ETRUSCAN MLAK/ AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE INSCRIPTION ON THE SANTA TERESA KYATHOS

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The bucchero kyathos recently recovered from tumulus V at podere Santa Teresa in the commune of Gavorrano, Grosseto Province, is an important addition to the small but growing corpus of Orientalizing period kyathoi inscribed with Etruscan inscriptions of the muluvanice type. The inscription, cited in (1), spirals up around the top half of the conical base of the kyathos in right-to-left direction. It was written without punctuation separating words.

(1) mini l[.]uxu[.]hie paiθin[. ]σ muluvan[... ] mlak[ - - - ]

* I am delighted to offer the results of this short epigraphic investigation to my esteemed colleague and good friend, Phil Baldi, in gratitude for his many contributions to the study of Latin and the languages of Pre-Roman Italy.


2 The addition of the Santa Teresa kyathos brings to five the number of kyathoi inscribed with muluvanice inscriptions. They are: ET Vt 3.1, ETP 196, ETP 353 and ETP 354. Three inscribed kyathoi (ETP 4 and two fragments in Esposito 1999: 27) may belong to this group, but the inscriptions are too fragmentary to be certain. The Calabresi kyathos (= ET Cr 0.1) and the Tomba del Duce kyathos (= ET Vn 0.1), are inscribed, but not with muluvanice inscriptions. It also seems likely that the inscriptions on the kyathoi recovered from the necropolis of Tolle in the Ager Clusinus (Maggiani & Paolucci 2009) are not of the muluvanice type.

3 The following notational conventions are employed: A single square bracket indicates a break in the inscription due to damage to the ceramic, e.g. mlak/. A dot placed beneath a letter, e.g., a, indicates that the letter is damaged and/or is no longer legible. Letters within square brackets [abc] were lost and restored by editorial decision. A dot placed within square brackets indicates a lost letter, e.g., [.]. Each dot represents a letter. Dashes within square brackets indicate that the number of missing letters cannot be determined. Angled brackets ⟨abc⟩ indicate letters omitted by the scribe and added by the editor. Dots before and after letters indicate syllabic punctuation, e.g., .a.bc. The colon indicates word punctuation. The pipe | indicates a line break. Words in phonological transcription are placed within slanted lines /abc/. The letter san is transcribed by the
The inscription presents several interesting features, the most intriguing of which is the appearance of the adjective $mlak/mlakas$ ‘good, beautiful’ in sentence-final position. This is, to my knowledge, the only muluvanice inscription in the Etruscan corpus in which $mlak/mlakas$ appears as a constituent.

The kyathos was in pieces when discovered by excavators. Some fragments were never recovered. As a result, when the kyathos was reconstructed by conservators there were several lacunae in the inscription, including one following the adjective $mlak[.]$. The question then arises as to the adjective’s inflectional morphology and its syntactic function in the inscription.

2.

Luca Cappuccini, who published the kyathos and other contents of the burial from which it was recovered, restored the missing letters of the inscription as in (2).8

(2) mini l[a]uζu[s]hie paiðîna[a]o muluv[ice] mlak[aɔ]

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Greek letter $σ$; four-bar sigma is transcribed by the Greek letter $c$; and three-bar sigma is transcribed by $s$. When a sibilant letter represents the palatal fricative sound $ʃ$, a diacritic sign in the form of an acute ´ is placed above the letter, e.g., $s = ʃ.$

4 Of considerable interest is the fact that the nomen of the donor, paiðîna[a]o, may be found also on an inscribed kyathos from San Paolo (Caere), paiðîna[s] (but possibly paiðîna[i][e], for which see Maggiani 2006: 331 and Wallace 2006). A morphologically related form, paiðîna[ie], is attested on kyathos 1997–0127 from Murlo (see Wallace 2007). Cappuccini claims that the donors of these inscribed kyathoi were members of the Paithina family but he passes over the morphological distinction between the suffixes -na (paiðîna) and -naie (paiðîna[ie]). Exactly what this morphological difference corresponds to in terms of familial relationships is not entirely clear.

5 For the paradigm of the adjective see Cristofani 1991: 64–65. The morphological relationship between the aspirated stop of the uninflected stem $mlak$ and the plain stop of stem $mlaka$- (genitive $mlakas$ and pertinentive $mlakasi$) is problematic (see Agostiniani 1981: 109–110 for discussion). The view adopted here is that the appearance of the two stems is morphologically conditioned.

6 The adjective $mlak/mlakas$ is rather more common in inscriptions of the proprietary type, e.g., ET Cr 2.9, 2.27, 2.33, 2.36, ET Ve 3.30b, 3.36, etc. This is not surprising; Etruscan proprietary inscriptions with $mlak/mlakas$ as modifier were modeled on Greek prototypes (Agostiniani 1981).

7 Photographs of the kyathos and inscription are published in Cappuccini 2007. See pages 222 (fig. 7) and 223 (figs. 8–11).