Sancti Antonii delo gumerino: 29.ix.1556, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/52, f. 107v.

Ta' Ġewwa il-Hâra, situated within the precinct:

ta ġewwa il. bara, tres clausurae in casali micabibe: 8.i.1561, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/64, f. 491.

Ta' Taħt l-Imdina, below Mdina:

ta taħt il. midina, contrata: 29.viii.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/21, f. 827.

Ta' Wara l-Bjut, behind the houses:

ta huara ilbiuth, lencia terrae at Axac: 26.vii.1508, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 13.

Ta' Ġenb il-Gudja, beside the hillock:

.a ġenb il. gudie, chensi: 15.ii.1530, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/5, f. 199v.

The prepositions *isfel*, 'beneath', 'below' and *barra*, 'outside', have not yet been found in the place-names examined so far, though they are both well known in the contemporary nomenclature of the Maltese islands.

ADJECTIVES

Only the adjectives referring directly to the character of the topography are examined; those referring solely to persons associated with the features named are ignored in this study. Even so, the adjectives of a topographical meaning fall into several classes,

those e.g. of location, size, shape, colour, quality, age. Here again every word encountered is of Arabic origin.

LOCATIONAL ADJECTIVES

The following locational adjectives have been found in the place-names of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (with a few later occurrences). Most of them have been formed from the prepositions already examined by the addition of *-ani*, *-anija*, or *-ni*, *-nija*

barrani, <i>outer, outsider</i> (masculine) (formed from barra, <i>outside</i>)	
barranija, <i>outer, outsider</i> (feminine)	fuqani, <i>upper</i> (m.)
ġewwieni, <i>inner</i> (m.)	taħtieni, <i>lower</i> (m.)
ġewwenija, <i>inner</i> (f.)	taħtenija, <i>lower</i> (f.)
saflieni, <i>lower</i> (m.)	wistanija, <i>middle</i> (f.)
(formed from isfel, <i>below</i>)	
siflenija, <i>lower</i> (f.)	għolja, <i>high</i> (f. or pl.)

To these may be added:

Bir il-Barrani, the outside well, the outsider's well (in the latter case, Barrani would refer to a person):

bir il barrani, cisterna in casali percop: 9.ix.1523, NLM, Univ. 12, f. 338.

Rqajja' Tal-Barrani, patches of cultivation at Barrani or belonging to the outsider, the stranger (N.B. Rqajja' is plural, Barrani is singular, *tal* shows that Barrani has a personal meaning):

ricayat (sic) ta Jlbarrani, tres lenciae de terra in contrata Jlbarrani: 17.iv.1543, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 196/4, f. 63v.

Xgħajra Barranija, the small outer scrubland:

xibayra barranie, clausura in contrata rahal Jauhar: 30.i.1537, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/4, f. 159.

Ta' Nardu l-Barranija, Nardo's outer (field), Barranija here referring not to Nardo (Leonard), but to Għalqa, which is not expressly mentioned (N.B. Nardo is masculine, Barranija is feminine):

ta nardo il barranie, clausura: 21.xii.1507, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 128.

Without going into the same detail, examples follow of the other locational adjectives:

Andar il-Ġewwieni, the inner threshing field:

Andar JI gebuenj, clausura in contrata casalis tymyn: 2.xii.1579, Not. Enrico Zarb, NAV, Ms. 1144/3.

Tal-Ġewwenija, of the inner (field):

tal geubenie, galcula in contrata bubacra: 27.xi.1511, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/5, f. 90v.

Hal Saflieni, the lower village:

rabal sifileni: 16.xi.1497, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 77.

Dar is-Siflenija, the lower house:

dar jsflenie (sic), clausura in contrata casalis charrad: 14.i.1586, Not. Andrea Alban, NAV, R 12/4, f. 20v.

Hal Fuqani, the upper village:

rabal fuqani, clausura: 22.i.1516, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/7, f. 6v.

Hofra il-Fuqanija, the upper depression:

il chofra fuqanie, clausura in contrata casalis attardo: 10.v.1548, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/21, f. 629v; *Jl hofra Jl fuqanie*, clausura in contrata casalis attardo: 21.iii.1587, NLM, Univ. 175, f. 403v.

Bir it-Tahtieni, the lower well:

bir itahteni, cistema in territorio di Vinecia: 9.2.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Hofra it-Tahtenija, the lower depression:

Jl hofra itahtenie, clausura in contrata casalis attardo: 21.iii.1587, NLM, Univ. 175, f. 403v.

Tal-Wistanija, of the central (portion, share):

talguistanie, clausura in contrata casalis Axac: 13.xi.1508, *ta bustanie*, clausura in contrata bubacra: 8.x.1532, Not. Ant. Rapa, NAV, Ms. 1033/1A, f. 118v; *tal guystania*, galca in contrata casalis balzan: 29.viii.1542, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/9, f. 455; *tal uistanie*, clausura in contrata casalis far: 22.iii.1548, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/4, f. 282.

To these may be added 'gholja', *high* (f. and pl.), and 'xemxija', *sunny* (f.):

Il-Gudja l-Gholja, the high hillock:

la gudja el halia, in contrata gued bufula: 14.ix.1654, NLM, Treas. A 154, f. 368.

Tax-Xemxija, of the sunny (area):

Ta xemmisi, clausura in contrata cortin marco: 28.xi.1537, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/2, f. 289.

ADJECTIVES OF SIZE

Two Arabic adjectives of size in their masculine and feminine forms, singular and plural, were in common use, together with one of obscure origin although it is also to be found in dialectal Arabic (cf. E. Serracino Inglott, *Il-Miklem Malti*, I, s.v. *cokon*, where it is also related to Spanish 'cequeno'):

kbir, <i>big</i> (m.)	żghira, <i>small</i> (f.)
kbira, <i>big</i> (f.)	ċkejken, <i>little, very small</i> (m.)
żghir, <i>small</i> (m.)	

Għar il-Kbir, the big cave:

gar JIkebir, locum in spacio xahara JI kebire et JI fucanie: 18.xi. 1467, Not. L. Sillato, photo-copy in M. Fsadni, *L-Ewwel Dumnikani f'Malta*, p. 60.

L-Għalqa l-Kbira, the large field:

il galca il kbire, lencia de terra in contrata il chandac: 15.xii. 1497, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. , f.

Misrah Żghir, the small open space, the small square:

misirach sibjr, pars feudi de lu zeituni: 19.vii.1521, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/9, f. 17.

L-Għalqa ż-Żghira, the small field:

il galca sighbire (clausura) in contrata tal barrani: 27.vii.1508, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/4, f. 13r-v; *Jl charcha Jssighbire*, lencia terrae ex quarto feudi de santu georgio, Gozo: 3.iv.1574, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/1, f. 28v of 1st pt.

L-Għelieqi Żghar, the small fields:

el ghilechi sghar, clausura in contrata casalis Safi poco distante dal casale: 3.v.1611, Not. Andrea Allegretto, NAV, R 16/24, f. 683v.

L-Imxierief iċ-Ċkejken, the small Imxierief (N.B. Mxierief, pl. of Mixraf, means elevations, heights, hills; presumably the adjective 'ċkejken' was adopted to distinguish the locality from another one of the same name, the precise original meaning having been forgotten or ignored. Otherwise it could mean 'the elevations or heights of the little one', the adjective being taken to refer to a person.):

Limsierief i Cichejchen, clausura del feudo Buleben Minore: 25. xi.1781, NLM, Treas. A 138, p. 627.

ADJECTIVES OF SHAPE

The adjectives of shape are concerned with width and slope of land or other feature of the topography:

wiesa', <i>wide</i> (m.)	twila, <i>long</i> (f.)
dejjaq, <i>narrow</i> (m.)	twal, <i>long</i> (pl.)
irraq, <i>slim, narrow</i> (pl.)	wàti, <i>flat</i> (m.)
twil, <i>long</i> (m.)	wieqaf, <i>steep, upright</i> (m. or pl.)

Wied il-Wiesa' the wide valley:

gued ilhuasa, contrata: 19.i.1498, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/2, f. 82.

Habel Dejjaq, the narrow field-strip:

il chabel dejac, clausura in contrata casalis kibir: 21.xi.1530, Not. Gr. Vassallo, NAV, R 464/6, f. 62.

Il-Hbejllet Irqaq, the narrow small field-strips:

il hubeyleth ricac, cabella belonging to the bishop: 6.iii.1521, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/8, f. 177.

Bir it-Twil, the long well (presumably a well in the shape of a tunnel), or Tawil's (personal name or nickname) well:

bit ytauyl: 28.xi.1486, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1, *la bir ta-buyl*, contrata, prebenda: 1.v.1479, Not. P. Bonello, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 1, f. 134.

Il-Hâra Twila, the long housing neighbourhood or precinct:

hara tauyle, ruga civitatis: 1.x.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *ilhara tauyle*, ruga civitatis: 9.xii.1496, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Ta' Haġar it-Twal, of the long megaliths (or menhirs):

ta haġar ittual, clausurae in contrata tal haseli: 2.iv.1593, Not. J.S. de Lucia, NAV, R 229/4, f. 934v.

Bur Wâti, the flat meadow:

ayn stas sive buruati, (contrata): 22.viii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Il-Haġar Wieqaf, the upright menhirs:

jl chajar buecaq, territorium in contrata tel cale, Gozo: 6.vii.1539, Not. Juliano Muscat, NAV, R 376/1, f. 334v.

ADJECTIVES OF QUALITY

Adjectives of quality refer most often to the type of soil or rock in the field or on the site of the place-name reference:

<i>aħrax</i> , rough, uneven (m.)	<i>taflija</i> , clayey (f.)
<i>ġebli</i> , stony (m.)	<i>tqil</i> , heavy (m.)
<i>tafli</i> , clayey (m.)	

L-Aħrax (tal-) Mellieħa, the rough area (full of karstic solution holes and protuberances) of Mellieħa:

l'Aħrasc della Melleħa, territorio: ? 1745, NLM, Treas. A152, f. 59.

Tal-Ġebli, of the stony ground:

tal ġebli, clausura in contrata casalis seyeħ: 23.iii.1514, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/6, f. 56v.

It-Taflija, the clayey ground:

tafalie, contrata: 9.iii.1487, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *la tafalia*, insituatu in contrata ayn casab prope capellam seu parro-

chiam capelle naxar: 4.xi.1499, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 2, f. 197.

Habel it-Tqil, the field-strip of the heavy man (nickname), or the heavy field-strip (i.e. with heavy soil); on the whole the first explanation seems more probable:

babel Jtikil, clausura in contrata ta dahar: 19.vi.1525, Not. J. Hajus, NAV, R 7, f. 35v.

It is probable that further research will lead to the discovery of Maltese and Gozitan place-names with other adjectives, e.g. 'qawwi', *strong*, *hard*, *tafli*, *clayey* (m.), *bewwiela*, *watery*, *ramli*, *sandy*. The following three adjectives showing age should also be noted:

ġ dida, *new* (f.) qadim, *old* (m.)

Tal-Ġdida, of the new

ta ġidide, clausura in contrata ta gued JIballut: 18.v.1538, Not. Gerolamo Cumbo, NAV, R 190/2, f. 40v of 1st pt; *tal ġidide*, clausura in contrata ta gued JI ballut: 30.xii.1544, Not. Gius. de Guevara, NAV, R 224/3, f. 150 of 1st pt.

Il-Ġnien Qadim, the old garden:

Jl ġinen qađm, vineale in contrata il ġadire: 10.iii.1582, NLM. Univ. 175, f. 313.

ADJECTIVES OF COLOUR

abjad, <i>white</i> (m.)	sewda, <i>black</i> (f.)
bajda, <i>white</i> (f.)	isfar, <i>yellow</i> (m.)
aħdar, <i>green</i> (m.)	iżraq, <i>blue</i> (m.)
aħmar, <i>red</i> (m.)	bajjada, <i>whitish</i> (f. or pl.)
ħamra, <i>red</i> (f.)	ħamran, <i>reddish</i> (m.)
iswed, <i>black</i> (m.)	

Ġebel l-Abjad, the white rock, the white hill-side:

ġebel labiath, contrata: 11.viii.1501, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/1, f. 102; *ta ġebel labiod*, galca in contrata yl ġizire sancti tomasi: 29.iv.1538, Not. G. Buttigieg, NAV, R 105/5, f. 338v.

Il-Blata l-Bajda, the white rock:

bilata ilbayda, contrata: 8.vii.1505, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/2, f. 143.

Ta' l-Aħdar, of the green (probably a nickname):

a lachdar, clausura congiunta con v Tifali ta ġhar taflia: 21.i.1629, NLM, AOM, 462, f. 326v.

Ġebel L-Aħmar, the red rock, the red hill-side:

ġebel lachmar, contrata, Gozo: 29.ix.1580, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, Ms. 867/9. f. 187v.

L-Ghalqa l-Hamra, the red field:

Jl barke il chamra, contrata: 3.i.1523, Not. J. Bondin, NAV, R 69.

Andar l-Iswed, (the black threshing floor, but more probably the black man's threshing floor, Iswed being taken for a nickname:

Andar l'jsuet, clausura nel feogo di Culeja Minore: 21.xi.1773, NLM, Treas. A 138, f. 265.

L-Ghalqa s-Sewda, the black field:

Jl galca Jseude, vineale in territorio huius Jnsule gaudisii in contrata della Madalena: 29.xii.1584, Not. J.D. Formosa, NAV, R R 271/1, f. 67v.

Gebel L-Isfar, possibly the yellow rock or hill-side, but more probably and grammatically 'Isfar's (nickname) hill-side':

gibel lisifar, pecia terrae in contrata deyr handur: 20.i.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1.

Il-Qolla s-Safra, the yellow hill-top:

Jll colle safra, lencia terrae in contrata meg Jll bachar: 28.x.1580, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/5, f. 142.

Ta' Ghar l-Izraq, of the blue cave:

tagarlisirac: clausura in contrata guardia Sancti pauli: 20.viii.1546, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/17, f. 701v.

Bajjada, the whitish land:

bayada, galca in contrata di rahal Tigan: 13.iii.1495, Not. J. Sabara, NAV, R 494/1; *ilbayada*, clausura in contrata casalis Far-rug: 11.viii.1507, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/3, f. 110.

L-Andar Ta' Hamran, Hamran's threshing floor:

landar ta hamran, clausura in casale micabibe: 11.x.1621, NLM, Treas. A 74, f. 126v.

COMPLEX PLACE-NAMES OF LOOSE CONSTRUCTION

With nouns, adjectives, prepositions, words showing possession like *bita*, *mita*, or *ta'*, and the use of *status constructus* it is possible to find compound place-names of a much more complex form than have been examined so far. To some they might appear as mere prosy descriptions and not real names at all, until it is pointed out that they have been found in documents written in Latin or Italian and have been recorded normally in Maltese with an obvious care on the notary's part to preserve the exact form and words of the place-name. Frequently they are recorded in more than one document and at fairly widely separated dates, showing that they were not the result of the fertile imagination of a single farmer or notary but widely accepted and rendered permanent.

- Il-Wilġa Ta' Taħt il-Qolla s-Safra**, the hill-side field below the yellow peak:
il huelge ta tabt il colla isafra, terrae in contrata di marsa il furno, Gozo: 4.iii.1581, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/5, f. 521v.
- Il-Ġnien il-Qadim Ta' Ġebel iċ-Ċantar Ta' Isfel**, the old garden at the lower part of Cantar's hill-side:
el ginen el chadim ta gebel ecciantar ta esfel, vinea in contrata Gebel ciantar: 6.iv.1642, Not. Thomeo Agius, NAV, R 11/6A, f. 809v.
- Il-Ġewwenija u L-Barranija Ta' L-Ibrag**, the inner and outer fields at l-Ibrag:
il giuenie ul barranie talebrai, duae clausurae in contrata gued el habid: 20.iv.1560, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/61, f. 797.
- L-Andar Ta' Wara l-Knejjes, Tal-Baqqari**, the threshing floor behind the churches at Baqqari:
landar ta huara il chineyes tal baccari, clausura domini Episcopi in contrata tal bacchari: 3.xii.1581, NLM, Univ. 175, f. 309.
- Saqwi l-Barrani (Ta') Ġħajn Tuta**, the outer irrigation at the black-berry spring:
sacui il barrani di ħajn tute, pars territorii ex gabella di hain tute, Gozo: 9.xii.1563, Not. Thomeo Gauci, NAV, R 287/3, f. 104v of 1st pt.
- Il-Wilġa Tal-Qassis (Ta') Santa Katerina (Taž-) Żejtuni**, the hill-side field of the priest of St. Catherine's at Żejtun:
Jl uilge tal cassis de sancta catherina di lo Zeitunj, territorium in contrata rachal tarxen: 4.ix.1532, Cath. Arch., Mdina, CEM, AO, vol. 11, f. 24.
- Habel l-Iblaq Ta' Ġewwa l-Ġnien**, the many-coloured (or dusky) field strip inside the garden:
chabel liblac ta geue Jl ginen, peciola in contrata gued il culeya: 28.i.1539, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/4, f. 330.
- Iċ-Ċens Ta' Fuq il-Wied il-Kbir**, the land on long lease above the big valley:
Ichens ta fuch Jl gued Jl chibir, terrae in contrata dueyre, Gozo: 7.x.1581, Not. Ferd. Ciappara, NAV, R 185/6, f. 255.
- Very often only common sense, not grammar, can determine to which noun a particular adjective in such a cumbersome place-name applies. Thus 'fucanie' in the following place-name is clear enough:

Bur Tax-Xghajra t-Tahtenija, the meadow of the lower scrubland (had *tahtenija* referred to *bur* it would have become *tahtieni*, masculine):

Jl bur ta xihaira Jttahtenie, clausura in contrata ta xihaira: 29. xi.1568, Not. Matteo Briffa, NAV, R 91/2, f. 467v.

But in the following example the adjective, *gewwieni*, could refer either to *bur* or to *harbux*:

II-Bur Ta' Harbux il-Gewwieni, either 'the inner meadow at Harbux' or 'the meadow at Inner Harbux'. On the whole, the former explanation is preferable, as in most such cases the adjective seems to be added on as an afterthought, and it therefore refers to the main feature of the place-name.

il. bur ta charbux il. geueni, clausura in contrata xarit il micallib: 6.i.1541, Not. Br. de Caxario, NAV, R 175/7, f. 191v.

Habel Hagar Qubleni il-Fuqani, the upper field-strip at Qubleni's (personal name or nickname) megaliths or the field-strip at upper Hagar Qubleni:

chabel bajar cubleni il. fuqani, lenciae terrae de feudo Buleben: 24.iii.1523, Not. C. Canchur, NAV, R 140/10, f. 36v.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important characteristic in which Maltese and Gozitan late medieval place-names differ from the normal place-names of Arabic countries lies mainly in that their construction is freer. This has come about by the frequent avoidance of the construct state and its replacement in whole or in part by a looser form made possible by the use in place-names of the possessive *ta'* or *tal-* and of a multitude of adjectives and prepositions, the first and last of which do not seem to have been normally regarded as acceptable components of place-names in Arabic-speaking countries. That Arabic place-names do not use *ta'* or *tal-* has been pointed out long ago by Professor Aquilina; this is true also of their cognate Arabic forms *bita'* and *mita'*, though they are in common use as possessives in everyday speech in several Arabic countries.

Though chains of more than two nouns joined together in the nexus of *status constructus* are quite common in the place-names of the Arabic world, it has proved impossible for the present writer to find any examples of Arabic place-names consisting of any words except nouns or nouns and adjectives. Perhaps scholars of Arabic simply ignore or reject unorthodox forms such as the more complex Maltese place-names. Indeed, it would not appear that the latter themselves have been noticed before this: their formation and popular recognition, if not their acceptance by scholars, has been un-

doubtedly helped by the circumstance that they occur in archival records drawn up invariably in a non-Maltese language like Latin or some form of Italian, while they are themselves almost always carefully recorded in Maltese, with extremely few exceptions, if one ignored the occasional rendering of *ta'* by *di* and *tal-* by *di il*. Thus they stand out from the rest of the text as recognisable entities in a way they would not have done had the records been totally written out in Maltese. In the Arab world place-names would normally be recorded in texts which are themselves written in Arabic and would not therefore stand out at all: prosy place-names would tend to be regarded as mere portions of the text not place-names with an individual existence of their own independent of the text in which they are found. This perhaps explains why the longer and more complex Maltese place-names do not seem to have a parallel in the Arabic world, although the whole of their normal vocabulary, whether nouns, adjectives or prepositions, is of Arabic extraction.

¹ G. Wettinger, 'Non Arabo-Berber Influences on Malta's Medieval Nomenclature', *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Studies on Cultures of the Western Mediterranean*, v. II,

² But cf. the Tunisian place-name Sebkhath Khed em-ta-el-Kebira: A. Pellegrini. *Tunisie* (Tunis, 1949), p. 164.