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## Projects of Research on Maritime Terminology in the Arab Countries

There are sections of the Arabic vocabulary that, for some reasons to be investigated, have been neglected by Arab men of letters and have been therefore ignored or hardly touched by Arab lexicographers.

One of them is the sea and all what is connected with it. In vain you will try to find literary passages describing the sea or any of the many activities connected with it<sup>1</sup>. The same applies to specialized glossaries and classified dictionaries<sup>2</sup>.

As the subject seemed to be worthwhile to be studied, I started collecting all what has been already written on it<sup>3</sup>. Then realizing that not much was to be found, I thought it wiser to gather materials on the field, directly from the persons concerned with activities in the sea, namely sailors, boat-masters and fishermen.

For the purpose of gathering Arabic maritime terminology, it is useful, either from a geographic standpoint, or from a practical one, to distinguish three areas to be considered also from the point of a progressive Arabization.

The first is the Arabian Sea with its two neighbouring seas, namely the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea; the second is the Mediterranean area and the third is the Atlantic area.

<sup>1</sup> See the contempt for sailors and seamen expressed in the verses of the mukhaḍram poet Yazīd b. al-Haddāq of the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays (L y a l l, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 600), and of al-Ḥarazdaq (d. 110 H.) against the Azd that lived on the coasts of Oman (a l - S ā w ī, *Diwān al-Ḥarazdaq*, Cairo 1936 p. 252).

<sup>2</sup> In the *Kitāb al-ifṣāh fī fiqh al-luġa* (Cairo 1929), by 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Ṣa'īdī and Ḥusayn Yūsuf Mūsā, that summarizes, in a way, the Arabic Lexicon found in the *Kutub al-luġa* and considered *faṣīḥ*, the whole chapter devoted to the sea including the geomorphology of the coasts, the boats, the fishes and other marine animals, does not exceed ten pages.

<sup>3</sup> To have a fair idea of what has been published till now, see A. H. J. P r i n s, *The Maritime Middle East: A Century of Studies*, Book Reviews, in "The Middle East Journal", Washington 1973, Spring issue, pp. 207-219.

The first one is the largest one, because in its coastline must be included the African coasts of the Arabic speaking countries of the Red Sea. It is the most important from an historical point of view, the Arabian Peninsula being the cradle of Arabic. The smaller one is the third one, because it includes only two countries, Morocco and Mauretania, of which a part of the first one, belongs to the Mediterranean<sup>4</sup>.

It would have perhaps been logical to start with the first area. Unfortunately it is not always easy to do things the way you think it best. Circumstances led me to start with the Mediterranean, which was, in a way, within an easier reach. As a matter of fact, I was offered to carry out a certain number of inquiries in the Arabic speaking countries of the Mediterranean within the frame of a program of research on the maritime terminology undertaken by a committee called "Comitato per l'Atlante linguistico mediterraneo" (Committee for the linguistic Atlas of the Mediterranean)<sup>5</sup>.

The inquiries started in 1962 and it took three years to complete them. The enquiries were carried out in the following points:

Syria:	Arwad (the island of Rouad, the biblical Arados);
Lebanon:	Tripoli — El-Mina, Saida (Sidon);
Egypt:	Alexandria — Anfushi, Dumyāt (Damietta) — Ezbet el-Borg;
Lybia:	Bengasi, Misurata (Gasr Ahmad), Tripoli;
Tunisia:	Gerba — Houmt Souk, Kerkena — Kellabine, Sfax, Mahdia;
Algeria:	Annaba (ex-Bône), Collo, Cherchel, Wahran (Oran) — Mers el-Kebir;
Spanish Africa:	Ceuta;
Morocco:	Al-Hucemas (ex Villa Sanjurjo).

Apart from these 18 points, two other outside the Mediterranean were carried out in the program: one was Suez El-Khor, on the Red Sea, and the second was al-'Arā'ish (Larache) in the Atlantic Morocco.

The considerable mass of material gathered is now filed by the Secretariat of the Committee whose centre is at the famous Cini Foundation in Venice. It is being

<sup>4</sup> The total length of the coastline of the Arab countries is approximately over 29000 kilometres, of which 20000 belong to the first area, 6100 to the Mediterranean area, and 2300 to the Atlantic area.

<sup>5</sup> See the Premessa of the "Bollettino dell' Atlante Linguistico Mediterraneo", Venezia 1959, I. pp. 1-3.



prepared for publication, together with the material gathered in some one hundred and forty other points of enquiry from all countries having coasts on the Mediterranean. It will take however some time for this material to be published.

A part of the material gathered, dealing with fishnames, integrated with material published and unpublished from other sources, has already been published in 1967 with the following title *L'ittionimia nei Paesi Arabi del Mediterraneo* (Fishnames in the Arab Countries of the Mediterranean)<sup>6</sup>.

At the request formulated by a final motion of the scholars participating to the International Congress on Linguistic Atlases, which was held in Rome from the 20th to the 24th of October 1967<sup>7</sup>, I tried again to extend the enquiries to the Arabic speaking countries of the extra-Mediterranean area which includes countries of the Arabian Peninsula, countries that face the Red Sea on the African coasts and the countries of the Arabian or Persian Gulf.

The points of inquiry chosen were the following:

a) Western or African coasts of the Red Sea:

Egypt:	Suez, Ghardaqa or Marsa Alam;
Sudan:	Port Sudan and/or Suakin;
Ethiopia (Eritrea):	Massawa;
Somalia:	Berbera, Chisimaio;
Tanzania:	Dar es-Salam.

b) Eastern or Asian coasts of the Red Sea:

Jordan:	Aqabah;
Saudi Arabia:	Yanbu, Giddah, Camaran Island;
North Yemen:	Hodeida and/or Mocha.

c) Arabian Sea coasts:

South Yemen:	Aden;
Oman:	Sur, Salalah.

d) Arabian Gulf coasts:

Iraq:	Basra;
Kuwait:	Mina al-Ahmadi;
Saudi Arabia:	Dammam;

<sup>6</sup> Published by Leo S. O l s c h k i, Firenze 1967 pp. XLVIII + 295. For other studies relating to fishnames, see my note *Recenti studi sull'ittionimia araba*, in *Scritti Linguistici in onore di G. B. Pellegrini*, Piza 1982, 2° vol., pp. 1301—1306.

<sup>7</sup> Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei Anno CCCLXI 1969 *Atti del Convergnio internazionale sul tema: Gli Atlanti Linguistici: Problemi e risultati*, Roma 20—24 ottobre 1967, Roma 1969, p. 330.

Bahrein: al-Manama;  
 Qatar: Doha;  
 Iran: Bandar Abbas.

It took some years before I could find the minimum financial support to carry out this part of the project. It came in 1970, through a contract of the Italian Council of Scientific Research. From mid-March to the end of May 1972, I was able to complete all the enquiries on the western coasts of the Red Sea and the African coasts, with only one change in the preliminary plan: Mogadisho instead of Berbera. In Egypt, it was impossible to visit any place on the Red Sea because of the state of war with Israel. I must add with satisfaction that to the five scheduled enquiries on the sea, I was able to carry out one on the river Nile, in the Khartum-Gebel Awlia area.

Two years later, it was possible to carry out the first enquiry on the eastern coasts of the Red Sea in Aqabah.

As a basic instrument for the research, both in the Mediterranean and the other seas, a Questionnaire has been drawn up<sup>8</sup>. It includes approximately 500 terms, grouped in nine chapters, as follows:

- I. The sea (7-29)
  - II. Geomorphology (30-60)
  - III. Meteorology (61-113)
  - IV. Stars (114-141)
  - V. Navigation and manoeuvres (142-206)
  - VI. Boats (207-375)
- which comprises seven different sections:
- a) types of boats (207-211b)
  - b) parts of a boat (212-242)
  - c) building and maintenance (243-270)
  - d) rigging (271-313)
  - e) oars (314-324)
  - f) masts and sails (325-363)
  - g) cordage and ropes (364-375)
- VII. Life on board (376-417)
  - VIII. Shipping trade (418-435)
  - IX. Fishing (436-500)

which comprises three different sections:

- a) Types (436-449)
- b) Gear and equipment (450-473)
- c) Nets (474-500).

Naturally, the Questionnaire provides only a sort of general framework that must be adapted and integrated according to the local situation.

<sup>8</sup> Working copies of it were published under the joint patronage of the Istituto Universitario Orientale (Napoli) and the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Roma) in 1971.



The answers are normally gathered by showing the object or the phenomenon directly to the informant, adding sometimes some additional information, but trying hard not to suggest the word wanted. In some cases, it is necessary to resort to drawings or photographs as in the case of the rainbow, for instance.

The informants (it is always better to dispose of more than one) are usually chosen among skilled boat-masters. Only the last chapter, devoted entirely to fishing, is of course discussed with experienced fishermen. As for the Vth chapter, concerning boats (building and maintenance) I usually prefer to rely on the more detailed and precise terminology of the local boat-builders.

Being convinced of the necessity of publishing the material altogether, nothing has been edited till now, except the enquiry carried out in the area Bagamoyo, Dar es-Salam, Zanzibar, which was elaborated by Prof. Sergio B a l d i of the Istituto Universitario Orientale of Naples<sup>9</sup>. Another valuable research in Ghardaqa, Egypt, was published by Prof. Guido C i f o l e t t i, of the University of Udine<sup>10</sup>. The other material is under disposal of any scholar interested.

Following the inquiries, some collateral studies have been carried out. Some observations on the main differences of terminology between the first and the second area, based on the scarce literature available, have been read at the Congress of the Atlante Linguistico Mediterraneo held in Dubrovnik in April 1971<sup>11</sup>. Also a survey of the Arabic maritime terminology of the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages was carried out and read at a Congress held in Spoleto in April 1978<sup>12</sup>. In 1963, the maritime terms used by the Arab-Sicilian geographer al-Idrīsī in his descriptions of the northern coasts of Africa, were published by the same author<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Sergio B a l d i, *A Contribution to the Swahili Maritime Terminology*, Roma 1976, pp. 99, Istituto Italo-Africano-Collana di Studi Africani 2.

<sup>10</sup> Guido C i f o l e t t i, *La terminologia della pesca a el-Ghardaqa (Egitto)*, in "Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale", 42, Napoli 1982, pp. 565—591 + VIII tab.

<sup>11</sup> The title was: "Osservazioni sulla terminologia marinaresca nei paesi arabi"; the text has not been published.

<sup>12</sup> G. O m a n, *La terminologia marinaresca araba altomedievale nel Mediterraneo*, in: *Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto medioevo, La navigazione mediterranea nell'alto medioevo 14-20 aprile 1977*, Spoleto 1978, Tomo secondo, pp. 775-796.

<sup>13</sup> G. O m a n, *Voci marinaresche usate dal geografo arabo al-Idrīsī (XII secolo), nelle sue descrizioni delle coste settentrionali dell'Africa*, in "Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli", Nuova serie, XIII, 1965, pp. 1-26.