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SICULO ARABIC: INTERFERENCES, DELETIONS, AND ADDITIONS

1.0

The Medieval Arabic of Sicily is the product of a number of dialects and sub-dialects spoken by a number of Arab and Berber tribes settled mainly in western Sicily and Sicilians who married Arabic speakers and accultured to Islam. Information on a spoken Arabic in Sicily comes from the *Tatqīf al-Lisān* written by Ibn Makkī ʿl-Šiqillī (d. 501/1107) who prescribes how one should speak and write *faṣīḥ* and get rid of dialectisms (*laḥn*, lit. "error"). I call this variety Siculo-laḥn Arabic. Parallel to this variety there grew another one that was spoken firstly, by converted Muslim Sicilians and secondly, by Christians and Jews alike, who had accultured to the Islamic way of life but not necessarily embraced Islam. They spoke what I call Siculo-Arabic, ie a hybridized form of Arabic and Romance (with some Greek intervention) in all its linguistic features, morphologically in particular, as our data show. Remnants of the SA are found in: (a) the notarial documents written in different places of Sicily during the Norman (485-681/1091-1282) and sometimes post-Norman occupation, and (b) the Sicilian lexical inventory of today. The documents, however, represent a SA which was an (artificial) analytic type, but diachronically important for the development of this variety. Both the SA and SLA varieties belong to the Maḡribī family. On the other hand, we have another group of documents, the *ḡarāʾid* (registers listing estates and names of inhabitants of the allocated territories) that were

written in Arabic by Muslims during the Islamic occupation (213-485/827-1091) with parallel translations of Latin and sometimes Greek. They exhibit features of a Middle Arabic variety with the dropping of case-endings in particular; thus the tendency to move from a synthetic Classical Arabic to an analytic type.

1.1

It is the SA variety that we are concerned with in this paper. An attempt is made to show: (a) Romance sounds interfering in the trilateral Arabic structure, (b) interference of origin and gender, (c) absence or substitution of sounds and (d) maintenance or addition of sounds. I include Maltese to compare some of its phonological and morphological features with CA and SA. The Maltese terms are underlined using the official orthographic system devised by the *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti* (Association of Writers of Maltese) in 1924. I will not discuss in this short paper, however, the Latin suffixes in SA because this would require a study of its own. Nor will I analyze the problems that occur in the transliteration of rare forms that have disappeared or were unintelligible to editors. Moreover, the phonetic misrepresentation by the scribes and the copying of such forms by subsequent scribes add to the complexity of this study. Historical-scriptorial problems require close collaboration with the historian specializing in the toponymical and anthroponymical lexemes if one is to place diachronically the terms derived from various sources.

Note all lexemes are in italics. Arabic words conform with the IPA system. The main bulk of my lexical data is cited from Pellegrini (1972) and Caracausi (1983). No attempt is made to give a full bibliography. This lexical data will be examined in more details in my forthcoming book *Siculo-Arabic* which will be published by Routledge Kegan Paul International.

Abbreviations

CA. Classical Arabic	Med. Lat. Medieval Latin
Gr. Greek	Per. Persian
Lat. Latin	SA. Siculo-Arabic
Mal. Maltese	SLA. Siculo-Laħn Arabic.
< derived form	= corresponding
> becoming	: equivalent to
* hypothetical	// phonemic (or morphemic)
# terminal juncture	m masculin
(complete utterance)	f feminine
	s singular

2.1: 0

Data

Interferences of SA apico-alveolar sounds.

2.1: 1

SA /l/ apical alveolar vibrant unvoiced.

CA *buḏūr* "seeds" > SA *buldurones* (Caracausi 131).CA *šāh* "monarch" > SA *schalcbum* "chess" (Caracausi 335).**2.1: 2**

SA / n / and Gr /v/ apical alveolar nasal voiced.

CA *ḥaġīra* "land abounding with stones" (Lane I, 518) > SA place-name *Xangirotta* (Caracausi 169).CA *ḥaġġām* "a cupper" (Lane I, 522) > SA *hangemus*; χατιτζέμ (Cusa 256; Caracausi 172-3).

2.1: 3

SA /r/ apical alveolar vibrant voiced.

CA *ṭabaqa* "layer, stratum" > SA *trabacca* "specie di padiglione" (Caracausi 382); Mal *barrakka* "cabin serving for shelter" (Aquilina I, 82).

CA *raqqāṣ* "dancer" > SA *regracius* (Caracausi 311).

CA *fustuq* "pistachio-nut" > SA *fistugra, fistuca* (Caracausi 227); Mal *fostog, fosdoq* "pod; pistachio" (Aquilina I, 358).

2.1: 4

Analysis

The apico-alveolar sounds occur often in SA lexemes. Our examples show that these types of sounds are internally built with one exception *fistugra*, where /r/ follows the radicals of the Arabic root. Three examples have /l/ and /n/ or /v/ preceding C₂ (2.1: 1 and 2). One notes gemination CA /ḡ[ḡ]/ > SA /ng/ (2.1: 2) and gemination CA /q[q]/ > SA /gr/ (2.1: 3). Our loan words suffixed with /-us/ or /-um/ are Latin masculine and neuter nouns of the second declension; of the same type is /-(i)us/ having a non-phonemic /-i-/ (2.1:3). The /-es/ is a noun of the third declension plural form (2.1:1) and /-otta/ ending is a diminutive (3.1:2).

2.2: 0

Data

Interference of origin.

Interference of gender.

2.2: 1

SA adjectives directly or indirectly derived from Arabic.

CA *nārang* "bitter and sweet orange" < Per *nārang* > Gr **ναράγγιον*; Med Lat *arancium* > SA *aranciu* / *arancio* "albero e frutto" (Caracausi 108-9); Mal *laring* "orange tree; orange" (Aquilina I, 731).

CA *mallāsī*, *imlīsī* "une variété de certains fruits, de grenades, de caroubes, de châtaignes, de noix, de noisettes" (Dozy II, 612) > SA *millisius* < (?) Lat *mollis* (Caracausi 290-1); Mal *melliesi* (*lewż*) "sorta di mandorla che ha il guscio flocido" (Barbera III, 692, 732).

2.2: 2

SA masculine nouns corresponding with feminine nouns in Arabic.

CA *ḡumma* "a skein of silk or a flock of wool" > SA *giummu* "tassel; tuft" (Caracausi 257-8; Agius 1991, 6).

CA *sukkāra* "wooden lock" > SA *suquaru*; *succhiaru* (Caracausi, 352; Agius 1991, 6); Mal *sokra*, *sokkra* "a padlock"; *sakkara*, *sukkara*, *sakkiera* "a bar; bolt" (Aquilina II, 1340).

2.2: 3

Analysis

Under this section I include those words that have an uncertain origin. The process of replacing or superimposing of words upon an earlier inventory is inevitable. In our case the underlying structure of either Old Latin or Greek may have been affected by an Arabic interference. In addition to SA

aranciu and *millisius* (2.2:1) other examples are: SA *ammiragghiu* "supreme head of the naval forces" < CA *'amīr* "one possessing, command"; cf early Byzantine development is ἀμῖρ, ἀμῖράς; also ἀμῖρ, ἀμῖρων (Caracausi 104-5); SA *ammiragghiu* became a specialized word to signify "admiral" (= *'amīr al-baḥr* [supreme head of the sea] of the navy in the Norman court (Agius 1987, 272-3) and SA *limiuni*, *limúni*; *lumia* "specie di limone con poco sugo dolce e di soave sapore" (Pellegrini I, 192) < CA *laymūn* "est de trois sortes: le doux, le citron, l'orange" (Dozy II, 563) < Per *laymūn* / *līmūn*; or Gr λυμῖα < (Agius 1981, 13); λυμῶνος (Cusa, 119); Mal *lumiya*, *lumi* (Barbera II, 647). With Maltese we find that, though it may share morphological features with Arabic, borrows indirectly from Sicilian rather than Arabic as it would be expected, eg. Mal *katusa* "earthen drain pipe, water-pipe, conduit-pipe" (Aquilina I, 630) either < SA *catusu* "doccione, cannone"; or < Lat *cadus* "a large vessel for containing liquids especially wine; jar particularly of earthenware"; or < Gr κάδος "a pail, jar cask" (Agius 1981, 12-13); or < CA *qādūs* "auget, godet; tuyau, conduit, canal" (Dozy II, 314); Mal *qartas* "cornet; rolled piece of paper for groceries" (Aquilina II, 1134), either < SA *cartasi* "cartridge, cone"; or < CA *qartās* "paper"; or < Gr χάρτης "leaf of paper" (Agius 1981, 8), though Greek loanwords in Maltese are very rare (Agius 1982, 21).

External interference, be it linguistic or cultural influence, can play an important role in defining the gender. The post-Islamic documents of Sicily give evidence of Arabic masculine nouns becoming feminine in SA, eg. CA *hām* (m) "raw material" > SA *chiumia* (f) "band, strip" (Caracausi 191); CA *dagal* (m) "thicket; bush, jungle" > SA *dagali* / *dágala* (f) "sloping ground on the river banks subject to flood" (Caracausi 199-200). It is rare, however, to find Arabic feminine nouns switching to masculine in SA (Agius 1991, 5), eg. CA *gumma* (f) > SA *giummu* (m), CA

sukkāra (f) > SA *suquaru*, *succhiaru* (m) (2.2:2). One other interesting note on gender interference is that SA tends to assign collective nouns masculine, such as CA *arz* (m or f) "cedar" > SA *àrzanu* (m) "silver fir" (Pellegrini I, 251) and CA *quruša* "sourness, acidity" > SA *cusurèmi* (m) "sour grapes" (Pellegrini I, 189). One may note, that in Sicilian, names of plants of Latin origin that are feminine become masculine ending in / -u / or / -i / (Galante 64). In Maltese the tendency is to assign the masculine gender to names of plants and trees, such as *arżnu* "pine-tree", *fosdoq* / *fostoq* (2.1:3), *ħorrieq* "nettle" (< CA *ħurrayq*) (Aquilina I, 90-91, 554-555).

2.3: 0

Data

Deletion and substitution.

2.3: 1

CA /h/ laryngeal fricative unvoiced: SA /ø/ or /g/ velar occlusive voiced; Gr /ø/.

CA *zabra* "flower; blossom; bloom" > SA *zàgara*, *zaara*; ἄζαροι (Caracausi 113); Mal *zabra* "blossom"; also surname (Aquilina, II, 1592).

2.3: 2

CA /ħ/ pharyngeal fricative unvoiced + /b/ bilabial occlusive voiced: SA /bb/ bilabial occlusive voiced.

CA *raħba* "square; an open space" > SA *rabba* "granajo pubblico pe' bisogni d'un paese" (Caracausi 312-313).

2.3: 3

Analysis

The Arabic phoneme /h/ was generally confused with the pharyngeal fricative unvoiced /ħ/ or the uvular fricative unvoiced /x/ and it was generally rendered by the SA velar occlusive /c/ unvoiced or fricative /ch/ unvoiced or (Gr /χ/) unvoiced, eg. CA *buwwa* "bas-fond, terrain bas et enforcé" (Dozy II, 772) > SA place-name, 'a *Cuva*; CA *ṭahūra* "res, quae mundatur et purificator" (Freytag III, 75) > SA *tachura*, Gr τάχερ (Cusa 132, 138; Caracausi 360-1); or SA /g/ voiced as in our example CA *zabra* > SA *zàgara*. But also CA /h/ > SA /ø/ and Gr /ø/ as *zaara* and ἄζαρη. It is also the case in Maltese where /h/ has no longer a phonemic value, though sometimes it is almost equivalent to CA /ħ/, eg *bena* [ēna] "happiness" but *bieni* [hīni] "happy". The combination of Arabic pharyngeal fricative unvoiced /ħ/ and bilabial occlusive voiced /b/ produced a SA gemination /bb/, SA *rabba*. In other places, this word was recorded as *rachabe*, *rababe* and Greek ράχαρ (Caracausi 312-313), where CA /ħ/ > SA /ch/, /h/ and Gr /χ/ all velar fricative voiced only when followed by /a/.

2.4:0

Data

Assimilation or contraction.

CA *amin ad-dawla* "the commissioner of the state" > SA *aminadal*, *aminaddal* (Caracausi 101).

CA *sūq al-‘aṭṭarīn* "market of perfumers" > SA place-name *Lattarini* (Caracausi 267); Mal *Attard* a place-name and a surname (Aquilina I, 51).

2.4:1

Analysis

The presence of the article with *idāfa* construction or remnants of *idāfa* in SA loanwords is unusual. Our two SA examples in 2.4:0 show that with a sun letter there are two possibilities; either maintaining the original assimilation of CA /l/ with the initial sun letter, eg. SA *amin* [*ad-dal*], or non-assimilation with an absence of /l/, eg. SA *amin* [*a-*]*dal*. The presence of /l/ appears in *lattarini* as part of the article connected with a missing first element of the *idāfa*, ie. *sūq a*-[*lattarini*]. In the case of an absence of article from the *idāfa* Maltese shows another type of assimilation which is a contraction of sounds between two words, eg. *Hattard*, the spoken form (< Mal * *Hadd Ghattard*) < CA *Hadd* "border" (Lat "divisa") + "Aṭṭār a name ("perfumer"), *Hamrun* (< Mal * *Hadd Ghamrun*) < CA *Hadd* + "Amrūn a name, also mentioned in the *ḡarā'id* as *rabalamrun* (= *Rahl* "Amrūn" the village of "Amrūn") (Cusa 188, 218). In both Maltese place-names (and the Siculo Arabic one) we notice CA pharyngeal fricative voiced /ʕ/ > Mal (and sometimes SA) /ø/. However it lengthens the preceding and/or following vowel in any position; it shifts sometimes to a pharyngeal fricative unvoiced /ħ/ at the end of a word.

2.5: 0

Additions, maintenance and absence.

2.5: 1

Addition of SA /a/ and Gr /α/ suffixed to Arabic nouns.

CA *dār* "house" > SA *Dara* place-name; *δαγα* (Cusa 670-1); Mal *dar* (Aquilina I, 207).

CA *balāṭ* "earth, ground; flag-stones or baked bricks for pavement" (Lane I, 240) > SA *balata* "plain stone; slab" (Caracausi 116-7); Mal *blat* "rock/s" (Aquilina I, 130); occurs as first element of an *iḏāfa* eg. *Blata l-Bajda* (near Hamrun, Malta) and *Blata l-Għola* (Mosta, Malta).

CA *qaṭrān* "tar" (Dozy II, 366) > SA *catarana* (Caracausi 166); Mal *qatrān* (Aquilina II, 1144).

2.5: 2

Maintenance of CA /a/ (*tāʾ marbūṭa*): SA /a/; Gr /α/ (> /ε/).

CA *ḥaṣīra* "a thing woven made of papyrus and of rushes and then spread upon the ground like a carpet" (Lane I, 583) > SA *gassira* "reed matting" (Caracausi 184); Mal *ḥasira* "mat; curtain made of reeds" (Aquilina I, 514).

CA *ḡassāla* "washer-woman" > SA ἐλγασσέλε (Cusa 580); Mal *ḥassiel(a)* "laundry(woman)" (Aquilina I, 517).

2.5: 3

Absence of the particle or word meaning "belonging to".

CA *batāʿ*, *matāʿ* (Dozy I, 50-51), *tāʿ* > SA ∅; Mal *taʿ* (Aquilina II, 1395-7).

2.5: 4

Analysis

The suffixing of /a/ to Arabic nouns of origin occurs with SA lexemes rendering them feminine. One may note that CA *dār* is feminine, not by form or meaning but merely by usage. The suffixing of SA feminine /a/ confirms the Romance gender

assignment as SA masculine /u/ does when suffixed to **bàit* -> *bàitu* "a place of merchandise" (Agius 1987, 273). It, in fact, reinforces the Arabic masculine *bayt* "tent; house; shelter" (Agius 1991, 3).

The examples in 2.5:2 show that reflex of Arabic *tā° marbūṭa* is invariably SA /-a#/ or Gr /ɑ#/ [> /ε#/] (note the *imāla*) where the Arabic /-t/ is not realized. I have not come across any example in SA of a morpheme bound /-t/ nor in an *idāfa* (first element) position. In Maltese this is rendered also as /-a#/ except in some instances when /-t/ appears in *idāfa* construction, eg *mart Ġanni* "Ġanni's wife", but not always such as *xkora ful* "a sack of broad beans". However the *idāfa* usages in Maltese, as well as in other Arabic dialects, tend to drop to be replaced by *ta'*, a shortened form of dialectal Arabic *mtā°* or *btā°* "belonging to", eg. *il-mara ta' Ġanni* "Ġanni's wife". No example of this construction is found in SA.

2.6: 0

Data

Addition of SA /-i/ to CA sound plural /-īn/.

CA *ḥaṣṣarīn* "matweaver(s)" > SA *basserini* (a matweaver)^r (Caracausi 250); Mal surname *Cassar*.

CA *dawwārīn* ([s] *dawwār*) "a round place (where) sometimes people sit and drink there" (Lane I, 931) > SA *daguarini* "a man who patrols; a policeman" (Caracausi 202); Mal surname *Deguara*.

2.6:1

Analysis

Nouns of profession and *nisbas* related to a country with Arabic sound plural ending /-īn/ maintain the marker-ending in SA but

with an addition of a Romance vowel ending / -i / (2.6:0); a hybridized suffixing of this nature exists with other nouns, eg. CA *al-andalusīn* > SA *bendulcini* "Andalusians" (Cusa 187), CA *matraḥī* > SA *matrahini* "fabbricante o venditore di materassi" (Caracausi 285), CA *ʿaṭṭarīn* > SA *lattarini* "perfumers" (2.4:0). This hybridized suffixing has two different number assignment: SA *basserini*, *daguarini* and *matrahini* point out to a singular meaning despite their Arabic sound-plural ending while SA *bendulcini* and *lattarini* correspond to the Arabic plural meaning. The Maltese *deguara* (2.6:0) equivalent to the Arabic *dawwarīn* is a plural form (with an /-a/ suffix) of **deguar* "one who patrols; a policeman"; the Maltese /-a/ending is found in other plural nouns, eg. *spiżjara* "chemists" and *sagristana* "sagristans".

2.7: 0

Data

Additions

SA compounding to Arabic loan-terms.

CA *zinbīl/zanbīl* "a basket of palm-leaves"; SA *cimbili* "fiscus, fiscina"; *suprazimbilerius* (Caracausi 349); Mal *zenbil* "a large basket made of broom carried by beasts of burden" (Barbera IV, 1167).

CA *šurṭa* "a guard; police agent" > SA *Sciorta* surname; *capixurta* (head of guards or police) (Caracausi 354-5); Mal *Sciortino* surname.

2.7: 1

Analysis

These compounds have a hybridized formation consisting of a Romance morpheme affixed to an Arabic loan-term, ie *supra*

(Lat "on the top, above") + *zimbil(erius)* and *cap(i)* (Lat [*caput*] "head") + *xurta*. The occurrence of such compounding is rare. Our second example is probably an *iḏāfa* construction, ie. *cap i[x]-xurta* "the head of the police" using a Romance word as the first part of the unit. The /-i/ is what is left of the Arabic article /-al/ > SA /-il/ (> i[x]/); an example of contraction of article (2.4:1).

3.0

Conclusion

There are several problems in the reconstruction of SA. The above examples point out some general phonological and morphological features that constitute a written type found mainly in the notarial documents. The lexical data of these documents represent an artificial language generally inflected by Latin endings. No certainty exists in SA as to the position of stress which, unlike Andalusī Arabic, was never marked in sources. Even the spoken type of SA, the lexical data of which are found in the present Sicilian dialect, particularly with verbs ending in /-ari/ [eg. *abbalatari* "coprire il suolo con lastre di pietra" (Pellegrini I, 220) < CA *balāṭ(a)* (2.5:1); *galibbari*, "mettere a maggese la terra" (Pellegrini I, 220) < CA *qalīb / qalaba* "earth turned over; turn upside down" (Lane II, 2552, 2554); *smažžarari* "emettere il meconio" (Pellegrini I, 220) < CA *mašara* "a place in which grapes and the like are pressed" (Lane II, 2063)] is not represented entirely with all its linguistic features. We know nothing of its syntactic level. Likewise, the spoken type of SLA is void of syntax. We can only assume that this variety, being a Mağribī dialect would share syntactical features with Andalusī Arabic, North African dialects and Maltese. One may also speculate, on the other hand that, Modern Maltese, consisting of Arabic and Romance, could be the linguistic remains of the SA variety. Its speakers preserved it

in a creolized form and continued to develop it during the Norman occupation and most probably even later giving rise to Medieval Maltese, a hypothesis yet to be proved.

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