

## LINGUISTIC COMMENTS ON THE PYRGI TABLETS

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The three gold tablets, discovered in the course of the 7th campaign of excavations at Pyrgi, the harbour of Caere, on 8 July 1964, have already won world-wide fame, although they have not fulfilled the hopes pinned on them in the first flush of the discovery<sup>1</sup>. To be sure, even if we did not understand their texts at all, the fact that, in the 5th c. B.C.<sup>2</sup>, a Punic (or Phoenician?)<sup>3</sup> tablet was deposited in a sanctuary on the soil of Etruria, would be sufficiently exciting news from that misty period of early Etruscan history. But we do understand almost completely the Punic text, and the gist of the two Etruscan texts. But only the gist of the Etruscan texts - and this is the disappointment I have alluded to. For the first news spoke of bilinguals and the expectation was aroused that here at long last we had the true key to a proper understanding of Etruscan. But the investigations have already revealed that the Etruscan texts, though they have much the same content as the Punic text in general, nevertheless differ in detail considerably.

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<sup>1</sup> I have seen the following publications: Colonna-Pallottino-Borelli-Garbini, *Scavi nel santuario etrusco di Pyrgi (editio princeps)*, in: *Archeologia Classica* 16, 1964, 49 f.; Georgiev, *Linguistique Balkanique* IX/1, 1964, 71 f.; J. Février, *CRAI* 1965, 9-15; Dupont-Sommer, *ibid.* 15-18 and *JA* 252, 1964, 289-302; Heurgon, *CRAI* 1965, 89-103; Colonna, *SE* 33, 1965, 191-219; Pugliese Carratelli, *ibid.* 221-235; Maria Grazia Tibiletti Bruno, *ibid.* 545-6 and 547-8; Bonfante, *AGI* 50/2, 1966, 181-6; M. Höfner - A. J. Pfiffig, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 21, 1966, 252 f.; Georgiev, *Linguistique Balkanique* XI/1, 1966, 25 f.

<sup>2</sup> The inscription has been dated around 500 or 500-490 B. C. by Pallottino, *l.c.* 106, a date accepted by most subsequent writers. But Pfiffig thinks, *l.c.* 254, that "höchstens das späte 5. Jahrhundert" can be considered.

<sup>3</sup> I shall speak of the "Punic" text although I am not unaware of the fact that some scholars have discovered certain "Cyprian" features and therefore assume that we may have to do with Phoenicians from Cyprus, who settled in the sphere of Italy, and not with Carthaginians; see especially Dupont-Sommer, *JA* 252, 300-302.

In fact, the Punic text provides very little help for the interpretation of the Etruscan texts. Only one single Etruscan word has been helped to a definitive solution: we now know that the Etruscan numeral *ci* meant 'three'. But even here we can say that this value, guessed by Torp, was conclusively proved by J. Wilkins<sup>4</sup>, so that the new texts merely confirm what we had known already. And apart from this single instance, no fresh light has been thrown either on the vocabulary or on the structure of Etruscan. We must still make do with what has been patiently and unsensationally worked out by dedicated scholars, and that is still very little. How little, can be seen from the differing interpretations of our texts. The phrase *ilacve tulerase* is 'having made a libation' for Heurgon<sup>5</sup>, 'ii libabant. In finibus suis . . .' for Georgiev<sup>6</sup>, but whereas Heurgon finds libation in *tule-*, Georgiev sees in *tulerase* a noun (: Umbr. *tuder*) and finds libation in *-lacve*.

There are, nevertheless, important new data in these inscriptions even for the linguist. Two of them shall be discussed in detail.

#### 1. Caere.

The Punic text states that "this holy place was made and given to Lady Astarte" by TBRY' WLNŠ MLK 'L KYŠRY'. The name is identical with the Etruscan texts' *θefariei velianas* (A5) and *θefarie veliunus* (B 1-2). But only the Punic text describes him as the "king of KYŠRY". Pallottino brilliantly clarified this place-name<sup>7</sup> by pointing to the statement of Verrius Flaccus preserved in one solitary passage in the Verona Scholia: Flaccus primo Etruscarum "Agylla" (i.e. Caere) inquit "ab Etruscis . . . nominata est Cisra". There can be no doubt that Cisra is connected with KYŠRY', but this fact raises two questions:

- a) what is the relation between KYŠRY' — Cisra?
- b) what is the relation between these and Caere, the only name-form in real use?

In order to be able to answer the first question, it would seem vital to know the reading of Punic KYŠRY'. Unfortunately, any reading will be based on the interpreter's view of the answers to be given to the questions put above. Thus Garbini suggests *Chaisrie* or *Chaisraie* of which Cisra and Caere are two differently developed adaptations<sup>8</sup>. J. Février reads *Kišrie*<sup>9</sup>,

<sup>4</sup> TPS 1962, 51f., and especially the Cambridge dissertation mentioned there.

<sup>5</sup> Heurgon, l.c. 99.

<sup>6</sup> Georgiev, *Linguistique Balkanique* XI/1, 30. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Pallottino, *Arch. Class.* 16, 62; cf. Servius ad Aen. X 183 (Thilo-Hagen II 444).

<sup>8</sup> Garbini, *Arch. Class.* 16, 68.

<sup>9</sup> Février, CRAI 1965, 11 f.

while Dupont-Sommer gives *Kayišraie*<sup>10</sup>. All take it for granted that the Punic form has *-šr-* (or *-sr-*), agreeing with *Cisra*; there is on the other hand a sharp divergence on the interpretation of the first part (*Kai-* | *Kayi-* | *Ki-*). But the last can certainly be ruled out: *š* would not have been indicated by *Y*, in fact would not have been indicated at all. Even *ī*, or *ē*, would not be expressed, cf. KKBM with the plural ending *-īm*, and BT rendering *bēt*. There can be no doubt that KYŠ- indicates *Kais-*, as assumed by Garbini: it is the form that appears in Caere; the reading *Kayiš-* is without foundation.

Turning now to the middle of the name, we see that, under the influence of the late *Cisra*, the Punic spelling is generally interpreted as representing *-ŠR-*. The difficulties inherent in this interpretation become manifest when we try to reconcile with it the Latin form *Caere*. As has been noticed by Maria Grazia Tibiletti Bruno<sup>11</sup>, an early sequence *-sr-* resulted in Latin *-br-* (*tenebrae*, *fūnebris*, *consobrīnus*, *cerebrum*), while a late treatment with assimilation of *s* to *r* and compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel is confined to the preverb *dis-* (*dirumpo*<sup>12</sup>). She suggests, therefore, that, besides *Chair(a)ie*, there was a more vulgar ("più popolare"), assimilated form *\*Chair(r)aie* in Etruscan itself, or, alternatively, that in a certain area of Etruria, after the date of the Punic tablet, *-sr-* was assimilated to *-rr-* and the Romans borrowed this form. But neither of these variants of the basic assumption, that *sr* developed into *rr* within Etruscan, can be accepted. There is no trace whatever of any kind of rhotacism in Etruscan. Moreover, the very fact that *Cisra* survived with its *sr* proves that in Etruscan even *sr* did not assimilate. And this form of the name is of the greatest importance. For it must come from Caere itself, it cannot be a form preserved in some remote corner of Etruria. We must also assume that the Romans learnt the name of Caere from the inhabitants themselves. After all, we cannot overlook the fact that Caere was merely 30 miles north of Rome, and that it was the leading Etruscan city between the 7th and 5th centuries B.C.<sup>13</sup>, whose power extended to Fregenae, within 10 miles of Ostia<sup>14</sup>.

The upshot of this argument is that the native name of Caere, spelt KYŠRY' in our Punic inscription, developed at Caere to *\*Cēsra*, and eventually to *Cisra*<sup>15</sup>, while at Rome it was transformed into *Caere*. If, then, Latin *Caere* is unlikely to have developed from an earlier *Caisr-*, the conclu-

<sup>10</sup> Dupont-Sommer, JA 252, 292 f. Piiffig's *Kisria* (l.c. 255) is unlikely.

<sup>11</sup> SE 33, 547-8.

<sup>12</sup> See Leumann-Hofmann, Lateinische Grammatik I 158.

<sup>13</sup> See Carratelli, SE 33, 225-234.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. Alföldi, Early Rome and the Latins, 1963, 211 f.

<sup>15</sup> The development of *ai* to *ē* is known from Etruscan inscriptions, s. Pallottino, Elementi di lingua etrusca, 1936, 20. The further change of *ē* to *ī* (sic!) may have to be ascribed to Late Latin, a development paralleled by *saeptum saeta* (cf. Old High German *sīda* 'silk'), see Leumann-Hofmann, o.c., 76.

sion we must draw is that it developed from a form in which *s* and *r* were separated by a vowel. In a form of this kind, *s* was regularly rhotacized in the course of the 4th century B.C., and the resulting \**Cairere* was either syncopated to \**Cair(r)e* or became \**Caire* by haplology.

We have left open the question of what the original vowel between *s* and *r* was. But when we consider the various possibilities (*Caiser*-, *Cai-sor*-, etc.), it becomes clear at once that our name must be connected with that of *Caesar*. Whatever the origin of the *Iulii*, their cognomen comes from Etruria, and the memory of one of their ancestors, perhaps of the founder of the city, survives in the name of *Caere*, just as later the historical *Caesar* is, or the *Caesares* are, commemorated by *Caesarea*, *Caesar Augusta*, etc.<sup>16</sup>

One final point concerns the end of the place-name. As we have seen, the Semitists interpret KYŠRY' as representing *-ie* or *-aie*. This would mean that the original form of *Caere* was \**Kaisarie* or \**Kaisaraie*. Both could represent a gentilicial name; cf. *śalie* 'Salvius' on the one hand, *velxaie* on the other<sup>17</sup>. But the real problem is the development in Latin: how could *Caere* result from these antecedents? From \**Kaisaraie* one would expect a name like *Pompei*. We must therefore conclude that the Etruscan form was \**Kaisarie* which, in Etruscan, developed into \**Kaisari* or \**Kaisare*, the source of Latin *Caere*<sup>18</sup>. The reading *Kaisarie* is of course supported by TBRY' which cannot represent anything but *Tiberie*; a \**Tiberaie* must be ruled out altogether.

To sum up. The form KYŠRY' of the Punic tablet is to be read *Kaisarie*, a place-name derived from a gens *Kaisar*. This developed in Etruscan, i.e. at *Caere*, into \**Kaisari*. Borrowed into Latin, it became in the 4th c. \**Kaireri*, and eventually *Caere*. In its native land, Etruscan \**Kaisari* later developed into \**Kēsari*, then syncopated to \**Kēsri*, the form that appears as *Cisra* in the Verona Scholia<sup>19</sup>.

It is interesting that the Roman historical sources reveal no knowledge of the forms which existed before, say, 350 B.C., in spite of the great importance of *Caere*. This ignorance is borne out by the curious etymology tracing the name to Greek χαῖρε. This is a remarkable fact since linguistic informa-

<sup>16</sup> I reached this conclusion when I read Pallottino's first account in the Illustrated London News of 13 February 1965 (p. 24) and communicated it to several of my colleagues at University College London as well as to my friend V. Georgiev when he visited us in the middle of March that year. He now combines this finding (Ling. Balk. XI/1, 52<sup>3</sup>) with a rather startling etymon of *Caesar*'s name: Etr. *ca aisar* meant 'hic deus (est)' and *Caisrai* derives from *ca ais(e)rāi* 'haec sacra (est)', which in Latin was assimilated to *Cair(r)ei*, and, with final *-ei* to *-e*, gave *Caere*.

<sup>17</sup> Rix, *Das etruskische Cognomen*, 1963, 217 f.

<sup>18</sup> Rix, *o.c.*, 264.

<sup>19</sup> Late Etruscan *xaireals*, if really 'Caeretanus', and *xeritna*, are of course the Latin forms, s. Tibiletti, *l.c.*, 547.

tion concerning the Papisii and Fusii as well as such words as *meliosem* etc., did survive into the Classical age.

## 2. *Tiberius*.

The name of the ruler of Caere appears in the Punic tablet as TBRY' WLNS̄, in the two Etruscan tablets as (A) *θefariei velianas* and (B) *θefarie veliunas*. Both parts of the name raise problems.

The 'second' name, rendered in the Punic text as WLNS̄, differs from the Etruscan forms. The latter show two syllables between *l* and *n* separated by *y*. Whatever the origin of the Etruscan name — Georgiev regards it (l.c., 36) as an ethnic from Velia — and whatever the explanation of the vowel-alternation *a/u*, we cannot agree with Garbini (l.c., 69) that the omission of *ia/iu* in the Punic text concerns Etruscan phonology. This would only be possible if the 'true' Etruscan form had been *Velinas*, so that *Velianas/Veliunas* would merely be 'historical' spellings, and there is no justification for such an assumption. We must therefore conclude that Punic *WLNS̄* is an error for the correct *WLYNS̄*.

More interesting is the proper name of the ruler. The Etruscan form<sup>20</sup> has in both tablets initial *θ* and internal *f*, the Punic form has T and B. Punic T for Etruscan *θ* can be accepted without further ado, but B for *f* has led to hazardous speculations. Since Punic B exactly corresponds with Latin *b* in *Tiberius*, it has been suggested that the Punic form is in fact the Latin form of the name, while the Etruscan form is an Italic form with *f*<sup>21</sup>. But how is this situation to be explained linguistically and historically? Are we really to assume that the Carthaginians had learnt this ruler's name in its Latinized form before they ever met him<sup>22</sup>? Or that he had a Latin name which the Etruscans had to adjust — via Italic, or more precisely Umbrian — to their own language? This is surely impossible historically in the early 5th century, and even at the end of that century when Rome was still far from being as significant as Caere was. Add to this that the Etruscan name later appears both as *θefri* and as *θepri*. Are we again to assume that *θefri* reflects an Italic form but *θepri* a Roman form? Surely, both *θefri* and *θepri* must be Etruscan. For this reason, I believe that Tibiletti and Pfiffig are nearer

<sup>20</sup> I ignore here the problem whether (A) *θefariei* is a different case-form from (B) *θefarie* (Heurgon, l.c., 102: *-ei* case), or simply the nominative with a deictic particle (Georgiev, l.c., 29). The name certainly ends in *-ie*.

<sup>21</sup> Pallottino, *Arch. Class.* 16, 87; Bonfante, l. c., 184.

<sup>22</sup> Pallottino, l.c., 111.

to the truth<sup>23</sup>: Etruscan did have a *b* sound, and with it probably all the voiced stops. Tibiletti also draws attention to the fact that in the Venetic alphabet *f* = */b/*. If this is true, we may perhaps assume that in Etruscan, as in Latin<sup>24</sup>, internal *f* first developed into *ǃ*, and then to *b*. The form *θefarie(i)* of our texts may reflect the stage *ǃ* — in which case Punic B was the nearest approximation<sup>25</sup> — or already the final stage *b*.

As is known, the Roman tradition hopelessly confused the name of the Tiber, ancient *Thebris* or *Thybris*, with the name of the ancient, almost mythical, Etruscan ruler *Thebris*<sup>26</sup>. So far we have had no means of proving that our instinctive refusal to accept this identification was correct. The Late Etruscan praenomen *θefri/θepri* and the gentilicium *θeprie* were not incompatible with the ancients' thesis. The new evidence proves us right. Nearly fifteen years ago I showed that the older form of the name of the Tiber, preserved by poets as *Thybris*, represented an IE noun *\*dhubris* 'river, sea', attested also by the Sicel gloss δύβρις κατὰ γλῶσσαν ἢ θάλασσα, and Irish *dobur* 'water' = Welsh *dwfr*<sup>27</sup>. The important point is that in the name of the river there was originally no vowel between *b* and *r*: the form *Tiberis* grew out of the nominative *\*Tiber* which had developed from *\*Tubris* in the same way as *ācer* from *\*ākris* or *sacer* from *sakros*. And since the syncope of *o* (or *i*) in final syllable is later than the Lapis Niger (which has nom. sg. m. *sakros*), i.e. the early 5th c. B.C., and the resulting *-rs* took also some time in developing to *-er(r)*, we may infer that the form *Tiber* did not appear until the late 5th c. B.C., and even then its final vowel was, and always remained, *e*.

In contrast to this form, the personal name *Tiberius* is now shown to have had a vowel between *b* and *r* from the start, and that vowel was *a*, not *e*. The names *Tiberis* and *Tiberius* therefore had originally no connection at all. It was the convergent development of the originally rather dissimilar forms *Tubris* and *Tebarios*, resulting in Latin *Tiberis-Tiberius*, that gave rise to the ancients' speculations.

At this point, I should hazard a guess about the origin of the personal name. As is known, it was originally used of the *Tuscorum rex* or a *regulus Veientum*, etc., certainly a ruling personage. It is also known that there are cases in which the word 'ruler' comes to be used (by foreigners in the first place?) as a personal name. The Etruscan *Lucumo* or *Lucumones* is a case in point, or the Sicel Δουκέτιος. If, then, we suppose that *Tebarie* or *Teparie* originally meant 'ruler', we should note the possibility that this Etruscan

<sup>23</sup> Tibiletti, l.c., 546; Pfiffig, l.c. 255.

<sup>24</sup> See on this problem my discussion at *Archivum Linguisticum* IV-V (1952-3).

<sup>25</sup> Février, l.c. 12: Punic B hardly a spirant.

<sup>26</sup> Pallottino, l.c., 87. 110.

<sup>27</sup> *Archivum Linguisticum* 5, 1953, 1-10.

term came from Asia Minor. There the verb *tapar-* 'rule, govern' is well attested in Hittite and Luwian, and we also know Hieroglyphic Hittite, i. e. Late Luwian, *tapari(a)-* 'government, rule, power', and *tapariali-* 'governor'. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Etruscan word *t(h)runa* 'power, supreme magistrate' (δροῦνα· ἡ ἀρχή, ὑπὸ τῶν Τυρρηνῶν, Hesychius) has also found its counterpart in Hieroglyphic Hittite *taruna* 'chief, governor'<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Laroche, REL 38, 1960, 72. Cf. his *Les Hiéroglyphes Hittites I*, 1960, 197 f. See also Pallottino, *Die Etrusker*, 1965, 251.