

A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN MIXED MALTESE

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THE SOCIAL USE OF LOAN WORDS

Loan words in Maltese are so numerous that they feature in most departments of our social life, especially those that are the products of a later post-Arabic civilization. Romance loan words, generally Mediaeval Sicilian or Italian, are used for the names of:—

1. *most sacred things*, including religion, its rites, celebrations, Church and ecclesiastical vestments. In this connection, very interesting are the religious names of Syriac origin which we have already mentioned.

2. *the twelve months of the year*, wind directions except *nofs-inhar*, south; *rih isfel*, south east wind and *rih fuq*, north west wind.

3. *a considerable number of parental relationships*. It is interesting to note in this connection that while the Maltese name for "father" 'missier' is of Romance origin, the names for "mother" 'omm' is Semitic. Very likely, as in England, the Normans that conquered Malta married native wives, each retaining the native word for "father" and "mother" respectively.

4. *most medicaments* as *porga*, ingwent etc.

5. *most objects usually associated with the "City"* though the city itself and its bastions have Semitic names.

6. *most objects connected with the household including the dining room and the bed room*, though the house itself and several of its constituent structures as the 'roof', 'the floor' etc. have Semitic names.

7. *most objects connected with liquors, victuals and kitchen* excepting the primitive kinds of food such as *bajd*, eggs, *hobż*, bread, etc.

8. *a good number of fruits and fruit trees*, though as a whole these are predominantly Semitic.

9. *the greater number of wild trees, flowers and odoriferous plants; wild quadrupeds; birds and some of the domestic fowls*.

10. *plants and seeds* but the majority are Semitic.

11. *fish and shell fish*, a majority of which is Semitic.

12. *most metals, minerals and precious stones*.

13. *most objects connected with the navy and navigation or shipping in general, parts of ships, the army, military and naval ranks*.

Interesting exceptions are: *gifen* (North African) ship; *qlugh*, sails; *moqdief*, oar; and *mirkeb* (obsolete if ever used) ship. The origin of *dghajsa* is unknown, but it is very likely Romance. It occurs also in Spanish Arabic (see Dozy, *Supplement aux Dictionnaires Arabes*). As for "armiral" the word, though ultimately Arabic, was directly borrowed from the Italian. *Dejma* is Archaic Semitic Maltese for "standing army."

14. *most objects connected with entertainments* as *ballu*, ball compared with which Semitic Maltese "*żfin*", dancing, is general, including *sports*, names of which are generally English as football, goal, foul, tennis, etc.

15. *most objects connected with education* in general excepting such primitive names as *ktieb*, book; *qara*, to read; *kiteb*, to write; *ghadd*, to count; *ghallem*, to teach; *tghallem*, to learn; *taghlim*, teaching or learning etc.

16. *most occupations* such as needlework, objects connected with it, *trades, professions, the arts* and their respective *technical words*.

In this connection the translation of our laws affords excellent opportunity for the study and development of legal Maltese, so far left all to itself. This language or rather pro-