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SOME NEW REMARKS ON THE TABULA CORTONENSIS (= TCO)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents some of the principal areas of progress achieved in the hermeneusis of the Tabula Cortonensis in recent years. In particular, for Etr. *sparza*, a key-word of the text, a new interpretation pattern (for the first time acceptable both on a lexical and on a morpho-syntactical level of analysis), proposed by Ignasi Adiego, reveals its full correctness, save for some minor details: so we are allowed to fix the meaning of this word definitively as "tablet." This acquisition displays some remarkable implications that will be further examined in future works.

Almost four years after the publication of the editio princeps (Agostiniani, Nicosia 2000) and (as far as I am concerned) of Frammenti, the discussion on the TCo has progressed with new contributions. Among the most remarkable works, we could mention Rix 2000, Eichner 2001, Atti TCo 2002, Wylin 2002a among others. The interpretation of many points of the text still remain dubious or even obscure, but, on some other aspect, it has been possible to get noticeable acquisitions.

Yet not all the different opinions published on specific points or on general contents of the TCo can be admitted into the scientific controversum (that is the group of significant hypotheses expressed on a still unclear text or grammatical/lexical feature of the Etruscan language: for this concept see also Facchetti 2005). De Simone 2000, for example, cannot be assumed into the debate simply because this work (even if written by one of the most known Etruscologist) is built on a quite entirely erroneous transliteration (preceding the editio princeps) that harms the whole hermeneusis. What has been said is obviously much more valid for works that are totally non-scientific, like those of Pittau (however quoted by Maggiani 2002) or of Alinci (see the review Gheno 2004 or the short comment included in Facchetti 2005).

On the general question of the limits and the problems of the interpretation of the Etruscan language (how to determine and fix what is considered as known by specialists and what to be included in the scientific controversum) I have tried to give some suggestions in Facchetti 2005. Thus it is not sufficient to compile a catalog of all

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1 This text was read in Poland, at the University of Lodz, during the Conference "Europe Through Millennia – Languages, Races, Cultures, Beliefs" (Lodz, 25th-26th June 2004).
particular opinions on a feature or on a text interpretation, but one must pay attention to expunge non-scientific authors and to indicate out-of-date considerations. In any case, it is incorrect to refer to "humility" (as is done at the end of Wylin 2003) as a category applicable to a scientific reasoning and, as for Etruscan, the fact that I have suggested a more or less hypothetical interpretation for nearly every word of the texts examined in Frammenti cannot be considered as a kind of deception of readers (Wylin 2003). A book like Frammenti is clearly addressed to specialists, so that my ideas were not displayed to be "partly deceiving," but rather to contribute somehow to the debate, being exposed, under my name, to every criticism (besides I have explicitly shown when I consider my hypothesis probable, dubious or very dubious).

Returning to the central argument, that is the progress achieved in the interpretation of TCo, I have already treated some of their aspects in Appunti and in Facchetti 2003.

So, among the new readings highlighted by Maggiani, *clḥil* (instead of *cθḥn*) is very important for its morphological analysis (the same pronominal form occurs, as *clθl-, also on the Larthi Cilnei epitaph), that turns out to be more clear and perfectly corresponding (cl-θh-l) to that of *ttel* (il-θe-l, similarly from the context of the TCo, and now, more correctly, to be disjoined from the following *tei:* for a wider analysis, see Appunti, pp. 26–28, 33–34). Also *talšuβlvenas* must without doubt be separated as *tal šuβlvenas* and the hypothesis (however presented as very dubious) of Frammenti (p. 79: *talšuβlvenas* would have been a place-name) absolutely cannot be maintained.

On other interesting new acquisitions, like *θuθ-* “house” (probably from *θu- “place”), *nuθ-* , very convincingly to be interpreted as “to hear” etc., I have already expressed my ideas, particularly in connection with my previous proposals (see, for instance, Appunti, p. 22; Facchetti 2003, § 3).

Here, in few words I will anticipate my reflections about some new and very important results of Ignasi-Xavier Adiego, who has recently sent to Luciano Agostiniani, Heiner Eichner, Gerhard Meiser, Adriano Maggiani, Helmut Rix and myself, the text of a study written by him on the TCo, already read and presented during two conferences held in March 2004 at the University of California-Los Angeles and at the Workshop on Italic Languages and Dialects, University of California, Berkeley, and titled The Etruscan Tabula Cortonensis: a Tale of Two Tablets?[^2]

Not every point of Adiego’s analysis can be accepted. For example, such an assertion as “at present there is no agreement about even the general sense of the text” (p. 1), is not correct, since not only the juridical typology of the text can be positively proved on a general basis of examination, that is apart from any attempt at interpretation (see, e.g., Facchetti 2002), but also the opinion of all the specialists is in agreement (we have seen that De Simone 2000 is out of the controversium). Anyway there is no doubt that Adiego has brilliantly succeeded in giving a clear and absolutely convincing solution to one of the main *crux* of the text.

First of all, following Frammenti, Adiego acknowledges that the text of the TCo is separated into three great sections; on the other hand (unlikely Frammenti and Agostiniani, Nicosia 2000) he does not adopt a continuous numeration of the main clauses, so

[^2]: It will appear soon in “Die Sprache”.
that clausulae I to VII of Frammenti are renamed by Adiego, respectively, as Subsection I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, II.1, II.2 and Section III.

On Subsection I.1 (i.e. clausula I, which clearly contains the terms of a transaction between Petru Šcevas and the Cușu brothers) Adiego does not fix his attention and also the comment of Subsections I.2–4, where it contains new proposals, can be here omitted.

Instead, we could affirm that this new contribution has cast new light on the interpretation of the whole important Subsection II.1 (= clausula V) and, particularly, has definitively solved the crucial problem of the meaning of šparza “tablet.” The question is quite complex and I will try to sum up as better as possible. This word occurs three times on the TCo (and only here) variously inflected (ablative šparzēs- and locative šparzē- in Subsection II.1 = clausula V; nominative šparza in Section III = clausula VII). When I was preparing Frammenti, I observed that the contexts of šparzē- and šparza (admitting possible references to a “written text” [sic] “on the šparza” and, just in the last clause, to the same šparza as something placed and remaining [cesu ... Šušlu] somewhere) were compatible with a meaning like “tablet,” but the (apparently) much clearer beginning of clausula V indicated a different solution: indeed the sentence “this text has been written” (cēn zic ztugu) is immediately followed by an ablative form: šparzēsit sazleis (and in Etruscan we have sure attestations of the ablative used to express the agent with passive verbs). Agostiniani, in the notes to the editio princeps translated that phrase as “dallo šparza sazle,” which in Frammenti I explicitly interpreted as the agent (that is as “by the šparza sazle”, connected to “written”). So this simple observation led me to exclude šparza, as the agent of an action of writing, could be a “tablet,” rather having a human referent. Moreover that ablative phrase is followed by a relative clause opened by the pronoun in, for which Agostiniani had very recently demonstrated inanimate reference. Therefore in Frammenti I have tried applying to šparza the meaning of “kind of collegial board,” with many consequent difficulties (among which the very uncertain “translation” proposed for ṯuy- [“hamlet”]3 and the complicated setting of the other elements in the general interpretation: in fact I have clearly indicated as dubious or very dubious almost the entire interpretative scheme of clausula V.

On the other hand, Maggiani 2002 has subsequently proposed translating “tablet,” simply ignoring the ablative form, or rather simply considering it as a locative, without any logical explication (so he has translated the beginning of clausula V as: “this text has been written in the sazle (= bronze?) tablet etc.”). This method, which totally ignores the grammatical features, is evidently unacceptable to the interpretation of an ancient document: thus, even if, at the end, Adiego has shown that the meaning “tablet” is right, Maggiani’s arguments had no value as scientific proof. In another way, Helm Rix had also tried to prove the meaning “tablet,” suggesting that sazleis were the real agent and šparzēsītis an attributive form derived from *šparzas-itas (meaning “by that of the tablet”); hence šparzēsītis sazleis should be translated “by the sazle (that) of the tablet.” Though linguistically founded, nevertheless this proposal has some problems, not

3 A simple question mark (?) will indicate a dubious, but probable, interpretation, while a double question mark (??) will indicate a very dubious, and only possible, interpretation. For an analogous use of diversities for Etruscan translations, see Frammenti, p. 8.
because of “a very improbable palatalization of a caused by i of itais” (Adiego, p. 9; instead this phenomenon is attested in Etruscan in similar phonological contexts: Appunti, pp. 35–36, 83), but because of other morphological (-tis) is very probably a postposition [maybe < *-te/i+is, like -ترا+is > -tres: Appunti, p. 80]: in any case its derivation from *itais is quite impossible: Appunti, pp. 84, 37, 44) and syntactical (there is a strict parallel excluding that *sazle can be the head of phrase, as requested by Rix’s hypothesis: Appunti, pp. 83–84) reasons.

Finally Adiego, explicitly referring to Appunti, pp. 39–44 (where it is shown that the Etruscan ablative was not only used in the agentive function, but also for the ideas of separation and origin), has found the right solution. In fact, also strengthening his analysis with important linguistic arguments (i.e. by quoting Latin documents with the formula *descriptum et recognitum ex tabula aenea, which constitutes a real “parallel text”), he translated ʿsparzestis sazleis as “from (and not “by”) the sazle (= bronze/wood/?) tablet”: thus the phrase indicates the origin and not the agent.

In conclusion, although some considerations in Adiego’s paper are not fully correct (for example his morphological analysis of ʿsparzēstis [see above], ʿsparztēte [erroneously considered a locative of *sparza-ta: in effect a regular locative of sparza plus postposition -te: it is not -tē!: see Agostiniani, Nicosia 2000, p. 94], šalt [from *(i)šala-bī, like *(i)calata-bī, but rather from *(i)šala-bīte, like *(i)calata-bīte: see Appunti, p. 27, 56, 76–77], štel [from a hypothetical reduplication *talatala phonologically and morphologically untenable: in effect the analysis is the same of clō(l)bī: see Appunti, pp. 26, 29]; even the idea that tiš- [but it should be better separated as tiš-] might be a derivative of bi “water” is phonologically impossible: see Agostiniani 1983, § 4.5)], anyway these points are only details, so that I can only praise the acumen of my Spanish colleague and express my agreement with most of his examination of the TCo. In effect, at this point, it seems certain that in Subsection II.1 (= clausula V) we find mention of two tablets: the deictic pronouns (i)jca and (i)jta, in opposition, are used to express a shorter or a longer distance from the speaker respectively (precisely confirming what was presumed in Frammenti, pp. 32–33 and Appunti, p. 28), while the element (i)ša now has to be considered, quite securely, another form of demonstrative pronoun (see Appunti, pp. 55 ff.).

Now I give a complete translation of Subsection II.1 (= clausula V) based on the Adiego’s clarifying contribution:

This text (cūn: zic) was written (zişqxe) on a bronze tablet (sparzestīs sazleis) that (in) in the house (duyti) of the Cūsun (cūšu:brasa) has been deposited (sūlu: ane). Of that (tai) having been done the deposit (sūlu:venus) according to the rite (raun) in the house (duyti) it stays (cesu). About those things (tījel), through that (tablet) (tē), the ša:na (šain), on the tablet (sparztēte) here (tha), on it (sul), has incised the text (ziş frauce) of for the Cūsun sons of Lāriš (cūšu:brasa lar:ša:šiva) and offor Petrū Ščēvas (pētr:ū ščēvas), according to the Tarchian pe tel (peš tar:šinaš). It is also possible to rewrite the interpretative scheme of Section III (= clausula VII):

Under the magistracy (ziče) of Larrū Cūsun (lar:ša: cu:šu), son of Titīna (titi:na), and Lāriš Šalini (lar:ša: ša:lini), son of Aule (aule:lo), in the district/territory (zie:line) of the lake (ša:šis) Trasimenus (tar:ši:na:ša). The tablet (sparza) that (in) stays in the house (duyti cu:šu) has been deposited according to the rite (raun ša:ši:na), by means of the acts of deposit (sūlu:venu:ša) of Velche Cūsun (vel:ge: cu:šu), son of Aule
(anteīta), Velthur Titnī (vēlturu ssīlitnīs), son of Velthur (vēlturu ssīta), and Lart Celatina (la-rāulc cēlā-
"tainas), son of Apnēi (apnai), and Lari Sela-tina (la-rāulc cēlā-tinas), son of Pitnēi (pitnai).

As seen, šužišušē is interpreted here as the plural locative, used in the instrumental function, of šužišušē (probably better than *šužišušē) “act of deposit”, a part of the Etruscan (juridical) rite of depositing a document.

It is important to underline that the real differences between the provisional translation given in Frammenti and the present one, lie at the lexical level of hermeneusis, while the grammatical features are substantially the same.

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