Dr. Jan Bremmer has recently observed in this form (\textit{MALXOS} ‘King’ and Trimalchio, Mnem. IV 34 [1981], 395-396) that ‘… a connection of Trimalchio with the Semitic root for ‘king’ is now generally accepted’. Bremmer then advances two arguments to suggest that ‘literary gourmets’ at Rome may have understood, and hence savoured, the meaning of Trimalchio’s name in its association with ‘king’: first, that Pliny (\textit{NH} 6, 120) properly explicated the name of the ‘famous river Nahr al malik’ as \textit{regium flumen}, and secondly, that ‘readers [of Pliny’s \textit{NH}] may well have remembered that the name of the contemporary Nabataean king was Malchus (± 40-70 A.D.)’.

To these useful observations may be added several clarifications and a comment on the understanding of Syrian (that is, Aramaic) expressions at Rome in the first century.

First, while the root M(A)LK is generally Semitic, its provenance in Greek and Latin texts cited by Bremmer is Aramaic, a North West Semitic Language spoken in several dialects throughout Syria-Palestine well before and after the first century. The name of the Syrian river known now by its Arabic name, Nahr al malik, was heard by Pliny as Narma\textit{c}ha (his text has the accusative, \textit{Narmalchan}), which is a close transcription of its Aramaic form: the final \textit{a} is the article, later rendered by the Arabic \textit{al}. The literal sense of the phrase is ‘the river of the king’, that is, ‘royal river’, hence Latin \textit{regium flumen}.

Secondly, the Nabataean name transcribed into Latin as Malchus means ‘king’ because the Nabataeans used Aramaic, at least in official inscriptions. But knowledge of the name by some Romans does not assure knowledge of its meaning in Aramaic unless either a) the Nabataean king (Malchus I and II) was called ‘king’ after the manner of the banal names of kings and queens in some Greek myths, \textit{Kpēc} and \textit{Kpēcov}, ‘ruler’, or b) at Rome some basic Aramaic vocables were understood among ‘literary gourmets’ and others. Such a possibility does indeed exist.

The Aramaic element ‘king’ transcribed into Latin as \textit{malch} appears both in Trimalchio and in a Malchio noticed indirectly by Martial (\textit{Malchionis ... improbi}, 3:82, cited by J. P. Sullivan). The occurrence of this name in a longer and in a ‘truncated form’ (Sullivan) suggests not that Martial’s Malchio harks back to Petronius; rather, that the term \textit{malch} had already, by the time of Petronius, become naturalized in Latin and retained its original sense, perhaps with colloquial force. Further, that it was already naturalized in Latin is suggested by its being hybridized with a Greco-Latin element, \textit{tri}, so as to mean, with Sullivan, ‘something like ‘Mr. Trelord’’.

A similar phenomenon occurs in the \textit{crux interpretum}, \textit{matavita} in Petronius (\textit{Sat.} 62:9), upon which an enormous and inventive bibliography has arisen. In a forthcoming study which, he hopes, will

rest the question, this writer demonstrates that the reading matavitatau is not corrupt and that it is, in itself, a hybrid asseveration with (Syrian) Aramaic ma(u)ta, 'death', over against Latin vita, 'life'; that the tau may be either the Aramaic or Greek letter name signifying 'life', or the exclusively Aramaic taw, which can mean both life and death. The juxtaposition of mata and vita as polar opposites, made more piquant by the paromoiosis of ta in each, gives special force to what Dölger called "in einem verzweifelten Kampf ein recht sinngemässer Ausruf" 6), which was, apparently, naturalized in colloquial speech. In this connexion, the term matus in the Satyricon (4:12) may also be a naturalized Aramaic word meaning, colloquially, 'dead', for this sense suits the context at least as well as the sense 'drunk', derived from the assumption that matus is a byform of madidus 7).

Colloquial naturalization of Aramaic words in Latin may have been occasioned in the speech of soldiers serving in Syria-Palestine, as Dölger suggested. But an equally likely place for the phenomenon was Rome itself. As Juvenal wrote in describing the 'deromanization' of the city (III 60-63):

Non possum ferre, Quirites,
Graecam urbem; quamvis quota portio faecis Achaei?
Iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes,
et linguam et mores et cum tibicine chordas obliquas ...

Although Juvenal cries out against all foreign elements which were turning Rome into more of a Levantine city, his rage against the Syrians is precious evidence for the penetration of their customs, and language, into Rome 8). Another evidence thereof may be the naturalization of Aramaic words in Latin as reflected in the lower colloquial levels of the Satyricon, and a few other places as well.

The receptivity of at least some circles in Rome to North West Semitic interference in Latin is evidenced as early as the beginning of the second century B.C. in the famous Punic monologue of Plautus' Poenulus. That the monologue was presented on the stage and understood, presumably, by some Romans is remarkable enough. But that the Punic text in Latin letters was preserved at all and survives intact, in several versions, in Plautine MSS, so as to be comprehensible to Semitists as well as valuable evidence for the vocalization of Punic, is even more remarkable 9). Finally, a small but valuable datum on Punic interference in Latin is the naturalization of the greeting (h)aae, 'live!' as Latin ave, fitted out for the second conjugation. Both the phonetic similarity, and the circumstance that people whose languages are in contact often borrow greetings from each other, favor this interpretation 10).

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