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# Archeological Dialectology: Reconstructing the Etymological Derivation of the Various Lexemes Denoting the Obsolete Farm- Implement “Threshing-Board” in Palestinian Dialects

By AHARON GEVA-KLEINBERGER, Haifa

**Summary:** Galilean Arabic preserves an array of agriculture terminology which has ancient cultural roots, some dating to Biblical times, others found in Semitic languages that infiltrated this region in the course of time. Presently the Galilee region is experiencing rapid language change for several reasons: some concern modernism, others the influence of Hebrew. These processes threaten an enormous display of vocabulary with obsolescence. The article probes for the etymological roots of an ancient agriculture apparatus, the *threshing-board*, which belongs to the research region and has several different lexemes. This research shows that the various etymons of this tool belong to a wider agriculture circle of agricultural terminology. Timeliness is of the essence with the collection of the region's agricultural vocabulary to repel the grave danger of obsolescence.

## 1 Background

Agricultural implements, methods, customs and way of life are dying out in our world very quickly and perhaps very swiftly, by reason of modernization and globalization. This article seeks to show how substrate words, which live on in local dialects, can shed light on the development of agricultural lexemes which still maintain a certain level of vividness. Agricultural terminology may also afford us information on the links among various cultures. In this article I base my data on different language theories such as the ideas of medieval Arab linguists and on more modern ideas and theories.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Arabic grammarian Ibn Ġinnī (932–1002) at the beginning of his book *al-Khaṣā'is* develops the idea of *Taqlībāt*, whereby the consonants in a specific root change places so that a joint semantic circle forms of all roots. See 'IBN ĠINNĪ: *al-Khaṣā'is*. Egypt 1913, pp. 1–4; in my article I rely also on comparative Semitic, as set forth in the book by W. GESENIUS: *Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. Berlin 1962 and on Nostratic Theory, as shown the book by A.-B. DOLGOPOLSKY: *From Proto-Semitic to Hebrew: Phonology: Etymological Approach in a Hamito-Semitic Perspective*. Milano 1999, p. 99: the word *ḡarn* appears in Ge'ez in the same meaning.

The farmer's "threshing-board" was purportedly invented in the ancient Near East, and even the Bible mentions it several times in different books. This agricultural tool was in active use by Palestinian farmers until the early 1980s in the West Bank and until the late 1970s in the Galilee region.<sup>2</sup> It served to separate grain from chaff, namely "to thresh". It had various names in Palestinian dialects: *lōḥ* *ʿddrās*<sup>3</sup> (literally "threshing-board"), *el-lōḥ elmuhagğar* (literally "the board which contains stones"), and sometimes only the simplified word *el-lōḥ*<sup>4</sup> "the board" was used; these lexemes were used together with another lexeme with two variations: *mōrağ*<sup>5</sup> and *nōrağ*.<sup>6</sup> This article describes the historical and diachronic development of the use of the different lexemes for threshing-board in Palestinian dialects

<sup>2</sup> According to a joint fieldwork, it was in use for example in the Galilean Moslem village of Naḥ<sup>f</sup> until 1979; see F. ZACHS/A. GEVA-KLEINBERGER: "On the Path to Obsolescence: Children's Songs and Nursery Rhymes from the Galilean Muslim Village of Naḥ<sup>f</sup>." In: *Mediterranean Language Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Rarely also *illōḥ* ("the board"). See I. HALAYQA: *Traditional Agriculture and Domestic Tools in Palestinian Arabic: An Ethnographic and Lexical Study*. Wiesbaden 2014, p. 59: "A wooden tablet, board or plank, but it also refers to a threshing tablet of different sizes."

<sup>4</sup> See CL. DENIZEAU: *Dictionnaire des Parlers Arabes de Syrie, Liban et Palestine (Supplément au Dictionnaire Arabe-Français de A. Bartélemy)*. Paris 1960, p. 483: "*lōḥ ed-drās* «planche à dépiquer». See also *Dictionnaire de l'arab parlé palestinien (français-arabe)*. Jérusalem/Afula: Fraternité 1983), p. 300. For more details see G. DALMAN: *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 1987 (repr.), Band III, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> M.M. ARANOV: *The Biblical Threshing-Floor in the Light of the Ancient Near Eastern Evidence: Evolution of an Institution*. Ann Arbor, Mich. 1977, p. 314, relates the name etymologically back to the Hebrew word מורה ["drawer"]. He adds on the same page: "The *morag* was adopted in Greece and Rome much later than its introduction in [Ancient] Israel".

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59. HALAYQA mentions that this word is in use in Jerusalem. See also R. SOBEH: *The Agricultural Lexicon in the Dialects of Shafa'amr*. MA thesis under the supervision of AHARON GEVA-KLEINBERGER. University of Haifa 2015, pp. 131–133 (in Arabic). See also A. BARTHÉLEMY: *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français: Dialectes de Syrie: Alep, Damas, Liban, Jérusalem*. Paris 1935, p. 855: "*nāwraj*- herse à depiquer le grain." This term is found also in Egypt. He relates this lexeme back to Literary Arabic *nawraju*. According to him, it also has traces in Modern Greek with a metathesis: 'ροχάνα. He also mentions that the variant *māwraj* is in use in Lebanon, and the existence of a term that relates to the root "djrj". Compare also GESENIUS 1962, p. 408. GESENIUS assumes that this lexem appears also in Old South Arabic as نوج. He adds that this word together with موزج was spoken even in his time. See also A. GEVA-KLEINBERGER/Y. BEN-ARTZI: *Von Muelinen's Mount Carmel [sha-Karmel shel Von Muelinen]*. Jerusalem 2013 [Scientific annotations, translation and editing of E. VON MÜLINEN: *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Karmels*. Leipzig 1908], p. 306: The word *nōrağ* was also in use in the village of il-Fredīs, which is located on the northern coast of Israel, south of Haifa. It strengthens the assumption that this word has a northerly "Coastal Isolex" which continues farther north to the Syrian coastline, based on BEHNSTEDT's data in his Syrian atlas. The word نوج as the agriculture implement "threshing-board" appears also in the Classical Arabic Dictionaries: see e.g. IBN DURAYD: *Ġamharat al-Luġa*. Beirut 1987, pp. 1169, 2.

and aims to reveal their etymological relations, which seem to be intricate. Thus, these linguistic data may shed light on historical developments.

In the Greater-Syrian Arabic dialectal macro-group, to which the Palestinian Arabic dialects belong, there is a much wider variety of lexemes that denote the threshing-board. These mosaics of different words can lead us to a better understanding of the etymology of this device's name. According to PETER BEHNSTEDT's Atlas of Syria<sup>7</sup> many more lexemes denote this equipment. The first group of variants of lexemes that contain the name "board" in Palestinian dialects reduce to one generalizing word *lōḥ* and its diphthongized parallel *lawḥ*, while the second group of lexemes *mōraḡ~mōraḡ~mōraḡ~mōroḡ*, which also exists in Syria, has plentiful alternatives; BEHNSTEDT's information shows that the variant *nōraḡ* does not exist in Syria:

*marḡ~marḡ~marč~marḡ~marḡ~mirḡ~mirḡ~murḡ~mayraḡ~merōḡ~mawraḡ~mawraḡ~mawrač, mawroḡ~mawriḡ*. A third group of names in Syria is *ḡarḡar~ḡarḡar* (literally "dragger", which have similar names also in Syrian Kurdish and Kildāni); a fourth group is *ḥilān~ḥilēn~ḥylōn* (literally "trick"); a fifth group is *daff~diff* (literally "drum", which has also a variant in North-West Aramaic [NWA]: *deffa*); and the sixth and last group is *šabḥāta* (literally "match-box"). According to BEHNSTEDT's data, we can easily observe six large independent areas of isolexes in Syria. The first group—the *lōḥ* variants—used to be spoken in Damascus and southward toward the Hauran region and the Druze Mountain. The second isolex of *marḡ* variants stretches to the Syrian coast and was found also in an isolated area near Palmyra. The third group of *ḡarḡar~ḡarḡar* was located in the past north of Aleppo up to the Turkish border. The fourth group of *ḥilān* variants used to be spoken in the Aleppo region. The fifth group of *daff* variants was heard near the three Aramaic villages of Ma'lūla, Baḡ'a and Žibb-ŧeddīn, probably under Aramaic influence; while the six group of *šabḥāta* was found in a restricted area southwest of Hamā. In another area—a seventh, north of al-Qarītēn—*lōḥ* and *marḡ* variants were in use side by side.

The data of this article is also based on fieldwork pursued by PETER BEHNSTEDT in the very traditional agricultural Christian-Arab Galilean village of *Mi'ilya* as part of a project financed by the GIF (German-Israeli Foundation) 20 years ago in which I also took part. BEHNSTEDT recorded a peasant on the theme of "threshing-board", a text that sheds light on the technical aspects of this device.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> P. BEHNSTEDT: *Sprachatlas von Syrien*. Wiesbaden 1997, Map 492, pp. 984–985.

<sup>8</sup> The linguistic informant is Yūsef Šabbāḡ, born in 1922. The name of the tool in *Mi'ilya* is *lōḥ 'd-drās*. The informant stated that he used to make it himself. He says [sentence 44 in the recording]: "*loḥ iddras, b-ilawwal baḡib ilxašabi ḡalīḡa. ḡalīḡa, ya'ni ḥēk*."

Note that in Palestinian dialects the word *lōḥ 'd-drās* is used more than the other variations of lexemes that mean this device. This word seems to have been used more on the coastal region, as in Syria, so a coastal isopleth has been created in the Greater-Syrian Arabic macro-dialectal group for this word. This is not the sole evidence of lexeme similarity in this coastal region.<sup>9</sup> In Palestinian Arabic there is an expression *Mōsem id-Drās*, which means “the season of threshing”.<sup>10</sup> Semantically this term is associated psychologically by these speakers to terms like “threshing-floor”.

## 2 Technical description

A very vivid and common expression is still heard among young speakers of Palestinian dialects: *zayy lōḥ 'ddrās* (“like a threshing-board”). It means a stupid or shallow person who has no idea of anything. This might have been borrowed because of the flat surface structure of the board. But this board is far from being technically described as “flat”, as the vernacular shows. My purpose is not to give an accurate technical description of the tool. The data here is based on BEHNSTEDT’s fieldwork and my own, and on DALMAN’s<sup>11</sup> work.

The threshing-board was not made in every single village. There were certain centers for its manufacture such as Nazareth, Mi‘ilya, Saxnīn and Taršīḥa in the Galilee region, and Nāblus in the West Bank. In Palestinian agriculture, this wooden tool was made of two, three or four tightened heavy boards of dense wood, normally oak. In Jerusalem the size of the boards was normally 72 centimeters in width and 161 centimeters in length. Sometimes the length was only 125 centimeters. A relatively small board<sup>12</sup> it was used for mules; one a bit bigger was used for draught bulls, while for draught horses the device had to be doubly large. Sometimes an ox and a

*bašūqqa b-innuss*. [Sentence] 45. *ba‘dēn banažžīra ba‘mallha sidir min quddam*.” Meaning [sentence 44 in the recording]: “The threshing-board: at the beginning I bring wood which is very rough, and I divide it into two parts. [Sentence 45]: Then I do the woodwork, shaping the form of a big plate in the front.”

<sup>9</sup> BEHNSTEDT marks the Syrian coastal dialects as “C”, *ibid.*, p. 1004. Even phonetically, this region shows an isophone, e. g. in the use of ž; see *ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>10</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 26: “The season of threshing—*warab ‘adri* [in Akkadian] ירח אדר [in Hebrew]”; “the time of threshing comes after compilation of the reaping”.

<sup>11</sup> DALMAN describes the threshing-board in great detail in the third volume of DALMAN 1987, pp. 78–97.

<sup>12</sup> There are two types of threshing-boards used by Palestinian peasants: “Palestinian” and “Turkish”. The Palestinian type is smaller and contains sharp stones.

mule were worked together with this equipment. Often a man or sometimes a youngster (a boy or a girl) would ride the draught animals and even stand on the threshing-board in order to use the weight for a better pressure, but sometimes (not with bulls) they stood on the threshing-board itself, guiding it with a hand holding a steering rope. The board was fastened by two crosswise boards (*āriḍa* pl. *‘awāriḍ*) 9–10 centimeters wide and 4–5 centimeters thick. DALMAN notes that in southern Palestinian villages an upright yoke (*nīr*) was carried on the board. Ropes (*ḥbāl*, *ribāt*) were tied to the end of these boards. The device consisted of a variety of rectangular or trapezoidal slats, so the forward part was somewhat narrower and curved upward; the bottom was covered with razor-like stones (*ḥḡāret ellōḥ* [literally: the stones of the board] or sometimes called *baḥṣ*<sup>13</sup>). On the Golan Heights, basalt stones<sup>14</sup> (*ḥaḡar ‘aswid*) were also in use. In southern Palestinian villages, a Sinai granite stone was used, while in some Transjordanian areas sharp wooden parts made by a craftsman were used. One form, once common in the Mediterranean area, was some three to four feet wide and six feet deep (although these dimensions often varied). It consisted of two or three wooden planks over four inches wide, joined together. Several hard, sharp flints were forced into their undersides to be drawn over the grains. To the fore part a large ring was nailed, for attachment of the rope that pulled the board. Two horses were usually harnessed to the rope, while a person seated on the threshing-board drove it in circles over the grain spread on the threshing floor. Should the driver need more weight he need only place a few large stones on it. But as noted, the dimensions of threshing boards varied.

### 3 Biblical and Talmudic references

The threshing-board is mentioned also in the Bible, although in some verses the meaning refers to a total different lexeme, the “threshing-floor” (Palestinian Arabic: *bēdar*) (2 Samuel 24: 10–25 and 1 Chronicles 21: 9–30). The place of threshing that is “the threshing-floor” is undoubtedly connected to the apparatus. Both are semantically associated to the act of threshing, one to the apparatus itself and the other to the location. In my fieldwork I found that even Palestinian peasants, especially in the Galilee region, combine the two semantic definitions in their speech. Surprisingly, in Hebrew the two

<sup>13</sup> DALMAN 1987, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> Compare also GESENIUS 1962, p. 408: “Dreschschlitten, ein n. vorn etw. aufwärts gebogener Schlitten, auf der unteren Seite m. spitzen Steinen od. Messern besetzt”.

terms גורן (*góren* “threshing-floor”) and the Arabic variations of *nōraǧ* may hint at a metathesis-like relations between the two lexemes. In ancient times the threshing-floor had acquired a touch of holiness, associated with the agriculture function.<sup>15</sup> In Isaiah 41:15 we find:

“Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.”

The word in the Hebrew text is “מורג חרוץ” חדש—בעל, “פיפיות”<sup>17</sup> DALMAN assumes that here the expression בעל פיפיות describes an apparatus which uses stones; it seems that מורג is almost a synonym for חרוץ<sup>18</sup>. In 1 Chronicles 21:23 there is another reference to the threshing-board as an apparatus: “Araunah said to David, ‘Take it! Let my lord the king, do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this’”; here too we find in the original Hebrew text the same word, but in the plural “מורגים”. In Proverbs 22:26 the lexeme עגלה literally “cart-wheel” seems synonymous with מורג, also it is not translated into English as such in all versions, e. g. “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set” (KJV<sup>19</sup>) or “Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors” (NIV<sup>20</sup>).

In the Babylonian Talmud<sup>21</sup> the word in the plural is “מוריגים”<sup>22</sup> and not “מורגים”. In Gmara Tractate Holies, *Zevahim*, page 116, II, the Aramaic word is *turbal* which has a Greek etymon τριβασπος that apparently has Akkadian or even Sumerian roots. ARANOV in his MA thesis adds:

<sup>15</sup> The etymon of the word *Nouraghe* meaning megalithic edifices found in Sardinia is still unknown. This archeological structure might have had a religious function on one hand and an agricultural purpose on the other.

<sup>16</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 318: “stone-embedded threshing[-]board”.

<sup>17</sup> See HALAYQA 2014, pp. 59–60: also used as *passim* (פסים literally “rails” or “stripes”) in Mishnaic Hebrew.

<sup>18</sup> DALMAN 1987, III, p. 82, notes that here Rabbi Sa’adya Gaon translates the Hebrew text into the Arabic term مורج.

<sup>19</sup> King James Version.

<sup>20</sup> New International Version.

<sup>21</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 314: “Rabinic texts relate מוריגים to a device ‘goat with hooks’ עיזא דקירקסא wherewith the threshers thresh. It is clear from several texts that what is being described by all these terms is the classical מורג threshing-sledge”. See also Y. A. BAR-LEV: *Yedid Nefesh le-Mesechet Shabat (le-Talmud Bavli)*. Petah-Tikva 1998, II, p. ימוריג: ג'ה. בהמה ללא מלח. [המוציא יין, פרק שמיני, [שבת

<sup>22</sup> The Targum uses here מוריגי סומפורין, which has an etymon derived from מספריים “scissors”.



“The ‘flail’ in the Sumerian language *turbalum* is the rod used to separate grains from straw.<sup>23</sup> It derives from the Sumerian composite of the words *duru* and *bal* which means ‘break open’ or ‘disrupt’.”<sup>24</sup>

It seems that the Carthaginians had brought this agricultural device to Hispania and the Romans named it *plostellum punicum*.<sup>25</sup> We saw above that in some Syrian Arabic dialects the name of this device is *daff*, which derives from the Modern West Aramaic of Ma'alula *deffa* probably meaning “drum”.

#### 4 Further etymological development

In many of the European Romance languages we can trace words for “threshing-board” coming from the same lexeme *tribulum* which derives from the Latin etymon; this in turn comes from Ancient Greek (and is also found in the Talmud). The last stop in the line is a Semitic word in Akkadian, which itself possibly derives from a non-Semitic origin in Sumerian. In Italian the word is *tribolo*; in Spanish and Aragonian *trillo*; in Catalanian *trill*; in Valonian *triboulom*. In the Germanic language family we find another etymon: *Dreschschlitten* or *Dreschtafel*; in English *threshing-board*; in Dutch *dorsen-paneel*; in Danish *Tærskning panel*; in Norwegian *Tresking av panelet*; in Swedish *Tröskning panel*. In this group the etymon seems also to derive from the Semitic languages, for example, the verb *كَّرَسَ*<sup>26</sup> in Arabic “to thresh”, and its Hebrew verbal equivalent *דָּרַשׁ* which derives from *דָּרַשׁ*. In Hebrew we find also the verb *דָּרַס* which means to “press, squeeze, crush”. Note also that the Arabic root *√d-r-s* is a homophone as it also means “to study, to learn” besides its meaning “to thresh”; in Hebrew there is a distinction between the two verbs, which sound very similar: *√ד-ר-שׁ* and *√ד-ר-ס*.

<sup>23</sup> Compare ARANOV 1977, p. 318: “the remarkable similarity to the Accadian [sic.] and Aramaic threshing flail ‘turbalum’ should be noted ... In the Sumerian language *turbalum* is the rod used to separate grain from straw.” According to ARANOV, the etymon of *turbalum* derives from the Sumerian composite of the words *duru* and *bal* which means “to break open” or “to disrupt”. I am not sure that ARANOV’s suggestion is right. I suggest another interpretation, based on J. BLACK/A. GEORGE/N. POSTGATE: *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Wiesbaden 2000, *duru* in the sense of “permanence” [p. 62; p. 57, from *dāru* “to last”] and *balu* in the sense of “without” [p. 37], and as a composite in the sense of “device”, like the semantics of the Latin word *automobile*.

<sup>24</sup> ARANOV 1977.

<sup>25</sup> DALMAN 1987, p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Threshing in Maltese (which derives from Arabic) is *tidrīs*. On the compatibility and etymology of Arabic words in Maltese see A. GEVA-KLEINBERGER: “The Mystery of the Dance: The Semitic Etymological Derivation of the Maltese Root *√zfn* and Its Contribution to History.” In: *Semitica* 58 (2016), pp. 271–287.

In Syriac the word is *gargerā*, which overlaps the Syrian Arabic use *ḡarḡar-ḡarḡar*<sup>27</sup>. This word can be etymologically derived in two different ways: first from the Arabic verb “to drag” (جرّ); secondly, we see here that the two first consonants appear also in the Arabic word for “threshing-floor” (*ḡurn*, جرن) or the Hebrew word גורן which is a metathesis of the word *nōraḡ* “threshing-board”.<sup>28</sup> This derives from the Hebrew word מורג, which appears in some Arabic dialects as *mōraḡ* based on a nasal phonological shift. It is extremely interesting that the discussed root √ḡ-r-r may have a link in its etymological development. I suggest here a new approach to a possible etymon for the Sardinian *nuraghe*, a megalithic edifice. This may have a joint etymon with the Semitic-Hebrew (or Phoenician<sup>29</sup>) word for “threshing-floor” (גורן), which was an agricultural place, but also a holy place<sup>30</sup>. It might have been brought with the Carthaginians to this Mediterranean island as well. These etymological developments might have compatibility<sup>31</sup> links with some European words that evince a semantic circle parallel to other agricultural terms, such as the English word “grain” which recalls the words جرن and גורן; it probably is also connected to the word *garīn* (גרעין) “grain” or *gargér* (גרגר) which is a diminutive form of “a grain” = “a cinus, granule, a little grain”. Amazing is that nowadays *ḡurn* does not have the meaning “threshing-floor” in Palestinian dialects, but it does in Literary Arabic.<sup>32</sup> Hearing the word *ḡurn* spoken among the *fella-*

<sup>27</sup> See note 6 above.

<sup>28</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 20: “A *gōren* is that complex of areas, structures and appurtenances where the farmer processes his harvested corn, barley, wheat and spelt. In order to make the grain product edible, the farmer had first to separate and cleanse the kernels from their adhering chaff.”

<sup>29</sup> HALAYQA 2014, p. 59. He refers to the word *lḥ* in Punic, which is the Phoenician dialect of Carthage. On Phoenician-Punic agricultural terminology in Egyptian Arabic dialects see also G. CONTI: *Apporti tra Egiziano e Semitico nel Lessico Egiziano dell'Agricoltura*. Firenze 1978, pp. 175–176. HALAYQA finds the same etymon of *lḥ* in Nabatean. This word lacks vowels, as is prevalent in this dialect. HALAYQA even locates the apparatus *le'u* in Akkadian, citing VON SODEN. For more details on Phoenician and Punic agriculture see also E. LIPiŃSKI/C. BAURAIN: *Dictionnaire de la Civilisation Phénicienne et Punique*. Turnhout 1992, pp. 9–10.

<sup>30</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 36, adds details on the sanctity of threshing for the ancient Egyptians. On page 39 he refers to the magical power of the threshing-board: generally “[i]t was not unusual for the local threshing-floor to serve as ‘high place’.” Also among the Philistines, “the local deity was a grain god and bore the name of Dagon [dorn]”, *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> F.J. CADORA: *Interdialectal Lexical Compatibility in Arabic*. Leiden 1979, p. 5: “Compatibility is a synchronic dialectological concept that operates on the lexical level. It assesses the degree of lexical relationship that exists between two or more varieties of a given language at a given time irrespective of geography.”

<sup>32</sup> The Arabic word for “peasants”.

*bin*<sup>33</sup> associate among them the meaning of a “mortar” for grinding deferent types of flour, legumes and coffee.<sup>34</sup> Also the Hebrew word for “threshing-floor” גרן begins with the same two radicals  $\sqrt{g_1-r_2}$ . Thus, the peasants use for “threshing-floor” the word *bēdar* (بيدر<sup>35</sup>), which may be reconstructed etymologically to  $\sqrt{*bēt-dar}$ , literally “the house of winnowing”.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, the Arabic root  $\sqrt{d-r-γ}$  (“to winnow”) has a Hebrew equivalent of  $\sqrt{z-r-γ}$ , as the biradical first two consonants may have a joint semantic-etymological connection with the Semitic word for “seed” or “semen”, like the word זרע in Hebrew and the root  $\sqrt{z-r-}$  in Arabic.<sup>37</sup>

## 5 Conclusions

All three etymon derivations discussed in this article show a Semitic root for *tribulum*, which is used in languages that derive from Latin (albeit through Ancient Greek); the root  $\sqrt{d-r-s} \sim \sqrt{d-r-š}$ , which means “to thresh”<sup>38</sup> in the Germanic languages; and the various developments of the biradical root  $\sqrt{ḡ-r-(r)}$ , which denotes the “act of threshing”, the agricultural “threshing-board” tool itself and the place “threshing-floor”. Thus, a connection is diagnosed with the broadening of this biradical root to the tri-radical root  $\sqrt{ḡ-r-n}$ , which denotes also “grain” and “threshing-floor” (גורן), or even the “threshing-board” itself, מורג. This is easily explained on the basis of two parallel linguistic processes: metathesis and phonological shift from *n* to *m* in the last consonant. This article has shown a joint semantic circle of the words “grain” and “winnowing” which are so-called “semantic squad-connectors” between to the words “threshing-floor” and “threshing-board”.

Moreover, we see that agriculture terminology, which reflects traditions of three millennia, preserve customs through language. The Arabic dialects of the Greater Syrian Area preserve a term that still remained in use until the late 1970s among Palestinian and Syrian farmers through an agricultural implement. Furthermore, the Arabic vernacular terminology for this

<sup>33</sup> A. M. BARGHOUTHI: *Dictionary of Colloquial Palestinian Arabic*. Ramallah-Bireh, n. d., p. 268. See also IBN MANḌOUR: *Lisān al-‘Arab*. Beirut 1956, v. 13, p. 82: the word جرن [*ḡurn*] is also associated here with بيدر “threshing-floor”.

<sup>34</sup> Compare BEHNSTEDT 1997, map 399, pp. 798–799.

<sup>35</sup> See also R. DOZY: *Takmilat al-Mā‘āḡim al-‘Arabiyya*. Iraq 1979–2000, v. 5, p. 122: “جاروفة تنظف بها الحبوب في البيدر” [an agricultural device that cleans the grain on the threshing-floor].

<sup>36</sup> ARANOV 1977, p. 18: “winnowing involved the further separating of the kernels”. See also *ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>37</sup> See BARGHOUTHI n. d., p. 55: “طرح الزرعة أي البيدر في الأرض”

<sup>38</sup> Thus *lōh* ‘*ddrās*.

apparatus is referred to and cited in the Bible and the Hebrew tradition of the Talmud. The uses that derive from the root  $\sqrt{d-r-s}$  in the various Levantine Arabic dialects draw on the same Semitic source. The words *mōraġ* and *nōraġ* too are located on the coastal parts of the Palestinian dialectal areas, and also northward up to the Syrian coast; they may derive etymologically directly from Ancient Hebrew or Phoenician, two sister-languages. So this implement has Semitic roots which are preserved in Hebrew; moreover, its etymons were preserved as an ancient substrate<sup>39</sup> in Arabic lexemes by Arab peasants in Palestinian dialects, and in other Arabic dialects in the macro-dialectal group of Greater Syria. The tool might have been presented to the Romans by Phoenician mariners or Carthaginians, to be absorbed thereafter into other European languages. We know that the Phoenicians dwelt mainly on the eastern Mediterranean littoral, so in the places where they lived the lexeme existed and was preserved by the Arab peasants. The Bible has it in Hebrew. Thus, the local Arab peasants are culture and language preservers par excellence. It may also show the influence of other agricultural terminology that migrated, such as the word for "grain" in English and the word for "threshing" in the Germanic family group, which probably shows a Semitic background.

In our globalizing world, agriculture may hold the last evidence explaining etymological derivations. Agriculture can denote links not only between languages but also between distant cultures. Still, the acceleration of the process of oblivion and lexical obsolescence has a direct link to the disappearance of agriculture devices and terminology in other boundaries of this field. In our times—just about 30 or 40 years ago, the threshing-board ceased to be used after 3000 years. If we do not hurry to collect linguistic material through field research this fascinating world may disappear as if it had never existed. In this field, the term *dialectal archeology* that I have used in this article may make an essential contribution: to show the missing language and cultural links, and to reconstruct them, by saving terminology which is on danger of obsolescence. Thus, again, we witness the importance of the peasants as culture preservers. Encouraging dialectal fieldwork among farmers may be literally understood: saving their field-lexicon, where crops are cultivated.

<sup>39</sup> The Arabic word صرار *ṣarār* "pebble" left its traces in Canaanite. Compare S. HOPKINS: "Pebbles: Canaanite Substrate Word in Palestinian Arabic." In: ZAL 30 (1995), pp. 37–49.

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