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# Lexical contact in the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: French

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**Abstract:** In the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times, French was variously involved in the dynamics of lexical contact in the Mediterranean. The study of lexical loans may display the stratification of influences and linguistic exchanges that is peculiar to the “French case”.

**Keywords:** French language, loanwords, linguistic contact, lexicography

*Li françois disoient que il ne se savoient mie si bien aïdier sus la mer come par terre*  
(Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*)<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Language contact in the Mediterranean

It is commonly believed that lexical contacts involving French in the Mediterranean linguistic area, during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, necessarily occurred through the mediation of other languages. As a matter of fact, the areas where *oïl* dialects were spoken and written during the centuries under examination do not border the Mediterranean Sea. The slow and gradual process of *francisation* of the Southern regions of the Gallo-Romance domain is essentially a modern phenomenon: France’s annexation of vast Occitan territories, starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, had no immediate and direct effect at a linguistic level, although it has given origin to some mechanisms bearing medium and long-term significant consequences on the language (Rey/Duval/Siouffi 2011: 270–286).

This overview is basically correct, and much of the lexical heritage concerning inter-linguistic contacts in the Mediterranean area has reached French through Oc-

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<sup>1</sup> Dufournet (2004: 120).

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citan and Italian dialects. However, the overview is also somewhat incomplete without considering another order of elements, pertaining to the speakers and writers who were the actual agents of language contacts. It is necessary to consider their itineraries through political, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to fully understand the dynamics of lexical contacts in the Mediterranean, in which French was involved from several points of view.

Therefore, the annexation mentioned above is a good starting point to better describe its linguistic effects: if the centre of gravity of the Kingdom of France remained firmly fixed in the North, as it was in the past and will be in the future, it is true that with the end of the Albigensian Crusade and with Louis IX's reign "la Méditerranée entre dans le réalités territoriales et dans l'horizon politique de la monarchie française" (Le Goff 1996: 169).<sup>2</sup> Among the new features that this enlargement of borders implied, there was the King's processing of an actual "Mediterranean policy", concretely represented by the development of the port of Aigues-Mortes, one of the major urban achievements of Medieval France. This harbour was Saint Louis' point of departure for his crusades, in discontinuity with his predecessors, who had moved by land (Louis VII to the Second Crusade, 1147–1149) or had based at Genoa (Philip Augustus at the Third Crusade, 1190–1191). On the other hand, military expeditions in the East were indeed prompted by the sovereign's deep devotion, but they also aimed at assisting a Latin community linked to the French and Occitan world through an intricate web of family, dynastic, political, and cultural relationships. The French King established an "unofficial protectorate" (Tyerman 2007, 805) on these overseas Latins: he financed fortification works during his stay in the Holy Land (1250–1254), exercised an important role on the political-diplomatic front, and eventually left a regiment of one hundred knights in Acre, under the guidance of a French commander (Marshall 1989).

At the same time, in 1246, the new Mediterranean frontier of the French Kingdom gained a coastline in the County of Provence, acquired thanks to the marriage of Louis IX's youngest brother, Charles of Anjou, who became King of Sicily in 1266. Settled in Naples, which was the capital of the kingdom, he led a multi-state project centred in the Mediterranean, until the end of his life. The kingdom included areas where the King imposed his military pressure and trade control, rather than an actual Angevin political authority (Borghese 2008). The loss of Sicily (1282) marked the collapse of this ambitious project, but it did not immediately lead to the disappearance of an area of (relatively) free movement of men, ships, and goods from the Holy Land to Provence, passing through Cyprus, mainland Greece, and Southern Italy, under the sign of a well perceptible *francocracy*. Φραγκοκρατία is the modern and learned term, documented since 1851 (Babiniotis 2010, 1556), used to define the Western political-military dominance on Greece: a predominance exercised in the late-medieval times by the Venetians and Genoese on the

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<sup>2</sup> See also Ménager (1960: 133–154), Le Goff (1990).

islands and by the French in the broad sense on the mainland and on Cyprus.<sup>3</sup> Slightly forcing the original meaning of the word, it is possible to speak of *francocracy* also beyond the Greek horizon, considering the maritime routes between ports and coasts governed or controlled by the kings or lords of France.

Thus, during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, French, which did not yet have a well-defined shape as a national language, was projected onto an international dimension, becoming an oral and written vehicular language, used by a large and mixed community (Zinelli 2016: 209). As a vehicular language, French seemed to complement rather than replace other languages – Greek, Arabic, Italian dialects, then Catalan and Occitan – in only partially overlapping contexts: chanceries, customs, *scriptoria*, and royal and noble courts. As a matter of fact, these contexts were the perfect opportunity for lexical contacts, as well as *fondachi* (caravansaries), ports, ships, and arsenals – merchants, ship-owners, and sailors are considered lexical contacts' main promoters, but they were not alone and their activities were often mediated by professional writers and institutional relationships with several political, administrative, and judicial centres (Kibbee 2010, Guidi Bruscoli 2014: 2015).

Therefore, written documents rightfully pertain to the discourse on lexical contacts, not only as testimonies to the linguistic dynamics which occurred in the past, but also as regulatory tools in long-distance communication, and hence vectors of exchanges at all levels, including language. As Gianfranco Folena noted about colonial Venetian – the so-called *veneziano de là da mar*:

di questa realtà linguistica amministrativa e mercantile, la lingua scritta è il perno centrale: è la *scripta* che assicura anzitutto le comunicazioni essenziali a distanza e consolida tradizioni particolari (Folena 1990: 241–242).

Written documentation plays a fundamental role also in the case of influences of lexical contacts in the Mediterranean on French. As Fabio Zinelli observed:

La *scripta* correspond souvent à un facteur de stabilité, s'agissant d'un ensemble cohérent de pratiques liées à des centres d'écriture (des chancelleries et des scriptoria), qui peut se traduire dans un puissant vecteur culturel et politique. [...] Tout en bénéficiant, pour sa diffusion à niveau régional et supra-régional, de son intégration dans une *scripta*, la propagation du lexique dépend tout d'abord du potentiel d'innovation de la parole orale (Zinelli 2016: 253).

French is therefore a particularly interesting case in the multi-faceted phenomenology of lexical exchanges across the Mediterranean. Not only did the trajectories of direct contact intertwine with those of mediated contact, but the latter included processes and mechanisms that were very different one from the other. Indeed, it can be noted that of the two most powerful intermediaries for French – the Occitan

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<sup>3</sup> This semantic vagueness is linked to the ambiguity (or polysemy) of the adjective φράγκος, φράγγος 'Western European, French', attested in Greek from the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Kahane/Kahane 1976; Aslanov 2006: 16–19).

and Italian dialects – only the former is in territorial continuity with French varieties, while for the latter it is only possible to reiterate some considerations similar to those already mentioned: in the absence of adstratic contacts along a physical and/or political border, one should think about forms of lexical dissemination based on networks of punctual locations, cultural institutions, and personal relationships (Zinelli 2016, 211). Occitan mediation is no less complex: French Occitanisms are mostly considered regionalisms – that is, they have penetrated into general French through Southern French varieties (Chambon/Carles 2007: 317; Glessgen 2008: 2954; Pfister 2016: 170). However, there is a certain amount of lexemes that can be categorized as technicisms, which have arrived to French through a sectorial language or an Occitan jargon (Chambon/Carles 2007: 315). Indeed, this category includes most words involved in inter-Mediterranean contact processes – the *mots méditerranéens* (Zinelli 2016: 213) as a subspecies of the *mots voyageurs* –, lexemes belonging to specialised languages of sea activities such as sailing, trade, piracy, and fishing.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of these considerations, the “French case” particularly deserves an in-depth analysis, due to the stratification of influences and linguistic exchanges that lexical loans make visible. However, studies aiming at reconstructing the path of the *mots méditerranéens* in the geographic and social space through a long-term analysis have encountered many obstacles.

First of all, in the case of genetically related varieties such as the Italo-Romance, Gallo-Romance, and Ibero-Romance ones, the formal resemblance of these languages and the proximity (and often casualty) of the oldest attestations make it generally difficult, if not impossible, to determine the source language of a given lexeme, and even to only identify the stages of its diffusion (Fennis 1995: 12–13; Trotter 2006: 1778, 1783). It must be concluded that:

the Mediterranean was not only the source of the major shipbuilding innovations from late Antiquity through the Renaissance (galleys, carvel construction, non-square sails), but also, inevitably, of much of the terminology too; and much of that terminology is not so much multilingual as (more simply) unlocalizable: it is often impossible to attribute the lexis of maritime affairs with certainty to any of the irresponsibly promiscuous and apparently interchangeable languages used in the Mediterranean ports from East to West (Trotter 2003: 22).

For instance, the first documentation of the term designating ‘dead calm at sea’ dates back to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Italian, Occitan, and Catalan areas (It. *bonaccia*, *bonaza*, *bonaça*, Occ. *bonassa*, *bonasa*, Cat. *bonança*, *bonansa*). Thus, for the French *bo(u)nace*, *bo(u)nasse* we can only suspend judgment and observe the simultaneous convergence of Romance languages and the great capacity of expansion of the lexeme, also passed to Greek and Turkish. On the other hand, as the attestations of *bo(u)nace*, *bo(u)nasse* are quite sporadic and concentrated in the

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<sup>4</sup> For the very problematic definition of technicisms see Martin (2007), Soubrier (2016). For the circulation of regionalisms in general French, see Greub/Chambon (2008).

13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries in texts from Eastern Mediterranean, it could be possible to conjecture a re-introduction of the lexeme during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when it enjoyed some diffusion in French texts, up to its present obsolescence.<sup>5</sup> A similar hypothesis can be elaborated for the verb *calfater* ‘to caulk’, of uncertain source – probably late-Latin, passed through Greek and/or Arabic mediation: the oldest Romance attestations (Occ. and Cat. *calafatar*, Cast. *calafat(e)ar*, It. *calafatare*, etc.) are almost simultaneous. As for the French form *calfater*, it is found in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and then, with greater continuity, starting from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Rouen documents of the *Clos de galées*. Besides these forms, there is an isolated testimony from the Latin East (ca 1320), which is alien to the nautical context.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in the Latin East as well as in the arsenal set up by Philip the Fair (1292) in Rouen with the help of Italian and Provençal ship-owners, sailors, and carpenters, we are in the presence of particularly multilingual environments, and there is no decisive elements to ascribe the responsibility of the diffusion of the term to one or the other Romance language.

Another serious obstacle to studying French’s role in Mediterranean lexical exchanges is the availability of sources. The maritime and mercantile environments were prone to vernacular languages in the late Middle Ages, but practical texts from those environments, or in any way related to them, have often been poorly edited by scholars with limited philological-linguistic skills, therefore resulting scarcely reliable even for the lexis they provide. For instance, some very significant documents, such as the *Pacta Naulorum* stipulated by Louis IX’s emissaries with the Genoese in view of the Seventh Crusade (1268), the inventory of the armament of galleys set up by the Venetians for Charles of Valois (1311), or the contract between Philip VI and the Genoese captain Aitone Doria (1337), are still available in largely perfectible 19<sup>th</sup>-century editions (Champollion-Figeac 1843: pt. 2, 61–67;<sup>7</sup> Mas-Latrie 1880: 67–68; Molinier 1882: 210–213). Among other issues, the editors were not always able to trace back to the Genoese or Venetian forms behind the French ones, and thus the latter were transcribed incorrectly in some cases: for example, the first of the quoted

5 See Kahane/Kahane/Tietze (1958: 112–113); Vidos (1965: 93–96); Vidos (1970); Hope (1971: 30); Fennis (1995: 159, 380–381); Minervini (2000: 385, 393–394); Aslanov (2006: 152–153); Gdf I: 26, VIII: 339; TL I: 1052; DFM 426; FEW VI.1: 78–80; Jal<sup>2</sup> I: 124; Rn I: 236 ; Lv I: 155; Mistral I: 329; Babiniotis (2010: 895, 898); Redhouse (1997: 190); DCECH I: 620; DECLC II: 82–83; TLFi, DMF s. v. *bonace*; TLIO s. v. *bonaccia* ; DOM s. v. *bonasa*, LEI VI: 891–900.

6 See Vidos (1939: 263–267); Kahane/Kahane/Tietze (1958: 513–514, 517); Kahane/Kahane (1981: 354); Pellegrini (1972: 94, 423); Hope (1971: 32); Fennis (1995: 454–455); Minervini (2000: 395); Trotter (2003: 23–24); Gdf VIII: 412; DFM 488; Jal<sup>2</sup> 188; FEW XIX: 80–82; Rn II: 288; AND, DEAFpré, DMF, TLFi s. v. *calfater*; TLIO s. v. *calefatare*; DCECH I: 749–750; DECLC II: 404–405; DOM s. v. *calafatar*.

7 Together with the French document Champollion-Figeac (1843: pt. 2, 50–61) published the Latin documents of the *pacta naulorum* between the same contractors, but relating to the first crusade of Saint Louis. These texts also have a very interesting vocabulary, largely due to the adaptation of Italian and “Mediterranean” terms. For the controversial dating of this textual *corpus* cf. Ménager (1960, 227–235).

texts reads *parescaline* for *parescalme* ‘small or medium-sized sailing or rowing boat’, *pariscalmo* or *paliscarmo* in Genoese, Venetian, and Tuscan texts, as a probable adaptation of the Greek πολυσκάλμος or παρασκάλμος.<sup>8</sup>

Obviously, there are some relatively recent editions, which are very satisfactory, as in the case of the documents of the arsenal of Rouen (1293–1418), edited by Anne Chazelas (1977–1978), or the oldest French treatise on galleys, the *Stolonomie*, written in the area of Marseille in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, edited by Jan Fennis (1978). There are also some literary texts whose style involves the use of specialized terminology, often associated with Mediterranean inter-linguistic contacts. It is the case, among many, of the *Prise d’Alexandrie* by Guillaume de Machaut (ca 1370), which exhibits an extraordinary catalogue of ship names, likely functional to the creation of an effect of “local color” (Roques 1986: 2016; Zinelli 2016: 224–225).<sup>9</sup>

Finally, it should be emphasized that the perspective taken in these pages might suggest a predominantly receptive role of French in terms of nautical and mercantile lexical contacts – in this sense, Villehardouin’s quote cited at the incipit of this work, referring to the relative inexperience of the French in naval combat, may be over-interpreted and read as an allusion to a lack of propensity for sea-related activities. But this is not the case: the Kingdom of France was well present on the Mediterranean scene since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and French played a role that is far from negligible in the passage of words from one point to another of this wide area. The linguistic domain of the *oïl* dialects also included vast portions of the Atlantic coast – gradually and in various forms embedded in the kingdom – and attendance at these other seas led to an actual “split between Mediterranean and Northern nautical parlance” (Kahane/Kahane 1981: 349), that is to say the coexistence of Eastern and Western maritime vocabulary in French that were very little integrated between them (Fennis 1995: 1–54).

It is therefore necessary to observe how, against this “réseau d’itinéraires lexicaux méditerranéens” (Ruffino/Telmon 2016: 31), examined so far, there is a network of Atlantic routes responsible for the circulation of lexemes such as *baie* ‘small bay’, whose origin and dissemination have been recently reconstructed in a convincing way (Chauveau 2006). We can also recall, albeit briefly, the trade and nautical terminology carried by French into Middle English, in cases like *ginge(m)bre*, *gengibre* etc. > *gingivere*, *gingivre* etc. (Tomasin 2016, 68; AND s. v. *gingembre*) or the aforementioned *calfater* > *calfatyngge* (Trotter 2003, 23–24; AND s. v. *calfater*).<sup>10</sup> The complexi-

<sup>8</sup> The form *parescaline* is read in Champollion-Figeac (1843: pt. 2, 63–64); Champollion-Figeac (1843: pt. 2, 55, 62–64); cf. Vidos (1939: 526–530); Hope (1971: 46); Kahane/Kahane (1974: 362–363); Minervini (2000: 422–423); Jal<sup>1</sup> 1115–1116, 1131; Gdf V: 7095–706; TL VII: 102 ; DFM 2464; DMF, DEAFpré s. v. *palescarne*; FEW IX: 141. Some erroneous transcriptions in the Mas-Latrie edition (1880) of the Venetian inventory are reported by Tomasin (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> For this poem, in addition to the ancient edition of Mas-Latrie (1877), we have Palmer’s edition (2002) and Hardy’s edition (2011).

<sup>10</sup> For an up-to-date and reasoned overview of the French contribution to Middle-English vocabulary, see Durkin 2014: 223–297.

ty of such linguistic and cultural dynamics must be fully recognized. It would be simplistic to read them in a single direction: the permanent movement of people across and beyond the Mediterranean can only be affected by the balance of power that cultures and languages have expressed throughout the centuries.

## 2 Lexical borrowing

As for the problems related to lexical loan mechanisms, their motivation and results, it is necessary to think about the possibility of having to analyze ancient situations, such as the ones dealt with in these pages, with tools that are normally used in the analysis of contemporary phenomena and tailored to the latter. There are dissenting opinions on the issue: Roberta Cella, reflecting on Gallicisms in Medieval Italian dialects, concludes that:

la sostanziale differenza fra i modi di trasmissione linguistica contemporanea e quelli antichi, e la conseguente diversità di trattamento e accoglimento del patrimonio lessicale allogeno, rendono quasi completamente inutilizzabili per l'analisi dei prestiti antichi le categorie interpretative costruite in vista del contatto linguistico *in atto* (Cella 2003: xiv-xv).

Also David Trotter, dealing with the mixilingual accounts of the Sienese Gallerani merchants, active in London and Paris, believes that some current linguistic research concepts would be inappropriate for the 14<sup>th</sup> century's situation:

Even the notion of language-mixing may be problematic insofar as it runs the risk of superimposing language labels on a period prior to the development of the idea that these were really separate languages [...]. 'Borrowing', similarly, implies an identifiable and separate lender and borrower, which may be anachronistic in the case of medieval languages (Trotter 2011: 213).

On the contrary, scholars of various educational backgrounds and interests such as Donald Winford (2005), Martin Glessgen (2008), Martin Haspelmath (2009), Philip Durkin (2014), and Esme Winter-Froemel (2015) considered loanwords as a result of inter-linguistic contact processes without the need to separate modern and contemporary situations from the oldest ones in a preliminary way.

These perspectives are obviously functional to different types of research: on the one hand, there are specific studies on *corpora* of medieval texts, and on the other hand there are attempts at wide-ranging synthesis and generalization. Therefore, without losing sight of the specificity of the ancient situations and the need of not pressing the past onto the present, we will cautiously try to use the broadest possible types in the analysis of lexical contact of Medieval and Early Modern Age phenomena, to better emphasize the distinctive features of the period under examination.

Trotter is right in pointing out that, before the codification of the major European languages, the perception of linguistic affinity and diversity was often inaccurate. However, it should not be forgotten that since the beginning, French appears more recognizable and autonomous than any other Romance language – a phe-

nomenon that can be found in various sources – and that some terminological opacity in terms of glottonyms does not imply the lack of precise geo-linguistic references and rooted feelings of diversity (Brugnolo 2015; Tomasin 2015).

Thus, without the risk of falling into anachronism, in the case of linguistic contact processes in the Mediterranean area we can certainly speak of highly multilingual and mixtilingual environments, which are the most suitable for triggering lexical exchanging processes. In these environments, it is particularly difficult to discriminate between recipient language agentivity and source language agentivity, like contact linguistics does according to an effective criterion: in principle, the first type of agentivity concerns lexicon, while the second one also involves structural elements of the language (Winford 2005: 2013).<sup>11</sup> Normally, linguistically heterogeneous working environments related to commerce, navigation, shipbuilding, and their administrative management, experience in the present and probably experienced in the past a tendency to forms of collaborative intercomprehension, without ruling out socially or functionally dominant languages (Guidi Bruscoli 2015). Therefore, we can suppose that in these environments lexical borrowing into French was enacted by French speakers as well as by alloglot speakers.

Like most loanwords, even those entered into French through contact at sea were initially individual innovations born in speech and then propagated, also by means of writing, through the speech community. The borrowing process should be considered in its diachrony like every other completed language change (Haspelmath 2009). Therefore, it is not sufficient to report the first, often isolated, attestation of a term, but one should investigate its spread in texts, the slow process by which it gains in frequency and is incorporated into the borrowing language, developing new meanings, giving rise to compounds and derivative formations, and spreading in different stylistic registers.

As we have already said, the documentation currently available often limits the possibility of distinguishing cases of stable lexemes, starting from a certain date in French, from cases of multiple loans whose attestations are so rare and dispersed in time and space to suggest several successive re-borrowings before some form of stabilization in the target language. This could be the case, e.g., of French *jarre* ‘large terracotta recipient; unit of measurement for liquids’ (< Arabic *ḡarra*): the word is well documented (as *jarre* and *jare*) in the Holy Land and Cyprus, with both meanings, in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries – *Bible d’Acre*, *Assises des Bourgeois*, *Règle du Temple*, and in various acts and documents. At this chronological point, the word is not documented in French written in France and England, but it appears in Latin, in English chancery rolls. The French attestations start again in the 15<sup>th</sup> century – *Port Book of Southampton*, *Traité sur le passage en Sainte Terre* by Emmanuel Piloti, *Journal du Procureur Dauvet*, *Comptes et Memoirs du roi René* – afterwards the word is

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11 “Borrowing, then, can be defined as the transfer of linguistic materials from a S[source]L[anguage] into a R[ecipient]L[anguage] via the agency of speakers for whom the latter is the linguistically dominant language, in other words, via RL agentivity” (Winford 2013: 172).



found with continuity, particularly in the maritime context. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it acquired other meanings in several semantic fields – *jarre électrique*, *jarre funéraire*.<sup>12</sup> Thus, various borrowings can be plausibly assumed: in the oldest one, the term came directly from Arabic into Overseas French and experienced some spread, geographically limited to the Latin East. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was borrowed again, probably from the Occitan or Italian dialects, in which the corresponding forms had been well established for a long time, or also from regional (Southern) varieties of French. We still have to explain the presence of *jarra*, *jara*, *jarda*, etc. in British Latin (1244, 1245, 1310, 1313, 1392, 1421), but the texts should be studied carefully and extensively to understand their composition.

As it is well-known, a feature that clearly distinguishes a recent lexical borrowing from an ancient one is the degree of its graphic-phonetic adaptation: words borrowed from other languages and not adapted, or poorly adapted to the target language are a rarity over the Medieval and Early Modern Age centuries (Cella 2003: xiv; Glessgen 2008: 2955; Winter-Froemel 2015: 418–419). The phenomenon is confirmed by the results of inter-Mediterranean lexical contacts belonging to the era under scrutiny, normally totally adapted loanwords: for instance, the French *magasin* ‘storehouse, warehouse’ is borrowed in the Mediterranean area from Italian dialects, which in turn adapted the Arab plural form *maḥāzin* (singular *maḥzan*) into *magazzino*.<sup>13</sup> The occurrence of *mahzen* remains isolated, in a French document of the Treasury of Cyprus (1468), probably a direct loan from Arabic or Turkish, under very particular socio-linguistic conditions.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, it is necessary to refer to the distinction between “cultural borrowings” and “core borrowings” – labels to be preferred to those previously in use of “necessary” and “luxury borrowings”, in French *emprunts de nécessité* vs. *emprunts de luxe* or *de commodité* (Winter-Froemel 2015: 421; Soubrier 2016: 88–90). Cultural borrowings designate new concepts coming from the outside – they can thus be considered gap fillers – while core borrowings duplicate or replace existing native words (Haspelmath 2009: 46–49). The distinction between the two types of borrow-

**12** Cf. Fennis (1995: 1102); Arveiller (1999: 131); Möhren (2005: 100); Kiesler (2006: 1650); Minervini (2012: 136–137, 2016: 196, 204); Zinelli (2016: 214); Jal<sup>2</sup> 979–980; FEW XIX: 55–56 ; Gdf X, 39; DEAF J: 147–148; DFM 1977; Rn III: 582; Lv IV: 249–250; AND, DMF, TLFi s. v. *jarre*; TLIO s. v. *giarra*; DOM s. v. *jarra*; DMLBS s. v. *jarra*. For DEAF, loc. cit., *jarre* would have entered French (when?) from the *langue franque* – the proposal is unsustainable for the medieval and problematic even for the modern times.

**13** This is probably another case of multiple loans: we find *magozene* in the documents of the Angevin Treasury of Naples (1279), *maguesins* in the *Songe du viel pelerin* by Philippe de Mézières, *magagene* in the *Livre des faits* by Marshal Boucicaut, with wider spread of the term in texts from the 16<sup>th</sup> century; cf. Durrieu/de Boïard (1933–1935: I, 141); Pellegrini (1970: 105, 266, 345); Hope (1971: 43); Kahane/Kahane (1982: 148–149); Arveiller (1999: 360–362); Minervini (2012: 137–138); Blanchard (2015: 644); Huguet V: 71; FEW XIX: 114; Gdf X: 105; DFM 2123; DMF, TFLi s. v. *magasin*; TLIO s. v. *magazzino*.

**14** «O mahzen dou sucre de Nicossie» (Richard 1983: 34). For a careful reconstruction of the island’s 15<sup>th</sup> century historical, social, and linguistic framework, cf. Baglioni (2006: 9–52).

ings is not without interest, since it can shed light on the degree of cultural significance of the loanword (Cella 2003: xx), but it is often less obvious than what one might believe.

The context and the peculiar modes of Mediterranean lexical loans sometimes make the difference less clear. As Trotter observed about the already cited Gallarani accounts,

the majority of the French terms are neither ‘essential’ nor ‘prestigious’ (in the conventional classification of borrowings), but must be construed either as the result of choices or better, as simply products of a reality – commercial, human, and linguistic – in which constant language contact in an already multilingual environment [...] led inevitably to language-mixing and to a process (to borrow a commercial metaphor) which was more about mergers than acquisitions (Trotter 2011: 223).

Similarly, Roberta Cella, noting the lexical peculiarities of colonial Venetian, speaks of a *Verkehrsprache*

non regolata direttamente dal gusto, né dalla moda, né dal generico prestigio socio-culturale delle lingue in causa, ma piuttosto assoggettata alla necessità – ancor prima che all’opportunità – di *chiamare le cose con il loro nome* in realtà alloglotte (Cella 2010: 57).

It is not only the needs of mercantile texts – and technical texts in general – to make it difficult to frame a loan in the category of core borrowings or cultural borrowings: there are actually cases of loanwords that only partially overlap the native competitors with which they coexist, even though it is not always possible to fully understand the semantic and pragmatic gap that separates these alternatives. A somehow exemplary case is represented by *corsaire*, that coexists, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on, with the term *pirate* – in the first case we are faced with a probable Italianism (or Occitanism), in the second case it might be a Latinism.<sup>15</sup> Though the two words are essentially synonyms – Antoine de la Sale, for instance, speaks of “ung pirate ou corsaire de mer” – it seems plausible that the Mediterranean piracy in the last centuries of the Middle Ages was perceived, even if loosely, as a new and different reality compared to the old one, to which the first occurrences of the lexeme *pirate* refer in translations and adaptations of Latin texts.<sup>16</sup> The situation is complicated not only by the lack of diachronic data on the frequency of the two terms, on the types of texts in which they appear and on the processes of semantic expansion that they

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**15** For *corsaire* cf. Vidos (1939: 332–339); Kahane/Kahane/Tietze (1958: 193–196); Hope (1971: 35); Fennis (1995: 639–640); Minervini (2016: 196–197); Jal<sup>2</sup> 345–346; FEW II: 1579–1581; Gdf II: 315–316; TL II: 910; DECLC II: 958–959; DEAFPré, DMF, TLFi s. v. *corsaire*; TLIO s. v. *corsaro*; DOM s. v. *corsari*. For *pirate* cf. Fennis (1995: 1423); Prétou (2016: 94–97); FEW VIII: 572; Gdf X: 344; TL VII: 970; DFM 2589; DEAF, DMF, TLFi, s. v. *pirate*; TLIO s. v. *pirata*.

**16** The first occurrence is in the *Faits des Romains* (1213). At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Valerio Massimo’s translator Simon de Hesdin feels the need to gloss the word: «pirate en mer, c’est a dire pilleurs ou larrons» (DMF s. v. *pirate*).

undergo, but also by the problem of the very notion of piracy, highly debated in historiography (Mollat 1977; Limousin 2016; Picard 2016; Prétou 2016).

### 3 French lexicography

French lexicography has dealt with lexical contacts in the Mediterranean in different ways. Leaving pre-scientific lexicography aside, which is prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the remaining material can be subdivided into two macro-categories: general lexicography – including both etymological dictionaries and others limited to specific chronological segments, such as Old French or 16<sup>th</sup>-century French – and specialized lexicography that, under several names (glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, etc.), insists on a particular section of lexis, such as loanwords from specific languages or peculiar semantic fields.

Starting from the second category, it can be observed that these works are often an appendix or a development of the critical edition of a text or of an in-depth study of a specific topic. This category includes relatively limited repertoires, without proper lexicological analysis, such as Fathi Nasser's (1966) work on Arabisms in French from the Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also very rich inventories and fine-grained analyses, such as those by Benedek Vidos (1939), Thomas Hope (1971) and Jan Fennis (1978) – the first and second studies are on lexical relations between Italian and French, the third study is on the formation of French nautical terminology.

Hope's volumes are exemplary in some respects: the lexical material – Italianisms in French and Gallicisms in Italian – is divided into chronological periods, and the terms are listed in alphabetical order; each term is provided with its first attestations, the original Italian form (or the French one in case of Gallicisms) and a succinct discussion on the possible path of the borrowing. An overview on lexical exchanges closes the discussion on each period. The sources are the most important dictionaries, etymological and not, and a number of works on individual lexical fields. The work is impacted by the remarkable and perhaps excessive breadth of the project and, from a current perspective, the backwardness of some areas of study: for example, when Hope collected his material, research on the social history of Latin East was still relatively underdeveloped, and therefore he completely ignored the existence of a French cultural and linguistic space in the eastern Mediterranean. This led him to ascribe a mediation role to Medieval Italian dialects on the Greek and Arabic lexis, probably giving them more relevance than they actually had.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In Hope's perspective – and of the earlier studies he relies on, as Vidos' (1939) – the direct relationship between Arabic and French is limited to the military phase of the First Crusade: "It is largely owing to the demands of trade that the Italian language becomes the recognised intermediary for Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Byzantine Greek loans into French once the temporary influx of direct Arabisms arising out of the First Crusade has ceased" (Hope 1971: 53). A first partial correction comes a few years later thanks to Sguaitamatti-Bassi's (1974) work; see also Kiesler (2006) and Minervini (2012).

Vidos' (1939) study is a fundamental and highly innovative – for the period in which it was written – contribution to the study of lexical contacts in the Mediterranean world: the title *Storia delle parole marinaresche italiane passate in francese* dissimulates the actual dimension of the discussion, which embraces lexical exchanges with Romance and non-Romance languages, and includes all words that are somehow related to sea activities. The analysis of the terms is preceded by an introductory part dealing with various important issues: the identification criteria of loanwords, their reasons, the historical backgrounds that favoured them, the acquisition of Grecisms and Arabisms by Italian vernaculars, the irradiation of Italian sea terms beyond the Mediterranean area, etc. The vocabulary is the strongest part of the volume: the entries are lemmatized from French in alphabetical order; they provide useful (but sometimes cumbersome) information about the semantic and formal evolution of the terms, loan conditions, and their near and far etymology – all based on general, etymological, historical, and dialectal dictionaries, as well as documentary sources. The volume is closed by the index of all the forms quoted, language-by-language. As in Hope's case – and perhaps even more – the advances in linguistic and historical sciences have partially rendered obsolete Vidos' theoretical positions and his conception of inter-Mediterranean linguistic contacts. Its vocabulary is still a tool of great utility and its amount of profitable work, its ability to synthesize, and its powerful overview can only create admiration.

As for Fennis, his 1978 work consists of a critical edition of the aforementioned *Stolonome*, accompanied by a dense historical-philological study and a rich glossary of the lexicon of galleys. The book is somehow the basis of Fennis' *opus magnum*, namely the three volumes of the *Trésor du langage des galères* (1995), explicitly conceived as a dictionary but also provided with a substantial introduction. Many topics had already been discussed in his previous work, first of all the long coexistence and the lack of integration of the “two French maritime lexicons”, the one of Marseilles (Eastern) and the other one of Rouen (Western). Fennis deserves credit for offering scholars a huge reservoir of sorted and carefully analysed lexical material: each term is provided with all the documentation available – also by “non-specialist” authors, i.e. chroniclers, travellers, translators etc. –, review of the different genetic and etymological hypotheses, and a rich bibliography of reference. The author is often – and expectedly, given his experience as an editor of a Marseilles text – inclined to emphasize the role of the Occitan world as an irradiation centre of nautical terminology, in particular (but not exclusively) in French-speaking environments, explicitly opposed to his teacher Vidos, who was tendentially Italo-centric.

Vidos' and Fennis' impressive accomplishments have another work behind them, ambitious and rudimentary at the same time, which must be briefly mentioned: the *Glossaire nautique* by Augustin Jal (1848 = Jal<sup>1</sup>). This is, as the subtitle reads, a *Répertoire polyglotte des termes de marine anciens et modernes*, a work by a self-taught author – an archivist and historian of the navy. It is a pioneering and methodologically not very accurate work, based on an extensive and indiscriminate collection of data. It is no coincidence that, when a team of specialists coordi-

nated at first by Michel Mollat du Jourdin started its review (= *Jal*<sup>2</sup>) in the 1970s, it seemed appropriate to narrow the field of investigation – which is still very large, going from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and including eighteen European languages – and to work more carefully on the selection of sources. According to the initial setting, the *Nouveau glossaire nautique* – whose subtitle now reads *Dictionnaire des termes de la marine à voile* – intends to provide a repertoire of words accompanied by textual definitions and examples, dated and localized as much as possible (Mollat 1970: xxxiii). Therefore, there is neither an etymological discussion nor a deep reflection on the history of the terms under consideration.

After this overview of the significant representatives of the field of specialized lexicography, we must examine the category of general lexicography, in relation to its analysis of lexical borrowings in the Mediterranean area. Etymologists are, of course, the most attentive to this type of terms, owing to a modern conception of etymology as the history of a word, of which the stages are to be retraced at the level of the form and of the meaning.<sup>18</sup>

The monumental *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (FEW) aims at providing – in view of its creator, Walther von Wartburg – a complete historical and comparative picture of the entire Gallo-Romance lexical heritage starting from the etymon shared by the ancient and modern forms. As it is inevitable in such a large-scale work (25 volumes published so far), the preparation of which has continued for many decades (the first volume came out in 1922), the *modus operandi* has not always been the same. It has changed over time, in harmony with the new methods of research, particularly in the field of historical linguistics. However, the genetic perspective, coupled with the need for synthesis, still tends to crush the *étymologie-histoire* onto the *étymologie-origine*, that is, to conceive the former in function of the latter.

For example, within the pages devoted to the Gallo-Romance developments of the Latin SŪRGĚRE (FEW XII: 458–462), some lines are devoted to the Old Occitan form *sorgir* and the Middle and Modern French *sourgir*, *sourgre*, *surgir* ‘to be at anchor; to throw the anchor’. On the basis of an article by Henry and Rénée Kahane (1950), the verb is considered a loanword from Catalan in French and Occitan, without clarifying whether they are independent loans or the French term depends on the Occitan. Despite the considerable pan-Romance horizon – which is one of the strengths of the dictionary – the role of Italian varieties is here understated, ignoring the presence of the verb *sorgere* and the noun *sorgidore* ‘place suitable for landing’ in the oldest Italian pilot book, *Compasso de navegare*.<sup>19</sup> On the one

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of French lexicographic tradition cf. Roques (1990); Quemada (1990); Pfister/Lupis (2001: 196–219); Fryba-Reber (2003); Gouvert/Heidemeier (2015), rich in bibliographic references.

<sup>19</sup> The most recent edition of the *Compasso* (Debanne 2011) was obviously not available to the FEW editors (volume XII was published in 1965), not even to Kahane (1950), but they might have known Motzo’s edition (1947). The *Compasso*’s only manuscript is dated 1296 and the work is believed to have been compiled towards the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Debanne 2011: 30).

hand, this testimony casts in doubt the chronological primacy of Catalan; on the other hand, the attestations of the verb in French texts coming from Venice (Martin da Canal, Marco Polo) and the Latin East (Templar of Tyre)<sup>20</sup> make evident that we are in the presence of a widely circulated *mot méditerranéen*: Emidio De Felice (1974–1975: 212) speaks, in this regard, of “una complessa e non più esattamente ricostruibile vicenda di influssi e di incroci tra lingua e lingua”, and a cautious and realistic lexicographic attitude should stop at this finding and not go any further.

The discussion of *s(o)urgir* also refers to a central and difficult problem of all etymological dictionaries: whether it is always necessary to set off from a Latin form (classic, late and/or popular), even in the absence of traces or convincing evidence of a semantic-syntactic continuity between the formal Latin antecedent and the Romance term. The FEW believes that the Romance lexical type in this case is to be traced back to the Latin form *SURGERE* ‘raise’, then ‘launch’ – this semantic evolution could be late-Latin and would pave the way to its Catalan evolution (‘launch an anchor’). In contrast, De Felice (1974–1975: 209, 212) considers arbitrary to postulate the far Latin etymology *SURGERE* for the Romance nautical term based on a purely formal relationship, when it would be more correct to motivate the onset of the different Catalan, Italian, Occitan, and French words and phrases within the Romance phase. The problem, as in many other cases, remains open, and recent assumptions in favour of the Latin solution (Debanne 2009, 49) are quite recurrent. However, it is important to emphasize the lexicographer’s responsibility, whose methods and choices should be explicitly stated and discussed.

Finally, it should be noted that a number of complementary and corrective interventions have occurred over the years that have consistently contributed to completing the very remarkable picture originally offered by the FEW: after the publication of the XIX volume (*Orientalia*) – released in 1967 but largely set up in the 1930s – the great Orientalist Raymond Arveiller published 25 addenda articles on the *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, then collected in a book edited by Max Pfister (Arveiller 1999). These are masterful contributions, which not only add quotes and sources ignored by the FEW editors, but provide also a thorough and problematic review of the entire words’ history. One can refer, for example, to the pages related to the Gallo-Romance outcomes of the Arabic *fundaq* ‘warehouse, caravansary’ (Arveiller 1999: 112–119), treated in a rather hasty manner in the FEW XIX: 48–49.

The dictionary’s internal revision has also produced a new version of the letter A, which has been greatly enriched quantitatively and qualitatively compared to its first version: here too, without going into the analysis, reference is made to the

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**20** This text is known to FEW, but its testimony is hastily dismissed: “Da dieser text stark italianisiert, können diese belege nicht mit sicherheit als französisch gelten” (FEW XII: 462). The FEW tacitly relies on Kahane/Kahane (1950, 198) who speak of “Genoese record [...] in French dress”. For the romance entries mentioned above, also see Vidos (1965: 78–80); Fennis (1995: 1695–1696); Minervini (2000: 431); Debanne (2011: 285–286); Huguet VII: 141; Jal<sup>2</sup> 1369; DECLC VIII: 81–84; DCECH V: 339–340; DMF, TLFi, s. v. *surgir* ; TLIO s. v. *sorgere*.

satisfactory handling of the Romance results of the Latin ANTEMNA ‘lateen yard’ (FEW XXIV, 644–645), compared to the few lines of the FEW I: 101.

Wartburg’s student and collaborator, Kurt Baldinger has the merit of having conceived and started another lexicographic enterprise of great importance, the *Dictionnaire Étymologique de l’Ancien Français* (DEAF), devoted to the French language from 842 to half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The project, then under the guidance of Frankwald Möhren and Thomas Städtler, produced its first issue in 1974 and is currently complemented with a digital version (DEAFél). The raw materials of the terms under preparation (DEAFpré) are also available online, with a formidable bibliography (DEAFBiblél) that combines the data of all manuscripts and editions available to the editors. A highlight of DEAF is its great philological accuracy, that is, the aspiration to critically evaluate all the textual sources used: this is a great improvement on current lexicographic practice, even of well-known scholars like Arveiller or Fennis, who tend to unproblematically accept composite editions and dubious dates. The description of the medieval French lexicon offered by DEAF is exemplary in many respects: in-depth etymological discussions, constant attention to the evolution of meanings and uses, exhaustive verification of all attestations, all together with readiness to integrate every novelty, whether editions, critical studies, methodological reflections, changes in historical or linguistic perspectives. Therefore, the results of lexical contact in the Mediterranean are usually well presented and discussed: for example, the cases of the Arabism *farise* ‘mare’ – for which a Greek-Byzantine mediation is reasonably supposed – and of the (possible) Italianism or Occitanism *golfe* ‘gulf’, a variant of the more common *goufre* (DEAF F1: 141; G: 1065–69).

Finally, we must briefly talk about the most ambitious work of modern French lexicography, the *Trésor de la langue française* (TLF), conducted under the direction of Paul Ibms and Bernard Quemada (1971–1994), and then made available in a computerized version (TLFi) by the laboratory of *Analyse et Traitement Informatique de la Langue Française* (ATILF).<sup>21</sup> The TLF is devoted to the French language of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – so there is no record of the entries documented in the Middle Ages but then disappeared from use. It incorporates essential etymological and historical-linguistic references at the end of the discussion of each lemma (first attestations, formal variants, semantic evolutions, etc.), which are generally accurate and reliable – like the DEAF, the TLF also follows philological principles and uses only attestations found in its reference *corpus* and duly identified complementary reviews. Many of the entries mentioned in these pages are considered in the TLF, which represents a detailed and well-balanced inventory of current knowledge on French lexis.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> ATILF itself develops a French electronic dictionary from 1330 to 1500 (*Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, DMF), projected by Robert Martin and freely accessible online.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. TLFi s.v. *antenne*, *bonace*, *calfater*, *corsaire*, *golfe*, *jarre*, *magasin*, *surgir*. A TLF selective etymology review project (TLFÉtym) is currently underway, which at the moment does not involve any of the words examined here.

To conclude this quick review, it is necessary to highlight, with Quemada, the danger represented by the “gigantisme insidieux que peut entraîner la surabondance documentaire” (1990: 880). In fact, the prodigious increase in available materials, along with the need to make dictionaries disposable online and to prepare different and richer ways of consulting them than the traditional ones, is one of the challenges of contemporary lexicography. The treatment of the results of lexical contacts in the Mediterranean finds excellent accomplishments in some of the French dictionaries mentioned above. In the future, we will gain benefit from giving more attention to the “close” than to the “remote” etymon and from willingness to investigate the areas, contexts, and ways of lexical diffusion rather than trying to identify its starting point.

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