

**Contact, Restructuring, and Decreolization:  
The Case of Tunisian Arabic**

**Thomas A. Leddy-Cecere**

**Senior Honors Thesis, 2010**

**Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Languages and Literatures**

**Jonathan Smolin, Advisor**



أودّ أن أتقدّم بالشكر لكلّ الذين ساعدوني في كتابة هذا البحث ، ومنهم أساتذتي وزملائي ( في كلّ من قسم اللغة العربيّة وقسم اللغويّات ) وأسرتي كذلك . أنا ممتنّ بالأخصّ للأستاذ جوناثان سمولين والأستاذ تيموثي بوليو اللذين أشرفا على بحثي .

ألف شكر لكم ، كلّكم .

- توماس لدي سسير

كلية دارتموث ، ٢٤ مايو ٢٠١٠



## Table of Contents

### Chapter 1: Introduction & Methods

1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Creole Characteristics .....	9

### Chapter 2: Results

2.1 Sūsi .....	21
2.2 Judeo-Tunisian .....	47
2.3 Maltese .....	73

### Chapter 3: Discussion & Conclusions

3.1 Discussion .....	99
3.2 Conclusion .....	115

Works Cited .....	119
-------------------	-----



## Chapter 1.1: Introduction

There are many Arabics. The term “Arabic,” though it implies the existence of a unitary linguistic entity, in fact designates a multiplicity of varieties that range from Mauritania to Uzbekistan, from Bedouin to city-dweller, from illiterate to highly educated – there are many Arabics. Yet we persist in referring to them as one. Why?

When Arabs say the word “*al-‘arabiyyah*,” ‘Arabic,’ it refers to the formal, standard variety of the language, represented historically by Classical Arabic and today Modern Standard Arabic. This is no one’s mother tongue. That role is filled instead by the markedly disparate colloquial Arabic varieties – the dialects, as they are generally called, which differ at least as greatly from the standard form as they do from one another. Thus, no one speaks *al-‘arabiyyah* as a first language. Yet, if asked, any Arabic speaker from any Arab country will claim to speak Arabic natively – to claim otherwise would be tantamount to denying an Arab identity altogether. Therefore, though the dozens of wildly differing Arabic varieties are undeniably distinct, both from the standard and from each other, they are, at some level, all one Arabic. It is the nature of this unity, the precise relationship between dialect and standard (and amongst the dialects themselves) that shall form the focus of this paper.

Dialectal variety is by no means unique to Arabic; it is found to some extent in virtually all of the world’s languages. However, Arabic presents a special case. Even a casual observer of Arabic will note that the dialects are remarkably difficult to identify and classify – as put by Bateson in her *Arabic Language Handbook* (2003), not only is it “difficult to set their precise boundaries” but the situation is also complicated by the fact that they are highly “fluid over time” (Bateson 93). As one digs deeper, one finds not answers but more questions: as Owens states in

the introduction to his *A Linguistic History of Arabic* (2006), the language “has always been a puzzle to those who delve into its intricacies” (Owens 1). What makes Arabic so impenetrable in this sense? What is it about Arabic that seems to stymie conventional linguistic research?

There are essentially three types of variation amongst the many Arabics which must be accounted for: geographic, social, and chronological. Geographically, there are five basic dialect regions within the Arabic world. These are the North African region (primarily comprising the dialects of Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya), the Egyptian region (Egypt and the Sudan), the Levantine region (Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan), the Iraqi region (Iraq), and the Peninsular region (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Gulf states), in addition to peripheral varieties (e.g. Central Asian Arabic, Cyprian Maronite Arabic, etc.). It is important to note that, despite this apparently clear-cut classification, there exists considerable dialect variation within each area; it remains, however, a useful scheme for the understanding of general geographic trends (Alosh 3-4).

The social division in the Arabic varieties is a dichotomy, characterized by two paradigmatic linguistic types characteristic of speakers of two basic lifestyle patterns – sedentary and Bedouin. It is possible to identify a fairly extensive list of features which differentiate the speech of sedentary Arab communities from that of their nomadic counterparts. This array of features (with slight variation) persists throughout the Arab world, seemingly independent of the geographical variation previously discussed. The one major exception is the Arabian Peninsula, where the distinction does not exist in the same manner as it does elsewhere (Bateson 95-96). This dichotomy, clearly evident and virtually omnipresent, is crucial to a complete analysis of the interrelation of the Arabic linguistic varieties.

The third important type of variation in Arabic is variation over time. While all languages change over time, Arabic appears to have done so in a rather striking and unusual manner. Most linguistic change is accepted as taking the form of a gradual process, one which generally takes generations to complete. In the case of Arabic, however, this gradual evolution seems to have experienced something of shock to its system. Though data from the earlier periods is limited, it is undeniable that the Arabic varieties which appear following the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries (New Arabic) constitute a sharp break from those varieties known to have existed prior to the coming of Islam (Old Arabic). New Arabic is today represented by the modern colloquial dialects, while Modern Standard Arabic is generally accepted as the sole extant branch of the Old Arabic type (Versteegh, 2001: 98).

None of these types of variation, geographic, social, or chronological, is unexpected in the field of dialectology. What makes Arabic remarkable is the fact that the confluence of these three sources of variation does not yield a result analyzable by the standard means of historical linguistics; despite the laudable efforts of many formidable scholars, no commonly accepted reconstruction of a “Proto-Arabic” has been made. As an example of the difficulties faced by researchers, let us examine the following:

One of the defining features of New Arabic is the replacement of the Old Arabic construct state (*iḍāfah*) with a genitive exponent (~ possessive marker). This syntactic trait seems straightforward enough. The presence of this transformation in all New Arabic varieties would lead a historical linguist to posit that, at some point before the sundering of the modern-day dialect groups, the community of Arabic speakers stopped using the construct state in their speech and began utilizing a genitive exponent, the descendant of which persists in the modern-

day dialects. However, a quick sampling of genitive exponents from across the Arab world causes one to rethink such a hypothesis:

**Table 1. Genitive Exponents**

Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)	<i>bitā'</i>
Syrian Arabic (Damascus)	<i>taba'</i>
Moroccan Arabic (Rabat)	<i>dyał</i>
Sudanese Arabic	<i>ħaqq</i>
Cypriot Arabic	<i>šáyt</i>
Iraqi Arabic (Baghdad)	<i>māl</i>

(Versteegh, 2001 107)

Given these clearly heterogeneous realizations of the morpheme, it is clear that they cannot be traced back to a single, original etymon. However, the universal presence of such a morpheme across the New Arabic varieties still demands an explanation. Some might invoke Sapir's rather numinous notion of linguistic drift, but for others the sheer quantity of such examples rules out such a rationale, leaving them still searching for a solution.

A great many puzzles such as this face those who attempt to put rhyme and reason to the development, distribution, and classification of the Arabic varieties. The failure of the comparative method is confounding, as it has been used to such great effect in analyzing languages far more disparate than the Arabic dialects over far greater spans of time. Perhaps, then, the problem is not one of degree but of paradigm. Arabic has always been analyzed by the standard methodologies of historical linguistics developed for the analysis of European languages, techniques which have proven accurate and reliable in the mapping of natural language change. But what if Arabic is in fact the product of another process?

Such a theory has been proposed by a few researchers, most notably Kees Versteegh in his 1984 publication *Pidginization and Creolization: The Case of Arabic*. In this groundbreaking work, Versteegh approaches the Arabic varieties from the perspective of language restructuring, an alternative model of language change. Language restructuring (a cover term for the processes of pidginization, creolization, and other less known contact phenomena) is a relatively young area of study within linguistics, but the field has already benefitted greatly from its analysis. The basic premise of language restructuring/contact linguistics is that when a given language is transferred suddenly from one group to another in an untutored, adult language-learning situation, the results are not what would be expected vis-à-vis the “normal” evolution of the language; moreover, those results are predictable, insofar as they tend to share certain common features regardless of the genetic identity of the input(s). Essentially, when large groups of adults are forced to learn a new language without recourse to formal training, the resulting variety will be restructured drastically and along certain, predictable lines.

Versteegh believes that such restructuring can account for nature of the Arabic varieties, something which our current understanding of natural language change fails to do. He claims that such an approach helps to explain the types of variation which so evade elucidation by conventional methods. His hypothesis (in greatly abridged form) is as follows:

When the Arabs expanded out of the Arabian Peninsula at the dawn of the Islamic era, they took control of a large area of the Middle East and North Africa which had not previously been under Arab dominion. They arrived speaking Arabic varieties of the Old Arabic type. In these regions, this Arabic quickly became the idiom of religion, high culture, trade, and government. The inhabitants of the regions rapidly began to acquire Arabic as a language of mobility and social growth, in a process much akin to that which took place in areas such as the

Caribbean under European colonization. The result was a continuum of Arabic pidgin varieties, which shared a number of features due both to contact and to their nature as restructured languages but displayed a great deal of regional variation as well. Later, these varieties were creolized, becoming native languages in their respective regions. Thus, New Arabic was born, edging out the Old Arabic speech of the original, but vastly numerically inferior, Arab conquerors. Versteegh has supported this claim with observations that a large number of the accepted New Arabic traits are directly relatable to known characteristics of restructured languages (Versteegh, 1984).

As the centuries progressed, successive groups of Bedouin Arabs migrated from the Arabian Peninsula outward to these newly Arabicized regions. As the Peninsula had been largely Arabic speaking since well before the conquests, no language restructuring had taken place there, and thus forms more closely identifiable with Old Arabic continued to be spoken. As the tribes migrated, these forms were transported throughout the New Arabic speaking regions, and sparked a process of decreolization in the New Arabic varieties with which they came into contact. This decreolization resulted in the re-adoption of some natural language features that had been lost in the process of restructuring, as well the converse influence of New Arabic forms on the speech of the new arrivals. These processes, which have been ongoing ever since, account for the nature and distribution of the multiplicity of Arabic varieties in existence today (Versteegh, 1984).

Beyond the key identification of New Arabic characteristics as restructured language traits, Versteegh's proposal contains a number of strengths as regards the three major modes of variation identified above. They are as follows:

- It offers a solution to issues of regional variation such as the one discussed above regarding genitive exponents, as contact universals explain shared traits while eliminating the logical necessity of a singular shared innovation.
- It explains the sedentary/Bedouin dichotomy and its apparent independence from geographical factors, as well its general absence in the Arabian Peninsula.
- It accounts for the unexpectedly sharp and rapid break in linguistic evolution between Old and New Arabic varieties.

Versteegh's 1984 publication also contains a key weakness, however – it approaches the subject from a distance, and actual linguistic data (though present) appears to play a rather secondary role in the presentation of the argument. The scope of the work comprises the entire Arab world; though this is perhaps fitting, as the hypothesis pertains to the Arabophone population as a whole, it does make it possible to gloss over regional inconsistencies which might serve to invalidate the claim. With this in mind, this study will examine the language restructuring hypothesis by searching for evidence of the process in a detailed and precise manner, utilizing dialect data from one particular corner of the Arab world – Tunisia. The study will accomplish this by:

1. Discussing and developing a means of evaluating linguistic “restructured-ness” in the data
2. Assessing the dialect data according those criteria
3. Interpreting the results in light of historical context

This course of action will serve to determine whether the view of Arabic as a product of language restructuring stands up to detailed scrutiny.



## **Chapter 1.2: Creole Characteristics**

In the following chapter, the generally accepted phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexicosemantic characteristics of creole languages will be described and discussed. This will provide a framework upon which to evaluate the “creoleness” (or lack thereof) of the Arabic dialect data presented in this study. The information provided below is meant to fill the role of a description of general features – the specifics of how these features relate to the Arabic dialects in question will be discussed in later chapters.

### **I. Phonological Characteristics**

The phonological results of creolization can be difficult to characterize in a detailed fashion, as they, perhaps more than those of any other linguistic domain that will be examined, are dependent upon the specific interplay of superstrate and substrate languages, as opposed to being governed by universal creole features. Creole phonology is the result of one phonemic system interacting with another (or perhaps multiple others). Phonemes common to all contributing languages will generally remain intact; phonemes not common to all contributing languages, however, are vulnerable to change (Holm 139). This change is characterized by Weinreich (1953) as transfer, which is identified as the process by which speakers of one language (L1) identify a phoneme in a second language (L2) with a phoneme in L1, subjecting it to the latter’s phonetic rules. This process generally takes one of three forms (Holm 138):

#### 1) Underdifferentiation

- the merger of two phonemes distinct in L2 but not in L1

2) Overdifferentiation

- the imposition of phonemic distinctions from L1 on allophones of a single phoneme in L2

3) Substitution

- replacement of a phoneme in L2 with a similar but distinct phoneme in L1

To these three forms, I will add a fourth:

4) Deletion

- deletion of an L2 phoneme not present in L1

These outcomes of phonemic transfer will serve as a framework within which to evaluate the Arabic dialects examined below. As stated above, however, the basic principles of creole phonology are somewhat vague without special attention to the specific details of the languages in question. With that in mind, let us examine the phonemic systems of the proposed substrate and superstrate languages, with a special eye to those phonemes not held in common, as those, so the theory tells us, are the most likely to be affected by the process of creolization.

The potential substrate languages at play in the Tunisian dialect area at the time of the Arab expansions are three: Late Latin, the local Berber dialect, and potentially Neo-Punic (Ostler 76, 97). Their consonantal systems will be compared with that of the earliest reliable phonological data for Arabic, that found in the *Kitaab* of Sibawayh (d. 796); those phonemes not common to both Arabic and the substrate languages will be of special interest in the coming analysis, as creolistics predict that they will be the most vulnerable to change.

## A. Consonants

The consonantal system of Sibawayh's Arabic is described in the following table:

### Sibawayh's Arabic Consonantal Phonemes (Al-Nassir 11)

	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Inter-Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
<b>Stops</b>	<b>b</b>			<b>t d ,d</b>		<b>k</b>	<b>g</b>		<b>ʔ</b>
<b>Affricates</b>					<b>dʒ</b>				
<b>Fricatives</b>		<b>f</b>	<b>θ ð ð̣</b>	<b>s z ,s</b>	<b>ʃ ʒ</b>		<b>χ ʁ</b>	<b>ħ</b>	<b>h</b>
<b>Nasals</b>	<b>m</b>			<b>n</b>					
<b>Approximants</b>	<b>w</b>				<b>j</b>			<b>ʕ</b>	
<b>Liquids</b>				<b>r l</b>					
<b>Lateral</b>				<b>ḷ</b>					

The phonemic systems of the proposed substrate languages are given below:

### Late Latin Consonantal Phonemes (Hall 57-90)

	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Inter-Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
<b>Stops</b>	<b>p b</b>			<b>t d</b>		<b>k g</b>			
<b>Affricates</b>					<b>tʃ dʒ</b>				
<b>Fricatives</b>		<b>f v</b>		<b>s z</b>					
<b>Nasals</b>	<b>m</b>			<b>n</b>					
<b>Approximants</b>					<b>j</b>				
<b>Liquids</b>				<b>r l</b>					
<b>Lateral</b>									

### Neo-Punic Consonantal Phonemes (Krahmalkov 20-27)

	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Inter-Dental	Alveolar		Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
<b>Stops</b>	p b			t	ʔ		k g	q		ʔ
<b>Affricates</b>				dz						
<b>Fricatives</b>				s					ħ	h
<b>Nasals</b>	m			n						
<b>Approximants</b>	w					j				
<b>Liquids</b>				r l						
<b>Lateral</b>										

### Pan-Berber Consonantal Phonemes (Basset 5-7)

	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Inter-Dental	Alveolar		Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
<b>Stops</b>	b			t	d		k g			
<b>Affricates</b>										
<b>Fricatives</b>		f	ð	s	z	ʃ ʒ	ɣ			
<b>Nasals</b>	m			n						
<b>Approximants</b>	w					j				
<b>Liquids</b>				r l						
<b>Lateral</b>										

As even a cursory overview of this data will show, Arabic is a consonantly rich language, and contains a number of phonological series not present (or barely so) in the substrate languages. Arabic's lateral (/l/) is completely absent in all three of the substrate languages, and its interdental (/θ, ð, ð /), uvular (/ɣ, ʁ, ʕ/), pharyngeals (/ħ, ʕ/), and glottals (/h, ʔ/) are exceedingly rare – the only interdental in the substrate data is Berber /ð/, the only uvular Punic /q/, and the only pharyngeal Punic /ħ/. Arabic's pharyngealized consonants /d, ð, s/ are comparatively rare in the data as well, with the only example of a pharyngealized substrate consonant being Berber /ð/.

The established principles of creole theory tell us that those sounds not common to both the substrate and superstrate are those most likely to be affected by creolization. We may thus surmise that the Arabic interdental, uvular, pharyngeal, pharyngealized consonant, glottal, and lateral described by Sibawayh are the consonants most prone to change via the process of phonemic transfer. As discussed above, this process will generally take one of four forms: underdifferentiation, overdifferentiation, substitution, or deletion. The modern reflexes of these sounds will be carefully examined in each of the dialects considered below for evidence of such changes.

## **II. Morphological & Syntactic Characteristics**

A great number of morphological and syntactic traits have been proposed as typical of creole languages. The list presented below is by no means exhaustive or beyond debate, but it represents the best possible compromise between general acceptability and depth of analysis necessary for the purposes of this study. Details of any contentious issues will be discussed as they appear.

### **A. Verbal Morphosyntax**

#### **1. The Bare Form**

Perhaps the most straightforward characteristic of the creole verb is its tendency to appear in a bare form, sans inflectional morphology (e.g., marking of person, gender, number, etc.) (Holm 175). As any researcher of Arabic dialectology will be aware, verbal use in the Arabic varieties examined below does not fit this description – verbs are inflected in all three dialects to be examined. It is, however, possible to search the data for evidence that this may not

always have been the case, and as such this creole trait will be considered relevant to the current study.

## **2. Preverbal Tense/Aspect/Mood Marking**

The use of sequenced, preverbal particles to mark tense, aspect, and mood (in said order) is an established creole feature (Holm 175-176). Among the most prevalent markers are those for anterior tense, progressive, habitual, and continuative aspect (all referred to here under the umbrella term “nonpunctual”), and irrealis mood. These markers are claimed to combine in the following manner:

**[anterior] + [irrealis] + [nonpunctual] + verb**

Examples of such marking in the data will be of great importance in evaluating the “creoleness” of the data (Holm 178-191).

## **3. Negation**

Negation in creoles generally takes one of two forms: simple, preverbal negation, in which a negative element is placed preceding the verb phrase, or discontinuous negation, in which one negative element precedes the verb phrase and a second follows it (Holm 194-196). Another typical feature of creole negation is negative concord, in which verbal arguments are negated in addition to the verb itself (Holm 197).

## **4. Serial Verb Constructions**

A serial verb construction consists of a series of two or more verbs or verb phrases which share a single subject and are not linked by a conjunction or complementizer, and are considered

to be characteristic of creole languages (Holm 205). The semantic results of such constructions can be grouped into two general categories: encoding directionality and encoding instrumentality (Holm 206). The presence of verb serialization in the data, particularly in either of the two semantic categories mentioned, would be consistent with current characterizations of creole languages.

### **5. Lack of a Marked Passive**

It has been hypothesized that the process of creolization results in the loss of the morphologically marked passive of the superstrate language (Holm 117).

### **6. SVO Word Order**

The typical default word order for creole languages is generally accepted to be Subject-Verb-Object (Holm 233).

## **B. Nominal Morphosyntax**

### **1. Case**

It is widely accepted that morphological case marking on nouns and related elements is not present in creole languages, with the possible exception of pronominal systems, which will be discussed elsewhere (Holm 193).

### **2. Number**

Creole nouns are generally understood not to be inflected for number, though they can often occur with an optional free morpheme marking plurality. It is important to note, however,

that it is not uncommon for plural forms of nouns to exist as frozen forms inherited from the lexifier language; they are no longer considered to be inflected, however, as the fossilized plural marker is a not productive morphological element in the creole (Holm 215).

### **3. Gender**

As seen in the categories of case and number, creole nouns are not typically inflected for gender. Though the phonological markers of gender in the lexifier language may remain intact, they are no longer morphologically relevant with regard to agreement, etc. (Holm 216).

### **4. Determiners**

Determiners in creole languages tend not to correspond directly in form or function to the determiners of their respective lexifier languages. Creole determiners generally derive from the superstrate's demonstratives or other particles (Holm 213). Though such a genesis of determiners has been known to occur in natural language situations, the presence of such a system would at least support a characterization of "creoleness." As regards the use of determiners, creoles often display a system involving a three-way split: a definite article is employed for definite, specific noun phrases, an indefinite article is used with indefinite, specific noun phrases, and no article is used for indefinite, non-specific noun phrases. Though such a system is not universal among creoles, it is at least typical (Holm 214).

### **5. Possessive Construction**

The formation of possessive constructions in creole languages can take a number of forms. One particularly widespread method is the simple juxtaposition of elements in the order

[possessor + possessed]. Another possessive formulation common amongst creoles is that of an analytical/prepositional genitive construction, which uses a genitive exponent to link two nouns in the form [possessed] + [gen. exp.] + [possessor]. Still other creoles employ possessive adjectives (Holm 217-219).

## **6. Relative Pronoun**

The presence of at least one relative pronoun is widely considered to be common to most (if not all) creoles (Holm 226).

## **III. Lexico-Semantic Characteristics**

While the range of lexico-semantic processes which take place in creole languages is vast, they are largely identical to the lexico-semantic evolutions of natural language change, differing in degree rather than type. Thus, it can prove quite difficult to assert definitively that a given trait is the result of creolization. For the purposes of this study, however, it is possible to identify two major features which might be of use in evaluating the Arabic dialect data. These may be found in the interrogatives and the personal pronouns.

### **A. Bimorphemic Question Words**

There is a tendency among creole languages to contain question words composed of what were once two etymologically distinct elements in the lexifier language (e.g., ‘what+time?’ for ‘when?’, ‘what+person?’ for ‘who?’). There are numerous exceptions to this rule, but as a general trend it is strong. Thus, a preponderance of such bimorphemic interrogatives is considered a creole feature (Holm 120).

## **B. Reduced Pronominal System**

Creole pronominal systems represent one of the more complex areas of creolistics, as they appear to be the product of a complex interplay of the substrate and superstrate systems. It is possible, however, to observe a general trend that, while the personal pronoun systems of natural languages often encode case, gender, and number in addition to person, the equivalent pronouns in creole languages usually encode only number. That being said, it would be incorrect to assert that this is a universal feature; some creole systems can be quite complex, including less common distinctions such as inclusivity/exclusivity. A basic trend of reduction, though, is the norm (Holm 222-223).

## **IV. Summary**

This chapter has discussed and described a large number of traits (phonological, morpho-syntactic, and lexico-semantic) considered to be typical of creole languages. This list of features will form the basis for an evaluation of the Arabic dialect data considered below. The characteristics discussed above will be of interest to this study as they are indicative of “creoleness.” These features are (in summarized form):

- **Phonological**
  - The presence of underdifferentiation, overdifferentiation, substitution, or deletion involving:
    - the Arabic interdental, uvulars, pharyngeals, pharyngealized consonants, glottals, and lateral

- **Morphosyntactic**
  - **Verbal**
    - bare verb forms
    - preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
    - preverbal or discontinuous negation
    - serial verb constructions
    - lack of a marked passive
    - SVO word order
  - **Nominal**
    - lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
    - a three-way determiner distinction
    - possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
    - relative pronoun
- **Lexicosemantic**
  - bimorphemic question words
  - reduced pronominal system

Instances of these features in each of the Arabic dialects will be considered and discussed in the following chapter.



## Chapter 2.1: Sūsi

### I. The Dialect

The dialect described here is that of the Tunisian city of Sousse, an active port and settlement since the era of the Phoenicians. Located on the country's eastern coast, roughly seventy miles south of the capitol, Sousse was successively ruled by the Romans, the Vandals, and the Byzantines until the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century. The city was transformed into an important religious center under the Aghlabids, and only Muslims were permitted to reside within the city walls until the waning years of the nineteenth century. Like many of Tunisia's urban centers, Sousse experienced a period of rapid population growth during the 1960s and 1970s, with the number of inhabitants jumping from roughly 50,000 in 1962 to approximately 192,000 by 1980 (Talmoudi 11). Sousse is Tunisia's third largest city and a major port in the nation's northeastern coastal region ("Sousse," *Encyclopedia Britannica*); for these reasons, the dialect of Sousse will be taken as a representative example of the urban Muslim speech varieties of Tunisia. The following discussion will be based primarily on Fathi Talmoudi's 1980 description of the variety, *The Arabic Dialect of Sūsa* [Sousse].

Talmoudi's work is a valuable record of the speech of Sousse, as it represents an in-depth analysis of field data collected by the author, a native of the city, via interviews conducted both on site in Sousse and with recent Soussi émigrés residing in Gotheburg, Sweden (Talmoudi 13-14). This fact constitutes the reason why this source was chosen over more general overviews of Tunisian Arabic. The information presented by Talmoudi is based on actual, rigorous fieldwork involving individuals from a single location; thus, it avoids the simplifying, koineizing tendencies likely to affect a description of a more general scope, which – though utilitarian –

masks the idiosyncrasies and regional variations which characterize the usage of true native speakers. In alignment with this view, Talmoudi's source was selected as the most preferable of those available.

One weakness of Talmoudi's dialect description is that it lacks information regarding certain elements of verbal syntax and morphology relevant to this study. In order to fill this gap, the analysis will utilize Giuliano Mion's (2004) article "Osservazioni sul Sistema Verbale dell'Arabo di Tunisi" [Observations on the Verbal System of the Arabic of Tunis] and Patrick Inglefield's (1970) *Tunisian Arabic Basic Course*. Though not based on precisely the same dialect as Talmoudi's work, these descriptions are both of a comparable variety, that of Tunis, spoken by the same demographic (urban, coastal, Muslim Tunisians) only a short distance (ca. seventy miles) away. In Mion's own words, the dialect of Tunis "non differesce marcatamente di quelle delle altre principali città del paese" [does not differ markedly from those of the nation's other principal cities], of which he explicitly lists Sousse as one (Mion 243).

## **II. Phonological Characteristics**

In alignment with the previous discussion on creole traits, this section will examine the dialect of Sousse (Sūsi) searching for examples of overdifferentiation, underdifferentiation, substitution, and deletion in the following series of consonants:

- the interdental
- the uvulars
- the pharyngeals
- the pharyngealized consonants
- the glottals

- the lateral

The following table presents the relevant phonemes of Sibawayh's description (Al-Nassir 11), representative of Old Arabic, with their realizations in the modern dialect of Sousse (Talmoudi 19-41). The orthographic form of each sound has been included for ease of reference, and inconsistencies are bolded:

**Table 1. Sousse Consonant Data**

Series	Orthography	Sibwayh	Sousse
Interdental	ث	θ	θ
	ذ	ð	ð
	ظ	ð	ð
Uvular	ق	g	<b>g, q~k</b>
	خ	χ	χ
	غ	ɣ	ɣ
Pharyngeal	ح	ħ	ħ
	ع	ʕ	ʕ
Pharyngealized	ط	<b>ɗ</b>	<b>.t</b>
	ظ	ð	ð
	ص	s	s
Glottal	ء	ʔ	<b>Ø, h</b>
	ه	h	h
Lateral	ض	ɬ	<b>ð</b>

The differences between the phonemic system described by Sibawayh and that of the dialect of Sousse are relatively few, consisting of the uvular, pharyngealized, and glottal stops, in addition to the lateral fricative. Each shall be discussed in detail below:

### **A. The Uvular Stop**

The first discrepancy lies in the properties of the Arabic letter <ق>. In Sibawayh's description, this sound is a voiced uvular stop. In the dialect of Sousse, however, this phoneme

is reflected in three ways: the voiced velar stop /g/, the voiceless uvular stop /q/, and the voiceless velar stop /k/ (appearing in free variation with uvular /q/). All three represent a departure from Sibayh's /G/, with /g/ displaying a shift from a uvular to a velar place of articulation, /q/ displaying a loss of voicing, and /k/ displaying both (apparently as a further evolution of /q/). Of the three realizations, the latter two are reported to be the more common amongst the older generations of speakers within the insular *medina* (walled city), with /q/ considered more typical of male speech and /k/ more typical of female speech. In the speech of these individuals, /g/ and /q~k/ contrast, resulting in minimal pairs such as *gdif* 'he vomited' and *qdif* 'he rowed.' The presence of /g/ in the speech of older Sūsi speakers is restricted to a relatively small number of loanwords from neighboring countryside dialects (Talmoudi 22-23).

Younger generations of Sūsi speakers, however, display a rather different pattern. Amongst this group, /q/ is replaced by /g/ in the great majority of lexical items, showing an apparent breakdown of the phonemic contrast and a step on the road to wholesale replacement of /q~k/ by /g/. This innovation, most common in younger men, is undoubtedly linked to the recent influx of new population to Sousse, most of whom hail from rural areas where /g/ predominates. In determining the direction of the shift, it is of note that, while Sūsi /q~k/ is always replaceable by /g/, /q/ is never introduced to the Sūsi lexical items which contain /g/ even in the production of older speakers (Talmoudi 22-23).

The realization of this phoneme is of particular note as it serves as one of the primary differentiators between sedentary- and Bedouin-type dialects across the Arabic-speaking world. The voiced realization /g/ is considered a major shibboleth of the Bedouin speech varieties, while a voiceless realization /q, ʔ, k/ is considered a defining feature of the sedentary dialect type

(Versteegh, 2001 143). This fact will be seen to be of great relevance as the discussion continues.

### **B. The Pharyngealized Stop**

Sibawayh describes a pharyngealized voiced alveolar stop /d/. In the modern dialect of Sousse, however, this sound is reflected as a voiceless /t/ (Talmoudi 15). This shift is common across the New Arabic dialects, however, and thus may represent an example of a pre-diasporic common innovation rather than a change unique to the New Arabic varieties of the Tunisian dialect area (Versteegh, 2001 89).

### **C. The Glottal Stop**

Sibawayh's glottal stop /ʔ/ is entirely absent in the modern speech of Sousse, apparently undergoing deletion in most cases and leniting to /h/ intervocally in verbal forms (Talmoudi 168-169). Similarly to the evolution of the pharyngealized alveolar stop, however, this may not constitute a Sūsi or Tunisian innovation, as early dialectal evidence shows the glottal stop to have been absent from the speech of a significant number of Arab tribes in the pre-Islamic era (Versteegh, 2001 42).

### **D. The Lateral**

Sibawayh's voiced lateral fricative /ħ/ appears in the dialect of Sousse as a pharyngealized voiced interdental fricative /ð/ (Talmoudi 15). Though a seemingly drastic change, this innovation is once again one common across the New Arabic dialects, with the further evolution of /ð/ > /d/ in the classic sedentary varieties. Thus, this may once again

represent a pre-diasporic trait, in which case the sound change would not be relevant to the current analysis (Versteegh, 2001: 89).

### **E. Summary**

In this section, the phonemic system of the dialect of Sousse was examined with special regard to those consonant series determined to be most vulnerable to creolization effects. In all, only four potential effects were found, and all but one are potentially explained by common innovation of the Old Arabic varieties at some point preceding the Arab expansions. Moreover, the types of changes observed do not all fall cleanly into the categories of overdifferentiation, underdifferentiation, substitution, and deletion which would be expected in a situation of language restructuring. The one possible exception is the realization of Sibawayh's /g/, with the voiceless /q~k/ of the older generation giving way to the voiced /g/ of younger speakers. This transformation will acquire added significance in light of the reflexes of this phoneme in the other dialects to be examined, and will be discussed further as the study continues.

Overall, it is possible to report that the Arabic dialect of Sousse displays little (or perhaps no) evidence of language restructuring/creolization in the makeup of its phonemic inventory. The discrepancies from Sibawayh's Old Arabic type are largely explainable as natural sound change, and do not warrant a labeling of this variety as "creole," at least from the phonological perspective.

### **III. Morphosyntactic Characteristics**

#### **A. Verbal Morphosyntax**

In accordance with the discussion of the previous chapter, the verbal morphosyntax of the dialect of Sousse will be examined for evidence of the following creole traits:

- bare verb forms
- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

The presence of these features will be evaluated in detail below. As noted above, Talmoudi's description of the dialect of Sousse does not contain certain information relevant to the analysis of verbal morphosyntax; when necessary information is not provided by Talmoudi's work, Mion (2004) will be utilized in its place.

#### **1. Bare Verb Forms**

The Arabic dialect of Sousse does not show evidence of bare (uninflected) verb forms. Rather, verbs receive inflection for aspect, person, number, gender, and mood (Talmoudi 78). This is consistent with system posited for the Old Arabic type. The Sūsi paradigm, however, does display a reduction in the number of such distinctions made. Below, the generally posited Old Arabic inflectional categories (here exemplified by Classical Arabic) are presented side-by-side with those present in the dialect of Sousse:

**Table 2. Sūsi Verbal Inflectional Categories**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Bateson 23-25)	<b>Sūsi</b> (Talmoudi 78)
<b>Aspect:</b>		
Perfective	√	√
Imperfective	√	√
<b>Person:</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	√	√
2 <sup>nd</sup>	√	√
3 <sup>rd</sup>	√	√
<b>Number:</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender:</b>		
Masculine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
Feminine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
<b>Mood:</b>		
Indicative	√	√
Subjunctive	√	<b>X</b>
Jussive	√	<b>X</b>
Imperative	√	√

As compared to the Classical Arabic verb, the Sūsi verb is marked for fewer inflectional distinctions. While aspect and person are present as they are in Classical Arabic, the inflectional categories of number, gender, and mood all show reductions in the number of distinctions made. With regard to number, the dual is lost completely, leaving only singular and plural. Gender distinctions are similarly diminished; while Classical Arabic inflects for gender in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural forms and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, plural, and dual, Sūsi makes the distinction

only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Modal inflections are also reduced, as Sūsi inflects only the indicative and imperative moods; the subjunctive and jussive are not present as in Classical Arabic, a common trait across New Arabic varieties.

Thus, though the Sūsi verb is far from bare, its inflectional paradigm does show clear evidence of reduction vis-à-vis the proposed Old Arabic paradigm. Though hardly a definitive indication of prior creolization, this fact could be accounted for by certain restructuring processes, as will be discussed in a later section. In other words, it does not in and of itself constitute proof of language restructuring, though it is not inconsistent with the scenario.

## 2. Preverbal Tense/Aspect/Mood Marking

As discussed in the previous chapter, preverbal particles indicating tense, aspect, and mood are typical of creole languages. These particles tend to have specific semantic significances and take a particular order. They are as follows:

**[anterior] + [irrealis] + [nonpunctual] + verb**  
(Holm 191)

Examination of the Sūsi data in search of such particles yields the following results:

### a. Anterior

Analysis of Talmoudi's data on Sousse provided no clue as to the presence of a preverbal anterior marker. Mion's data for Tunis includes a single example of *kān* (the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular masculine perfective of the copula) used in such a way, but as only one example exists it is impossible to say whether it represents a true particle or an auxiliary verbal construction (Mion 252). Given the lack of data available, it is not possible to posit the existence of a preverbal anterior particle in the Arabic of Sousse or Tunis.

## **b. Irrealis**

Talmoudi's description of Sūsi contains no mention of an irrealis marker. Mion's study however, contains a wealth of potential candidates. He cites three preverbal markers in the dialect of Tunis that fall under the label of irrealis. The first is *taw*, used to mark the intentional, imminent future; the second is *qrīb*, which marks an anticipatory state; the third and final marker is *bāš* (~*māš*), the marker for general and narrative future (Mion 252). All three markers are true particles, not taking any agreement or inflection that would mark them as an auxiliary verb. Their number, however, is troubling: creolistics would predict a single, unspecified irrealis marker. It is possible, however, that a single particle once existed only to have its usage refined by later differentiation.

It is worthy of note here that the Old Arabic type also makes use of a preverbal irrealis particle (c.f. Classical Arabic *sa-*) (Bateson 39). Thus it is possible to view the presence of such a marker here – or in any of the dialects discussed – as an inheritance rather than an innovation brought about by language restructuring. The lack lexical continuity, however, does pose a problem for such a line of reasoning.

## **c. Nonpunctual**

Talmoudi's description is yet again silent on this point. Mion's data, however, cites the use of *qā šad* (active participle of *qa šad* 'to sit') as a progressive marker, thus potentially filling the role of a preverbal nonpunctual particle. However, the picture is complicated by the fact that *qā šad* is the recipient of agreement marking for the verb's subject, alternating between the forms *qā šad* (masc. sg.), *qa šda* (fem.

sg.), and *qa šdīn* (masc. & fem. pl.). Thus, the usage *qā šəd* documented is more akin to an auxiliary verb than a preverbal particle (Mion 249). It is therefore not possible ascribe a preverbal nonpunctual particle to urban Muslim Tunisian Arabic.

#### d. Combinatory Use

A key property of the preverbal particles proposed as typical of creole languages is their ability to be used in combination, in the given order presented above (Holm 175-176). No explicit mention is given in either Talmoudi or Mion of combining any of the elements discussed above. One example, however, can be found upon examination of Mion's sample data. His article contains the following sentence:

*əl-εassās kān qrīb yuḏrub-ni* (Mion 252)

‘The porter was about to hit me.’

This sentence contains two potential candidates for preverbal particles ([anterior] *kān* and [irrealis] *qrīb*) appearing together, in the position relative to one another and to the verb predicted by creole theory. This is, however, a single example, and it is not possible to generalize in the absence of further data.

Given the evidence discussed immediately above, it is not possible to state that the urban Muslim Arabic of Tunisia utilizes a creole-like system of preverbal tense/mood/aspect particles.

### **3. Preverbal or Discontinuous Negation**

No mention is made of negation schema in either Talmoudi's or Mion's work, perhaps as it is considered a syntactic phenomenon beyond the scope of Talmoudi's mainly morphological approach and deemed too basic to include in Mion's more focused analysis. Thus, it is necessary to turn to yet a third work, that of Inglefield (1970), to obtain the necessary information. Like Mion's study, Inglefield's description is based primarily on the Muslim dialect of Tunis.

Creole languages generally utilize either preverbal or discontinuous negation; according to Inglefield, urban Muslim Tunisian Arabic makes use of a discontinuous system, in which the negated verb is preceded by the element *maa* and followed by the element *š* (Inglefield 184). In this respect, then, the variety is consistent with what is predicted for creolized languages.

### **4. Serial Verb Constructions**

No mention is made of serial verb constructions in any of the sources available. As it is not explicitly noted as forbidden, however, this does not rule out its existence, but given the current state of the data it is not possible to posit the existence of such structures in the dialects of Sousse or Tunis.

### **5. Lack of a Marked Passive**

The dialect of Sousse does contain a marked passive, though its form is quite divergent from that typical of the Old Arabic type. In his account of the verbal system of Tunis, Mion describes a passive prefix *t-* which is inserted immediately before the verbal root (Mion 245); the presence of this same morpheme is also noted in the dialect of Sousse (Talmoudi 103), and is attested elsewhere throughout the North African region (Versteegh, 2001 167). This stands in

stark opposition to the passive marking strategy found in the Old Arabic type, as exhibited by Classical Arabic. The Old Arabic system is what is referred to as an internal passive, in which the voice is marked by the vowels inserted between the triliteral verbal roots, not by an affix (Bateson 35).

Thus, while Sūsi does contain a marked passive, it does not appear to be a direct descendent of a passive of the Old Arabic type. Rather, it would appear to be an extension of the Old Arabic reflexive marker *t-* found in Classical Arabic's fifth, sixth, and eighth verbal measures (Bateson 33-34); indeed, the morpheme in Sūsi maintains a reflexive meaning as well (Talmoudi 103). In light of this fact, as is possible to view the dialect of Sousse as having once been without a passive (as there is no evidence of any maintenance of the Old Arabic internal system) and having later formed one by generalizing an existing morpheme to fill a semantic gap, though such an interpretation is not the only possible reading of the data.

## **6. Subject-Verb-Object Word Order**

According to Mion, Muslim Tunisian Arabic utilizes a subject-verb-object word order (Mion 243). This is the formula predicted for creoles, and is different from that found in Old Arabic, where verb-subject-object is the norm (Bateson 45).

## **7. Summary**

Above, the verbal morphosyntax of the urban Muslim speech variety of Tunisia was evaluated with regard to the following five features, known to be typical of creoles:

- bare verb forms
- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking

- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

With the exception of negation schema and word order, none of these traits could be convincingly displayed to be present in the data. Although the findings regarding bare verb forms and the passive (as well as certain elements of the preverbal particle marking) could be interpreted as not inconsistent with a hypothesis of prior creolization, they hardly represent strong evidence for such a view. Thus, it is not possible to label the verbal morphosyntax of the dialect as markedly creole in nature.

## **B. Nominal Morphosyntax**

The creole-typical nominal morphosyntactic traits to be evaluated in Sūsi are as follows:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

Sufficient information is found in Talmoudi's description to discuss these features; thus, Mion and Inglefield will not be utilized in this section.

### **1. Lack of Inflection for Case, Number, and Gender**

The details of the various inflectional categories are presented in the following table. Classical Arabic data is provided as well, for a comparison with the Old Arabic type.

**Table 3. Sūsi Nominal Inflectional Categories**

<b>Inflection</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Bateson 9-15)	<b>Sūsi</b> (Talmoudi 128-135)
<b>Case</b>		
Nominative	√	<b>X</b>
Genitive	√	<b>X</b>
Accusative	√	<b>X</b>
<b>Number</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender</b>		
Masculine	√	√
Feminine	√	√

As can be clearly seen, the dialect of Sousse has completely lost the category of case – no mention of it at all is made in Talmoudi’s description, which, given the author’s otherwise highly detailed account of nominal morphology, has been taken as evidence of its nonexistence (a stance which can be verified by analysis of example phrases found throughout Talmoudi’s text). This stands in contrast to the presence of an active system of three-way case distinction present in Classical Arabic.

With regard to number, the speech variety of Sousse, though it inflects for singular and plural, does not maintain the dual as a productive inflectional category as Classical Arabic does. The nominal dual in Sūsi is present only in frozen forms, consisting primarily of words for domestic animals, units of measurement, and paired body parts (Talmoudi 131).

Masculine and feminine gender are marked in Sūsi, just as they are in dialects of the Old Arabic type.

An analysis of Sūsi nominal inflection provides a similar result to that of the examination of verbal inflection presented above. Though the inflectional categories of the Old Arabic type are not absent in the dialect of Sousse, they exist in a significantly reduced form. While this should not be interpreted in and of itself as a creole trait, it could be seen to be consistent with a prior process of creolization, a possibility that will be discussed in detail in a later section.

## **2. Three-Way Determiner Distinction**

The dialect of Sousse does not contain a three-way determiner distinction of the type discussed in the previous chapter. Rather, there is a two-way distinction between definite *el-* and an indefinite zero-marker. *el-* is not a definite article per se, but more accurately a morpheme marking definiteness which is prefixed to nouns and adjectives (c.f. Classical *al-*) (Talmoudi 136). With regard to determiners, Sūsi is not consistent with the predicted creole characteristics.

## **3. Possessive Juxtaposition / Analytical Genitive Construction**

Sūsi employs two strategies for the production of possessive constructions: the nominal construct state and an analytical genitive. The nominal construct state (Arabic *iḍāfah*) may at first appear to be similar to simple possessive juxtaposition, in which the possessed and possessor are placed adjacent to one another with no overt marking of possession beyond syntactic position. Such a view, however, crumbles when feminine nouns fill the role of possessed, as they do take an overt inflection of *-t* to mark their role in the construct state. Thus,

this type of possessive structure cannot be said to be consistent with either of those predicted for creoles (Talmoudi 130).

The dialect of Sousse does, however, contain a genitive exponent *mtɛ: ʃ* which is utilized in the formation of analytical genitive constructions in a manner precisely comparable to that seen in many creoles (Talmoudi 158). Moreover, such a construction is not generally observed as part of the repertoire of the Old Arabic type (Bateson 49-50).

#### **4. Relative Pronoun**

The use of a relative pronoun is considered defining of creoles, and is present in the dialect of Sousse as well, taking the form *ɛl:i*. This morpheme would seem to be an evolution of the analogous Old Arabic element (c.f. Classical Arabic *allaḏī*), though it does not share the latter's agreement marking for number and gender. Given the available data, it would appear that *ɛl:i* is used in definite contexts while a second pronoun *mɛ* (c.f. Classical Arabic *mā*) fills the role in indefinite ones, at least in the speech of older speakers. The precise conditioning, however, is not immediately clear from the data (Bateson 42-43; Talmoudi 146-147).

It would seem, then, that the Sūsi relative pronoun system, while consistent with the prediction for creole languages, can also be explained as an inheritance from the Old Arabic system, and thus does not serve as strong evidence of creolization.

#### **5. Summary**

In the above section, Sūsi nominal morphosyntax was evaluated for creoleness according four major criteria. These criteria were:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender

- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

Only with regard to the analytical genitive construction was Sūsi found to be substantively creole-like. The three-way determiner distinction sought was not found at all, and the results for the remaining two criteria – lack of nominal case inflection and the presence of a relative pronoun – do not represent conclusive evidence for creolization, though they are not inherently contradictory to its existence. Thus, with regard to nominal morphosyntax, it is not possible to conclude that the dialect of Sousse exhibits significant presence of creole-like traits.

#### **IV. Lexicosemantic Characteristics**

As discussed in the previous chapter, this section will search for lexicosemantic evidence of creolization in the form of the following two characteristics:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

The discussion will begin with an analysis of the question words.

##### **A. Bimorphemic Question Words**

The question words of the Arabic dialect of Sousse are as follows, with the corresponding Classical Arabic elements presented for comparison (N.B.: ‘what (n.)’ refers to the form used in nominal sentences and ‘what (v.)’ refers to that used in verbal sentences):

**Table 4. Sūsi Interrogatives**

<b>Sūsi</b> (Talmoudi 149-150, 162)	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Cowan)
<i>ʃnuwwε:</i>	‘what (n.)’	<i>mā</i>
<i>əʃ</i>	‘what (v.)’	<i>māḏā</i>
<i>ʃku:n</i>	‘who’	<i>man</i>
<i>waqtε:ʃ</i>	‘when’	<i>matā</i>
<i>wi:n ~ fi:n</i>	‘where’	<i>ʔayna</i>
<i>mni:n</i>	‘from where’	--
<i>lwi:n</i>	‘to where’	--
<i>ʃlε:ʃ</i>	‘why’	<i>limāḏā</i>
<i>kifε:ʃ</i>	‘how’	<i>kayfa</i>
<i>qadde:ʃ</i>	‘how much/many’	<i>kam</i>
<i>ε:nε</i>	‘which’	<i>ʔayy</i>

As can clearly be seen, the forms of the Sūsi interrogatives differ sharply from their Classical Arabic counterparts. Are they, however, bimorphemic, consisting of two compounded elements? Even a cursory analysis of the Sūsi forms shows that this is quite likely the case.

Firstly, six of the eleven forms appear to be composed of an interrogative element  $[(\varepsilon)\int]$  combined with other morphemes, and a seventh seems to consist of the  $[(\varepsilon)\int]$  only. These seven forms may be divided into two subgroups, those which utilize the  $[(\varepsilon)\int]$  element as a sort of interrogative affix combined with a root morpheme and those which do not. The latter group, consisting of the forms *əʃ* and *ʃnuwwε:* (‘what’ in verbal and nominal sentences, respectively), will be examined first in hopes of determining the etymological origins of  $[(\varepsilon)\int]$ .

The Sūsi form for ‘what’ used in verbal sentences, *əʃ*, can be identified with the  $[(\varepsilon)\int]$  element present in the other interrogatives. Though it is difficult to assign a definite etymology

to such a reduced form, the most probable origin of the form is something akin to the Classical Arabic construction *ʔayyu ʔayʔ* meaning ‘which thing.’ Evidence for such a conclusion is provided by the second group of [(ε)ʔ] interrogatives, those which include the form for ‘what’ used in nominal sentences, *ʃnuwwε:*. This form can be tentatively traced back to the Classical Arabic phrase *ʔayyu ʔayʔin huwa* meaning ‘which thing is it?’. The appearance of an [n] in *ʃnuwwε:* traceable to the Old Arabic indefinite genitive case ending [-in] is particularly powerful support of the proposed etymologies. In accordance with Classical Arabic morphophonological patterns, the [-in] would not be pronounced in pausal (phrase final) position, as in \**ʔayyu ʔayʔ(in) > əʃ*. In nonpausal position, however, the case marker would be pronounced, as in \**ʔayyu ʔayʔin huwa > ʃnuwwε:* (Bateson 8). Such an etymology for *əʃ* would render it bimorphemic in nature, while *ʃnuwwε:* would in fact be trimorphemic.

Given the evidence of the five affixal forms, it would appear that the reduced form \**ʔayyu ʔayʔ > əʃ* ‘what’ was extended in function to serve as a more general morphological marker of “interrogativeness.” Each of these forms may be analyzed as consisting of a root morpheme combined with the element *əʃ*. The forms, each accompanied by a putative etymology based on Classical Arabic roots (Cowan), are presented below:

*ʃku:n* ‘who’ < \**əʃ* + *kawn* ‘being’

*waqtε:ʃ* ‘when’ < \**waqt* ‘time’ + *əʃ*

*ʕlε:ʃ* ‘why’ < \**ʕalā* ‘upon’ + *əʃ*

*kifε:ʃ* ‘how’ < \**kayfa* ‘how’ + *əʃ*

*qaddε:ʃ* ‘how much/many’ < \**qadd* ‘quantity’ + *əʃ*

These five roots, then, appear almost certainly bimorphemic. The nature of *ʔf* as a quasi-independent marker of interrogativeness is supported by its usage as a cliticized interrogative particle, as seen in sentences like *qra:-f?* ‘did he read?’ and *bke:-f?* ‘did he weep?’ (Talmoudi 150).

Three of the remaining four interrogatives may also be classified as bimorphemic, though they do not include the element *ʔf*. These three are the ‘where’ series, including *wi:n ~ fi:n* ‘where,’ *mni:n* ‘from where,’ and *lwi:n* ‘to where.’ Classical Arabic contains a word for ‘where,’ but the second two elements appear to have no direct equivalents in Classical Arabic, at least not as single lexemes. Proposed etymologies for the Sūsi ‘where’ interrogatives are given below (classical roots from Cowan):

*wi:n* ‘where’ < \**wa* ‘and’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’; \**huwwa* ‘he/it’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*fi:n* ‘where’ < \**fī* ‘at’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*mni:n* ‘from where’ < \**min* ‘from’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*lwi:n* ‘to where’ < \**ʔilā* ‘to’ + *wi:n* ‘where’ (see above); \**li-* ‘for’ + *wi:n* ‘where’

The words *wi:n* and *fi:n*, meaning ‘where,’ both appear to be bimorphemic, comprising a combination of the Old Arabic *ʔayna* and *wa / huwa* or *fī*, respectively. The words *mni:n* ‘from where’ and *lwi:n* ‘to where’ also appear to be composed of two elements. The former appears from the Old Arabic *min ʔayna* ‘from where’, while the latter seems to represent a historically later formation, as the component meaning ‘where’ is represented by the New Arabic, Tunisian coinage *wi:n* rather than Old Arabic *ʔayna*.

At present, it is not possible to posit a viable etymology for *ε:nε*, so no judgment will be leveled regarding its status as bimorphemic.

Though the dialect of Sousse has not thus far displayed much evidence of creoleness, the question words represent an exception. Of the eleven interrogatives taken from Talmoudi's description, nine may be listed as bimorphemic, one as trimorphemic, and the eleventh as being of uncertain origin. This fact is strong evidence for the creole nature of Sūsi question words.

## B. Reduced Pronominal System

The Sūsi personal pronominal system comprises two paradigms, the free and the bound. The free pronouns stand as independent lexemes and are utilized in subject position; the bound pronouns are clitics and are used as object and possessive pronouns (the only paradigmatic difference between the object and possessive series exists in the first person singular – the possessive form will be listed second below). The following tables present the Sūsi pronominal system, as well as the Classical Arabic system as a representative of the Old Arabic type:

**Table 5. Sūsi Free Pronouns** (Talmoudi 143-145)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>ɛ:ni</i>	<i>aħnɛ</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>inti</i>	<i>ntu:mɛ</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>hu:wɛ</i>	<i>hu:mɛ</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>hi:yɛ</i>	

**Table 6. Classical Arabic Free Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>ʔana:</i>		<i>nahnu</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>ʔanta</i>	<i>ʔantuma:</i>	<i>ʔantum</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>ʔanti</i>		<i>ʔantunna</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>huwa</i>	<i>huma:</i>	<i>hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>hiya</i>		<i>hunna</i>

**Table 7. Sūsi Bound Pronouns** (Talmoudi 143-145)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ni, -i</i>	<i>-nε</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ik</i>	<i>-kum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-u</i>	<i>-hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-hε</i>	

**Table 8. Classical Arabic Free Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ni, -i</i>		<i>-na:</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-ka</i>	<i>-kuma:</i>	<i>-kum</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ki</i>		<i>-kunna</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-hu</i>	<i>-huma:</i>	<i>-hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ha:</i>		<i>-hunna</i>

There is no difference between Sūsi and Old Arabic with regard to the actual number of pronominal paradigms present in the language (two), nor do the forms of the Sūsi pronouns seem to diverge from their Classical Arabic counterparts to in a way that would suggest the independent re-formation of a novel, but parallel, paradigm lost at an earlier stage. The loss of semantic distinctions within the paradigms, however, is noticeable: the Sūsi paradigms have not preserved the dual number and have lost gender distinctions in all but the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. The result is a total of fifteen personal pronouns found in the dialect of Sousse, while Classical Arabic, representative of the Old Arabic type, contains twenty-five.

Thus, the conclusion to be reached regarding the Sūsi pronominal system is much like that in the section regarding verbal morphology above. While the reductions of the pronominal system Sousse are not sufficient to warrant a label of “creole,” they are not inconsistent with

such a process, and may prove relevant as the discussion continues. As a single feature, however, the Sūsi pronouns do not appear markedly creole-like.

### **C. Summary**

With regard to lexicosemantics, the dialect of Sousse appears to be more creole-like in nature than it does in the other domains examined in this study. The two features examined were:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

As regards the first point, the Sūsi question words are nearly all bimorphemic, as is predicted for a product of creolization. The pronominal system, on the other hand, does not display any strong creole traits, though the general reduction in semantic distinctions could be seen as consistent with a process of restructuring. Thus, though Sūsi's lexicosemantics are more creole-like than its phonology or morphosyntax, they are far from incontrovertible evidence for prior creolization.

### **V. Evaluation**

Overall, the Arabic dialect of Sousse appears significantly creole-like in relation to only a few of the features discussed above. These features are:

- the treatment of Old Arabic \*/ǧ/
- a discontinuous negation schema
- SVO word order
- the use of an analytical genitive construction
- the preponderance of bimorphemic question words

There are several other respects in which the Sūsi data could be interpreted as consistent with an analysis of, if not proof of, prior creolization, but such a stance is tenuous at best. Given the data at hand and the above discussion, it is not possible to identify the Sūsi dialect as significantly creole-like. While a few traits provide tantalizing flashes of possibility, the dialect as a whole fails to meet enough of the criteria presented to warrant its identification as a restructured variety, at least on its own merits.



## Chapter 2.2: Judeo-Tunisian

### I. The Dialect

The Arabic dialect described in this section is that of the Jews of Tunisia's capitol city of Tunis in the mid-1900s. The Jewish community represented a significant fraction of the population of Tunis at that time, as well as of the region as a whole. It is estimated that at the turn of the twentieth century the Jews of Tunis numbered approximately thirty thousand, out of a citywide population of roughly one hundred and eighty thousand. The majority of that number are represented by "Tunsi" Jews, who trace their lineage back to the earliest Jewish settlers in the area, though their ranks were enriched over time with arrival of Iberian refugees, or Grana, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Jewish presence in the region stretches back at least to before the arrival of Christianity, and possibly precedes the advent of Roman rule altogether. As was the case across North Africa at the time, the Jewish community of Tunis was swelled by the diaspora following Titus' dissolution of the Jewish state. Tunis continued to be a haven for Jews facing persecution in Europe and elsewhere (Jacobs).

The Jewish presence in Tunis has declined greatly, however, since the emergence of Israel in 1948. The vast majority of Tunisian Jews either chose or were pressured to emigrate to the newly-formed Jewish state in the latter half of the twentieth century; today, only about a thousand remain in the nation as a whole (Bassiouney 104). The variety is no longer in general use in Tunis itself, though it may still be heard in small émigré communities in Israel and France (Cohen 3). The dialect described here is thus highly endangered, perhaps even on the edge of extinction, but no less an integral and rich part of the legacy of the Arabic language in Tunisia.

The following section will rely on David Cohen's 1975 description *Le Parler Arabe des Juifs de Tunis*, based on work completed in 1956, while Tunisian Judeo-Arabic still represented an established and vibrant speech variety. The work, though composed in a somewhat outdated style of colonial French reference works, is meticulous in detail and rife with examples of speech. It thus offers an in-depth, lengthily discussed, and fully developed presentation of the Judeo-Tunisian dialect so often given only cursory mention in other works of the period. Though at times worryingly authoritative in its pronouncements of "grammaire," copious footnotes and counterexamples show Cohen's work to be a nuanced and data-driven account fitting with the norms of modern linguistic scholarship, and an invaluable source of information on a rapidly vanishing speech variety.

N.B.: Though IPA symbols will be utilized in the discussion of phonology, examples in further sections will be provided in Cohen's slightly idiosyncratic transcription system. The major symbols of note are [ä], used to denote a frontal [a] (though it is unclear whether it proceeds to the quality of [æ]), and [ɛ], used to represent the pharyngeal approximant [ʕ] rather than a mid front vowel. Due to difficulty in replicating the complex series of diacritics his work includes, a few small alterations have been made, including the indication of vowel length by way of a colon rather than a macron.

## **II. Phonological Characteristics**

Just as discussed for the Muslim dialect Sousse, the analysis of Judeo-Tunisian phonology will revolve around a search for overdifferentiation, underdifferentiation, substitution, and deletion in the following consonant series:

- the interdental

- the uvulars
- the pharyngeals
- the pharyngealized consonants
- the glottals
- the lateral

The following table presents the consonantal phonemes described by Sibawayh (Al-Nassir 11), representative of Old Arabic, compared to those of the Judeo-Arabic dialect of Tunis (Cohen 11). Differences are bolded.

**Table 1. Judeo-Tunisian Consonants**

Series	Orthography	Sibwayh	Judeo-Tunisian
Interdental	ث	<b>θ</b>	<b>t</b>
	ذ	<b>ð</b>	<b>d</b>
	ظ	<b>ḏ</b>	<b>ḏ</b>
Uvular	ق	<b>g</b>	<b>q</b>
	خ	<b>χ</b>	<b>x</b>
	غ	<b>ʁ</b>	<b>ɣ</b>
Pharyngeal	ح	<b>h</b>	<b>ħ</b>
	ع	<b>ʕ</b>	<b>ʕ</b>
Pharyngealized	ط	<b>ṭ</b>	<b>Ṭ</b>
	ظ	<b>ḏ</b>	<b>Ḑ</b>
	ص	<b>s</b>	<b>Ṣ</b>
Glottal	ء	<b>ʔ</b>	<b>Ø</b>
	ه	<b>h</b>	<b>Ø</b>
Lateral	ض	<b>ḷ</b>	<b>Ḑ</b>

It is immediately evident that the phonemes of Judeo-Tunisian differ greatly from those of the Old Arabic type, and to a much greater extent than those of Sūsi. Moreover, these differences appear highly concentrated in precisely the areas predicted by creole theory. The particulars will be discussed below.

## **A. The Interdentals**

The three Old Arabic interdental fricatives /θ, ð, ð̣/ are reflected in Judeo-Tunisian as the corresponding coronal stops /t, d, ḍ/ (Cohen 19). This seems to constitute a clear case of substitution. The interdentals, which are virtually nonexistent in the substrate languages (represented only by Pan-Berber /ð̣/ (Basset 5-7)), are replaced by coronal stops found across the three proposed substrates. Distinctions of voicing and pharyngealization remain intact. It is also possible to view this change as an example of underdifferentiation, in which two distinct series of Old Arabic sounds, the interdentals /θ, ð, ð̣/ and the coronals /t, d, ḍ/, are identified as one in Judeo-Tunisian, reflected as /t, d, ḍ/. In either case, this change is in line with the type of phonological process associated with creolization.

## **B. The Uvulars**

The Old Arabic uvular phonemes /ɣ, χ, ʁ/ have the Judeo-Tunisian reflexes /q, x, γ/ (Cohen 31-33). The shift of the voiced and voiceless uvular fricative to the corresponding velar fricatives appears to be an example of substitution. The uvular fricatives, with no counterparts in any of the substrate languages, have moved to a velar place of articulation, a location utilized in all three potential substrates (though in Latin and Punic only for stops). Thus, this evolution seems quite creole-like in nature.

The reflex of Old Arabic /ɣ/ as /q/ does not fit quite so nicely into the category of substitution, as it involves a difference in voicing rather than place of articulation, though it might be possible to view this change as a substitution of the Old Arabic voiced uvular stop with the voiceless uvular stop found in Punic. Regardless of the precise nature of the change, a phonological shift in a predicted area should not be overlooked as evidence for prior creolization.

### **C. The Pharyngealized Consonants**

The Old Arabic pharyngealized consonants /d̤, ð/ have the Judeo-Tunisian reflexes /t, d/, while Old Arabic /s/ is identical in both varieties (Cohen 19-21). As discussed in the section on Sūsi phonology, the shift of \*/d̤/ > /t/ may not represent a creole phenomenon, but rather a common innovation having occurred prior to the Arab expansions. The change of \*/ð/ > /d/ is discussed above, under “Interdentals.” Thus, though the category of pharyngealized consonants displays variation from its Old Arabic equivalent, there do not seem to be any creolization effects on the category per se, though the results of other changes do influence its makeup.

### **D. The Glottals**

The Old Arabic glottals /ʔ, h/ both appear to have undergone deletion in Judeo-Tunisian, as both phonemes are absent in the New Arabic variety (Cohen 35-39). This clear-cut example of deletion is consistent with the changes predicted by creole theory. As mentioned in the previous section, the loss of /ʔ/ may not represent a specific Judeo-Tunisian innovation, and may have occurred before the Islamic era; the loss of /h/, however, cannot be explained in such a way.

### **E. The Lateral**

The change of the lateral fricative \*/ħ/ > /d/ (Cohen 19) may be a straightforward case of underdifferentiation in Judeo-Tunisian, in which Old Arabic /ħ/ and /d/ were co-identified and merged. Alternatively, this change could represent the result of both pre-Diasporic sound change and creole innovation. As discussed in the section on the phonology of the dialect of Sousse, a change of \*/ħ/ > /ð/ may have occurred before the Islamic era; further substitution/

underdifferentiation in Judeo-Tunisian would yield /d/, the modern reflex of the Old Arabic phoneme.

## **F. Summary**

With the exception of the pharyngeals, all series of Judeo-Arabic sounds predicted to be affected by creolization display significant differences from their Old Arabic counterparts. Moreover, the type of these differences fits with those typically found in instances of language restructuring. The specific changes deemed to be consistent with creolization effects are the substitution/underdifferentiation of the interdental fricatives (with corresponding effects on the reflexes of lateral fricative and the voiced pharyngealized fricative), the substitution of the uvular fricatives, variation (or possible substitution) of the uvular stop, and deletion of the glottal stop and fricative. The change of the voiced lateral fricative to a voiced pharyngealized coronal stop may represent yet another case of underdifferentiation.

Though no single one of these changes is impossible by the principles of natural sound change, the large number of changes consistent in location and type with those predicted by creole theory renders such an explanation increasingly unlikely and offers language restructuring as an ever more preferable alternative. Thus, these features constitute strong evidence of prior creolization, at least as far as phonology is concerned.

### **III. Morphosyntactic Characteristics**

#### **A. Verbal Morphosyntax**

Just as for the dialect of Sousse, the verbal morphosyntax of Judeo-Tunisian will be evaluated with attention to the presence/absence of the following creole traits:

- bare verb forms
- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

The precise nature of these features as they appear in Judeo-Tunisian will be discussed below.

#### **1. Bare Verb Forms**

The Judeo-Arabic dialect of Tunis does not utilize bare verb forms, as verbs are inflected for aspect, person, number, gender, and mood (Cohen 94). Its system of verbal inflection does, however, display a significant number of reductions as compared to that of the Old Arabic type. In fact, these reductions are the same as those found in Sūsi. It is important to note, however, that it is not the verbal forms themselves that are identical across the two dialects, but rather the series of semantic distinctions upon which those forms are based. These distinctions, in comparison to Classical Arabic, are presented in the following table.

**Table 2. Judeo-Tunisian Verbal Inflectional Categories**

Category	Classical Arabic (Bateson 23-25)	Judeo-Tunisian (Cohen 94)
<b>Aspect:</b>		
Perfective	√	√
Imperfective	√	√
<b>Person:</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	√	√
2 <sup>nd</sup>	√	√
3 <sup>rd</sup>	√	√
<b>Number:</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender:</b>		
Masculine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
Feminine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
<b>Mood:</b>		
Indicative	√	√
Subjunctive	√	<b>X</b>
Jussive	√	<b>X</b>
Imperative	√	√

As in Sūsi, the Old Arabic dual number is lost, gender distinctions disappear in all but the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, and the subjunctive and jussive moods similarly fall to the wayside. Such a reduction in inflectional categories is not in and of itself indicative of creolization, though it could be viewed as consistent with such a process. Taken in conjunction with other factors, it could be interpreted as the result of language restructuring, but as a single feature it is not possible to characterize Judeo-Tunisian verbal inflection as creole in nature.

## 2. Preverbal Tense/Aspect/Mood Marking

As previously described, creole languages show a strong tendency towards the use of preverbal particles marking tense, aspect, and mood. These particles contain particular semantic significances and follow a particular combinatory pattern, as displayed here:

**[anterior] + [irrealis] + [nonpunctual] + verb**  
(Holm 191)

The presence or absence of particles of each type in Judeo-Tunisian will be considered on an individual basis below.

### a. Anterior

Much like Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian uses a preverbal element *kä:n* (the perfective form of ‘to be’) to mark anterior time reference. In this context, however, *kä:n* takes verbal agreement marking, and thus appears to function as an auxiliary verb rather than as a true preverbal particle. Thus, Judeo-Tunisian does not contain an anterior marker of exactly the type predicted by creole theory (Cohen 135).

### b. Irrealis

Judeo-Tunisian contains an element *mä:š* which would seem to meet the criteria to be considered a creole-like preverbal irrealis marker. The form does not take agreement marking (and thus functions as a true particle) and placed before a verb conveys a meaning of imminent or intentional future, fitting with the irrealis mood (Cohen 137). This particle is akin in function and etymology to the Muslim Tunisian *bāš* described in the previous section. Just as discussed with regard to the Muslim variety, it does bear mentioning that the Old Arabic future marker is also believed to have taken the form of a (etymologically unrelated) preverbal particle.

### c. Nonpunctual

Judeo-Tunisian contains an element *qa* which is placed preceding verbs as a marker of nonpunctuality, more specifically durativity and progressivity, as seen in Cohen's example *qa yä:kəl* 'il est en train de manger ~ he is eating.' In this form, *qa* appears to be a true particle, as it is incapable of taking any form of agreement marking. The element may also appear in the form *qa:εəd* (cf. Muslim Tunisian *qā ḥəd* previously discussed). In this longer form, though, the marker receives agreement inflection, and thus constitutes an auxiliary verb rather than a particle. This fact, however, does not invalidate the use of *qa* as a preverbal nonpunctual marker typical of those found in creole languages (Cohen 136-137).

### d. Combinatory Use

Cohen's description does not contain explicit mention of the grammaticality of combining the preverbal elements discussed above. One example found in the section does, however, contain the following sentence:

*kä:n mä qa:š yäxdəm* (Cohen 137)

'He didn't use to work.'

This example appears to include a combination the anterior marker *kä:n* and the nonpunctual marker *qa*, in the order predicted by creole theory. It is not possible to draw any strong conclusions from this usage, however, for multiple reasons. Firstly, for reasons discussed above, *kä:n* cannot be classed as a true preverbal particle, and this fact may influence its combinatory possibilities. Second, the placement of the first negative element between the two markers is troubling, as is the suffixation of the second negative morpheme to *qa* rather than the verb. Third, the above sentence

is the sole representative sample, and without access to more data further generalization would be ill-advised. At this juncture, there is no solid evidence that Judeo-Tunisian preverbal elements combine in a creole-like manner.

Given the data discussed above, the evidence for creolesque preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking in Judeo-Tunisian is split. There does not appear to be a true anterior particle (this function is filled by an auxiliary verb), and the specifics of particle combination remain unclear; however, the presence of both a nonpunctual particle *qa* and an irrealis particle *mä:š* provides enticing parallels to systems found in creoles throughout the world.

### **3. Preverbal or Discontinuous Negation**

Negation in Judeo-Tunisian Arabic seems to parallel that in Muslim Tunisian speech, consisting of an element *mä* preceding the verb and an element *-š* following it (Cohen 268). Judeo-Tunisian thus utilizes a discontinuous negation strategy, a scheme consistent with those expected in restructured languages.

### **4. Serial Verb Constructions**

While Cohen's description does not include specific discussion of serial verbs, it is possible to find examples of such constructions in his work, or at least evidence of the prior existence of such constructions. Recall that a serial verb construction consists of two or more verbs which share the same subject and are not linked by a conjunction or complementizer. Cohen provides numerous examples of verbs behaving in this manner. Those identified as capable of immediately preceding another verb are as follows (Cohen 135-137):

<i>kä:n</i> ‘to be’	<i>žä:</i> ‘to come’
<i>bdä:</i> ‘to start’	<i>qa:m</i> ‘to stand up’
<i>qeäd</i> ‘to sit’	<i>wəllä</i> ‘to turn’
<i>εä:wod</i> ‘to return’	<i>mšä:</i> ‘to go’
<i>ħäbb</i> ‘to like’	<i>bqa</i> ‘to stay’

Cohen labels these verbs as auxiliaries, in the belief that their use in verbal constructions conveys a purely grammatical significance, separate from their standard lexical meaning, but insufficient evidence is provided to ascertain the validity of this judgment (Cohen 135-137). Even if he is correct, in his classification of these usages as auxiliaries and not true examples of serial verbs, the sheer number and diversity of such verbs present in the data might cause them to be viewed as the grammaticalized results of an earlier system of serial verb constructions. In either case, it is the opinion of this study that the evidence of the above verb constructions renders Judeo-Tunisian creole-like.

## 5. Lack of a Marked Passive

Judeo-Tunisian marks the passive with the prefix *t-*, a form analogous to that found in Sūsi usage (Cowen 123). As mentioned in the description of the Sūsi morpheme, this method of passivization diverges sharply from that of Old Arabic, which is based on internal vowel alternations, not affixation (Bateson 35). As was also discussed in the previous section, this may be interpreted as a semantic extension of the Old Arabic reflexive marker of the same form to replace an original passive lost in the process of linguistic restructuring. Thus, while the Judeo-Tunisian passive marker is not inherently creole-like, it can be viewed as following from a process of prior creolization.

## 6. Subject-Verb-Object Word Order

Like Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian utilizes a subject-verb-object word order, as observed in sentences like the following:

*nä:š oqbəl yaɛrfu əlkəll bəttūrā* (Cohen 134)

‘People of the past knew the whole Torah.’

This represents a change from the Old Arabic verb-subject-object formula to a more creole-like system (Bateson 45).

## 7. Summary

In the above section, the dialect of the Jews of Tunis was evaluated for creoleness with regard to the following criteria:

- bare verb forms
- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

While the evidence examined was far from definitive, the dialect was found to exhibit a number of creole-like traits. Negation and word order formulas were consistent with those found in creole languages, and strong candidates were identified for two of the three preverbal particles expected in creoles, as well as evidence for the (possibly former) existence of serial verbs. Additionally, the reductions in verbal inflectional categories and the replacement of the Old

Arabic passive may also be taken as support for a hypothesis of language restructuring, though they may be interpreted in other ways as well.

## **B. Nominal Morphosyntax**

The nominal morphosyntax of Judeo-Tunisian will be analyzed for evidence of the following creole traits:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

Detailed discussion of each feature will be provided below.

### **1. Lack of Inflection for Case, Number, and Gender**

The Judeo-Tunisian nominal inflectional categories mirror those found in Sūsi. The specifics are shown in the following table, with relevant Classical Arabic data provided for comparison with the Old Arabic type.

**Table 3. Judeo-Tunisian Nominal Inflectional Categories**

<b>Inflection</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Bateson 9-15)	<b>Judeo-Tunisian</b> (Cohen 181-188)
<b>Case</b>		
Nominative	√	<b>X</b>
Genitive	√	<b>X</b>
Accusative	√	<b>X</b>
<b>Number</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender</b>		
Masculine	√	√
Feminine	√	√

As is rapidly observable from the table, case is lost as an inflectional category in Judeo-Tunisian. As is the case in Sūsi, the dual number does not represent a productive distinction, and the occurrence of the Old Arabic dual marker is restricted to frozen forms in specific semantic fields, including body parts, units of measure, numbers, and a few scattered others (Cohen 186-188). Gender distinction between masculine and feminine is maintained.

As is the case for many features examined in this study, the Judeo-Tunisian nominal inflectional system is not significantly creole-like when taken in isolation. The loss of case and reduction of number distinctions, however, do render it more creole-like than varieties of the Old Arabic type, and could be understood as consistent with a process of language restructuring.

## 2. Three-Way Determiner Distinction

According to Cohen's account, Judeo-Tunisian utilizes a two-determiner system, in contrast to the three-determiner system predicted for creole languages. The determiners Cohen describes are analogous to those found in both Sūsi and Classical Arabic: a morpheme *əl-* marks definiteness while indefiniteness is marked by a zero-morpheme (Cohen 227-228).

One of Cohen's numerous samples of Judeo-Tunisian speech, however, provides a possible contradiction to the system he describes. In his description of the irrealis marker *mä:š*, Cohen provides the following sentence, with the accompanying gloss:

*mä:š nədduyu əlä wä:həd uləd* (Cohen 137)

‘Nous allons parler d’un garçon.’

The French translation provided by Cohen is ambiguous, and could either mean ‘we’re going to talk to a boy’ or ‘we’re going to talk to one boy,’ and thus the meaning of the Arabic sentence is not immediately clear. If, however, the former is meant, then the Judeo-Tunisian word *wä:həd* (lit. ‘one’) seemingly serves as an indefinite article. Taken in conjunction with sentences like the following, this perception is qualified:

*u:bu: kən yəlbəšlu hwä:yəž mnä:h* (Cohen 135)

‘His father used to dress him in fine clothes.’

In the first sentence, where *wä:həd* is used, the word modified by the determiner is indefinite but specific; in the second sentence, where no marker is used, the word is indefinite and nonspecific. Thus, it would seem that Judeo-Tunisian might actually contain a three-way determiner system consisting of *əl-* [+ definite], *wä:həd* [- definite, + specific], and  $\emptyset$  [- definite, - specific]. Such a distribution is exactly that predicted for creoles.

As intriguing as this discovery may be, it is not possible to draw solid conclusions based on a single example which exists in direct contradiction to the description of the author. However, these findings will acquire new relevance, and perhaps validity, when viewed in light of the discussion of Maltese determiners in the following section.

### **3. Possessive Juxtaposition / Analytical Genitive Construction**

Judeo-Tunisian utilizes two types of possessive construction. The first is a nominal construct state (*iḍāfah*) comparable to that proposed for Old Arabic. The second is an analytical construction involving the genitive exponent (*(n)tä:ε* (Cohen 256)). The latter strategy, unknown to the Old Arabic type, is fitting with possessive constructions found throughout the world's creole languages, rendering Judeo-Tunisian creole-like with regard to this particular feature.

### **4. Relative Pronoun**

Creole languages are predicted to contain a relative pronoun, and on this count Judeo-Tunisian does not disappoint. Like Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian contains two such pronouns, *əlli* and *mä*, the former used following definite antecedents and the latter in indefinite contexts. These two items are traceable to Old Arabic elements (cf. Classical Arabic *allaḍī*, *mā*), though Judeo-Tunisian *əlli* does not accept the gender and number agreement of its classical counterpart (Cohen 219-221). Thus, while Judeo-Tunisian is consistent with what is predicted for creole languages, the modern elements could be seen as an inheritance from Old Arabic rather than a creolization-induced innovation.

## 5. Summary

Judeo-Tunisian nominal morphosyntax was evaluated for creoleness according to the following criteria:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

The dialect was found to be creole-like in its use of an analytical genitive construction and potentially creole-like in its determiner system, though that particular analysis requires further data. The nominal inflectional system is not inherently creole-like, though it exhibits reductions from the Old Arabic system which might be viewed as the result of language restructuring. The evidence of the relative pronoun is inconclusive, as it is both consistent with known creole traits and the proposed Old Arabic system. Overall, it is possible to say that the nominal morphosyntax examined contains some creolesque features, though such a characterization is not universally applicable.

## IV. Lexicosemantic Characteristics

The lexicosemantic evaluation of the Judeo-Tunisian dialect data will focus on two particular characteristics:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

As in the previous section, the analysis will begin with a discussion of the interrogatives.

## A. Bimorphemic Question Words

The Judeo-Tunisian question words are listed in the table below, with the Classical Arabic equivalents included for comparison.

**Table 4. Judeo-Tunisian Interrogatives**

Judeo-Tunisian (Cohen 226-243)	Meaning	Classical Arabic (Cowan)
<i>äšnu:wä, äšni:yä, äšnumä:n</i>	‘what (n.)’	<i>Mā</i>
<i>äš</i>	‘what (v.)’	<i>Māðā</i>
<i>äšku:n</i>	‘who’	<i>Man</i>
<i>wäqtä:š</i>	‘when’	<i>Matā</i>
<i>wä:yən ~ fä:yən</i>	‘where’	<i>ʔayna</i>
<i>mnä:yən</i>	‘from where’	--
<i>lä:yən</i>	‘to where’	--
<i>ʔlä:š ~ lä:š</i>	‘why’	<i>Limāðā</i>
<i>kifä:š</i>	‘how’	<i>Kayfa</i>
<i>qaddä:š</i>	‘how much/many’	<i>Kam</i>
<i>ä:mä</i>	‘which’	<i>ʔayy</i>

The interrogatives of the Judeo-Tunisian dialect diverge sharply from those of the Old Arabic type and are largely similar to their Sūsi equivalents. Like the Sūsi question words, they appear to be generally bimorphemic. The specific analyses will be discussed on a case-by-case basis below.

The Judeo-Tunisian interrogative *äš* ‘what (v.)’ may be attributed the same etymology as the Sūsi *əʃ*, which is to say a compounding of the two Old Arabic elements *ʔayyu ʃayʔ* ‘which thing’. It may thus be considered bimorphemic. The form of ‘what’ used in nominal contexts in Judeo-Tunisian differs from its Sūsi counterpart in that it is marked for gender and number,

having the three forms *äšnu:wä* (masc. sg.), *äšni:yä* (fem. sg.), and *äšnumä:n* (masc./fem. pl.) as compared to the uninflected Sūsi *šnuwwε*:. This fact, however, is easily reconcilable with the proposed etymology for both these forms, the Old Arabic *ʔayyu šayʔin huwa* ‘which thing is this?’. In the case of Sūsi, this phrase was condensed into a single form utilized in all contexts; in Judeo-Tunisian, however, the final element in the phrase, the pronoun, remained variable, changing in accordance with the Judeo-Tunisian 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal forms (discussed below). Thus, *ʔayyu šayʔin u:wä* (masc. sg.) yielded *äšnu:wä*, *ʔayyu šayʔin i:yä* (fem. sg.) led to *äšni:yä*, and *ʔayyu šayʔin umä:n* (masc./fem. pl.) resulted in *äšnumä:n*. These Judeo-Tunisian interrogatives are thus in origin trimorphemic (Cohen 226).

Several of the remaining Judeo-Tunisian question words can be identified as consisting of a root morpheme plus an “interrogative element” *äš*, just like their Sūsi counterparts. The proposed etymological breakdown of these words is as follows (classical roots from Cowan):

*äšku:n* ‘who’ < \**äš* + *kawn* ‘being’

*wäqtä:š* ‘when’ < \**waqt* ‘time’ + *äš*

*šlä:š* ‘why’ < \**šalā* ‘upon’ + *äš*

*lä:š* ‘why’ < \**li-* ‘for’ + *äš*

*kifä:š* ‘how’ < \**kayfa* ‘how’ + *äš*

*qaddä:š* ‘how much/many’ < \**qadd* ‘quantity’ + *äš*

All of these interrogatives may thus be classed as bimorphemic.

Yet another group of the Judeo-Tunisian questions also appear to be bimorphemic, though they do not include the interrogative element *äš*. These are the ‘where’ series: like Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian includes two acceptable variants of the word for ‘where,’ as well as words

meaning ‘from where’ and ‘to where’ which are not present in Old Arabic. These words may be analyzed in the following manner (classical roots as found in Cowan):

*wä:yən* ‘where’ < \**wa* ‘and’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’; \**huwa* ‘he/it’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*fä:yən* ‘where’ < \**fī* ‘at’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*mnä:yən* ‘from where’ < \**min* ‘from’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*lä:yən* ‘to where’ < \**ʔilā* ‘to’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’; \**li-* ‘for’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

These words are thus also consistent with the creole theory prediction of bimorphemic interrogatives. It is of note that the Judeo-Tunisian *lä:yən* would seem to derive directly from the Old Arabic *ʔayna*, as opposed to the *post facto* formation observed in Sūsi *lwi:n*.

The etymology of the final Judeo-Tunisian interrogative, *ä:mä* ‘which,’ is somewhat obscure, though its phonological similarity to Sūsi *ε:nε* is suggestive of a common source. Cohen mentions an older form *äš mən*, also meaning ‘which’ (lit. ‘what of’) – if this archaism is fact the origin of *ä:mä*, then this question word too is bimorphemic (Cohen 226). Such a link, however, is not made by Cohen, and the derivation is tenuous at best. The precise origin of *ä:mä*, then, must remain shadowed for the present.

The Judeo-Tunisian interrogative system appears to be of a highly creole nature, with all but two of the forms having been identified as likely bimorphemic. Of the two remaining words, one is trimorphemic and the other of unclear derivation, though possibly bimorphemic as well. In this respect, the Judeo-Tunisian question words differ greatly from their proposed Old Arabic counterparts.

## B. Reduced Pronominal System

Like the Sūsi dialect previously discussed, Judeo-Tunisian contains two personal pronoun paradigms – the free and the bound. The free forms function as subject pronouns, while the bound forms serve as object and possessive pronouns (with the sole distinction between the latter two types occurring in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular). The same system is found in the Old Arabic varieties, as well. The following tables present both Judeo-Tunisian paradigms, as well the corresponding Classical Arabic paradigms for comparative purposes.

**Table 5. Judeo-Tunisian Free Pronouns** (Cohen 210)

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> p.	<i>ä:nä</i>	<i>əhnä</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> p.	<i>ənti</i>	<i>(ə)ntumä:n</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)	<i>u:wä</i>	<i>umä:n</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)	<i>i:yä</i>	

**Table 6. Classical Arabic Free Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> p.	<i>ʔana:</i>		<i>nahnu</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)	<i>ʔanta</i>	<i>ʔantuma:</i>	<i>ʔantum</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)	<i>ʔanti</i>		<i>ʔantunna</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)	<i>Huwa</i>	<i>huma:</i>	<i>hum</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)	<i>Hiya</i>		<i>hunna</i>

**Table 7. Judeo-Tunisian Bound Pronouns** (Cohen 212)

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> p.	<i>-ni, -i</i>	<i>-nä</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> p.	<i>-ək</i>	<i>-kəm</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)	<i>-u</i>	<i>-əm</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)	<i>-ä</i>	

**Table 8. Classical Arabic Bound Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ni, -i</i>		<i>-na:</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-ka</i>	<i>-kuma:</i>	<i>-kum</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ki</i>		<i>-kunna</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-hu</i>	<i>-huma:</i>	<i>-hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ha:</i>		<i>-hunna</i>

Though Judeo-Tunisian retains both pronominal paradigms of the Old Arabic type, the semantic distinctions made within each paradigm are significantly reduced. The dual number is lost completely, and gender is lost in all but the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. This leads to a far lower number of total forms: fifteen in Judeo-Tunisian as compared to the twenty-five of Classical Arabic. As discussed in the description of the Sūsi pronouns, this fact is not sufficient to label the Judeo-Tunisian personal pronoun system as creole-like, though it would not be impossible to reconcile the reduction with a broader process of linguistic restructuring.

### **C. Summary**

As far as lexicosemantics are concerned, the evidence seems to lean in favor of a creole-like characterization of Judeo-Tunisian. The features examined were:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

The dialect's interrogatives are strongly bimorphemic in nature, in opposition to the Old Arabic norm and in line with creole traits. The pronominal system is reduced, though not to an extent that would warrant its labeling as necessarily creole; nor is it contradictory, however, to such a

view. The two features, then, taken in conjunction with one another, point to the creole-like quality of Judeo-Tunisian lexicosemantics.

## **V. Evaluation**

The Judeo-Arabic dialect of Tunis was found to be significantly creole-like on a number of counts. These include:

- Phonology
  - treatment of the interdentalals
  - treatment of the uvulars
  - treatment of the glottals
  - treatment of the lateral and pharyngealized /ð/
- the presence of preverbal particles in two of the three expected positions
- a discontinuous negation schema
- SVO word order
- use of analytical genitive
- bimorphemic question words

Additionally, the following features may be identifiable as creole-like, though sufficient data is not available to render a valid judgment:

- the (possibly former) presence of serial verb constructions
- a potential three-determiner system

Moreover, the presence of a relative pronoun, as well as reductions in the verbal inflectional, nominal inflectional, and personal pronoun systems could be interpreted as consistent with the

effects of language restructuring, though they do not constitute solid evidence of creolization in and of themselves.

Though Judeo-Tunisian does not appear to be a fully-fledged creole of the type identified by modern creolistics, it is certainly possible to state that it exhibits a decidedly higher number of creole features than does the Muslim dialect of Sousse. This fact will be borne in mind as the study continues.



## Chapter 2.3: Maltese

### I. The Dialect

Maltese is the language of Maltese archipelago, located between North Africa and Sicily in the central Mediterranean, roughly two hundred miles from Sousse and two hundred thirty miles from Tunis. Though generally classified as a separate language, Maltese is in fact the direct descendent of the Arabic brought to the island group during the Islamic expansions; its current appellation is the result of cultural and political factors rather than linguistic ones, as the modern Maltese do not self-identify as Arabs. Today, it is the mother tongue of roughly three hundred and fifty thousand Maltese (Dalby 394).

The history of Malta and its small surrounding islands is long and varied, and includes appearances by many of the great Mediterranean powers. Inhabited from at least the third millennium before Christ, Malta was settled by the Phoenicians around 800 B.C. and fell under the sway of yet another Phoenician offshoot, the Carthaginians, roughly a century later. The Romans wrested control of the island group in 218 B.C., and it continued to be ruled by their descendants until the arrival of the Arabs in the year 870. A host of European powers then held and lost political control of the islands throughout the Middle Ages, beginning with the Normans in 1090, though the Arab cultural presence remained strong until the expulsion of the islands' Arab inhabitants at the hands a Swabian ruler in 1224. Their Arabic, however, did not leave with them, and has remained the primary language of the archipelago throughout the rest of its colorful history, both as the headquarters of the Romance-speaking Knights of St. John and under over a century and a half of British colonial rule. The languages of both these ruling groups left a sizeable imprint on Maltese in the form of loanwords (Aquilina v).

The Arabs who brought their language to Malta in 870 and continued to rule it for the next two hundred and twenty years were Tunisians of the Aghlabid dynasty. Maltese, then, stems from the same linguistic stream as both the Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian dialects previously discussed, though it was separated from them at an early date (Versegh, 2001: 209). Despite this clear genetic link, Maltese has long been recognized as a highly divergent Arabic variety, as exemplified by the following comment appended to the Maltese entry in the latest edition of the *Ethnologue*, which states that the language “is descended from Maghrebi [North African] Arabic but . . . with different syntax and phonology” (Lewis). The linguistic features of Maltese, divergent and otherwise, will be evaluated for evidence of prior creolization, in the same manner as Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian above.

The source to be used in this section is Joseph Aquilina’s *Teach Yourself Maltese* (1965). Despite the work’s apparent orientation as a language teaching guide, it is better described as a rigorous reference grammar which proves an excellent linguistic resource. The author is perhaps the preeminent name in Maltese linguistics, and had an illustrious career as Professor of Maltese at the Royal University of Malta. His book provides an in-depth account of the language with numerous examples, and does not tailor its findings to fit particular cultural or political viewpoints (as do most previous grammars, which focus on positioning Maltese as either more or less Arabic-like, often to the extent of excluding large amounts of data) (Aquilina vi). It is thus the optimal available source for the pursuit of this study. In tracing etymologies in the discussion of lexicosemantics, Busuttil’s 1965 *Kalepin Malti-Ingliz (Maltese-English Dictionary)* will also be utilized.

## II. Phonological Characteristics

In this section, Maltese phonology (Aquilina 11-19; Versteegh, 2001 210) will be compared with that of the Old Arabic described by Sibawayh (Al-Nassir 11) in search of evidence of overdifferentiation, underdifferentiation, substitution, and deletion in the following series of consonants:

- the interdentalals
- the uvulars
- the pharyngeals
- the pharyngealized consonants
- the glottals
- the lateral

The results of this comparison are shown in the table below, with differences between the two consonantal systems in bold.

**Table 1. Maltese Consonants**

Series	Orthography	Sibwayh	Maltese
Interdental	ث	<b>θ</b>	<b>t</b>
	ذ	<b>ð</b>	<b>d</b>
	ظ	<b>ḏ</b>	<b>d</b>
Uvular	ق	<b>g</b>	<b>ʔ</b>
	خ	<b>χ</b>	<b>ħ</b>
	غ	<b>ʁ</b>	<b>Ø</b>
Pharyngeal	ح	<b>h</b>	<b>ħ</b>
	ع	<b>ʕ</b>	<b>Ø</b>
Pharyngealized	ط	<b>ṭ</b>	<b>t</b>
	ظ	<b>ḏ</b>	<b>d</b>
	ص	<b>s</b>	<b>s</b>
Glottal	ء	<b>ʔ</b>	<b>Ø</b>
	ه	<b>h</b>	<b>Ø</b>
Lateral	ض	<b>ḏ</b>	<b>d</b>

As the table clearly shows, the number of discrepancies between the Old Arabic system and the Maltese is significantly larger than that seen in either Sūsi or Judeo-Tunisian. Additionally, the types of differences present in the data are readily identifiable with those predicted for creolized language varieties. The specifics will be discussed below.

### **A. The Interdentals**

The Old Arabic interdental fricatives /θ, ð, ð̣/ have the Maltese reflexes /t, d, d/. This pattern is similar to that observed in Judeo-Tunisian, which displayed the reflexes /t, d, d/. As such, it may be viewed in one of two ways: a case of substitution in which the Old Arabic interdentals (alien to the substrate languages) are replaced by coronal stops, or a case of underdifferentiation in which the two distinct series of Old Arabic interdentals and coronals were identified and reflected as a single series in Maltese. From either view, this shift is consistent with phonological developments predicted for creole languages.

One major difference between the Maltese reflexes of these consonants and Judeo-Arabic reflexes discussed earlier is that, while the voicing distinction is maintained, the pharyngealization of Old Arabic /ð̣/ is not. This fact will be addressed in the discussion of pharyngealized consonants below.

### **B. The Uvulars**

The treatment of the Old Arabic uvulars also shows evidence of creole-like phonological processes. The voiceless uvular fricative /χ/ merges with the voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/, a clear instance of underdifferentiation, and the voiced uvular fricative /ʁ/ undergoes complete deletion. The reflection of Old Arabic /g/ as /ʔ/ is not as easily categorized, as an analysis of

underdifferentiation between /g/ and /ʔ/ is ruled out by the apparent change of /ʔ/ > /Ø/. It is perhaps better viewed as a further development of the devoicing observed in Judeo-Arabic reflex /q/; indeed, such an evolution of /g/ is proposed for many other Arabic dialects, though typically in Egypt and the Levant rather than in North Africa (Bateson 100). Despite the difficulty of assigning a precise label to the change, such variation in a consonant predicted to be vulnerable to creolization processes should not be ignored.

### **C. The Pharyngeals**

The Old Arabic pharyngeal series, retained intact in both Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, is subjected to change in Maltese. Though the voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ remains unchanged, and in fact increases in occurrence due to the aforementioned merger with /χ/, the pharyngeal approximant /ʕ/ disappears entirely in Maltese. This appears to be a straightforward case of deletion of /ʕ/. It is tempting to attribute the evolution of the two pharyngeal phonemes and the uvular /χ/ to the effect of a Punic substrate, which contains /ħ/ only (Krahmalkov 20-27), a fact which could plausibly lead to the changes /χ, ħ/ > /ħ/ and /ʕ/ > Ø; despite the known Carthaginian history of the island, however, the survival of Punic on Malta to the year 870 is far from certain, and no solid conclusions can be drawn. Regardless of the precise causality, the fact remains that the Maltese deletion of Old Arabic /ʕ/ is in line with the phonological changes predicted by creole theory.

### **D. The Pharyngealized Consonants**

Again in opposition to what is found in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, Maltese appears to have entirely lost the phonemic category of pharyngealized consonants, replacing Old Arabic /d, ð, s/

with /t, d, s/. As mentioned in earlier sections, the devoicing of /ḍ/ is quite likely a pan-dialectal shared innovation from the pre-Islamic era rather than a result of creolization, and the despirantization of /ḥ/ is discussed above in the section on interdentals – these two changes are of secondary importance here. The change that is of primary concern here is the loss of an entire phonemic category of Old Arabic and its replacement with corresponding non-pharyngealized sounds. This may be viewed as either a case of substitution or perhaps one of underdifferentiation, in which Old Arabic /ḍ, ḥ, s/ (rendered \*/t, d, s/ by devoicing and despirantization) ceased to be differentiated from /t, d, s/. The universal loss of the entire phonemic category of pharyngealized consonants, not present in the substrate languages, is very much a creole-like effect and powerful evidence for the occurrence of language restructuring in the history of Maltese.

### **E. The Glottals**

As in Judeo-Tunisian but unlike in Sūsi, both Old Arabic glottals /ʔ, h/ have undergone deletion in Maltese. As discussed previously, the loss of /ʔ/ may represent a pre-diasporic trait not attributable to creolization effects, but the loss of /h/ cannot be explained in such a manner. Thus, the deletion of Old Arabic /h/ in Maltese appears to be consistent with the types of sound changes predicted for creole languages.

### **F. The Lateral**

The treatment of the Old Arabic lateral /ḥ/ in Maltese may be interpreted as either a product of language restructuring or as a mixture of creolization effects and natural sound change from before the Islamic expansions. In the first case, the change from /ḥ/ > /d/ would be an

example of substitution or underdifferentiation; in the second, a pre-diasporic change of /ħ/ > /ð/ would have been further affected by the processes of despirantization and deparyngealization discussed above, yielding /d/.

## **G. Summary**

The phonology of Maltese is strongly creole-like in nature. Every series of sounds deemed vulnerable by creole theory is affected, with /ħ/ being the sole phoneme not experiencing some type of change. In addition, the changes observed are of the types predicted by creolistics. The specific changes consist of the substitution/underdifferentiation of the interdental, the underdifferentiation of the voiceless uvular fricative, the deletion of the voiced uvular fricative, variation in the uvular stop, the loss of the pharyngeal approximant, the loss of pharyngealization as a phonemic feature, deletion of the glottals, and the reflection of the lateral as /d/. Both the quantity and quality of these changes render them strong phonological evidence for the occurrence of prior creolization in Maltese.

## **II. Morphosyntactic Characteristics**

### **A. Verbal Morphosyntax**

In the following section, Maltese will be examined for the presence the following creole-like traits of verbal morphosyntax:

- bare verb forms
- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

Each feature will be evaluated individually below. Note that standard Maltese orthography is utilized in place of IPA; thus, while some examples may seem to contradict the phonological changes discussed above, they are in fact only the products of an artificially archaized spelling system (based on knowledge of Classical Arabic roots) and should not be taken as phonetically accurate transcriptions (Versteegh, 2001 210).

#### **1. Bare Verb Forms**

Maltese does not utilize bare verb forms – rather, Maltese verbs are inflected for person, aspect, gender, and number. The system of verbal inflection found in Maltese mirrors those found in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian. Thus, though far from bare, the Maltese verb displays a significant reduction in inflectional categories when contrasted with its counterpart of the Old Arabic type. The following table shows the Maltese verbal inflectional distinctions, with the Classical Arabic distinctions provided for comparative purposes.

**Table 2. Maltese Verbal Inflectional Categories**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Bateson 23-25)	<b>Maltese</b> (Aquilina 131-136)
<b>Aspect:</b>		
Perfective	√	√
Imperfective	√	√
<b>Person:</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	√	√
2 <sup>nd</sup>	√	√
3 <sup>rd</sup>	√	√
<b>Number:</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender:</b>		
Masculine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
Feminine	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> sg. & pl.; 3 <sup>rd</sup> sg., pl. & dual	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. only
<b>Mood:</b>		
Indicative	√	√
Subjunctive	√	<b>X</b>
Jussive	√	<b>X</b>
Imperative	√	√

Just as observed in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, the dual number does not exist in Maltese, and neither do the subjunctive and jussive moods. Gender distinctions are greatly reduced remaining in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular only. As discussed for the previous two varieties, such a reduction cannot be considered definitive evidence of creolization. However, in light of other

evidence, it could be seen as consistent with a process of language restructuring. The precise implications of this evidence will be discussed in further sections.

## 2. Preverbal Tense/Aspect/Mood Marking

Creole languages show a marked tendency towards inflecting verbs for tense, mood, and aspect by means of preverbal particles. The prototypical semantic values and syntactic ordering of these particles is as follows:

**[anterior] + [irrealis] + [nonpunctual] + verb**  
(Holm 191)

The presence of Maltese particles corresponding to these three functions and positions will be investigated below.

### a. Anterior

Maltese makes use of a preverbal element *kien* to mark anterior tense, corresponding to Muslim Tunisian *kān* and Judeo-Tunisian *kä:n*. Just like *kān* and *kä:n*, however, *kien* appears to function as an auxiliary verb rather than a true preverbal particle as it takes standard verbal agreement marking for the subject of the main verb. Due to this fact, it is not possible to claim that Maltese contains a preverbal anterior marker of precisely the type predicted for creole languages (Aquilina 133-134).

### b. Irrealis

Maltese contains several preverbal particles with semantic values classifiable under the irrealis mood. They are *ser* (general, narrative future), *sa* (imminent future), *ħa* (intentional future), and *ghad* (potential future). All of these four appear to be true particles free of agreement marking, though it is possible to replace *ser* with

a related element *sejjer*, which is marked for gender and number (a fact which does not, however, make *ser* itself any less of a particle). The number and specificity of irrealis markers is greater than that predicted by creole theory, but it is certainly possible to theorize that the system may have once contained a single a particle only (perhaps *ser*, as it is of the most general meaning), with later differentiations occurring over time. If viewed in this way, the Maltese method of marking irrealis mood is consistent with those typically produced by creolization (Aquilina 138-139).

**c. Nonpunctual**

Maltese does contain a preverbal marker of nonpunctual aspect: *qed* (pronounced with an initial glottal stop despite its spelling), which may be compared to the Muslim Tunisian *qā ʕəd* and the Judeo-Tunisian *qa* described in earlier sections. Maltese *qed* seems to be a true preverbal particle, with no evidence of agreement marking that would indicate its nature as an auxiliary verb. Nor is it the case that an auxiliary-like alternative exists side by side with the particle, as in Judeo-Tunisian. Thus, from the multiple examples provided, the Maltese nonpunctual marker appears quite creole-like (Aquilina 222).

**d. Combinatory Use**

In contrast to the Muslim Tunisian and Judeo-Tunisian sources, the Maltese data contains numerous citable examples of combinatory use of its preverbal elements in the order predicted above. These examples are of one of two types:

- i) anterior *kien* + irrealis {*ser*, *sa*, *ħa*}\* + verb
  - *konna ser niktbu* ‘we were going to write’ (Aquilina 139)
  - *kienet sa toħroġ* ‘she was going to leave’ (Aquilina 139)

- *kont ħa ngħidlu* ‘I was going to tell him’ (Aquilina 139)

\* there are no examples of potential future marker *għad* used in this context

ii) anterior *kien* + nonpunctual *qed* + verb

- *kont qed naqra l-gazzetta* ‘I was reading the paper’ (Aquilina 222)

Examples of the first type, though intriguingly creole-like, must be interpreted cautiously, as an equivalent construction exists in Classical Arabic with similar meaning, utilizing the verb *kāna* and the future marker *sa-* (Abu-Chacra 241). Thus, this usage could conceivably be viewed as an inheritance rather than an innovation. No Old Arabic counterpart of the second construction exists, however.

No examples are found of the nonpunctual and irrealis markers operating in conjunction with one another; it is therefore not possible to say whether or not Maltese contains the full range of combinatory possibilities predicted for creole preverbal particles. The examples which are present, however, show that productive combination of multiple preverbal elements does exist in Maltese.

The Maltese system of preverbal tense/mood/aspect marking is not precisely that predicted by creole theory: the preverbal anterior marker, *kien*, is an auxiliary verb rather than a true particle, and it is not clear whether the elements are capable of forming the complete array of combinations found in many creoles. It does utilize both nonpunctual and irrealis particles, however, and the numerous combinations present in the data display the predicted ordering of elements. Therefore, though it fails to meet all expected criteria, the Maltese system of preverbal markers is decidedly more creole-like than either that of Muslim Tunisian or Judeo-Tunisian.

### 3. Preverbal or Discontinuous Negation

Like Muslim Tunisian and Judeo-Tunisian, Maltese utilizes a discontinuous negation strategy: an element *ma* precedes the negated verb and an element *x* ([ʃ]) follows it, as seen in the example *ħuk ma jikolx* ‘your brother doesn’t eat’ (Aquilina 138). This negation formula is consistent with those predicted for restructured languages.

### 4. Serial Verb Constructions

Maltese makes heavy use of serial verb constructions, a trait typical of creole languages. Aquilina’s grammar explicitly allows them, and a great number of examples are found in the text. A few of these are reproduced below, with verbs underlined:

*daħal jidħak u ħareġ jibki* (Aquilina 220-221)

‘he came in laughing and left crying’ (lit. ‘[he] entered laughs and left cries’)

*tiddejjaq tistenna* (Aquilina 221)

‘you are annoyed to wait’ (lit. ‘[you] feel annoyed [you] wait’)

*id-dgħajsa hija u tidħol tegħreq* (Aquilina 221)

‘the boat, while entering, sinks’ (lit. ‘the boat she and enters sinks’)

It is also possible to link more than two verbs together in a serial construction, as seen in the following:

*għaġġel mur ilħqu* (Aquilina 223)

‘hurry to go reach him’ (lit. ‘hurry go reach him’)

The common and productive use of serial verb constructions in Maltese make it highly creole-like in this respect.

## 5. Lack of a Marked Passive

Maltese does not contain a morphologically marked passive, either of the Old Arabic internal form or of the *t*- prefixal form seen in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian. A passive-like construction can be achieved by use of an auxiliary verb followed by a passive participle. The auxiliary verb used in such constructions varies: *kien* ‘to be’ is predominant in standard or literary usage (e.g. *il-ktieb kien miktub mitt sena ilu* ‘the book was written a hundred years ago’), while *gie* ‘to come’ is more common in colloquial contexts (e.g. *ir-raġel jigi maqtul* ‘the man will be killed’). The verb *safa* ‘to be reduced to the state of’ is also sometimes used (e.g. *sfaw midrubin mill-ġhadu* ‘[they] were wounded by the enemy’). Passive meaning may also be inherent in individual derived verbs, but these derivations are not productive and thus cannot be considered a true method of passivization (Aquilina 134-135).

In lacking a morphologically marked passive, Maltese is consistent with what is expected for restructured languages.

## 6. Subject-Verb-Object Word Order

Maltese, like both Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, has shifted from the Old Arabic default word order of verb-subject-object (Bateson 45) to a basic order of subject-verb-object, the formula considered typical of creoles (Aquilina 222).

## 7. Summary

Maltese has been evaluated for the presence of the following verbal morphosyntactic features known to be typical of creoles:

- bare verb forms

- preverbal tense/aspect/mood marking
- preverbal or discontinuous negation
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order

When judged on the basis of these criteria, Maltese is quite creole-like. It exhibits a largely creolesque system of preverbal tense/mood/aspect markers, utilizes discontinuous negation, allows serial verb constructions, lacks a marked passive, and utilizes an SVO word order. Moreover, though it does not make use of bare verb forms, the reduction of verbal inflectional categories could be interpreted as evidence for prior restructuring in the language. Overall, the verbal morphosyntax of Maltese displays a high number of creole traits.

## **B. Nominal Morphosyntax**

The following section will examine Maltese nominal morphosyntax for the presence or absence of the following creole features:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

The findings will be discussed in detail below.

## 1. Lack of Inflection for Case, Number, and Gender

In keeping with the pattern found in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, Maltese nouns are marked for the following inflectional categories, shown side by side with Classical Arabic categories for comparison:

**Table 3. Maltese Nominal Inflectional Categories**

<b>Inflection</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Bateson 9-15)	<b>Maltese</b> (Aquilina 51, 69-70)
<b>Case</b>		
Nominative	√	<b>X</b>
Genitive	√	<b>X</b>
Accusative	√	<b>X</b>
<b>Number</b>		
Singular	√	√
Dual	√	<b>X</b>
Plural	√	√
<b>Gender</b>		
Masculine	√	√
Feminine	√	√

As in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, case is lost as an inflectional category in Maltese, and the dual is no longer productive, being restricted to frozen forms in particular semantic fields – these primarily consist of units of quantity or measure, some food words, and paired body parts (Aquilina 70-71). The Old Arabic singular and plural numbers are maintained, as is the masculine/feminine gender distinction.

This system of nominal inflection, while not particularly creole-like of its own accord, could be interpreted as consistent with a process prior creolization as it represents a marked

reduction of inflectional categories from the Old Arabic type. Whether or not such a viewpoint is warranted, however, is unclear on the basis of this information alone.

## 2. Three-Way Determiner Distinction

Maltese utilizes a determiner system of precisely the type predicted by creolistics, exhibiting a three-way split between definite, indefinite-specific, and indefinite-nonspecific. In Maltese, the definite article is *il-*, the indefinite-specific article is *wieħed* (lit. ‘one’), and the indefinite-nonspecific article is represented by a zero-marker (Aquilina 35). This contrasts with the two-way distinction found in Sūsi (*el-* vs.  $\emptyset$ ) and Classical Arabic (*al-* vs.  $\emptyset$ ), and provides strong support for the parallel three-way system proposed for Judeo-Tunisian in the previous section (*əl-* vs. *wä:ħəd* vs.  $\emptyset$ ), even down to the etymology of the novel third article. With regard to its determiner system, Maltese is thus judged as creole-like.

## 3. Possessive Juxtaposition / Analytical Genitive Construction

Maltese makes use of two strategies for forming possessive constructions, as do Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian. The first, the nominal construct state or *idāfah*, is analogous to the schema utilized by Old Arabic varieties such as Classical Arabic, and cannot be said to be a creole-like phenomenon. The second strategy, however, involves the use of a genitive exponent *ta'* (c.f. Sūsi *mtē: ʕ*, Judeo-Tunisian *(n)tä:ε*), used in analytical constructions such as *il-mara ta' l-avukat* ‘the lawyer’s wife.’ This second strategy is reported to be significantly more common and productive in everyday speech (Aquilina 56-57).

Thus, the predominant method of forming possessives in Maltese, the analytical genitive utilizing *ta'*, is consistent with known creole traits.

#### 4. Relative Pronoun

As opposed to the split, definite/indefinite relative pronoun system encountered in Sūsi (*ɛl:i, mɛ*), Judeo-Tunisian (*əlli, mā*), and Classical Arabic (*allaḏī, mā*), Maltese appears to contain only the single pronoun (*il)li*, which does not take the inflectional agreement of its Old Arabic equivalent (Aquilina 98). The fact that Maltese contains such a pronoun is consistent with what is expected of creole languages, and the generalization of the definite form to cover all contexts could be seen as evidence for identifying the pronoun as a product of linguistic restructuring rather than a simple inheritance from the Old Arabic system.

#### 5. Summary

In the above section, the nominal morphosyntax of Maltese was evaluated for creoleness on the basis of the following criteria:

- lack of inflection for case, number, and gender
- a three-way determiner distinction
- possessive juxtaposition or analytical genitive construction
- presence of a relative pronoun

The results of the evaluation show Maltese nominal morphosyntax to be generally creole-like. A three-way determiner distinction was found, as was the use of an analytical genitive construction and a relative pronoun. Nouns were found to be inflected for number and gender, though the Old Arabic dual is not present as a productive phenomenon, and the inflectional category of case has disappeared entirely. This reduction, while not convincing evidence in and of itself, may be linked to a process of language restructuring.

#### IV. Lexicosemantic Characteristics

In the following section, the creoleness of Maltese lexicosemantics will be assessed on the basis of two major characteristics:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

The discussion will begin with an analysis of the Maltese interrogatives.

##### A. Bimorphemic Question Words

The Maltese question words are listed in the table below, with the Classical Arabic equivalents provided for comparison.

**Table 4. Maltese Interrogatives**

<b>Maltese</b> (Aquilina 99, 104-107)	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Classical Arabic</b> (Cowan)
<i>xi</i> (n.&v.)	‘what (n.)’	<i>mā</i>
--	‘what (v.)’	<i>māḏā</i>
<i>min</i>	‘who’	<i>man</i>
<i>meta</i>	‘when’	<i>matā</i>
<i>fejn</i>	‘where’	<i>ʔayna</i>
<i>mnejn</i>	‘from where’	--
<i>(lejn)</i>	‘to where’	--
<i>għaliex</i>	‘why’	<i>limāḏā</i>
<i>kif</i>	‘how’	<i>kayfa</i>
<i>kemm</i>	‘how much/many’	<i>kam</i>
<i>liema</i>	‘which’	<i>ʔayy</i>

In striking contrast to the pattern encountered in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, Maltese does not appear to share a marked tendency towards bimorphemic question words. Rather, a fair

proportion of the interrogatives seem to derive directly from their Old Arabic counterparts.

These are:

*min* ‘who’ (Classical *man*)

*meta* ‘when’ (Classical *matā*)

*kif* ‘how’ (Classical *kayfa*)

*kemm* ‘how much/many’ (Classical *kam*)

The word for ‘what,’ *xi*, used in both nominal and verbal contexts, seems not to descend from the Old Arabic *mā* or *māḏā*, though neither does it appear to be bimorphemic; rather, it would seem to have its origin in the Old Arabic *šayʿ* ‘thing.’ This shift of a noun to a related interrogative function may have a parallel in an alternate etymology for *kemm* ‘how much/many,’ which is Old Arabic *kamm* ‘quantity.’ Regardless, neither *xi* nor *kemm* may be counted as bimorphemic (Cowan).

The sole Maltese representative of the [root] + [*āʃ*] series so prevalent in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian is the word *għaliex* ‘why.’ Orthographic <gh> corresponds to an etymological /ʕ/ (among other things), so the etymology of *għaliex* is likely *šalā* + *āʃ*, just as for the Sūsi *ʃlɛ:ʃ* and the Judeo-Tunisian *ʃlā:š* (Cowan). The “question morpheme” [*āʃ*] thus does not appear to be productive in Maltese to the degree it is in the other dialects. (N.B.: A possible second occurrence of the morpheme occurs in an alternate word for ‘when,’ *šhīn* (< \* *āʃ* + *hīn* ‘time’), mentioned in Versteegh, 1984 (97). As this form is not mentioned in Aquilina’s work, however, its exact status is not clear.)

The bimorphemic ‘where’ series found in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian is present in Maltese, though the specifics differ slightly. The etymologies of the interrogatives ‘where’ and ‘from where’ mirror the pattern found in the other two dialects (classical roots from Cowan):

*fejn* ‘where’ < \**fī* ‘at’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

*mnejn* ‘from where’ < \**min* ‘from’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’

The expected ‘to where’ form (c.f. Sūsi *lwi:n*, Judeo-Tunisian *lä:yən*) is not found, though there is evidence that it may have existed historically. A form *lejn* (< \**ʔilā* ‘to’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’; \**li-* ‘for’ + *ʔayna* ‘where’) is found in Maltese, though it functions as a preposition meaning ‘to, towards’ (Busuttil 196). It is possible, however, to conceive of a semantic shift by which such an interrogative might come to function as a preposition of related meaning, a proposal supported by the word’s etymology.

The Maltese *liema* ‘which’ seems to be bimorphemic as well, apparently composed of the preposition *li-* ‘to, for’ and a “Proto-Tunisian” element \**āma* ‘which’ (c.f. Sūsi *ε:nε*, Judeo-Tunisian *ä:mä* ‘which’). As discussed in the previous sections, no solid Old Arabic etymology can be proposed for \**āma*; this fact, however, does not alter the bimorphemic nature of the Maltese interrogative.

Thus, it is possible to classify five of the ten Maltese interrogatives as bimorphemic, whereas the remaining five are not; as the evidence is split halfway, it is not possible to concretely classify the Maltese question words as creole-like or not. This presents an interesting contrast to the interrogative systems of the Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian, which are overwhelmingly bimorphemic in nature. This discrepancy is somewhat puzzling, as Maltese is decidedly more creole-like than the latter two dialects in most other respects. With regard to the question words, however, the assessment is not clear.

## B. Reduced Pronominal System

The Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian varieties previously discussed, Maltese contains two personal pronoun paradigms – free and bound. The free forms function as subject pronouns, while the bound forms serve as both object and possessive pronouns. The sole distinction with the bound paradigm between object and possessive form is found in the first person singular. This personal pronoun system is parallel to that of Old Arabic. The Maltese forms are shown below, with the Classical Arabic system provided for comparison (N.B. Recall that orthographic <h> does not correspond to a true phonemic /h/):

**Table 5. Maltese Free Pronouns** (Aquilina 40)

	Singular	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>jien(a)</i>	<i>aħna</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>int(i)</i>	<i>intom</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>hu(wa)</i>	<i>huma</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>hi(ja)</i>	

**Table 6. Classical Arabic Free Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	Singular	Dual	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>ʔana:</i>		<i>naħnu</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>ʔanta</i>	<i>ʔantuma:</i>	<i>ʔantum</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>ʔanti</i>		<i>ʔantunna</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>huwa</i>	<i>huma:</i>	<i>hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>hiya</i>		<i>hunna</i>

**Table 7. Maltese Bound Pronouns** (Aquilina 100)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ni, -i</i>	<i>-na</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ek</i>	<i>-kom</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-u</i>	<i>-hom</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ha</i>	

**Table 8. Classical Arabic Bound Pronouns** (Bateson 40-41)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Dual</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-ni, -i</i>		<i>-na:</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-ka</i>	<i>-kuma:</i>	<i>-kum</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ki</i>		<i>-kunna</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-hu</i>	<i>-huma:</i>	<i>-hum</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-ha:</i>		<i>-hunna</i>

Though Maltese maintains both Old Arabic paradigms, the number of semantic distinctions made within each paradigm is significantly reduced: the dual number is not utilized, and a gender distinction is made in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular only. These changes do not themselves constitute solid evidence of language restructuring, though the overall reduction observed is certainly not contradictory to such a process.

In addition to the two paradigms described above, Aquilina lists a third paradigm – a second set of bound forms which function as indirect object pronouns, suffixing to the verb in the manner [verb]+([d.o. pronoun])+[i.o. pronoun] (Aquilina 212). The forms of these pronouns are as follows:

**Table 9. Maltese Indirect Object Pronouns** (Aquilina 210-211)

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>-li</i>	<i>-lna</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>-lek</i>	<i>-lkom</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (m.)</b>	<i>-lu</i>	<i>-lhom</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p. (f.)</b>	<i>-lha</i>	

These pronouns appear to be composed of the Maltese preposition *l-* ‘to’ (Busuttill 191) or the Old Arabic *li-* ‘to, for’ (Cowan) followed by the forms of the first bound pronoun series. Though they may at first appear to represent a simple prepositional construction rather than a true suffixal pronominal paradigm, upon further investigation there is evidence for their identification as the latter. The forms display morphophonemic variation dependent upon the phonological structure of the verb they are appended to, as seen in the examples *kitbu-lna* ‘they wrote to us’ vs. *kitibt-ilna* ‘you (sg.) wrote to us’ (Aquilina 215). Additionally, the placement of verbal negation elements constitute evidence for the classification of the forms as true pronouns. Take, for example, the form *kitiblu* ‘he wrote to him.’ If *-lu* represented a true prepositional construction, the expected negation schema would be *ma kitibx lu*; the correct negation, however, is *ma kitiblax* (Aquilina 138, 213). This shows that the pronouns are analyzed as true suffixal elements of the verb rather than as separate phrasal constructions.

The addition of a third pronominal paradigm would initially seem to be evidence against a process of creolization, as in many ways it represents an increase in the complexity of the system. However, the novel and highly transparent nature of the paradigm in fact makes it relatable to the phenomenon of new paradigm formation observed in creoles such as Ki-Nubi (an Arabic-lexifier creole of Kenya and Uganda), which has developed a set of possessive pronouns unknown in its lexifier language based on a former prepositional construction (Holm 226,

Wellens 316). Thus, this evidence actually serves to position the Maltese pronominal system as more creole-like than those of Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian.

### **C. Summary**

The lexico semantics of Maltese were examined for the presence of the following creole-like features:

- bimorphemic question words
- a reduced pronominal system

The findings were not as clear-cut as those of the previous sections. Maltese does contain bimorphemic question words, though they do not appear to dominate the entire interrogative system as they do in Sūsi and Judeo-Tunisian. The pronominal system displays a reduction in the number of overall semantic distinctions made, though it actually shows an increase from two to three personal pronoun paradigms. This type of novel paradigm formation, however, is in fact an observable creole phenomenon, and may thus actually serve to classify Maltese as more creole-like than the other dialects examined. Overall, Maltese lexico semantics are moderately creole-like, though not to the same extent as its phonology or morphosyntax.

### **V. Evaluation**

The above analyses have shown Maltese to be quite creole-like on the basis of the characteristics examined. Creole features present in Maltese data include:

- Phonology
  - treatment of the interdentalals
  - treatment of the uvulars

- treatment of the pharyngeal approximant
- treatment of the pharyngealized consonants
- treatment of the glottals
- treatment of the lateral
- the presence of preverbal particles in two of the three expected positions, with combinatory possibilities
- a discontinuous negation schema
- serial verb constructions
- lack of a marked passive
- SVO word order
- a three-determiner system
- use of an analytical genitive
- the presence of a generalized relative pronoun
- the transparent formation of a novel pronominal paradigm

Furthermore, the general reduction in verbal, nominal, and pronominal inflectional distinctions, as well as the not insignificant presence of bimorphemic question words, may be interpreted as consistent with a process of language restructuring. Given this evidence, this study classifies Maltese as strongly creole-like.

## Chapter 3.1: Discussion

### I. The Progression

In the above analyses, the dialects of Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian, and Maltese were evaluated for creoleness; these judgments were based on the presence of a number of linguistic features considered characteristic of creoles. These features are listed in the table below. In addition, columns are presented for each of the three dialects examined. A black cell indicates the presence of a given creole feature in a given dialect, while a gray cell indicates those findings (discussed above) which this study has judged to be creole-like, though perhaps not in the classic manner predicted by creolistics. By means of this table, it is possible to present a quantitative comparison of the creoleness of each variety studied.

**Table 1. Inter-Dialectal Comparison of Creole Features**

Feature	Maltese	Judeo-Tunisian	Sūsi
Treatment of Interdentals	Black	Black	White
Treatment of Uvulars	Black	Black	Gray
Treatment of Pharyngeals	Black	White	White
Treatment of Phar. Consonants	Black	White	White
Treatment of Glottals	Black	Black	White
Treatment of Laterals	Black	Black	White
Bare verb forms	Gray	Gray	Gray
Preverbal TAM	Black	Black	White
Discontinuous Negation	Black	Black	Black
Serial Verbs	Black	Gray	White
Lack of Marked Passive	Black	Gray	Gray
SVO word order	Black	Black	Black
Lack of Nominal Inflection	Gray	Gray	Gray
Three-Determiner System	Black	Gray	White
Analytical Genitive	Black	Black	Black
Relative Pronoun	Black	Gray	Gray
Bimorphemic Interrogatives	Gray	Black	Black
Reduced Pronominal System	Black	Gray	Gray

When displayed in such a manner, the results show a clear progression of creoleness amongst the dialects, with Maltese stationed as the most creole-like and Sūsi as the least, with Judeo-Tunisian occupying an intermediate position. This ordering is clearly established by the data presented in earlier sections. What is not immediately clear, however, is the directionality of the progression – from which end of the creoleness spectrum did it begin? Was Proto-Tunisian, the common ancestor of all three dialects, more like Sūsi or more like Maltese – a typologically natural language variety or a creolized one? If the former is true, then Maltese and (to a lesser extent) Judeo-Tunisian would represent divergent, creolized evolutions of the original form; if the latter, then all dialects would have sprung from a creolized source but have decreolized to varying degrees. It is difficult to adduce the correct alternative solely from the linguistic data at hand; examination of further evidence, however, leads to a clear conclusion.

## **II. The Directionality**

It is the position of this study that the second path proposed above is the correct one: Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian, and Maltese all have their origins in a creolized Proto-Tunisian, and are the products of differing degrees of decreolization, Sūsi having decreolized the most, Judeo-Tunisian to a lesser extent, and Maltese the least of all. This decision is based upon examination of the available socio-historical knowledge of Tunisia in the years following the Arab expansions. Information of this type is essential to a complete analysis and is not to be ignored. As Holm states in his introduction to the study of restructured language varieties: “Pidgin and creole languages cannot be defined, nor can their genesis and development be understood, without taking into account the social factors that shaped them” (Holm 68). This is precisely the

case here, and such details point to a specific interpretation of the linguistic data presented above.

## **A. Socio-Historical Factors**

The socio-historical situation of Tunisia in the early Middle Ages strongly supports the conclusion that the common ancestor of Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian, and Maltese was a creolized variety of Arabic from which the three dialects decreolized to varying degrees. The epoch of Tunisian history immediately following the first Arab invasions was one ripe for the occurrence of creolization, while that of the next several centuries accounts for the differential rates of decreolization observed in the three dialects. The specifics will be discussed below.

### **1. Creolization**

As summarized in Holm, the social settings which typically lead to creolization are those which involve sudden, large-scale contact between two or more groups who do not share a common language. The power dynamics of such situations are generally asymmetrical, with one group (though often numerically inferior) enjoying political power, wealth, and cultural prestige while members of the other(s) live as second-class citizens. A situation such as this induces the members of the poorly situated groups to attempt to rapidly acquire the language of the most powerful one. This results in a linguistic phenomenon known as pidginization, in which a drastically modified version of the dominant (superstrate) language is developed and used by a significant portion of the population as a means of intergroup communication. This is the first step in the process of creolization. The second step consists of nativization, the process by which the early pidginized form replaces other language varieties to become the mother tongue of its

speakers. Via an as yet uncertain mechanism, this process results in language forms of a predictable type – creoles (Holm 4-7). While it is beyond the scope of this study to comment on the causality of this fact, it is generally accepted that languages originating in this manner will likely contain a number of specific linguistic features. It is these features which have formed the basis of the present analysis.

The socio-historical situation of Tunisia during and immediately following the Arab conquests is virtually a perfect match to that described above. The Arabs, speakers of the Old Arabic dialects of the Pre-Islamic era, arrived suddenly and conquered quickly: the first serious incursion occurred in the year 670, and by the end of the century the invading Arabs had pacified the last major threats to their rule and established themselves in the region's cities, founding the massive military hub of Qayrawan (Abun-Nasr 29-32). Though politically, socially, and religiously dominant in this era, Arab Islamic culture was not that of the majority of the populace; rather, it is believed that during this time no more than ten percent of the region's population claimed such an identity (Hourani 46). Its prestige and ruling position, however, more than made up for its lack of numbers, and conscription, religious conversion, and the large-scale taking of local wives by Arab warriors helped to cement its status (Abun-Nasr 34-5). Despite this fact, the Arab cultural presence remained largely restricted to urban areas and centers of political power, governing a heterogeneous nation of Berbers, Roman Christians, Jews, and others. Such was the status quo under the first several Arab dynasties to rule the area, including the Aghlabids, under whose command Malta was captured and settled (Knapp 40).

The society described here meets all the criteria laid out above as encouraging creole formation. The Arabs arrived in Tunisia and quickly took political and economic power, soundly defeating all rivals and tilting the cultural gravity of the multiethnic region to an Arab orbit in the

span of a generation. This situation is prime for the first step in the process of creolization – pidginization of the Old Arabic speech of the conquerors for use as a vehicular language. The second step, nativization, would likely occur in the following centuries, as the Arab presence grew and was swelled by new culturo-religious converts and the children of marriages between Arab men and local wives. It is perhaps this last point which is the most compelling – intermarriage could easily lead to a setting in which a non-Arab wife, compelled to use Arabic in her Arab husband’s home, would raise her children largely in her own Pidgin Arabic. This variety would thus become the primary language of her children, thereby causing it to be nativized and creolized.

Though this situation matches precisely that necessary for creole formation, it is not exactly unusual – numerous powers throughout history have expanded rapidly across broad expanses of territory, bringing their language suddenly to prominence in areas where it had not previously existed. Why is it, then, that Arabic appears to have creolized, whereas the speech of other such invaders (say the Romans or the Mongolians) does not? The answer lies in perhaps in the openness of early Arab-Islamic society to new cultural and religious converts. In the years following the Islamic expansions, the Arab identity was extended to include not only the ancestral Bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula but also any in the newly conquered lands who accepted some form of Arabic as their language and oriented themselves toward Arab-Islamic culture (Hourani 48-49). Such ease of cultural transition from a subordinate into a dominant ethnic group has certainly not been the norm across history, and serves to set medieval Arab society apart from the majority of the world’s other great civilizations.

This fact is highly relevant to creole theory, as it has been proposed that creole formation is most likely to occur under conditions such as slavery and the large-scale reorganization of

populations due to colonialism; these result in an uprooting of peoples and a destruction of the previously existing culturo-linguistic identities of the substrate group, followed by a corresponding shift to a new cultural affiliation dominated by the speakers of the superstrate language (Holm 69-70). Though the arrival of the Arabs in Tunisia did not result in a massive dislocation of the local population, it did achieve a similar effect of cultural shift. In this case, the cultural transition was encouraged by the permeability of the Arab identity rather than the annihilation of local identities; thus, the effect was motivated from the top down rather than the bottom up. The end result, however, was the same, and may explain why creolization may have occurred under the Arab occupation of Tunisia while under other historical powers it did not.

It has been demonstrated that the socio-historical setting of Tunisia in the era immediately following the Islamic conquests was one that could easily have led to the pidginization and subsequent nativization of the speech of the Arab invaders, resulting in a form of Creole Arabic used throughout the region. The following section will describe the means by which such a variety may have begun to decreolize in the following centuries.

## **2. Decreolization**

Decreolization is the process by which a creole, through prolonged exposure to the superstrate language from which it derives, gradually sheds its creole features in favor of those of the more prestigious superstrate language. Eventually, a variety decreolizing in this way may come to contain only vestiges of its former creole nature. This process requires significant, sustained contact between the creole and superstrate varieties, as well as the continued social esteem of the latter (Holm 10).

A creolized variety of Arabic spoken in medieval Tunisia would likely have begun to decreolize in the centuries following its formation, as the Arab presence and influence persisted in the region throughout that time. There is a singular event in Tunisian history, however, that may have served to greatly accelerate this process, as it did the arabization of Tunisia in general. This event, or perhaps more accurately series of events, has come to be known as the Hillalian Invasion.

In 969, the Fatimids established themselves in Cairo and eventually extended their polity across much of North Africa. The province of Ifriqiya (which encompassed modern Tunisia) was placed under the control of the Zirids, who served as governors and tributaries to the Fatimids. Eventually, however, relations chilled; the Zirids broke their ties to Cairo and instead pledged their allegiance to the rival Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad (Knapp 45-46). In retribution, the Fatimids unleashed two tribes of Bedouin warriors on Ifriqiya, the Banu Hillal and the Banu Sulaym, presumably speakers of conservative Bedouin Arabic varieties. These tribes, which had previously migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt, were a fearsome, destructive force. They left Egypt moving westward in 1050, totaling approximately 50,000 warriors accompanied by dependents. Though the Banu Sulaym did not continue past modern Libya, the Banu Hillal reached the Tunisian proper in 1052, crushing Zirid resistance and laying waste to all in their path. The horrific war of devastation waged by the Banu Hillal effectively decimated any extant branches of non-Arab civilization in Tunisia, paving the way for a large-scale adoption of Arab culture beyond its traditional province of the urban, Muslim elite. The effects of this obliteration last to this day, evidenced by Tunisia's largely homogeneous population, which stands in stark contrast to the mixture of Arab and Berber citizens found in neighboring Algeria and Morocco (Abun-Nasr 69-70).

This sharp increase in the rate of arabization would have brought with it a corresponding increase in the rate of decreolization – the amount of contact the average non-Arab Tunisian would have had with the Arabic language would have grown dramatically in this period. Perhaps more importantly for the current study, it can help to account for the differing extents of decreolization observed across the dialects. The destruction of indigenous civilization by the Banu Hillal and the integration of a large number of Arabic-speaking Bedouin would have had a great effect on the general population of Tunisia, the descendents of which are the modern speakers of the majority Muslim dialects like Sūsi; thus, it stands to reason that these dialects would show the greatest degree of decreolization. The effect of the Hillalian Invasion on the Tunisian Jewish community, however, was not exactly parallel. From the information available, it appears that the region's Jews may have been sheltered from the Bedouin advance more than other local groups due to their location – it is reported that the areas spared the worst of the epoch's destruction were the fortified coastal cities, precisely those districts where the majority of Tunisian Jews made their home (Knapp 40, 46). This fact, coupled with the Jew's semi-autonomous cultural identity, is justification for the comparatively lesser degree of decreolization observed in Judeo-Tunisian Arabic.

The Maltese experience of the Hillalian Invasion differs from both of those described above. Located off the Tunisian coast, Malta avoided the Bedouin assault which so devastated mainland society. However, the destruction of the Zirids left the Islamic Western Mediterranean without a significant protector from European attack, and the island territories began to fall. The Norman Count Roger I launched an invasion of Arab Sicily in 1060, and Malta came under Norman control in 1090. Thus, far from being drawn closer to Arab language and culture as a result of the Hillalian Invasion, Malta was in fact pushed further away, severed from the

contiguous Arab world under European occupation which was to last till 1964 (Knapp 47; Aquilina v). The resulting shift in orbit and identity accounts for the comparative lack of decreolization evident in the Maltese data. This is not to say that Maltese would not have decreolized at all – as mentioned above, some amount of decreolization would almost surely have taken place prior to the mid eleventh century (the arrival of the Banu Hillal is not claimed to have initiated the process, but rather to have dramatically accelerated it). It is safe to propose, however, that Maltese would have been decreolized to a significantly lesser extent than its mainland neighbors.

An examination of the relevant eras of Tunisian history supports the formation of a creolized common ancestor to Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian, and Maltese, stemming from the original Old Arabic of the first invaders and persisting in use throughout the early Islamic era. This variety was subsequently decreolized to different degrees amongst different groups of speakers, shaped largely by the effects of the Hillalian Invasion. Thus, the socio-historical factors examined indicate a directionality of more creole-like to less creole-like for the evolution of the cross-dialectal progression presented above.

### **B. Additional Support: Linguistic Evidence**

This directionality also accounts for some of the irregularities encountered in this study's linguistic data, particularly those dialect features that were regarded as somewhat creole-like though they differed in their specifics from the classic creole incarnations of those traits. When viewed not only as the product of creolization but rather of creolization followed by

decreolization, these characteristics are seen to be far more consistent with the rest of the data. Several examples are discussed below.

### **1. Reductions in the Verbal Paradigm**

According to creole theory, the creole verb should be bare, without inflectional morphology of any kind. Verbs of this type were not found in any of the three dialects examined; instead, verbs were found to be obligatorily inflected for aspect, person, number, and gender. The number of inflectional categories, however, was greatly reduced from that of the Old Arabic verbal paradigm. This reduction was interpreted as consistent with a process of creolization, though it did not match the “ideally” creole bare verb form. This judgment makes more sense when the verb is viewed as having creolized and subsequently decreolized – during the first stage of the process, all inflections were lost, and in the second they were added back in, though not to the full extent they had been previously. Though not necessarily intuitive given a knowledge of standard linguistic evolution, there does exist precedent for such a trajectory of development – the case of Juba Arabic in the Sudan.

Relatively few studies have been conducted on the precise mechanics of decreolization. The author, however, has previously carried out a corpus study of Juba Arabic texts which provided results highly pertinent to the current discussion.<sup>1</sup> The texts were transcripts of court cases tried in the southern Sudanese City of Juba, as recorded in Miller (2007). The lingua franca of Juba is a form of pidginized/creolized (whether or not nativization has occurred is unclear) Colloquial Sudanese Arabic brought to the area by invaders from the north in the mid-

---

<sup>1</sup> Leddy-Cecere, Thomas A. “Superstrate Influences on the Verbal Morphology of Juba Pidgin Arabic.” Submitted for *Linguistics 50: Pidgins & Creoles*, Dartmouth College. 12 March 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Each of the 247 decreolized verbs present in the data was coded for correct inflection of aspect, person, number, and gender (all obligatorily marked in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic). The rates of correct inflection were separable

1800s (Watson 95). What is remarkable about the texts examined is that they exhibit countless examples of depidginization/decreolization, particularly with regard to verbal inflection. The Juba Arabic verb, typical of restructured languages, is free of inflectional morphology (Watson 106-107). The data from the court transcriptions, however, contained a great number of verbs inflected using Sudanese Colloquial Arabic morphology (Miller 622-638). This phenomenon is reported in other sources, as well (Versteegh, 1981 126). Perhaps most interesting is that these uses of decreolized morphology of the corpus analysis followed differential rates of use for each of the semantic categories inflected for, and these rates of use were directly relatable to the salience of the given categories in the basilectal (non-decreolized) language.<sup>2</sup>

Not only does this fact provide a precedent for the re-acquisition of verbal inflectional morphology in decreolized Tunisian Arabic, but it may also provide a rationale for why some inflectional categories were completely reintroduced (e.g., aspect, person) and others were not (e.g., gender, number). In the absence of further data, a precise analysis of the type conducted for Juba Arabic is not possible, but the Juba Arabic results would suggest that such a process is not random but rather determined by observable linguistic factors.

Further support for the idea that the verbal inflectional systems of the dialects examined were rebuilt from the bottom up can be found in the forms of the inflectional morphology itself. In the Old Arabic system, represented here by Classical Arabic, the first, second, and third persons inflectional markers for singular and plural verbs forms (masculine, imperfective aspect, sans modal endings) are as shown below:

---

<sup>2</sup> Each of the 247 decreolized verbs present in the data was coded for correct inflection of aspect, person, number, and gender (all obligatorily marked in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic). The rates of correct inflection were separable into three statistically significant tiers, directly correlated to the relative salience of each semantic feature in basilectal Juba Arabic (Leddy-Cecere, 2010).

**Table 2. Classical Arabic Inflectional Markers**

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>ʔa-</i>	<i>na-</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>ta-</i>	<i>ta-/ū</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p.</b>	<i>ya-</i>	<i>ya-/ū</i>

The inflectional markers of Sūsi, Judeo-Tunisian, and Maltese, however, follow a slightly different pattern, one widely acknowledged as typical of the region:

**Table 3. Tunisian Dialect Inflectional Markers**

	<b>Sūsi</b> (Talmoudi 78)		<b>Judeo-Tunisian</b> (Cohen 94)		<b>Maltese</b> (Aquilina 136-137)	
	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> p.</b>	<i>ni-</i>	<i>ni-/u</i>	<i>nə-</i>	<i>nə-/u</i>	<i>ni-</i>	<i>ni-/u</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> p.</b>	<i>ti-</i>	<i>ti-/u</i>	<i>tə-</i>	<i>tə-/u</i>	<i>ti-</i>	<i>ti-/u</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> p.</b>	<i>yi-</i>	<i>yi-/u</i>	<i>yə-</i>	<i>yə-/u</i>	<i>ji-</i>	<i>ji-/u</i>

The system utilized in all three dialects is more regular than that of Classical Arabic. It extends the formula of a prefixed person marker and a suffixed plural marker (found only in the second and third person forms in Classical Arabic) across the entire paradigm. This process involves a reanalysis of *na-* (first person plural) as a general marker of first person and a corresponding extension of plural *-ū*. This change is indicative of a significant shift in the formulation of verbal inflection in the three dialects. The existence of this reformation and its type (toward a more transparent, one-to-one correspondence of morpheme and semantic feature) are consistent with a process of loss and reacquisition of inflectional morphology in which irregularities would be ironed out as a byproduct of the reconstruction.

Though the above discussion focuses on connecting reductions in verbal inflectional morphology to a process of creolization/decreolization, the same essential principles could be abstracted and applied to explaining the reductions in nominal and pronominal inflectional categories as well, though they will not be considered in detail here. Thus, positing a directionality of evolution from more to less creole-like helps to position these traits, previously difficult to interpret, as part of a broader trend.

## 2. Preverbal Particles vs. Auxiliary Verbs

An evolution from more to less creole-like also serves to explain the somewhat troubling finding that, in all of the dialects examined, the role of at least one creole preverbal particle is filled by an auxiliary verb. While it is conventional wisdom in general linguistics that auxiliary verbs often grammaticalize and become invariant particles, in situations of decreolization it is possible for this process to happen in reverse. Once again it is possible to turn to Juba Arabic for an example. In basilectal Juba Arabic, there exists an invariant preverbal marker *gum* which indicates inchoative aspect (Watson 107-108). This element corresponds to the Sudanese Colloquial Arabic verb *gām* ‘get up’ (Dickens 18). In the decreolized Juba Arabic of the court case transcriptions, it is possible to find multiple instances of Juba *gum* being used in its basilectal manner but with verbal inflectional marking, as seen in the following example:

*ana gumta zitta katwa btay* (Miller 626)

‘I began to accelerate my walk’

Thus, the Juba Arabic data demonstrates that it is possible for the process of decreolization to endow a preverbal particle with the inflectional morphology necessary to render it an auxiliary verb. It can therefore be posited that a creolized Tunisian Arabic may once have contained all

three invariant particles predicted by creolistics, though ongoing decreolization has since replaced some of them with inflected auxiliaries.

### 3. Phonological Variation

A directionality of evolution from more creole-like to less creole-like serves to explain yet a third puzzling result of this study – the Sūsi treatment of Old Arabic /g/. As discussed earlier, the reflex of this phoneme is /q~k/ for the oldest generation of Sūsi speakers, and /g/ for the younger ones (Talmoudi 22-23). The reflex of Old Arabic /g/, along with the reflexes of /θ, ð/, is widely used as a shibboleth for the classification of Arabic dialects: the sedentary dialects, here proposed to be the product of creolization, contain the innovative reflexes /q~ʔ~k, t, d/, while the Bedouin dialects, supposedly of a more natural line of language evolution, contain the more conservative reflexes /g, θ, ð/. Virtually all modern Arabic dialects can be classed as belonging to one or the other typology and containing one or the other sets of reflexes (Versteegh, 2001 141). Thus, Sūsi is quite unusual in that, in the variety of its older speakers, it contains the sedentary reflex /q/ alongside the Bedouin reflexes /θ, ð/. As spoken by younger residents of the city, however, the dialect contains only the expected Bedouin reflexes /g, θ, ð/.

The reflex /g/, though not identical to the Old Arabic /g/, is considered a feature of conservative Bedouin phonology; thus, this change represents a shift to an older way of speaking, widely believed to be “more Arabic” (Versteegh, 2001 64). This change may then be taken as an example of decreolization in progress, with conservative Bedouin speech as the target variety. With this change, directly observable in the linguistic data, it is possible to theorize that Sūsi may once have contained other, more creole-like phonological features (such as the /t, d/ reflexes of the Old Arabic interdentals found in Judeo-Tunisian and Maltese) which were

purged by means of decreolization toward a more conservative norm. The change /q~k/ > /g/ appears to be the final step in a long process of phonological decreolization; had the Sūsi study been carried out even a generation later, the dialect might have been found to contain purely Bedouin reflexes, and this clue to the directionality of its evolution may have been missed entirely.

### **C. Summary**

A chronological directionality of more creole-like to less creole-like for the progression of dialects presented above is established by examination of the relevant socio-historical factors and supported by its ability to reconcile numerous anomalous details encountered in the analysis with a broader scheme of linguistic evolution. Thus, it is the finding of this study that the three dialects examined have their origin in a single creolized ancestor which has decreolized to varying degrees in the resultant varieties, Sūsi having decreolized the most, Maltese the least, and Judeo-Tunisian to an intermediate level.



## Chapter 3.2: Conclusion

The conclusion that the modern Arabic dialects of the Tunisian dialect area descend from a creolized common ancestor and have decreolized to differing degrees has implications for both the field of Arab and Arabic studies and that of linguistics. On the first count, the finding provides valuable social insight into the details of everyday life in the period immediately following the Islamic expansions, an often obscure era of Arab history. While numerous accounts are available detailing military exploits and political happenings, knowledge of the more mundane aspects of the quotidian experience of the time are scarce at best. It also provides a historical context in which to place the ongoing processes of arabization (and associated arabicization) in regions such as Morocco and the Sudan, where non-Arab populations face continuing pressure toward integration with the majority Arab culture and language. Thirdly, a more nuanced knowledge of the origins and development of colloquial Arabic provides a better understanding of its present and future evolution.

As regards linguistics, and creole studies in particular, the classification of colloquial Arabic varieties as a post-creole phenomenon greatly increases the amount of knowledge available in an often data-starved field. With regard to the understanding of creole evolution, such information would be invaluable. The earliest generally accepted creole language was a Creole French which originated in Martinique in 1671 (Holm 17); the other early creoles date from this era as well. Thus, as it stands, creole evolution may only be observed across a span of just over three hundred years. If, however, the colloquial Arabic varieties are recognized as products of creolization, then the available time frame is quadrupled, and creole development

can be analyzed on the order of centuries and millennia rather than decades. The corresponding advances in understanding could have effects across the field and beyond.

Perhaps most importantly, the identification of the colloquial Arabic varieties as creole phenomena has profound ramifications for the very existence of creolistics as a discipline. Creole theory is often attacked in academic circles, its decriers claiming that the similarities observed across creole languages are not truly the product of a creole “type” but rather are due to the relatively homogeneous nature of the various sub- and superstrate languages involved (the substrates generally being West African languages, the superstrates European) and the fact that these languages are closely clustered both temporally and geographically. The appearance, however, of the same creole traits resulting from the same social scenario half a world away and thousand years earlier time, with sub- and superstrate languages wholly unrelated to those of the classic creoles, goes a long way toward validating the notion that a creole type does in fact exist, and its continued study is a worthy pursuit.

This new approach to the development of the modern Arabic dialects frees the discipline from the model of “standard” linguistic evolution so long imposed on it by outside scholarship and, somewhat poetically, brings it back in line with the view held by the original scholars of the Arabic language – the Arabs themselves. In explaining the origin of the Arabic dialects, the great historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1356) cites the conventional wisdom of his time:

فلما جاء الإسلام وفارقوا الحجاز . . . وخالطوا العجم تغيرت تلك الملكة بما ألقى إليها  
السمع من المستعربين . . . وفسدت بما ألقى إليها . . .

When Islam came and [the Arabs] left the Hijaz . . . and mixed with foreigners, their linguistic habits began to change as a result of the different ways of speaking they heard from those who tried to learn Arabic . . . As a result of this influence, Arabic was corrupted . . .

(Quoted in Versteegh, 2001 102)

Though the modern evaluation avoids the value judgment entailed by Ibn Khaldūn's "corruption," the basic premise is the same: the Arabs spoke a "pure" Arabic in the Arabian Peninsula during the pre-Islamic period, which they brought with them as they expanded their domain outward across the Middle East and North Africa. There, the influence of non-Arabs attempting to acquire the language resulted in a restructured form of Arabic used across the Arab world. Ibn Khaldūn continues by predicting that this "corruption" will be combated by increased knowledge of Classical Arabic, which will result in an evolution away from the restructured variety towards more conservative forms of speech – in effect, decreolization (Versteegh, 2001: 102). Perhaps keen linguistic insight, like the phenomenon of creolization, is not limited to the modern era.



## Works Cited

- Abu-Chacra, Faruk. *Arabic: An Essential Grammar*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007.
- Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Al-Nassir, Abdulmunim Abdulamir. *Sibawayh the Phonologist : A Critical Study of the Phonetic and Phonological Theory of Sibawayh as Presented in His Treatise Al-Kitāb*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1993.
- Alosh, Mahdi. *Using Arabic: A Guide to Contemporary Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Aquilina, Joseph. *Teach Yourself Maltese*. London: The English Universities Press Ltd., 1965.
- Basset, André. *La Langue Berbère*. London: Published for international African Institute by Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Bassiouney, Reem. *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity, and Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009.
- Bateson, Mary Catherine. *Arabic Language Handbook*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003.
- Busuttil, E.D., ed. *Kalepin Malti-Ingliz*. Il-Belt: Giov. Muscat & Co. Ltd., 1964.
- Cohen, David. *Le Parler Arabe des Juifs de Tunis*. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.
- Cowan, J.M., ed. *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. 1994.
- Dalby, Andrew. *Dictionary of Languages*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Dickens, James. "Khartoum Arabic." *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Hall, Robert A. *Proto-Romance Phonology*. New York: Elsevier, 1976.
- Holm, John. *An Introduction to Pidgins and Creoles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Inglefield, Patrick L., Kacem Ben-Hamza and Toufik Abida. *Tunisian Arabic Basic Course*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1970.

Jacobs, Joseph and Isaac Broydé. "Tunis." *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. 1901-1906. Web. 10 May 2010.

Knapp, Wilfrid. *Tunisia*. New York: Walker and Company, 1970.

Krahmalkov, Charles R. *A Phoenecian-Punic Grammar*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Lewis, M. Paul, ed. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 16<sup>th</sup> Edition. Online version. Dallas: SIL International, 2009. 25 May 2010.  
<[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=mlt](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=mlt)>

Miller, Catherine. "Do They Speak the Same Language? Language Use in Juba Local Courts." *Approaches to Arabic Linguistics: Presented to Kees Versteegh on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*. Ed. Everhard Ditters and Harald Motzki. Leiden: Brill, 2007. 607-638.

Mion, Giuliano. "Osservazioni sul Sistema Verbale dell'Arabo di Tunisi." *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 78.1-4 (2004): 243-255.

Owens, Jonathan. *A Linguistic History of Arabic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

"Sousse." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2010. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 5 May 2010.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/575523/Sousse>>

Talmoudi, Fathi. *The Arabic Dialect of Sūsa (Tunisia)*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothobergensis, 1980.

Versteegh, Kees. *Pidginization and Creolization: The Case of Arabic*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984.

---. *The Arabic Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.

Watson, Richard L. "An Introduction to Juba Arabic." *Occasional Papers in the Study of Sudanese Languages* 6 (1989): 95-117.

Wellens, Ineke. *The Nubi Language of Uganda: An Arabic Creole in Africa*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005.