

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE MALTESE VERB

By A. CREMONA

IN THE Arabic morphology the classification of the verb has been one of the topics which, owing to different linguistic shades and peculiarities in the various dialects, has given to grammarians the opportunity to express a variety of views which differ in some particular details from the classical standard system of the classification of the verb.

Such a variety in the methods of classification is also noticed in some grammars and treatises on the Maltese Language of which the morphological verbal forms are, in a general sense, identical to the Arabic, and in some peculiarities widely differing from the classical Arabic, in the same way as the dialects of the latter, from the Syrian territories along the coast-land of North Africa as far as Morocco, seem also to differ a good deal.

In order to appreciate these discrepancies it would be necessary to make a comparative analysis of the various methods of the classification of the verb of Arabic dialects which are akin to the Maltese Language in their morphological aspects as the offshoots of the standard classification of the verb in classical Arabic.

Classical Arabic divides the Verb *الفعل* into two classes: *Perfect* *سالم* and *Imperfect* *غير سالم* the *Perfect* comprising those dissyllabic verbs of which the radicals are all strong or sound letters - not including the *hemza* or the *تشديد* (in the *surds*), the *Imperfect* comprising those verbs which are either *hemzated* or *surds*, or verbs containing one or more weak letters.

The *Imperfect* is moreover subdivided into strong or sound *صحيح* and weak *معقل*; it is sound if the stem does not contain any weak letters (the *waw* or the *ya*), and weak if it contains one or more weak letters (the *waw* or the *ya*). The *Imperfect*, if strong, may thus be either *مضاعف* of which the last radical, being identical to the second, is contracted, or *hemzated*, having a *hemza* among the radicals. Ex: *Qara* *قرأ*, (he read); *sal* (سأل) (to ask), *'abad* (أخذ) (to take). The *Imperfect*, if weak, is subdivided into *Assimilative* *المثال* having a first weak radical, Ex: *وعد* (to promise); *ولد* (to bear children); *يبس* (to be dry); *Hollow* *اجوف* having for its middle radical a weak letter. Ex: *باع* (to sell); *قال* (to say), and the *Defective* *الناقص* having for its third radical a weak letter; *ya* or *waw*. Ex: *رمى* (to throw). Such verbs may contain two weak letters which are subdivided into two kinds of such verbs: defective verb having

or sword' <It. *siabola*, Sic. *sciabula*; **Xalata** (XI, 35) 'sport, diversion, recreation, outing' <It. *scialare* 'condurre vita molto spenderaccia' (DEI); **Xkubetta** (XIV, 34) 'a fowling piece, a rifle' <Sp. *escobeta*; **Xkupa** (XVIII, 46) 'a broom, a brush', <Sic. *scupa*, It. *scopa*; **Zekkin** (XXIV, ii, 91) 'a sequin or ducat' <It. *zecchino*, Sic. *zicchinu*; **Zija** (XXIV, ii, 90) 'aunt' <It. and Sic. *zia*.

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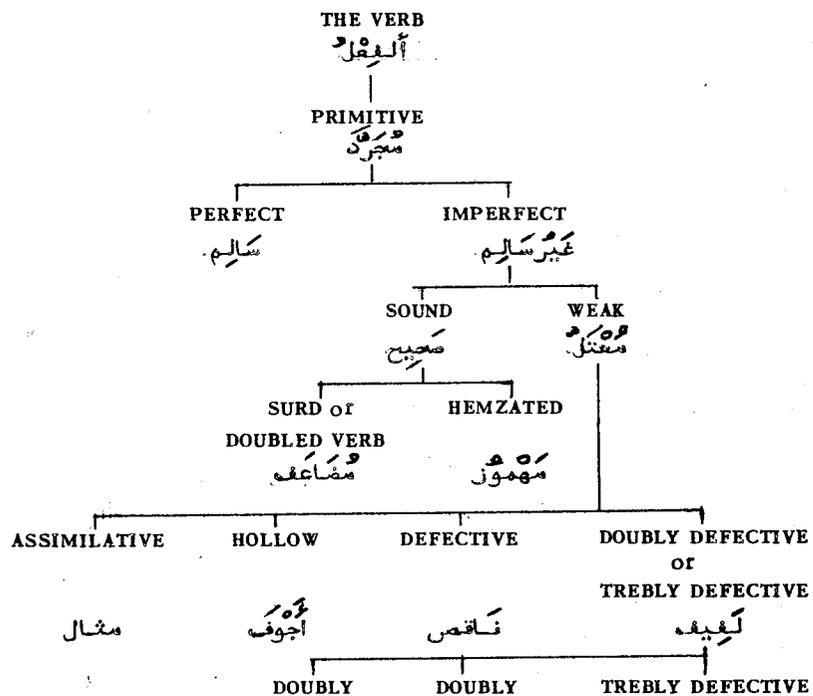
a second and a third weak radical (*el-lafifu el maqrunu*); Ex: شوى (to roast), طوى (to fold); defective verb having a first and a third weak radical (*el-lafifu el-mafruqu*), Ex: وطى (to trample) وقى ; (to preserve, to guard).

These are said to be *doubly weak*.

A third kind of such verbs is also included: verbs which have both a *hemza* and the other two a *waw* or a *ya* among their radicals and those in which the three radicals are a *waw* or a *ya*. Such verbs are said to be *trebly weak*. Ex: اوى (to betake oneself to, to repair)

The following synoptical table will show at a glance the above-mentioned classification in all its details.

TABLE A



Some Arabic Grammars adopt a simpler, more synthetical classification of the verb. Wright's Grammar of the Arabic Language (translation from the German of Caspari) divides the above classification into the following classes:

*Strong* verbs are those of which all the radical letters are strong, the *surds* or 'doubled' verbs (*verba mediae radicalis geminatae*) are included in the strong verbs. *Weak* verbs are those of which one or more than one of the radical letters are the sounds *waw* or *ya*. A verb having an *alif hamzated* for one of its radicals, or belonging to the class *mediae radicalis geminatae* (*surds*) is designated as *ṣaḥīḥ*: whilst verbs free from any defective radical are called *sound* verbs corresponding to the Arabic designation of *sālim*; but some grammarians treat *ṣaḥīḥ* and *sālim* as synonyms. (Cfr. Wright. Vol. I, paras: 82, 83 Rem.).

Elsewhere in Wright's Grammar Vol. I (paras: 128-9) the *Weak* verbs are subdivided into (a) Verbs having a moveable *alif* or a *hemza*, the weakest of the gutturals, especially styled *verba hemzata* (*hemzated* verbs); (b) and verbs having among their radicals a *waw* and a *ya*. These are more particularly *weak* verbs. Strictly speaking, however, the Arab grammarians do not reckon the *verbs hemzata* among the *weak verbs*. They restrict this appellation to those containing a *waw* and a *ya*.

*Weak* verbs in Arabic may have two or three weak letters as: *waqa(y)*, (to preserve, to guard), *ra(y)*, (to see), *'awa(y)*, (to betake oneself to), i.e., *doubly* or *trebly weak verbs*.

Following the classification of the Verb in the Grammar of classical Arabic, the Maltese Verb may be in a more simplified and synthetical way classified as follows:

*Sound and Weak Verbs*: The *Sound* verbs are those, the radicals of which are all strong sounds, whereas the *Weak* verbs are those, broadly speaking, of which one or more of their radicals are weak sounds.

A *Surd* verb which in Arabic is classified as *Imperfect* sound verb (*ṣaḥīḥ*) should, therefore, be included under the strong verb differing from the *Perfect* strong verb in its structural mono-syllabic characteristic. Originally such a verb must have had a disyllabic form of structure, the vowel between the last two letters being dropped and the second radical joined with the third which in Arabic is marked with تشديد. The *surd* verb is therefore often described by grammarians as *Doubled Verb*.

In classifying the strong or *sound* Maltese verb, an exception has been made in the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, published by the Society of Maltese Writers (1924) as regards verbs having ع as a third quiescent radical, such verbs being reckoned as *weak* in view of the weakness of the said radical ع which, in some verbal inflections, changes into ya.

E. F. Sutcliffe's in his *Grammar of the Maltese Language* (1936) classifies such verbs with the *weak* verbs, most probably in this particular instance following the views of the compilers of the *Tagħrif*.

Although as one of the members of the Society's Commission entrusted with the drafting of the orthographical and grammatical rules, I was mainly responsible for the compilation of the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, embodying the principles of the rules of Maltese Morphology, in revising the classification of the Maltese Verb in my Maltese Grammars (*Tagħlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, 1st and 2nd Books) published in 1936 and 1938 respectively, with further editions, I included the verbs with a final  $\varepsilon$ , orthographically indicated by ' with the *strong* or *sound* verbs.

My opinion that such verbs should be treated as *sound* verbs is based on the following morphological facts: (a) the  $\varepsilon$ , though silent, is not a *weak* letter, though in Maltese it may be regarded as the weakest among the *strong* sounds; grammarians of the Arabic language define the weak verbs as strictly those of which one or more radicals are either a *waw* or *ya*; (b) as the permutation of  $\varepsilon$  into  $\zeta$  occurs only in the 1st and 2nd persons, singular and plural of the Perfect Tense and not throughout the inflection of the verb, such verbs should be considered as anomalous *strong* verbs rather than weak verbs. If such verbs were considered as *weak* they would not have any other parallel pattern in Maltese to justify a departure from the ordinary classification of *strong* verbs. They are not the reverse case of the *weak* Maltese verbs *laqa'* and *baqa'* which have changed throughout their verbal inflections the last radical  $\zeta$  into an  $\varepsilon$  and have become in Maltese *strong* verbs, though originally they belonged to the defective verbs.

Such participial form as *maqtul* (killed) is the grammatical pattern of past participles of verbs with a final  $\varepsilon$ . Cfr. *merfugħ* (raised) from *rafa'* (to raise); *milqugħ* (received, welcomed, entertained) from *laqa'* (to receive, entertain, etc.) whereas the corresponding participial form with a final *ya* (or *waw*) has for its grammatical pattern the form *merħi(j)* from *reħa(j)* (to let go, to give up, etc.) the last *ya* being absorbed by the long vowel  $\bar{i}$ , reappearing with the feminine suffix *a* in *merħija*. Such participial form is characteristically the grammatical pattern of *weak* verbs with final *ya*. Cfr. *mitfugħ* (thrown) from *tafa'* (to throw) vis-à-vis *mitf(j)* (extinguished) from *tefa* (to put out the light) with a final *ya*.

Before the publication of the *Għaqda's Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, we find but very slight traces of the classification of the Maltese Verb in Maltese Grammars. Neither De Soldanis' grammar and M. A. Vassalli's two grammars (Latin and Italian editions) nor Panzavecchia's and F. Vella's grammars contain the slightest system of classification according to the

nature of Maltese Verbs. In Panzavecchia's *Grammatica della Lingua Maltese* (1845) Maltese verbs with weak radical letters are completely ignored, and such verbs of the type *wasal*, *dar*, *mexa* are unscientifically considered as defective, because their stems, in the opinion of the author, do not consist of three radical letters, the *waw* and the *ya* being considered as vowels.

The classification of the verb, as generally dealt with in all Semitic text books particularly Arabic, to which Maltese morphologically is very akin, obviously, for practical purposes, does not seem to have been appreciated in Panzavecchia's Grammar, the division of verbs in classes being based only on the basis of the vocalization of the stems with respect to their different conjugations.

G. Vassallo in his treatises on the Maltese Orthography based on Maltese phonetics and morphology, published under the titles *Il-Muġtieħ tal-Kitba Maltija* (1910), *L'Ortografia Maltese* (1928), *It-Tieni Muġtieħ tal-Kitba Maltija* (1931) and *The Catbicism of the Maltese Orthography* (1932), deals with the inflection of the verbs without not even defining the nature of the verbal roots, hence he omits entirely the classification of the Maltese Verb. The same omission may be noticed in B. Roudanovsky's *Maltese Pocket Grammar* (1910) and *Quelques Particularités du Dialecte Arabe de Malte* (1911).

No systematic classification of the Maltese Verb as detailed in classical Arabic is given in Clio's (alias Dr. G. Micallef, a Maltese scholar) *Lessons on Maltese Grammar* which were published in instalments in the *Malta Chronicle and Imperial Services Gazette* (1935-6), such classification being obviously, in the opinion of the author, of no substantial importance in so far as the morphological and inflexional nature of the Maltese Verbs is considered in comparison with Arabic Grammar.

The *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija* was the first attempt as a first text book of Maltese spelling and grammar to provide, although with some imperfect grammatical details, an elementary system of the classification of the Maltese Verb. The main object in the compilation of this book, according to the terms of reference of the *Għaqda's* Commission (1920), was to establish on the basis of morphological rules, a standard book of reference for a uniform Maltese spelling to be adopted by the Maltese writers. Under these circumstances, the Commission's report outlining views on the matter was not intended to satisfy scientific grammatical details of a rather complicated nature. In the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija* verbs are grouped into two main classes: the *sound* verb (*sbih*) comprising the triradical verbs with a short light accent of the pattern *qatel* and the *defective* verb (*nieqes*) comprising five kinds of verbs, i.e., (a) the monosyllabic (*surds*)

verbs with a reduplicated second radical letter, characterized by a stressed short accent; (b) the hollow verbs with two consonants and a vowel of prolongation between them; (c) verbs with a first radical *w* called assimilative verbs like *wižen* (he weighed); (d) verbs with a third radical *weak* letter *ya* or *waw* or an *alif* which is never represented in the Maltese alphabet, and (e) verbs with two weak radical letters. Ex: *xewa*, *ghewa*.

The word defective (*nieqes*) is used in lieu of the more acceptable description *weak*. The striking discrepancy in the classification of these verbs lies in the inclusion of the *surds* which are admittedly considered by all authoritative grammarians of the Arabic Language as *Imperfect*. *Sound Verbs*, with the exception of Sapeto who, in his *Grammatica dello Arabo Volgare* (1860) includes the *surds* in the list of the *weak* verbs owing to their irregular or anomalous form, though they do not contain *weak* letters. Their inflections in the Perfect Tense follows that of the verbs with a weak third radical by analogy, and the compilers of the *Tagħrif*, besides following Sapeto's classification of the verb, must have been unduly influenced by such analogy. (See Bibliography at p. IX in the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija*)

As already pointed out, no proper classification of verbs appears to have been given in former Maltese grammars.

The *Muġtieb tal-Chitba Maltija* (Key to the Maltese Orthography) by G. Vassallo (1902) enumerates, without classifying, the kinds of trilateral primitive verbs, i.e., the regular trilateral verbs, including the assimilative verbs (with a first radical *waw*); verbs with a third radical *j* (*ya*), and the *surds*, and finally the monosyllabic verbs with a long vowel, known as verbs of the 9th form and which in Vassallo's book pp. 58-9, are wrongly included with the Primitive Trilateral Verbs. My *Manual of Maltese Orthography and Grammar* (1929), published to provide Government officials with a practical test handbook for learning Maltese Spelling according to the system then obtaining in such Government Departments as were using the official Maltese orthography, does not contain any classification of verbs, but divides the Primitive form of the Maltese verb according to the roots existing in the verbal ground-form, considering that the compilation of the book had for its main practical aim the building up of elementary rules for the grammatical spelling of Maltese.

Besides grammars and manuals of Maltese orthography, one must note that some lexicographers, particularly authors of etymological dictionaries, have, in their introductory notes, dealt with basic principles and rules of Maltese Grammar. Of these are worth mentioning the following lexicons and philological works: *Vocabolario della Lingua Maltese preceduto da un Compendio della stessa Favella* (1903) by Antonio Emanuele

Caruana; *Dizionario Maltese-Arabo-Italiano con una Grammatica comparata Arabo-Maltese* by D. Giuseppe Barbera (Vol. I, 1939-xvii) and *Malta Cananea ossia Investigazioni Filologico-Etimologiche nel Linguaggio Maltese* by Annibale Preca (1904).

Caruana's system of classification of verbs under the designation of 'forms' is not based on any recognized grammatical or scientific principles, the paradigms of such classification consisting of nine 'forms' on the following patterns: *kiteb*, *wasal*, *medd*, *mela*, *kewa*, *rtab*, *qam*, *ta* and *qarben*. The classification, as shown by these patterns, does not in any way correspond to that of the standard system followed by Arabic and Maltese grammarians. Barbera's synoptical table of the classification of the verb under an Arabic designation as shown in his introductory treatise (under the heading *Grammatica*) of his Dictionary, may be considered as the most acceptable classification only from an academical point of view as it is to a certain extent based on the classification of classical Arabic, but it is far from applicable to the dialectal verbal patterns of Maltese.

Preca in the *Prolegomena* of his *Malta Cananea* deals with the classification of the Maltese verb dividing its different kinds into *categorie* or classes, without, however, following the methodical division of either the classical classification of the Arabic Language or of its dialects, though it is implicitly admitted that the structure and morphological development of the Maltese verb is characteristically Arabic. Thus Preca divides the Maltese verb into the following five classes: 1st Class: Pattern: *Qatel* which is called *Perfect* or *Sound verb*. 2nd Class: Pattern: *Rema*, *jarmi*, which is called *Defective verb*. 3rd Class: Patterns: *Miet*, *imut* and *sab*, *isib*, which are called *Concave verbs*. Preca notes that the 2nd radical in Arabic is a *ya*, a *waw* or an *Alif*. 4th Class: Pattern: *Temm* which is called *surd verb*. 5th Class: (quadrilateral verbs) divided into two subclasses: (a) Pattern: *TeP-TeF* (duplicate biliteral) which is called (in Hebrew and Arabic) *Reduplicated*. (b) Pattern: *Har-BaT* (consisting of two different biliteral roots).

Preca adds other verbs of a *heteroclite* nature: verbs with hypothetical *Alif* or with an *Alif* and a *Y*; Patterns: *Ibber*, (root ABR); *ibbies* (root ABS); *emmen* (root AMN); etc.

Preca ends his list of the classification of Maltese verbs with other patterns which he considers as of a heterogeneous nature owing to the presence of the *waw* as one of the radicals of the verbal stem either as an initial or as a medial radical. Such are patterns belonging to (a) verbs with initial *waw* as in *wasal*, *waqaf*, etc., which grammarians usually include in the class of *Assimilative verbs*; (b) verbs with formative *waw* denoting a causative action, corresponding to Hebrew Conjugation *Hip'il*

as in *wennes*, *wera*, *wemmen*, which grammarians usually describe as derived from a primitive root with a change of a hemzated *Alif* into the weak *waw*.

Whereas Preca compares with an admirable and particular way the Maltese verbal Forms with those of the Arabic Language and points out their morphological similarity in structure and meaning, he practically ignores the applicability of the Classification of Arabic Verbs in his grammar.

My *Taghlim, fuq il-Kitba Maltija* (2nd book) consisting of lessons on Maltese Orthography and Grammar, published for the first time in 1938 for the Secondary and Lyceum Classes when Maltese was introduced as an obligatory subject in the schools, appears to be the only grammar which has classified the verb according to the system so far followed in the best Arabic Grammar texts. The first edition of this grammar was followed by other editions and reprints, amended and revised.

Before proceeding to show the method of classification in the *Taghlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, it is necessary to make a comparative study of the various methods of classification of the verb so far adopted by the grammarians of classical and spoken Arabic languages, particularly of the Arabic dialects which are spoken in the coastal lands of North Africa as well as Egypt and Syria.

One of the earliest grammars of Vulgar Arabic is Caussin de Percival's *Grammaire Arabe Vulgaire* (1843). It deals with Arabic Dialects in the Levant and the Barbary States. Verbs in this grammar are mainly divided into *Regular* and *Irregular*, the Regular Verbs being those verbs of which the Preterite (perfect) contains three radicals of which none is a *weak* letter (*alif*, *waw*, or *ya*) or a doubled letter (*surds*) and the Irregular verbs comprising the *Surds* and the *Hemzated* verbs. In the case of the *Surds*, a *ya* is inserted in the 1st and 2nd persons of the Preterite (perfect) between the last doubled letter and the pronominal suffixes, as in Maltese and other Arabic dialects. Ex: *meddejt*, *meddejna*, *meddejt*. *Weak* verbs are especially classified as *Imperfect* verbs (i.e., the *Assimilative*, *Hollow* and *Defective* verbs: verbs with the first, third or with the second and third *weak* sounds).

J.B. Belot's *Cours Pratique de Langue Arabe* (a revised new edition 1902), (Syrian Arabic) classifies as: *sound* (*Sâlim*) the verb the radicals of which consist of strong letters, that is, verbs which have not for their radicals any of the weak letters *alif*, *waw* and *ya*. Such verbs include the trilateral verbs of the type: *kataba*, the quadrilateral verbs *رَبَّاعِي* of the form: *عَرَطَل*, the *surds* of the type: *مَمَّ*; the hemzated verbs, having a *hemza* as one of the radicals; the *surds* and the hemzated verbs being considered also by grammarians as sound verbs.

The *weak* or *infirm* verbs, having one or more of the letters *waw* or *ya* as one of their radicals are subdivided into: *Assimilative* having for their first radical a *waw* or a *ya*. Ex: *يَسَّرَ*; *Hollow* or *Concave* verbs having for their second radical a *waw* or a *ya*. Ex: *فَسَّلَ*, *بَاعَ*; *Defective* (*nâqis*) having for their third letters a *waw* or a *ya*. Ex: *رَمَى عَزَى*.

In *The Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia* by the Rev. John Van Ess, M.A. (Oxford University Press) verbs are divided into *Regular* and *Irregular*, the Regular comprising verbs which have a regular form equivalent to the paradigm *kataba* the radical letters of which are strong; while the Irregular verbs are (a) those verbs in which the root contains one or more *weak* letters, i.e., *waw*, *ya*, *alif*; (b) verbs in which the second and third radicals are the same, *radd*, *mess*, and (c) verbs containing a *hemza*.

A.O. Green's *A Practical Arabic Grammar* 1901 (Egyptian Arabic) classifies the verb into *Regular* and *Irregular*. The *Regular* verbs consist of dissyllabic verbs with strong radicals; the *Irregular* verbs comprising the (a) *Surds* or *Doubled* verbs; (b) *Infirm* or *Imperfect* verbs, consisting of verbs with one or more weak radicals; the *waw* or *ya*; including the *Hemzated* verbs.

Fr. Alberto Vaccari's *L'Arabo Scritto e l'Arabo Parlato in Tripolitania* which purports to be a practical elementary grammar of written and spoken Arabic in Tripolitania, and meant to teach Arabic on rather practical lines, does not classify the verbs according to their regular and irregular forms, but simply divides them into sound or weak verbs. Such verbs as *surds* or *duplicated* verbs, *hemzated* and *weak* verbs, are dealt with in great detail as regards their inflections.

*L'Arabe Parlé Tunisien* by J. Clermont (1909) following the same practical method divides verbs into *Sound* and *Weak*; *sound* verbs comprising verbs with strong radicals; *weak* verbs comprising verbs having the first, second and third weak radicals (*waw*, *ya*). The *sound* verbs include also verbs with *hemza*.

J. Machuel's *Grammaire Élémentaire d'Arabe Régulier*, (1892) which is a manual of Algerian Arabic divides the verbs into *Regular* and *Irregular*. The former comprise verbs the root of which does not contain any weak letters and of which the second and the third radicals are not similar as in the case of the *surds*; the latter comprise the *Surds*, the *Assimilative*, the *Hollow*, the *Defective* (having for their third radical a weak letter; *waw* or a *ya*) and the *Hemzated* verbs. In this manual an additional classification comes under the heading of *Verbs Doubly Irregular*, these being verbs known as *Assimilative* and *Surds*; *Assimilative* and *Hollow*; *Assimilative* and *Defective*; *Assimilative* and *Hemzated*; *Assimilative*, *Hemzated* and *Defective*; *Hemzated* and *Hollow*; *Hemzated* and *Defective*;

*Hollow and Hemzated; Hollow and Defective verbs.*

Such irregular verbs are not easily met with in other Arabic dialects. Such verbs as still occur, as they do in Maltese, have in their verbal inflections assumed a simpler form than that of their original classical morphological structure.

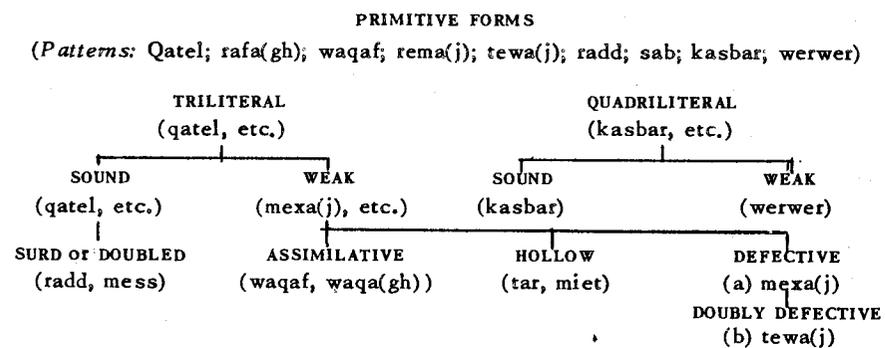
M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes et L. Mercier's *Manuel d'Arabe Marocain* follows also the simple practical method we have seen adopted in several other manuals of the Arabic dialects. In the conjugation of the normal verbs and in that of the non-normal verbs, such as the *Surds*, the *Concave* and the *Hemzated* verbs, including the abnormal quadrilateral verbs, some peculiarities are pointed out which make the Moroccan verbal conjugation different from that of classical Arabic and Arabic dialects.

Other grammars of Spoken Arabic published since the last century have more or less adopted a practical, simple method in dealing with the classification of the verb. The difference in the various methods lies mainly in the different principles distinguishing the *Sound* from the *Weak* verb or the *Regular* from the *Irregular* and in avoiding the elaborate system of the classification of the classical verb, which, though interesting from a scholarly point of view, makes the teaching of Spoken Arabic too unnecessarily cumbersome for the ordinary students.

By way of recapitulation, it may be said that such classification is limited to the subdivisions of the Primitive Trilateral and Quadrilateral Verbs, both including the *Sound* and the *Weak* verbs, the form *qatel* (Ar. قَاتَلَ) of the trilateral verb being taken as the proto-type of the Maltese Verb, as far as the grammatical classification in the Maltese language is concerned in this particular study.

The following is a synoptical table of the Classification of the Maltese Verb according to the *Tagħlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija*:

SYNOPTICAL TABLE OF MALTESE VERBS



NOTE: There are no Maltese examples of Treble Weak or Defective Verbs.

It is quite evident that the classification of the Maltese Verb does not follow those of classical Arabic as it is found in some texts of the Arabic language, and that such detailed classification is not followed in any of the Grammars of Vulgar Arabic used in schools. In Maltese, a living spoken language, the classification of the Verb on the model of classical Arabic would serve no useful purpose. Its value would be purely scholarly or theoretical.

The classification of verbs in the *Tagħlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija* (2nd book) tackles two controversial groups. These are (a) verbs having 3rd radical 'ayn, which in the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija* and in Sutcliffe's *Grammar of the Maltese Language* are classified as *Weak*, and (b) *Doubled Verbs* or *Surds* which in the *Tagħlim*, are listed with the *Strong* verbs (*Shāh*) and more particularly in classical Arabic, as Imperfect Sound verbs, consisting of strong radicals, their original ground-form being presumably that of the dyssyllabic verbs like: *sadd*, *hatt*, for *sadad*, *hatat*, and their behaviour in their participial inflection being quite identical to the *strong* verbs. Cfr. *merjugħ* from *rafa'*, (Ar. رَفَعَ) *maqtul* from *qatel* (Ar. قَاتَلَ) and *misdud* from *sadd* (Ar. سَدَّ) *maħtut* from *hatt* (Ar. حَطَّ) quite different from the participial forms of the weak: *mitfi*, *merħi*, although their conjugation in the 1st and 2nd persons, sing. and plur. Perfect Tense is formed on the analogy of the *weak* verbs: *saddejt*, *saddejtna*, *saddejtu*; *ħattejt*, *ħattejtna*, *ħattejtu*. Sutcliffe classifies them under the separate designation of *Verbs with Reduplicated Middle Radicals*, and the *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija* classifies such verbs with the *Infirm* verbs (*Neqsin*).

The loss of the *Alif* in the hemzated Arabic verbs has, in Maltese, as in some Arabic dialects too, evolved an anomalous and irregular verbal form. Cfr. *Kiel* for the Arabic كَلَّمَ (cfr. also Hebrew כָּלַם) *ħa(d)* for (Ar. أَحَدَ) which in the Perfect and Imperative behave like Höllow verbs, and in the Imperfect like a normal hemzated verb, the *Alif*, instead of being assimilated, has been lengthened by way of compensation. Ex: *Niekol*, *tiekol*, etc. So also in the case of the verb *ħa(d)*; *nieħu*, *tieħu*, etc.

The following are traces of the hemzated verbs which are still found in the spoken language: *amar* (Ar. أَمَرَ), *emmen* (Ar. أَمِنَ), and in rare cases with *ya* as first radical. Cfr. *ibies*, *ibbies*; the *ya* in the 2nd form inserting a *w*. Ex: *webbes*. So also *wiegeb* from the Arabic أَجَبَ (to answer). In the case of *emmen*, the *Alif* is substituted by *w* in the 2nd form *wemmen*, (to cause to believe).

As an instance of traces of verbs with 2nd hemzated radical we may quote the monosyllabic *ra* (Ar. رَأَى). The verb originally consisting of the stem: *r-alif-y*, the omission of the *alif* in Maltese having caused the contracted form *ra*. The same contracted form is also traceable in the verb

gie from the original: ġ-ya-alif.

Instances of verbs having an *alif* with *hemza* as a third radical are the Maltese verbs *beda* (Ar. بَدَأَ) and *qara* (Ar. قَرَأَ). They are particularly distinguished from their cognate class of weak verbs by the ending of the vowel *a* in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons singular of the Imperfect Tense instead of the characteristic vowel *i* in similar defective verbs. Cfr. *ibda* (begin), *tibda* [you, she, begin(s)], *jibda* (he begins), and *nimxi* (I walk), *timxi* (you, she walk(s)), *jimxi* (he walks).

An anomaly in the ending of the last vowel of the Imperfect Tense sing. is to be noticed, however, in the case of some weak verbs of the same class which, though having an original *ya* (يَا) as a third radical, end also in *a* in the Imperfect Tense sing. 1st, 2nd and 3rd pers. Cfr. the verbs: *dara*, *nesa*, of which the corresponding verbal inflection of the Imperfect Tense, sing. is the following: *nidra*, *tidra*, *jidra*, *ninsa*, *jinsa*. Such verbs have also followed the same final vocalization in the verbal inflection of the plural persons in the same tense as in the case of *weak* verbs with the original *alif* and *hemza* as a third radical. Cfr. *nidraw*, *tidraw*, *jidraw*, *ninsew*, *tinsew*, *jinsew*.

The discrepancy in the final vocalization of such verbs with a final weak consonant, in my opinion, is to be accounted for by a morpho-phonological development, parallels of which may, perhaps, be met with in some Arabic dialects of the Mediterranean African coastland.

In the case of such *weak* verbs as *tesa*, *rema*, *mexa*, etc., having *ya* as third weak radical, this *ya* is obviously vocalized into the homogeneous vowel sound of *i* in the conjugation of the Imperfect Tense, sing. [Cfr. Ar. نَطَفَى *nitfajj*] the *ya* being elided or absorbed into the preceding vowel sound of *i*.

In the case of such *weak* verbs as *beda*, *qara*, the final *a* representing *alif* is left unchanged, it being assimilated with the preceding vowel sound of *a*. By an analogous assimilation other anomalous *weak* verbs of the patterns *dara*, *nesa*, adopt the same suffix in the Imperfect Tense, the *ya* being replaced by an *alif* or the vowel sound of *a*.

The morpho-phonological development of the *plural conjugation* of the Imperfect Tense of the two different types of verbs with final weak radical (*ya* and *alif*) is explained in the following processes: (i) In the case of *weak* verbs with final *ya*, the suffix *u* in *nitfu* [from *tefa(j)*] stands for *nitfju* (Cfr. the pattern *nirkbu*), the *ya* being elided or phonetically absorbed. (ii) In the case of *weak* verbs with final original *alif* (including some anomalous *weak* verbs with final *ya*, replaced by an identical *a* in the sing. persons of the Imperfect Tense) the suffix is the diphthong *aw* when the vowel sequence in the stem is *a-a* and the diphthong *ew* when

the vowel sequence of the stem is *e-a*. Ex: *Naqraw* from *qara*; *nibdeu* from *beda*; *nidraw* from *dara*; *ninsew* from *nesa*, etc.

The diphthongs *aw* and *ew* similarly occur in the conjugation of the Perfect Tense of the above class of *weak* verbs in the third person plural as in *qraw*, *bdew*; *draw*, *insew*, etc., whereas in all other persons sing. and plur. the *alif* of the third radical changes into *aj*, *ej*. Cfr. *Qrajt*, *bdejt*, *qrajna*, *bdejna*; *drajt*, *drajna*, *insejt*, *insejna*, i.e., those with vowel sequence *a-a* change into *aj*, whilst those with vowel sequence *e-a* change into *ej*.

Some Maltese verbs with an original third radical *ya* have changed the *ي* into the sound of *ع* and followed the class of triradical verbs ending in a final *ayn*. Cfr. *Laqa'* and *baqa'*. In the place-name of *San Pawl Milqi* (an old historical spot on the western side of the Island traditionally known as the summer dwelling place or villa of St. Publius's father where shipwrecked St. Pawl on his landing in Malta was sheltered) still goes back to the old Maltese participial form of the Arabic verb *مَلَقَى*.

As a corollary of my comparative analysis of the classification of the Maltese verb vis-à-vis the classification of Classical Arabic and the various Arabic Dialects akin to Maltese, it is quite obvious that, so far, Maltese scholars and some foreign grammarians in dealing with such verbal classification have followed different methods.

Some of such methods belonging to the earliest period of morphological studies by Maltese grammarians, are built on old theories which show inadequate appreciation of the linguistic material dealt with. It must be therefore acknowledged that it is owing to a further attempt of a deeper study of the morphology of the Maltese Language that it has been found possible to establish a standard classification in our latest grammars based on grammatical sound principles from a linguistic point of view.

NOTE: The transcription used in the examples of Maltese words follows the orthographical system of the *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti* (Association of Maltese Writers) in which some special Maltese letters as *x* (ش), *j*, *ġ* (ج), *għ* (غ or ع) and *z* (ز) correspond to the Arabic letters shown in brackets.