

## *On Lexical Borrowing in some Algerian Arabic Dialects<sup>1</sup>*

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### **Résumé :**

Cet article étudie un certain nombre de mots et d'expressions non-arabes dans des dialectes arabes algériens. Ces mots et expressions trouvent leur origine dans des langues aussi variées que le berbère, le turc, l'espagnol ou l'italien, et le français. L'origine et la distribution géographique de ces termes seront déterminées de manière aussi précise que possible. En outre, certaines occurrences d'emprunts sémantiques comme source de création lexicale seront aussi analysées.

Mots-clés : dialectes arabes algériens, emprunts lexicaux, berbère, turc, espagnol, français, transfert sémantique

### **Introduction:**

Non-Arabic lexical items hold an important place in the vocabulary stock of Algerian Arabic dialects. In general, these words or expressions have been easily integrated in the predominantly Arabic lexical structures of these Algerian dialects. The examples listed in this paper do not, by any means, constitute final and exhaustive data covering the domain Algerian dialect borrowing. They only constitute representative lists of a very large corpus widely used across the north-western parts of Algeria.

The exact historical details of these borrowings are not dealt with as this will suppose a diachronic study that will be

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<sup>1</sup> This is an English version of an article entitled 'Emprunts Lexicaux dans des Dialectes Arabes Algériens' and accepted for publication in *Synergies Monde Arabe* No. 8 (2010).

too daunting and too wide to be contained in this modest contribution. For example, the term ‘*Berber*’ as used here should rather be worded ‘*pan-Berber*’. Similarly, the word ‘*Spanish*’ is used here as a generic term covering all the dialects spoken in the Iberian Peninsula and the Balears islands, and not just the literary and standard Castilian.

Lexical borrowing may have come about directly or indirectly from these different dialects through other linguistic media. For this reason, the glosses or linguistic explanations are given in French and English rather in the original dialect or language. Any other specifications will be given in the notes which constitute important references in this kind of contribution.

This study makes use so f a phonemic transcription, taking into account the Arabic vocalic system of three long and three short vowels. However, as most dialects make use of a common un-accentuated central vowel, it appeared natural to add such vowel to the system and represent it by a schwa [ə]. The resulting system is by no means the best to render the vocalic nuances and the allophonic variations of the dialectal forms under study, but it offers the advantage of a uniform and simple transcriptional reading.

### **1. Lexical items of Berber origin:<sup>2</sup>**

It is an accepted historical and linguistic fact that large portions of Berber speaking areas have in the past and through time been arabicized in many parts of North Africa and in the Maghrib in particular. However, although a great deal of Arabic has been borrowed into Berber due to the Arab presence in North Africa and also due the religious and cultural

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<sup>2</sup> The words in this list are transcribed phonetically. The specification (sg.) and (pl.) which follow certain terms simply refer to the *singular* and *plural* forms of these terms.

importance of this presence, it is noticeable that this linguistic contact has produced a sizeable corpus of Berber lexical items. These Berber terms have naturally been borrowed by practically all the Arabic dialects of the region<sup>3</sup>.

Word of Berber origin	French gloss	English gloss
āzdūz <sup>4</sup>	un pilon	a pestle
sāsnu <sup>5</sup>	fraises (sauvages)	(wild) strawberries
səkkūm	des asperges	asparagus
fəkrūn (pl. fkārən)	une tortue	a tortoise
‘atrūs (pl. ‘tārəs)	un bouc	a goat
fərnān	liège, bouchon	balsa wood, corkwood
m□ā□ət (sg. m□āta)	jambes, fesses	legs, buttocks
(bu)žūglāl	escargots	snails

<sup>3</sup> For an easy and brief historical reference of the Berber language and culture, read M.A. Haddadou (1994)

<sup>4</sup> To my knowledge, the term [āzdūz] is not known outside the regions of Tlemcen, Nédroma and Ghazaouet in the western part of Algeria.

<sup>5</sup> This term designates, in the areas cited in footnote 2 above, dans les régions citées en note 2, wild strawberries. Another Arabic term, [tūt] is used throughout the western part of Algeria (and probably all of Algeria) to designate many sorts of ‘fruits’: blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, etc. As concerns the word rendering English ‘*strawberries*’, the French word ‘*fraises*’ (adapted or not) is generally used in the dialects of the region. In literary Arabic, we note that in addition to the term [farawla], the terms [frīz] and [tūt al ard] and perhaps others are used almost interchangeably to designate a wide variety of berries (‘*strawberries*’, ‘*raspberries*’, ‘*mulberries*’, ‘*cranberries*’), etc. (Cf. for example, and in this respect, the various entries proposed in BA’ALBAKI (1979) and SABEK (1985). However, BAALBAKI (1997) introduces nuances between [tūt al ard] or [farawla] or even [frīz] (*strawberries*), [tūt šāmi] or [tūt aswad] (*black mulberry*), [tūt šawki] or [tūt al ‘allīq] (*raspberry*), etc. In fact, the term [tūt] seems to function in a similar way to English ‘*berry*’ in the formation of many kinds of different fruits.

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gəržūma (pl. grāžəm)	une gorge	a throat
zərmūmiya	un lézard	a lizard
fərtəṭtu (pl. frāṭəṭ)	un papillon	a moth, a butterfly
azəllīf (pl. azlāləf)	une tête de mouton	a head of sheep, ox, etc.
azəqqūr	un rocher, une pierre	a rock, stone
tiziǧziǧt	Vers (dans viande séchée)	Worms (in dried meat)
qarqra (pl. qraqar)	un crapaud	a toad, a frog
tifilləs	une hirondelle	a swallow (bird)
aməndās	un rat, une souris	a rat, a mouse
āngə	une uvule	a uvula
šlāgəm	moustache	Moustache
rzazzi (ou tarzazzi)	une guêpe	a wasp
azəbbūž <sup>6</sup>	Olivier sauvage	oleaster
fallūs <sup>7</sup>	un poussin	a chick

### **2. Lexical items of Turkish origin**

As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire's military and administrative control of much of the Middle East and North Africa led to a progressive and varied linguistic presence of a Turkish vocabulary. This Turkish lexical core has adapted and integrated the vocabulary of Arabic dialects with varying degrees of success and efficiency. For example, the suffix [-zi ] seems to be present and active in all Arabic dialects. But this generalization does not apply to the suffix [-ši ], which is used with military terms elsewhere in the Middle East but only to a limited extent in North Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> This term is most probably itself borrowed from Latin '*acerbus*' (bitter).

<sup>7</sup> This term was probably borrowed a long time ago by Arabic from Latin *pullus*. The same applies to the word [almerqa] ou [el margə] 'sauce' derived from Latin '*amurca*', a kind of mixture of olive oil and water.

<b>Word of Turkish origin</b>	<b>French gloss</b>	<b>English gloss</b>
ṭabāḳi (pl. ṭbāḳa)	une assiette	a plate
buqraž	une bouilloire	a kettle
tqāšīr (sg. taqšīra)	chaussettes	socks
bašmāq (pl. bšāmaq)	une mule, une sandale	a sandal
bāylak <sup>8</sup>	publique	public
bālāk	peut-être	maybe
qahwāzi <sup>9</sup>	garçon, patron de café	café-boy
su <sup>10</sup> āzi	un horloger	a watch-maker
qmārzi	un joueur, parieur	a gambler
sukārzi	un ivrogne	a drunkard
fūra <sup>10</sup>	Jeu ! terme de défaite dans un jeu de carte	Game ! Term of defeat in card-playing
fərtūna	bagarre, désordre, chaos	fight, chaos, disorder
batinti <sup>11</sup>	taxes, impôts	certificate of rates
bāla <sup>12</sup>	une pelle	a shovel, blade
məngūša (pl. mnāgəš)	boucle d'oreille	ear-ring
branīya	aubergine	aubergine
zerda	festin	feast

<sup>8</sup> For example in the expression [trīq al-bāylak] ‘*public road, way*’, as opposed to ‘*private*’).

<sup>9</sup> This term together with the following three items bearing the suffix [-zi] have Arabic roots borrowed by Turkish before reintegrating the Algerian and Maghribin Arabic dialects suffixed with the Turkish [-zi].

<sup>10</sup> This item is probably a Turkish nautical term of Italian origin. It has integrated the Algerian dialects through Turkish or Spanish. For more details, cf. Henry et Renée KAHANE (1942). The same considerations apply to notes 10 and 11 infra.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. note 9 supra.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. notes 9 et 10 supra.

### 3. Lexical items of Spanish (and Italian) origin:

The Spanish colonial presence in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. It was also at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1518) that the Spanish forces succeeded in occupying part of the Algerian coasts before being pushed out by the Ottoman Empire, under which Algeria was to become an independent province for the next three centuries, until the beginning of the French colonization. That Spanish presence along the Algerian coasts left a lexical stock still in use today in the dialects of these areas. That stock will be ‘enriched’ by another lexical stock brought from Andalusia and other Spanish regions and belonging to Andalusia Arabic and to other dialects spoken by Christians and Jews of Spain during the forced migrations of Arabs from Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<b>Word of Spanish (or Italian) origin</b>	<b>French gloss</b>	<b>English gloss</b>
rūnda	Jeu de cartes	Game of cards
tringla	3 cartes de même valeur dans le jeu de Ronda	3cards of same value in Ronda game
bəlġa (pl. blāġi)	Pantoufles en cuir	Leather slippers
sbarġāt	chaussures	shoes
tbarna	Une taverne, un bar	A tavern, a pub
gusṭu	Désir, envie	Desire, motive
nūmru	Numéro	number
fālṭa	Une faute	A mistake
gāna	Une envie	A desire
fārīna	farine	flour
baṭāṭa	Pomme de terre	potato
bərrāka	Une baroque	A hut
galūn	Un gallon, grade	A military status
swīrti	chance	luck

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qmažža <sup>13</sup>	Une chemise	A shirt
šīta	Une brosse	A brush
šnūga	synagogue	synagogue
spardīna	espadrille	snickers
bugādu	avocat	lawyer
kanāsta	Un panier	A basket
sukwīla	Une école	A school
grillu <sup>14</sup>	Un cafard	A cockroach
□ūldi <sup>15</sup>	Un sou	A sou (a coin)
mizirīya <sup>16</sup>	misère	misery
ṭarbāṭi <sup>17</sup>	Un turban	A turban
kubīrta <sup>18</sup>	Une couverture	A blanket
tšankla <sup>19</sup>	mules	Slippers, flip flops
□ū□ṭa	doucement	quietly
bāga	paie, salaire	Salary
batīnti <sup>20</sup>	impôts	Rates
diwāna <sup>21</sup>	douane	customs
bugādu <sup>22</sup>	avocat	lawyer

<sup>13</sup> The alveo-palatal /ž/ suggests that the word [qmažža] derives from old Castilian *camisia* rather than from the more modern *camisa*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Italian *grillo*

<sup>15</sup> This term is the plural form of Italian [soldo]. However, [□ūldi] is invariable in the Algerian dialects.

<sup>16</sup> This form probably derives from Italian rather than Spanish where we note the realization of /s/ rather than /z/.

<sup>17</sup> The word *turbante* exists in both Italian and Spanish.

<sup>18</sup> Most probably from the word *coberta* (in Catalan or Valenciano)

<sup>19</sup> The diminutive [tšankliṭa] is also very often used in the Oran region, especially among the young.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the Latin word *patente*

<sup>21</sup> Although the origin of this term is well attested, it remains that the origin of the form [diwāni] (cf. French ‘*douanier*’, meaning ‘*customs officer*’) may well be considered as having a French origin. In fact many speakers think that the word [diwāna] itself is of French origin.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Spanish *abogado*

#### 4. Lexical items and expressions of French origin:

In this category, there will appear old terms borrowed during specific periods in the history of French colonization, and also those more ‘modern’ and more flexible in their daily integration. These borrowings have been more or less extensively studied in different works that showed their phonetic, morphological and syntactic integration in Maghribin dialects in general. The lists that are given here are more heterogeneous and without precise order. However, they will be as far as possible arbitrarily classified according to their first appearance, either in the 1950’s/ 1960’s or much later. It should be noted nevertheless that it is not always easy to determine with precision their borrowing period in the Arabic dialects.

a) A number of lexical items, such as the terms for ranks, objects, places and other expressions, appeared with the military and their activity during the colonial period.

<b>Word of French origin</b>	<b>French gloss</b>	<b>English gloss</b>
tifis <sup>23</sup>	typhus	typhus
intik <sup>24</sup>	intact(e)	in good shape

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<sup>23</sup> In the 1920’s, the typhus as a disease was quite widespread in all the Algerian regions. Its first appearance dates back to much earlier, as 1868 is recorded as a year of terrible epidemic. The expression [*mtayfas*] (‘having, or contaminated with typhus’) also meant ‘short sighted’ especially in the Algiers area. Also, the expression [*mbarkal*] (‘having tuberculosis’) meant ‘of poor health’.

<sup>24</sup> This term was originally used in the Algerian (especially Algiers) docks and ports par les to mean that the containers being discharged were in good condition (’ in French). The term does not seem to have wide currency in the western part of Algeria.

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kāṭma	cantonnement	military base
zūfri (pl. zwāfra)	ouvrier	worker
□āržān	sergent	sergeant
kabrān	caporal	corporal
saligān <sup>25</sup>	sénégalais	Senegalese
ravitayma	ravitaillement	provisions
silūn	cellule	(prison) cell
blindi	blindé, char	armored car
kazmāt	casemate	casemate,
garrīṭa	guérite	garret
kazīrna, gazīr <sup>26</sup>	caserne	(military) barracks
midāya / madāya	médaille	medal

b) Others are words used in various spheres of daily life. These include terms for food, clothing, and various common objects that generally are useful to borrow.

Word of French origin	French gloss	English gloss
bagīṭa	baguette de pain	Loaf of bread
tipāna (also : ptipāna)	petit pain	(thin) loaf of bread
rubīni	robinet	(water) tap
tīki	ticket	Ticket
bunāni	bonne année	Good (new) year
sandli	descente de lit	Bed mat
muzīt	musette	Haversack ; satchel

c) The list below includes some descriptive terms, adjectives or nouns used in the description of humans, animals and things.

<sup>25</sup> In Algiers and its wide surrounding areas, this term is pronounced [*sanigāl*], which is closer to the original French pronunciation of Senegal.

<sup>26</sup> The term [gazīr] was more frequently used in the western parts of Algeria.

Word of French origin	French gloss	English gloss
kāfī (also : kāvī)	cave (mot d'argot)	stupid, naive
būžādi	poujadiste	poujadist
zāzu <sup>27</sup>	zazou, bien habillé	zazou, well-dressed
mzā'gar <sup>28</sup>	plein, repu, en avoir marre	full, replete, being fed-up
mbarwal <sup>29</sup>	désordonné, sans professionnalisme	disorganized, unprofessional

### 5. Words deriving from calques or semantic transfers from other languages

A number of lexical items are dialectal lexical creations whose creation or etymology goes back to words or expressions of foreign origin. The majority of these semantic borrowings are of French origin, although the situation in Algerian and Maghribin dialects seems to evolve towards a wider globalization of semantic transfer. Only a few examples will be provided in the list below.

Word deriving from transfer	Origin (probable)	French gloss	English gloss
□arrāg (pl. □arrāga)	L'expression française 'brûler un feu rouge')	Passer une frontière	To act illegally, to

<sup>27</sup> This term was used in reference to a sub-culture that existed in France during the Second World War. The 'zazous' were trendy young people who danced the 'swing' and the 'be-bop'. The diminutive [zwizu] is also heard.

<sup>28</sup> The origin of this term, which I have heard only in the area of Nédroma and its surroundings in the western part of Algeria, is most probably to be traced back to the French expression '*avoir des aigreur*'. The dialectal expression has certainly undergone a certain semantic extension.

<sup>29</sup> The origin of this word is obscure. One possible explanation may link it to French '*brouillon*'.

		illégalement, brûler un feu rouge	cross borders illegally
maqla zīt <sup>30</sup>	L'expression française 'mer d'huile'	Mer d'huile, plate, calme	'flat' sea (as opposed to rough sea); sea with no waves
'urq la s̄an	Cette expression est un mélange du mot arabe 'urq (nerf) et l'expression française 'la cinq'	Le nerf de la cinq (= de la cinquième vertèbre)	The nerve of the fifth vertebrae

**Conclusion:**

The lists of borrowed lexical items presented in this short paper as well as the explanations concerning their usage and their geographical distribution are by no means precise or exhaustive. Many lexical items of diverse origins have been discarded to avoid presenting too fragmented a corpus. It is worth mentioning that non-Arabic borrowed lexical items in Arabic dialects in general constitute a fertile and extensive domain of which this modest contribution is but a small representation.

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<sup>30</sup> On this expression, see also Guella (2010: 488).

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