

WHITE DIPPING SAILS

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The following linguistic survey of sail terminology will reveal a heavy traditional romance influence that is being gradually replaced by the modern anglicised modification and innovation in local yachting. The purpose of this study is twofold: to record dying terms and to register new changes. English and Italian correspondents are given for comparison and further research.

The oldest sail known to man is the square sail (QALA' KWADRU; *vela quadra*); the fore-and-aft sail (QALA' FORENAFF; *vela aurica*)¹ is a relatively recent development.² At first ships had one mast and a single sail, and it was only towards the end of the Middle Ages that two- and three-masted ships, with one sail on each mast, started appearing.³ The development of the sail continued at the end of the 15th century with the appearance of the topsail (GABJA; *gabbia*) and eventually by the mid-16th century the Mediterranean had three-masted ships rigged with six sails:⁴

spritsail _____	(ŽIVATA; <i>civada</i>)
foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>)
fore topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT; <i>parrocchetto</i>)
mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>)
main topsail _____	(GABJA; <i>gabbia</i>)
mizzen _____	(MEZZANA; <i>mezzana</i>)

The mizzen was a triangular lateen sail (QALA' LATIN; *latino*) which was the first fore-and-aft sail and it is typically Mediterranean.⁵ Towards the beginning of the 17th century the larger ships rigged the topgallant sail (PAPPAFIK; *pappafico*). Afterwards rigging started being more functional since there could be more effective reefing and better bracing. At the beginning of the 18th century the square-rigger was already complicated.

We can get an idea of this complication from a treatise on navigation, dated 1729, found at the National Library at Valletta.⁶ This treatise contains a sectional view of a three-masted galley of the Knights. The sails marked and listed are as follows:⁷

A spritsail _____	(ŽIVATA; <i>civada</i>) 33
B top spritsail _____	(KONTRŌŽIVATA; <i>controcivada</i>) 28, 40
C foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>) u
D fore topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT; <i>parrocchetto</i>) Z
E fore topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT; <i>pappafico di trinchetto</i>) 26, 38, B

Table contd

F mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>) t
G main topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gabbia di maestra</i>) 23, y
H main topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>pappafico di maestra</i>) 25, 37, A
I mizzen _____	(MEZZANA; <i>mezzana</i>) 32, x
J mizzen topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANA; <i>gabbia di mezzana</i>) 36
K mizzen topgallant sail _____	(KONTROMEZZANA; <i>contromezzana</i>) 27, 39, D
L fore staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAT-TRINKETT; <i>vela di straglio di trinchetto</i>) E
M main staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>vela di straglio di maestra</i>) E
N mizzen staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-MEZZANA; <i>vela di straglio di mezzana</i>) E

Some of the sails' names are taken from the names of the yards which bend them. So the same name may apply to mast, yard or sail. Here I refer only to sails and I took masts' names to indicate sail position in Maltese and Italian. For instance, *pappafico di trinchetto* in the manuscript is the mast, here it is the sail. The following are some comments on the above sail terms.⁸

A—MS 33: *pennone di sivadiera*; although there is a great probability that the sail might have been called after the Knights' fashion SIVADIERA in Maltese, I found no evidence of this. In Maltese I found it written ŽIVATA or ZIVATA,⁹ and never SIVADA or CIVADA which could have been possible alternatives.¹⁰ And in Italian, although the manuscript writes *sivadiera* and Vella (1843) gives *sivada*, technical dictionaries give only *civada*.¹¹

B—MS 28, 40: *albero di contrasivadiera* and *pennone di contrasivadiera* respectively; the forms KONTROSIVADA, KONTROCIVADA and KONTROSIVADIERA might have been possible in Maltese. Here we select the one that seems to be most naturally derived from ŽIVATA. Nowhere in Maltese is the word found in any of its versions.

C—MS u: *vela di trinchetto imbrogliata*: the Maltese and the Italian versions may be modified by QALA' and *vela*: eg. QALA' TAT-TRINKETT, *vela di trinchetto*. Even in other cases.

D—MS Z: *vela di perrucchetto alla vela*.¹²

E—MS 26, 38, B: *pappafico di trinchetto, pennone di pappafico di trinchetto, vela di pappafico alla vela*. MS 26 refers to the mast, but the same name may also apply to the sail it carries. This is confirmed from MS 38 which is a yard bearing the name of the sail it bends.

F—MS t: *la maestra imbrogliata*.

G—MS 23, y: *albero di gabbia, vela di gabbia*

H—MS 25, 37, A: *pappafico di Maestra, pennone di pappafico di maestra, vela di pappafico alla vela*. See comments for E above.

I—MS 32, x: *antenna di mezzana, vela di mezzana imbrogliata*.

J—MS 36: *pennone di fuga*. The mizzen topsail could have had a nickname like *vela di fuga*, running parallel in concept to *civada*.

K—MS 27, 39, D: *albero di contromezzana, pennone di contromezzana, vela di contromezzana alla vela*. See comments for E above.

L—MS E: *vele di stragli serrate*. Normally, these staysails are named after the sails they accompany.

M—MS E: see L above.

N—MS E: see L above.

In the 19th century, the majestic clipper dominated the scene. In 1964, A. Cremona printed a diagram of a 19th century sailing ship¹³ and listed the corresponding sail terms in Maltese and Italian. The diagram is of a well-rigged clipper, in vogue during the last half of the 19th century. In all Cremona listed nineteen different sails which do not make it fully rigged. He left out at least seven other sails that this type of ship could carry. These are marked in Figure 2 by a, b, c, d, e, f, g.¹⁴ The list, with possibly more standardised terminology, will read as follows:¹⁵

29 flying jib _____	(KONTRAFLOKK; <i>controfiocco</i>)
30 outer jib _____	(FLOKK TA' BARRA; <i>falso fiocco</i>)
31 inner jib _____	(FLOKK; <i>fiocco</i>)
a fore topmast staysail _____	(PARRUKKETT TA' L-ISTRALL; <i>trinchettina</i>)
32 fore royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT; <i>controvelaccio di trinchetto</i>)
33 fore topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT; <i>velaccino</i>)
34 fore upper topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT TA' FUQ; <i>parrocchetto volante</i>)
35 fore lower topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT T'ISFEL; <i>basso parrocchetto</i>)

Table contd

36 foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>)
b main royal staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>contro gran pappafico di straglio</i>)
c. main topgallant staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran pappafico di straglio</i>)
d main topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>carbonera</i>)
37 main royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>contro gran velaccio</i>)
38 main topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran velaccio</i>)
39 main upper topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA TA' FUQ; <i>gabbia volante</i>)
40 main lower topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA T'ISFEL; <i>bassa gabbia</i>)
41 mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>)
e mizzen royal staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>controvelaccio di straglio di mezzana</i>)
f mizzen topgallant staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-PAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>velaccio di straglio di mezzana</i>)
g mizzen topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA TAL-MEZZANA; <i>gabbia di straglio di mezzana</i>)
42 mizzen royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>controbelvedere</i>)
43 mizzen topgallant sail _____	(KONTRAMEZZANA; <i>belvedere</i>)
44 mizzen upper topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANA TA' FUQ; <i>contromezzana volante</i>)
45 mizzen lower topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANA T'ISFEL; <i>bassa contromezzana</i>)
46 mizzen _____	(MEZZANA; <i>mezzana</i>)
47 spanker _____	(RANDA; <i>randa</i>)

However, a fully-rigged ship could also carry studding sails (KULTELLAZZI; *coltellacci*) which were used to increase the sail area generally on a run. In this case we could have a square-rigger similar to the one given in *Webster's Third*.¹⁶ It is a full-rigged ship under all plain sail set with skysails, staysails and studding sails. All the possible sails that such a ship could carry are:

flying jib _____	(KONTRAFLOKK; <i>controfiocco</i>)
outer jib _____	(FLOKK TA' BARRA; <i>falso fiocco</i>)
inner jib _____	(FLOKK; <i>fiocco</i>)
fore topmast staysail _____	(PARRUKKETT TA' L-ISTRALL; <i>trinchettina</i>)
foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>)
fore lower topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT T'ISFEL; <i>basso parrochetto</i>)
fore upper topsail _____	(PARRUKKETT TA' FUQ; <i>parrochetto volante</i>)
fore lower topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT T'ISFEL; <i>basso velaccino</i>)
fore upper topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT TA' FUQ; <i>velaccino volante</i>)
fore royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAT-TRINKETT; <i>controvelaccio di trinchetto</i>)
fore skysail _____	(PAPPAFIK TA' QUDDIEM; <i>pappafico di trinchetto</i>)
lower studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ T'ISFEL; <i>basso coltellaccio</i>)
fore topmast studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-PARRUKKETT; <i>coltellaccio di parrochetto</i>)
fore topgallant studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-PAPPAFIK; <i>coltellaccio di velaccino</i>)
fore royal studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-KONTRAPAPPAFIK; <i>coltellaccio di controvelaccio</i>)
main staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran vela di straglio</i>)
main upper topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA TA' FUQ TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>carbonera volante</i>)
main lower topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA T'ISFEL TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>bassa carbonera</i>)

Table contd

main topgallant staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran pappafico di straglio</i>)
main royal staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>contro gran pappafico di straglio</i>)
mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>)
main lower topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA T'ISFEL; <i>bassa gabbia</i>)
main upper topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA TA' FUQ; <i>gabbia volante</i>)
main lower topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA T'ISFEL; <i>gran basso velaccio</i>)
main upper topgallant sail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA TA' FUQ; <i>gran velaccio volante</i>)
main royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFICO TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>contro gran velaccio</i>)
main skysail _____	(PAPPAFIK MASTRU; <i>gran pappafico</i>)
main topmast studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>coltellaccio di gabbia</i>)
main topgallant studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>coltellaccio di gran pappafico</i>)
main royal studding sail _____	(KULTELLAZZ TAL-KONTRA- PAPPAFIK TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>coltellaccio di contro gran velaccio</i>)
mizzen staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-MEZZANA; <i>vela di straglio di mezzana</i>)
mizzen topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA TAL-MEZZANA; <i>gabbia di straglio di mezzana</i>)
mizzen topgallant staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-PAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>velaccio di straglio di mezzana</i>)
mizzen royal staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>controvelaccio di straglio di mezzana</i>)

Table contd

mizzen sail _____	(MEZZANA; <i>mezzana</i>)
mizzen lower topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANA T'ISFEL; <i>bassa contramezzana</i>)
mizzen upper topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANA TA' FUQ; <i>contromezzana volante</i>)
mizzen lower topgallant sail _____	(KONTRAMEZZANA TA' FUQ; <i>belvedere volante</i>)
mizzen royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>controbelvedere</i>)
mizzen skysail _____	(PAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANA; <i>pappafico di mezzana</i>)
spanker _____	(RANDA; <i>randa</i>)

This brings the total number of sails to 42. In addition to the above, on a full-rigged four-masted ship¹⁷ there would be, behind the mizzen just before the spanker, the following square sails on the fourth jiggermast:¹⁸

jigger lower topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANELLA T'ISFEL; <i>bassa mezzanella</i>)
jigger upper topsail _____	(GABJA TAL-MEZZANELLA TA' FUQ; <i>alta mezzanella</i>)
jigger topgallant sail _____	PAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANELLA; <i>pappafico di mezzanella</i>)
jigger royal _____	(KONTRAPAPPAFIK TAL-MEZZANELLA; <i>contropappafico di mezzanella</i>)

Turning now to fore-and-aft rigging, we could give a list of the sails on a fore-and-aft schooner as given by *Webster's Third*¹⁹ as follows:²⁰

flying jib _____	(KONTRAFLOKK; <i>controfiocco</i>)
jib _____	(FLOKK; <i>fiocco</i>)
fore staysail _____	(TRINKETTINA; <i>trinchettina</i>)
foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>)
fore gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAT-TRINKETT; <i>controranda di trinchetto</i>)
main topmast staysail _____	(QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>carbonera</i>)
mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>)
main gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran controranda</i>)

A four-masted fore-and-aft schooner would have the following:²¹

flying jib _____	(KONTRAFLOKK; <i>controfiocco</i>)
outer jib _____	(FLOKK TA' BARRA; <i>falso fiocco</i>)
inner jib _____	(FLOKK; <i>fiocco</i>)
fore staysail _____	(TRINKETTINA; <i>trinchettina</i>)
square foresail _____	(TRINKETT KWADRU; <i>trinchetto quadro</i>)
raffee _____	(RAFF; <i>parrocchetto triangolare</i>)
foresail _____	(TRINKETT; <i>trinchetto</i>)
fore gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAT-TRINKETT; <i>controranda di trinchetto</i>)
mainsail _____	(MAJJISTRA; <i>maestra</i>)
main gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAL-MAJJISTRA; <i>gran controranda</i>)
mizzen _____	(MEZZANA; <i>mezzana</i>)
mizzen gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAL-MEZZANA; <i>controranda di mezzana</i>)
jigger _____	(GIGER; <i>mezzanella</i>)
jigger gaff-topsail _____	(GAFTOPSIN TAL-GIGER; <i>controranda di mezzanella</i>)

The gaffsail (QALA' FORENAFF TAL-GAFF; *vela di picco*) became universally popular and at the beginning of the 20th century it was the rig widely used in yachting.²² Further development in the present century changed the gaffsail into a gaffless boom sail (QALA' TAL-BUM; *vela di boma*) better known as the Bermuda sail (QALA' BERMUDA; *vela Bermuda*).

A modern cruising yacht can have the following sail plan in accordance with international rules;²³

mainsail _____	(MEJNSEJL; <i>randa</i>)
jib No. 1 _____	(GIBB WIEHED; <i>fiocco uno</i>)
jib No. 2 _____	(GIBB TNEJN; <i>fiocco due</i>)
genoa No. 1 _____	(GENOA WIEHED; <i>genoa uno</i>)
genoa No. 2 _____	(GENOA TNEJN; <i>genoa due</i>)
storm staysail _____	(STORM STEJSEJL; <i>trinchetta di straḡ...)</i>)
storm trysail _____	(STORM TRAJSEL; <i>trinchetta di cappa</i>)

It can also take a spinnaker (SPINNAKER; *spinnaker*). Finally, a sailing dinghy today may be rigged with:

mainsail _____	(MEJNSEJL; <i>randa</i>)
jib _____	(GIBB; <i>fiocco</i>)
spinnaker _____	(SPINNAKER; <i>spinnaker</i>)

The latter is used mostly in racing.

1 In Maltese we could also have QALA' AWRIKA. FORENAFF is, however, more common in modern usage.

2 A.B. Nordbok ed. *The Lore of Ships* (Gothenberg, 1975) p. 96.

3 E.L. Cornell ed., *History of Ships: the Magnificent Saga of Man's Conquest of the Seas* (New English Library, 1973) pp. 1453–1457.

4 This coincides more or less with the coming of the Knights of Malta.

5 Nordbok, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

6 *Libro di Marina (1729)* MS (National Library) LIBR. 318.

7 The capital letters near the English terms refer to the accompanying illustration, Fig. 1, which is only an imitation of a Knights' galley. The numbers and letters after the brackets refer to the sails' position on the sectional view of the manuscript.

8 MS followed by a number of letter refers to the number or letter found in the manuscript.

9 F. Vella, *Dizionario Portatile Maltese-Inglese-Italiano* (Livorno, 1843), *sub*: BRAZZ; E. Serracino Inglott, *Il-Miklem Malti* (KKM, 1975–1989), *sub.*: BRAZZ, ŽIVATA; J. Aquilina, *Maltese–English Dictionary* (Malta–1987–1990), *sub.*: BRAZZ, ŽIVATA.

10 On later boats and ships the ŽIVATA was better known as TARKIJA.

11 Vella *op.cit.* also writes *civata*.

12 Even in MS 24, the word is written *perrucchetto*.

13 A. Cremona, "La Marina Maltese dal Medio Evo all'Epoca Moderna: Storia e Terminologia Marittima" in *Journal of Maltese Studies* (1964) pp. 177–197.

14 The numbers in Fig. 2 refer to the original given by Cremona. Fig. 2 is a reproduction of Cremona's diagram with the addition of the letters a, b, c, d, e, f, g.

15 Sometimes *a* is also called TRINKETTINA in Maltese and 36 TARKETT.

16 *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (G. & C. Merriam Co., 1966) *sub*: "sail".

17 Nordbok, *op.cit.*, p. 102 fig. D.

18 "Jigger" in Maltese has these alternatives: MEZZANELLA, GIGER, QALA' TA' FUQ IL-KWADRU TAL-POPPA; and in Italian *mezzanella* and *vela di contromezzana*. "Jiggermast" is then given as GIGGERMAST, ARBLU TAL-MEZZANA TA' FUQ IL-POPPA NETT: see E. Magro, *English and Maltese Dictionary* (Malta, Government Printing Office, 1906) *sub voce*; Aquilina, *op. cit.* includes GIGGERMAST.

19 See note 16 above.

20 GAFTOPSIN (see Mamo *op. cit.*, *sub* "gaff topsail" and Aquilina *op. cit.*, *sub* GAFF/GAFTOPSIN) was used because the introduction of the term coincided with the British period. I never found KONTRARANDA written anywhere. The Maltese corresponding term for "main topmast staysail" is not QALA' TA' L-ISTRALL TAL-GABJA TAL-MAJJISTRA on this craft since the fore-and-aft schooner did not have a GABJA.

21 Nordbok *op.cit.*, p. 102 fig. A.

22 D. Kemp, *A Manual of Yacht and Boat Sailing* (London 1891), Bk. 1, Bk. 2.

23 Nordbok *op.cit.*, p. 198. Maltese terms in modern yachting are derived largely from English international terms. The traditional terms are never used—on the verge of being totally forgotten—in local yachting where communication is almost entirely in English or Anglicised Maltese. Even the term "sailing", officially known as IBBURDJAR, is commonly uttered SEJLING.