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Richard S. Tomback
CUNY Kingsborough Community College

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Richard S. Tomback

PUNICA MISCELLANEA – I

In 1902 Mark Lidzbarski published a short punic inscription from Carthage. The inscription, written in black ink on the handle of a small vessel, was found in a grave.

The text of the inscription reads as follows:¹

'bdmlkt kltš't'

In our opinion a redivision of the second element in the text yields an heretofore unrecognized semitic idiom. Our division of the inscription reads:

'bdmlkt kl t š't'

“'bdmlkt completed his payment.”

Commentary to the text

'bdmlkt-Theophoric personal name composed of the elements *'abd “servant, slave” and *milkat “queen, goddess.” The bearer of the name was perhaps a devotee of a goddess, perhaps *Astart, and therefore was a religious functionary in the temples of Carthage.²

kl-We have analyzed this form as the third person *pi'el* perfect of the semitic root, *kly, which has as its range of meanings, “to complete, accomplish, to finish and to be spent (especially of food and drink)”.³

The verb belongs to the category *lamed he*, originally *killaya *killa(y) *killā, since -ay after the rejection of the *yod* now stands in an open syllable, consequently its final vowel must be lengthened to ā.⁴

t-This is an example of the sign of the determined object: *'iyyāt *'iyyōt *'t with the omission of the initial 'alep. An analagous form may be found in a punic inscription from Dougga (KAI 101): *tmaqš z bn' b'l' tbgg* (line, 1) “this sanctuary the citizens of TBGG built”. A further example of this phenomenon is found in a neo-punic inscription from Leptis Magna (KAI 129): *l'dn qn 'rš bn w'yqdšt 'ksndr' wt 'rpt st . . . q'ndd' bn q'ndd'* (lines 1-2)

¹ Cf. Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, tome I, 1902; 295-96. Lidzbarski notes “dass in *š't'* der Inf, *š't'* mit einem Suffix vorliegt.; sein (ihr) Wegtragen, sein Wegheben”. Dann liegt es nahe, in *kl't* ein Pf. I sing, im Sinne von, ich habe verboten’ oder ahnl. zu sehen. Von den Stämmen, die für diese Form Betracht kommen. Hat *kl'* am meisten für sich.” For a summary of other interpretations of this inscription see Nahum Slouschz, *Otzar HaKKitōbōt HaPPiniqitōt* 1942, 205-06. In our opinion earlier interpreters of this text have not related the inscription to the material upon which it was written. This criticism has enabled us to arrive at a new letter division, and arrive at what we hope is a more precise meaning of the text.

² For a complete discussion of the possible etymology and the role of the god/goddess *Istar/Ēstar in the Semitic pantheon see J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon*, 37-40, 100-102.

³ The most recent treatments of this root are: L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *KBL*³: 454-55 and *CAD* “K” volume 8: 95-104.

⁴ On the *lamed he* verbs see, *GKC* §75, 207-14.

“for the lord, creator(?) of earth, *Q'NDD'* son of *Q'NDD'* built and consecrated . . . the excedra and this portico.”⁵

š't-In our opinion this is an instance of the infinitive construct of the verb **naša'a* “to lift, to carry” hence, in a figurative sense, “to make an offering/payment.” The character of the infinitive construct as a verbal noun is shown in the present inscription by the presence of the noun-suffix of the third person singular as an accusative of the verb **kly*. This interpretation of the syntax of *š't* is in accord with the structure of the *'alep* suffix and the *t nota accusativi*. Accordingly we have translated *š't* as ‘payment’, literally that which the devotee (of the goddess) has brought to the temple or has been made liable to pay.

If we have understood this inscription correctly, then an important new semitic idiom has been isolated along with a previously unattested punice lexeme.

A reading of the third line of *CIS I*, inscription no. 5090 yields the punice *hapax legomenon*, *lyn*. While the editors of *CIS* have suggested a possible translation,⁶ as yet no satisfactory root has been isolated yielding a potential etymology. In our opinion the *crux interpretum* of the inscription, the phrase *bd[']štrt hlyn* may be analyzed as the proper name *bd[']štrt* followed by the definite article **ha* and the *nomen opifex* **layyān*, meaning “lodger”.

We have analyzed the noun **layyān* as being patterned after the *qaṭṭāl* nominal formation with the sharpening of the middle root letter.⁷ The root underlying the form begins *heb. lūn/līn*; *ug. *lwn* “to spend the night”.

If our understanding and translation of the form *lyn* is correct then the equivalent of a new root and nominal pattern has been added to the punice lexicon.⁸

⁵ Cf. Jacob Hoftijzer, *La Nota Accusativi 't en Phénicien*, *Le Muséon* 76 (1963), 195–200 for a complete discussion of the particle *'t* in Phoenician. Also note Charles Krahmalkov, *Observations on the Affixing of Possessive Pronouns in Punic*, *JSS* 15 (1970): 181–83. Krahmalkov argues that the direct object marker in Phoenician/Punic takes the genitive rather than the accusative. It is our contention, however, that the use of **t* with the omission of the initial *'alep* was confined to vulgar speech with a tendency therefore, to confuse the two constructions.

⁶ The editors of *CIS* have related the form *lyn* to the Arabic root *layana*, “blandus”.

⁷ Cf. *GKC*:§84, 233.

⁸ On the possibility of the root *lwn/lyn* in Phoenician see *DISO*, 136.