

Arabic Elements in Sardinia

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Foreword

In this paper I present new linguistic, historical and bibliographical data to be added to my previous articles on the relationship between the Sardinians and the Arabs which I have published in the last fifteen years¹.

This work utilises some of the contents of a paper on Sicily, Sardinia and the Arabs which Prof. Salma Khadra Jayyusi is going to publish for Brill in a book on Arabic heritage: I thank her for her permission to use a part of the paper that I sent to Prof. Jayyusi in December 2010. I also thank Prof. Arie Schippers and Prof. Alex Metcalfe for their bibliographical information.

1 The Arabs and Sardinia

The first mention of *Sardāniya*, the name of Sardinia in Arabic sources is that of 703-704; since that year, but anticipated – in the opinion of Kaegi – by an attack against Olbia, a port town in the North of Sardinia, in 661-62², *ḡaṣawāt* against this island were organized in 705/706, 707/708, 710/711, 732, 735 (or 737), 752/753, 807, 809, 813, 816/817, 821/822, 934/935 (or 935/936)³.

Sardinia was conquered by Muḡāhid al-‘Āmīrī, a Christian slave who was one of the *Mulūk al-Tawā’if*, the small kingdoms into which al-Andalus was divided when the Omayyad caliphate collapsed. Muḡāhid occupied Denia and the Balears and planned to extend his power in the Mediterranean by organizing a military expedition against Sardinia. The island was divided at the beginning of the 11th century into four independent kingdoms called *Judikatos* (kingdoms of a *Judike* = lit. “Judge”): Cagliari, Arborea, Torres and Gallura, which can be considered a division of the territory that was originally unified under the Byzantine Archon of Cagliari.

After the Muslim occupation of North Africa and Spain, between the 7th and 8th centuries, and of Sicily in the 9th century, the ties between Sardinia and Byzantium were deeply weakened and the Sardinians had to base the defence of their island mainly on their own forces. Sardinia was in fact the South Western bulwark of Christianity in the High Middle Ages and its resistance to the invaders was well-known. In the 12th century Idrīsī noted

that Sardinians were *mutabarbirin* (“Barbaricins”)⁴, never abandoned their arms and left no attack unavenged.

Attacked several times and obliged to pay the *ǧiḏya* at least once, Sardinia was conquered by Muḡāhid in the years 405/1014-1015⁵ or 406/1015-1016⁶, 407/1016⁷, 409/1018-1019 and 410/1019-1020⁸, as classical Arabic sources stated. All sources, except al-Ḥimiyārī, confirm that this occupation lasted only a few months, after which Muḡāhid was defeated and forced to flee from the island. This was due not only to the resistance of the Sardinians, but also, and perhaps mainly, to the alliance of Genoa and Pisa whose fleets cooperated following adept diplomacy by the Pope.

The end of Muslim power opened the doors of Sardinia to Christian invaders. It fell first under Pisan and Genoan control, then it passed to Genoa alone when Pisa was defeated by the Genoese, then to the Catalans in 1326 and finally to the kingdom of Spain which occupied Sardinia, Sicily and Southern Italy (end of the 15th century). These regions remained under Spanish rule up to 1720 when Sardinia was given to the Savoys, becoming, together with Savoy, Piedmont and Liguria, the kingdom of Sardinia and forming the first nucleus of the future kingdom of Italy.

Sardinia and other towns of Mediterranean did not suffer as before from the Muslim attacks in the period between the 11th and 15th centuries, but a long period of pillaging, sacking and slavery commenced when the Ottomans occupied Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli which became the pirate capitals of the Turk corsairs of Berberia. Piratery, which was also undertaken by European corsairs, plagued the Mediterranean from the beginning of the 16th century to the first half of the 19th century when Europeans started the occupation of the Arab countries.

During the colonial occupation, the relations between the Arabs and Sardinians continued as they were in medieval times: alongside wars and skirmishes, pacific relations and commercial exchanges also developed in modern times.

A new era then started, after Arab countries gained their independence in the last century, characterized by commercial and diplomatic relations. Recently a new phase has emerged, marked by the presence in Italy of Arab migrant workers and the new phenomenon of political refugees who use Sardinia and especially Sicily as a door through which to enter the rest of Italy and Europe.

Since the appearance of the Arabs in the Mediterranean in the 7th century the relations between this people and the European countries have been continuous, characterized not only by wars, victims, slaves, conquests,

military occupations and pillaging, but also by the exchange of the intellectual, as well as commercial products of Muslim civilization.

2 Linguistic elements

If we compare the Arabic influence in Sardinia with that in Sicily, we must first of all note that in this last island, where the Muslims dominated for more than two centuries, Arabic was the last of a series of languages, such as Latin and Greek, which deeply influenced the language spoken. The influence of Arabic in Sicily is proportional to the numerous pages that the Arab authors dedicated to describing it, differently from Sardinia description of which is very short, as was the period of the invasion of Muğāhid.

Nevertheless, the linguistic elements present in Sicilian languages and dialects permit us to compare them with the similar items which are present in the Sardinian language.

No differently from the history which has been an object of study since the 19th century, when Amari found and studied Arabic manuscripts and composed his *Biblioteca arabo-sicula* and the *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, also the linguistic influence of Arabic on the Sicilian language and dialects has been deeply studied in a considerable volume of works⁹.

As for the Arabic elements in the Sardinian language, few items are present in the island and this field of research has yet to gain momentum. In these last years, I have undertaken initial studies in order to organize the field for future researchers.

Arabismi medievali di Sicilia by Girolamo Caracausi (1980) can be considered the most complete glossary of the items of Arabic origin in Sicily and is used in this paper as the basis for comparison with the Arabic elements in Sardinian.

Caracausi first describes the routes along which Arabic elements penetrated Sicilian and European languages and indicates several possible pathways. Cortelazzo and Pellegrini underline the importance of trade: since medieval times the Italian Maritime Republics had extensive commercial contact with the Orient, and the ships laden with goods also carried less tangible items such as maritime, commercial and diplomatic terms.

Another route can be identified, in my opinion, in slavery and the renegades who lived on the borderline of *Dār al-Islām* and Christendom especially after the Ottomans established their rule in North Africa at the beginning of the 16th century and inaugurated a period in which pirates and corsairs troubled the Mediterranean for about three centuries.

Other elements entered at the time of Colonialism, when the European languages left their cultural and linguistic influence on the Arabic language and dialects but also became enriched with Arabic words.

Nevertheless identifying with certainty the source of an Arabic item in a European language is often somewhat arduous, especially when we find it in a region which has been conquered by peoples whose languages had been exposed to Arabic influences, for example, the Catalans and the Spanish. This is the case in Sicily where there are Arabisms which arrived directly from Arabic after the Muslim conquest of 827 and others that came indirectly through Catalan or Spanish after the Aragonese conquered the island. Similarly, Sardinia, which was under the rule of Pisa and Genoa after the defeat of Muğāhid, was then conquered by the Aragonese. Therefore, when studying the influence of Arabic on the Sardinian language we must distinguish between Arabisms which arrived directly from Arabic, and others by way of the Genoese and Pisan dialects or the languages of the Iberian Peninsula.

A particular bridge of passage of Arabisms to Sardinia is represented by a Genoese community which was established on the islands of San Pietro and Sant'Antioco, in South West Sardinia, in 1738. This community had migrated from Ṭabarqa, an island off the coast of Tunis, that it had inhabited since 1540, the principal economic activities being fishing and coral working. These islanders had had commercial and social relations with Tunis which continued after their emigration to the islands of San Pietro and Sant'Antioco, so much so, that in 1810, Francesca Rosso of Carloforte, a town in Sant'Antioco, became the only wife of Bey Muṣṭafā and mother of Ḥamid who was destined to become Sidi Ahmed Bey "the Sardinian"¹⁰.

These two islands represent the center from which the direct Arabic elements in Sardinian emanate. These are, however, "very few" in the opinion of Max Leopold Wagner, the founder of the scientific study of the Sardinian language, who published groundbreaking research in the first half of the 20th century¹¹.

Another question to be studied is how the Jews, who adopted Arabic or Arabic dialects, contributed to the spread of Arabic elements in Sardinia where they were present in the 15th century in the ghettos or *aljamas* of the towns of Alghero, Sassari and Cagliari¹², as they did in Sicily¹³. A recent publication I examined in writing this paper is *Diccionario de Arabismos*, the 2007 edition *Recopilacion de algunos nombres arábigos, que los árabes (en España, Francia y Italia) pusieron a algunas ciudades, y a otras muchas cosas (=DA)*, which Diego de Guadix, "intéprete de la lengua árabe en el Sancto Oficio de la Inquisición de la ciudad Granada y de su Reyno", wrote about in 1593.

A final note on a paper presented to the 25th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants at the Orientale of Naples (9-12th September 2010), in which Alex Metcalfe, following his research into Muslim and Norman Sicily pointed out that Arabic elements must also be seen in the light of the influence of the Latin and Greek languages which left their traces in the Arabic of Sicily¹⁴ and can offer the possibility of a confrontation with Sardinia where Punic, Latin, Greek and Byzantine Greek were written and spoken.

3 Differences and similarities between three items in Sicilian and in Sardinian.

The letter A is given for the Sicilian items and B for the corresponding Sardinian word.

Square brackets enclose the citations of other authors mentioned by the writer, which appear at the end of the sentence inside round brackets.

1.A *Alosa* > Ar. *al+lawz* (almond) and *lawza* (almond) (Wher 883); in Palermo 1424, in Sicily the term survived in some place names such as *Losera*, 'a *Lusia*, *Lausetum* (Caracausi 100-101). Cf. Anc. Sp. *alloza*, *arzolla* 'almendra verde' *izmalloz* (Granada) < *hišn al-lawz* 'Castillo del Amendro' (Pellegrini I 309, who quotes Avolio, Steiger, Asin Palacois, and others). *Lawz* "dans le Voc. sous amigdalū" (Dozy II 557, quoted also by Caracausi). In SA *lausetum*, *illeuczi*; *alosa[rum]* is an example of monophthongization from Ar. *aw* > SA *o* (Agius 347-348). Diego de Gaudix recorded that *alloza*, a corruption of *al+lawza* (=almond) is used in some parts of Spain for green almond (DA 74-75). The Ar. *lawz* is at the origin of the Berber *lwz* (Dallet 472) and the Amharic *läwz*, *loz*, *loze* (=nut, almond) (Leslau 11 and Leiper-Kane 100 and 103).

1.B In Sard. verb *allosai*, *losai* = "to pave" in the South and *losa* = "slab" in the North, have been indicated as words of Spanish origin (Spano-Paulis 82 and 326), or more exactly Anc. Sp. *allosar* (DES II 29). *Losa* = "tombstone" is in (Spano-Paulis 326) and Pittau adds to the meanings "slab" and "tombstone", "tomb" from Catal. *llosa* and Sp. *losa* (DILS I 592). Among the place names, we may note in Sard. "Nuraghe Losa" near Ghilarza, in the Province of Oristano. As a word of pre-Roman origin *losa* with the meaning of *pizarra* ("slab"), it is indicated by Corominas and Pascual (DECH III 698-699); the verb *lawšar* appears in Mozarabic writing of 1222 and the simple *lawša* = "lapis" in R. Martí (ibid. 699). The Catal. *llosa* with the same meaning, "stone", is studied and etymologized – on the basis of words of Greek origin (*λάς*, ibid., = *λάας* "stone") – as an Indo-

European term by Coromines (DECC V 271-274). From this discussion it seems that the theory of the Sard. term *losa* = “stone” being a word from Ar. , even if via Sp., must be abandoned or seen in the light of a Greek or Indo-European origin (cf. $\lambda\alpha\alpha\varsigma$ “une pierre lancée par un guerrier ou en général, se dit d’une pierre tombale”, Chantraine 609). If we accept this origin of the word it is probable that it passed into Ar. and from Ar. in the Romance languages of Spain.

In conclusion, for the two terms *alosa* and *losa*, while it is clear that in Sic. *alosa* = “almond” the Ar. origin is *al+lawz*, with the agglutination of *al*, in Sard. *losa* = “stone” presents different problems: if it is a pre-Roman word Sardinia must be added to the regions where the word has been found (Piedmont, Iberian Peninsula, Provence) as Coromines recorded (DECC V 271-274). If we accept a Sp. mediation in this case, the word could have been derived from the Ar. *lawsha* (pl. *lawsh*) “cadette, pierre carrée dont on pave les églises...losa para losar...suelo de losa” (Dozy II 557) or as de Gaudix noted in the 16th century, *losa*, corruption of Ar. *lawxa*, meaning “plane stone” and from that in Cast. Language derived the verb *losar* = “hazer, aderezar y solar con losas” (DA 299) and *mulawwash* = pavé de cadettes (Alc. In Dozy II 557). In Skr. I found that *rush* = *lush* means “to cover, strew smear” and that *rushita* signified “stewed, covered, soiled, smeared with, pounded , reduced to powder” (Monier-Williams 886-887).

2.A *Catusium* (Caracausi 166-167), 1159 n.p., 1309 Palermo) from Ar. *qādūs* (“water-wheel bucket, scoop”, Wher 736). Caracausi lists among the other meanings of *catusu* “sewerage” and “chamber-pot”.

2.B *Kaddótsu* means “dirty” and in the opinion of Wagner the etymology is prob. from *kaddu* (“horse”), even if he writes that *ótsu* (pronounced *oʒʒu*) is rare, but is present in some items of “accatto” (Wortbild. § DES I 258). The origin of the Sard. word is, in my opinion, not *kaddu*-horse but Ar. *qādūs*, even if we still need to identify the route through which it entered Sardinian language. Cf. also Agius who proposes this etym for CA *qādūs* < Gr. $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ or < lat. *cadus* > SA *catusu* (271 and 370); Ar. *qādūs* < Gr. $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ was already indicated by Fleisher in 1836 (cf. Dozy II 822-823 and Dozy I p. XXI). In describing the etymology of $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\varsigma$, Chantraine wrote: “Mot sémitique à supposer en phénicien, cf. hébr. *kad* «seau». Le terme se trouve aussi en ougaritique et en punique... $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ a fourni lat. *cadus*” (Chantraine 478). Gr. has also $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\delta\omicron\varsigma$, with the redoublement of δ with the same meaning of $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ (“vaso, brocca, secchio, anfora... urna ... cado”, Montanari 1022; cf. idem 1021), which can be considered nearest and explain the Sard. form of *kaddótsu*, whose ending *ótsu* is to be explained, in

my opinion, with the sardization of the Gr. termination ος; the Ar. influence can be seen the pejorative meaning of the Sic. *catusu* “sewerage” and “chamber-pot” which explain the abstraction “dirty”. If our analysis is correct Gr. *νάσδος* provided the base for using a foreign term, through Ar. and Sic., as a *nomen barbarum* to described taboo arguments such as magic and sex, as we have already noted in the Sardinian language¹⁵, and in this case a negative quality of a person.

3.A *Chalcu*, Monreale 1346. The Sic. item *chalco/chalcu* (appellative and place name?) corresponds to Ar. “*ḥalq* ‘guttur, fauces’ [Freytag I 418b], ‘bouche’, ‘l’embochure d’une rivière’, ‘un passage serré entre les montagnes, gorge de montagne’, ‘détroit’ ”. The same etymon has been indicated, by De Gregorio and Fiore, for the place name *Kalki* or *Halki* in Pantelleria (Caracausi 169-170).

3.B These indications by Caracausi could suggest an explanation of *Kyrkidelakis*, a place name found in a letter written by Pope Onorius the 3rd in 1221 referring to a “villa” of the Saracens in Sardinia. To explain this name I propose the hypothesis that it is composed of three parts to be read as *kyrki de lakis/Lakis*. The form of this name is no different from that which we find in the expression *Kastro de Mughette* (Κάστω δε Μουγέτη) = Castle of Muḡāhid, that we found in the *Charte sarde* of 1089, a document in Sardinian language written in Greek¹⁶. The fact that in the letter of the Pope there is reference to a place of Saracens could explained that the first part of the name *Kyrki* has the meaning of Ar. *ḥalq*.

Further research could permit us to identify and study similarities between the Sicilian dialect and Sardinian language, not only in nouns and verbs, but also in adverbial forms as we can find, e.g. in the reduplications of SA (from Gr. and/or Gr. Byz. τὴν ὁδὸν ὁδὸν >) *al-ṭariq al-ṭariq* > Lat. *per viam viam* of Norman time¹⁷ which could explain Sard. expressions with reduplications like *andare muru muru* = (lit.) to go wall wall (= along the wall, or ‘right along the road’¹⁸) *ghirare thiri-thiri* = (lit.) to come back *wet-wet* (= completely wet, after having been under the rain for long time).

Further research could permit us gauge the depth of the influence of Greek or Byzantine Greek, Latin and Arabic in the Sardinian language and examine the relationships and influences among these languages or other ancient tongues spoken and written in the island of Sardinia.

In December 2010 Sardinian researches informed the academical world that they had found in the archives of Pisa a new medieval document in Sardinian written in the Greek alphabet¹⁹. This discover, in confirming the importance of the Byzantines in Sardinia²⁰, proves how research in the

historical and linguistic fields may enrich our knowledge of the past of the Mediterranean in order to explain our cultural life of the present, fostering tolerance, comprehension and cooperation in our Era of globalization.

Abbreviations

AD = Anno Domini
adj. = adjective
Ar. = Arabic
Anc. = Ancient
BC = Before Christ
Byz. = Byzantine/s
c. = circa
Cal. = Calabrian
Camp. = Campidanese
Cat./Catal. = Catalan
Cl. = Classic/al
Cm = centimeter
d. see n.d.
dim. = diminutive
En. = English
Fr. = French
f./fem. = feminine
Gr. = Greek
héb. = hébreu
Kat./Katal. = Cat./Catal.
id. = idem
It./Ital. = Italian
Lat./lat. = Latin
Log. = Logudores
Lig. = Ligurian
lit. = literary
Lomb. = Lombard (ic)
Luc. = Lucan
Med./med. = Medieval/medieval
m = metre
m. = masculine
n. = noun
n.d. = no date
Neap. = Neapolitan
neu. = neutral
n.p. = no place
Port. = Portuguese
Pers. = Persian
prob. = probably
Prov. = Provençal
pl. = plural
p. see n.p.
Sp. = Spanish
Sard. = Sardinian
Sic. = Sicilian
SA = Siculo-Arabic
Skr. = Sanskrit

s. = somebody/someone
 sm = something
 Turk. = Turkish
 Ven. = Venetian

Transcription

’ b t ɫ ğ ħ ĩ d ɖ r z s š ʂ ɗ ʈ z ‘ ġ f q k l m n h w y

Vowels a i u and ā ī ū

Other abbreviations and transcriptions (like j = ğ, gh = ġ, ħ = kh, etc.) are in the texts of the quoted authors.

Notes

¹ Cf. Contu 1988, 1995, 1999, 2000/2001, 2001, 2002, 2002/2005, 2003/2005, 2004, 2007, 2008 and Contu in press.

² Cf. Kaegi 2001: 21.

³ Cf. Stasolla 1982 and 2002; cf. also *Sardaniya*, *EI*, IX, 1998: 50-51 and Contu 2007 and Contu in press.

⁴ “Inhabitants of the Barbagia”. Differently from Amari who translated the word *mutabarbirūn* “berberizzanti” = similar to Berbers, I think that Idrīsī identified a peculiarity of the Sardinians who first resisted the imposition of a Roman forced “civilization”, fought for their independence and for this reason lived in “Barbaria”-Barbagia; hence, I prefer the translation “Barbaricins”. Cf. Idrīsī V, 584 and Contu 2003/2005: 293-295. On Barbagia see also in this volume of the *AnnalSS* the article of Pittau 2010.

⁵ Cf. Ibn ‘Idārī and Ibn Ḥaldūn, *W*: 153.

⁶ This date is accepted by Clelia Sarnelli Cerqua as the year of the conquest of the island and the defeat of Muḡāhid, cf. al-Dabbī, Ibn al-Aṭīr, ibn ‘Idārī, cf. n. 20 and 21 of Contu in press and Sarnelli Cerqua, in Contu 2007: 26-27.

⁷ Cf. al-Dabbī and n. 20 in Contu in press.

⁸ Cf. al-Ḥimiyārī: 314-315. Regarding the latter date, al-Ḥimiyārī wrote that in 409 Muḡāhid sailed towards Sardinia, occupied the main parts of it and founded a town, but that in 410 because of a famine and a plague the commander and all his men left the island. Al-Ḥimiyārī states that Muḡāhid had landed on the island another time before that, but his soldiers were killed by the enemy and he was obliged to withdraw. We also find another year for the conquest in Ibn al-Aṭīr: 446? (1054?); this year seems to be a clear mistake, probably made by a copyist, because Arab sources indicate, as does Ibn Ḥaldūn, that Muḡāhid died ten years before in 436/1044-1045, cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *W*: 153.

⁹ The use of words of Arabic origin in Sicily has been indicated by Amari who was more interested in historical and geographical studies. However, a prime contribution to understanding the Arabic influence was given in the last century when the linguistic and philological works of De Gregorio, De Simone, Ineichen, Rizzitano, Pellegrini, Caracausi and others were published. At the end of the 20th century the volumes of Kiesler on Romance languages (1994) and of Agius on Siculo-Arabic (1996) appeared. New contributions by Metcalfe were published in the first years of this century.

¹⁰ Cf. Contu 2007: 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.* and Wagner 1951: 177-181.

¹² For the Jews in Sardinia, cf. n. 13, 14 and Tasca 1992, 2008 and 2009 (ed.); in these works Tasca quotes or presents contributions dealing with Jews in Sicily, in Sardinia or the relations among the Jewish communities in the Mediterranean countries, by authors such as Simonsohn, Saccara, Scandallato, Esposito, Krasner, Luzzati, Mazzamuto, Mulè, Suarez-Fernandez, Jancu, Olla Repetto and others.

¹³ As noted by Giuffrida and Rocco, Bresc and others. In Sicily the Jews were established in Palermo and in the Sicilian main towns; Cf. Giuffrida and Rocco, Bresc and Riera, quoted in Tasca 2008 and Simonsohn 1997-2011.

¹⁴ The title of the paper presented by Metcalfe 2010 was “Duplication in Sicilian Arabic and its Historical Implications”, cf.

http://magazine.unior.it/sites/default/files/UEAI_25th_Program.pdf

¹⁵ For the use of foreign words in Sard. to define taboo arguments, cf. Contu 2000/2001 257-258 (+ note 25: 272) and Paulis 1990 608-615.

¹⁶ Cf. Contu in press. A.1.11 and note 24.

¹⁷ Cf. the paper of Metcalfe 2010 in note 25.

¹⁸ Cf. Metcalfe 2009b: 262 and note 10: 272 in which, quoting Metcalfe 2003, wrote: “On noun duplications in Greek, Arabic and Latin, see Metcalfe *Muslim and Christians [in Norman Sicily]*: 118-26. For moves towards a trilingual lingua franca in the *divān*, see: 135-40”.

¹⁹ Cf. The newspaper *La Nuova Sardegna* of the 7th and of the 9th December 2010. Cf. Soddu, A., Crasta, P., Strinna, G., 2010, *Bollettino di Studi Sardi* 3: 5-42.

²⁰ In their period the Byzantines formally ruled and spread the Oriental orthodox form of worship, hence effectively being responsible for the conversion of the Sardinians to Christianity. On the influence of the Greek Byzantine in Sardinia cf. Paulis 1983.

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