

## A Remark on Late Punic Syntax

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Since its first publication by Vassel in 1914, the Neo-Punic text from Bir Tlelsa in Tunisia has been the subject of several studies: Vassel also published articles on this inscription again in 1915 and twice in 1916. Dussaud published an article on this text in 1914 and again in 1917, as did Lidzbarski in 1915. Février used the text in his 1949 article on *Ba<sup>q</sup> Addir*, and Röllig presented the text among the Neo-Punic texts in *KAI*. A new edition was given by Szzyrmer in 1980, who reads the text in the following way:

- 1) lb<sup>cl</sup> ʔdr htqdš
- 2) b<sup>cl</sup>lšylyk bn m<sup>cr</sup>rq<sup>ʔ</sup> c<sup>wy</sup>c<sup>ny</sup>
- 3) t hmzbbḥ šhmqnt š<sup>c</sup>br<sup>ʔ</sup>
- 4) š<sup>c</sup>g<sup>c</sup> šbšm hmlkt bn/tm km
- 5) bkt<sup>cb</sup> slm bt<sup>ʔ</sup>rm btm
- 6) ḥydš w<sup>ʔ</sup>yqdš

We do not want to discuss the exact meaning of words, in the several instances where we suppose to know the correct derivation. We will however draw our attention to one point, namely that should the explanation of *hmqnt*, *c<sup>br</sup>ʔ*, *c<sup>g</sup>c* and *hmlkt* as "cattle", "cereals", "cake(s)" and "work" be correct, one must suppose that the feminine ending is represented by three different signs, resp. *-t*, *-ʔ*, *-c*. Although it is not difficult to explain the three endings as developments from original \*/-at/ (> /-āt/ resp. /-a/ and > /-ōt/ > /ō/), it is difficult to account for the appearance of these three separate developments in one text. As *hmqnt* and *hmlkt* are both without a doubt correctly explained as feminine singular formations, it seems, at first sight, worthwhile to suppose another origin or explanation for *c<sup>br</sup>ʔ* and *c<sup>g</sup>c*. The first solution which comes to mind is another word division, viz. *š hmqnt š c<sup>br</sup> ʔš c<sup>g</sup> cš bšm*. However, in this case one has to suppose three different forms of the marker of relativity, thus we are faced with a new problem, one of the same order as the previous one. Perhaps the observation that the two words displaying the *-t* ending are both preceded by the article *h-* will lead us further. In (later) Punic, the article is often spelled *ʔ*-, sometimes *ḥ-*, and at least once *c<sup>-1</sup>*. This leads to the supposition that we may explain *hmqnt* and *hmlkt* as 'historical spellings'<sup>2</sup>. We have often seen that historical spellings and phonetic spellings, i.e. based on the later pronunciation, may be combined in the same text. This leaves us with *ʔ* and *c* as representation of the pronunciation of the feminine ending in this text. The easiest way is to suppose that the pronunciation of the ending wavered between /a/ and /o/, but also such a supposition leaves us with more questions than solutions. Therefore, we propose to

<sup>1</sup>Cf. the overview by Friedrich-Röllig-Amadasi (1999: §118).

<sup>2</sup>Also *hmzbbḥ* and *ḥydš* are examples of 'historical spelling', as there is every reason to suppose that in this late period *h* had lost its guttural pronunciation.

divide and read: *hmzbh šhmqnt š cbr ʔš c<sub>g</sub><sup>c</sup> š bšm*. As the marker of relativity was pronounced /əš/, the historical spelling *š* combined with the spelling ʔš, frequently attested elsewhere, is not difficult to account for. This leaves us with the noun *cbr* for "cereals", "grain", comparable to Classical Hebrew עֲבוֹר.

It is interesting to note how the syntax of this text remains uncertain. Several scholars have taken *b<sup>c</sup>šy<sub>l</sub>k* in line 2 as the subject of the verbs in line 6, moving this line in their translation to a position near to the subject, cf. e.g. Clermont-Ganneau with Vassel (1915: 4-7), Dussaud (1917: 167), Szyner (1980: 41), Friedrich-Röllig-Amadasi (1999: §332). Others have combined *b<sup>c</sup>šy<sub>l</sub>k* with the preceding *htqdš*, cf. e.g. Röllig, *KAI* a.1. As it is *a priori* more plausible that the syntax of the text is of a normal Northwest-Semitic type, we suppose that *b<sup>c</sup>šy<sub>l</sub>k* is the subject of the verb in line 1. The order *I + nomen dei + verb + subject* is attested in hundreds of texts and hence poses no problem. Perhaps one should interpret the prepositional phrase as a heading to the whole text, and not as part of the following clause because of the word divider between ʔdr and *htqdš*. The supposition of Szyner (1984: 35), that the ivy leaf in this line has no function whatsoever, seems hardly acceptable. This means, of course, that *htqdš* must be taken as a reflexive verb, instead of a passive verb as supposed by those who combine *b<sup>c</sup>šy<sub>l</sub>k* with the verbal forms in line 6 (cf. also Friedrich-Röllig-Amadasi 1999: §149). The hitpa'el of *qdš* also occurs in Classical Hebrew, and in most cases, it is also used in a reflexive sense. In many texts, the word seems to have a specialized meaning when priests and/or Levites are the subject of the verbal form. This construction is especially frequent in Chronicles (1C 15: 12, 14; 2C 5: 11; 29: 5, 15; 29: 34 (bis); 30: 3, 15, 17, 24; 31: 18<sup>3</sup>; 35: 6), but occurs in another places too (Ex 19: 22). Elsewhere, the people of Israel as a whole are the subject (Lev 11: 44, 20: 7; Nu 11: 18; Jos 3: 5, 7: 13), and in one case, it is a small group of Israelites, viz. the elders of Bethlehem (1S 16: 5). In Is. 66: 17, the subject is also a group of people, but in this case the context is negative and the consecration those people have in mind is meant as a introduction to highly ungodly behaviour. Another specialised meaning is the case where a woman who fulfils the appropriate rites after her menstruation is the subject (2S 11: 4). Once the subject of the verb is not man, but God, i.e. in Ez. 38: 23 God says: "I will show my greatness and my holiness." The only instance where the hitpa'el of *qdš* is assumed by some to indicate the passive is found in Is 30: 29: כָּלִיל הַתְּקֹדֶשׁ-חַג as the night when a holy festival is celebrated<sup>4</sup>. But חַג is better explained as an extension of the verb instead of as its subject: he has consecrated himself for the feast, cf. e.g. Siegfried & Stade 1893, s.v.<sup>5</sup>, cf. further e.g. the modern dictionaries *HAL* a.1., and also Wildberger 1982<sup>6</sup>. We conclude that the use of this verb in Clas-

<sup>3</sup> In *HAL yitqaddešu* in this verse is explained as a passive form, which seems less attractive, cf. e.g. Keil and Delitzsch a.1.

<sup>4</sup> Thus the translation presented in Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 432. The same explanation, i.e. as a passive verb, is also given by BDB, its forerunner Gesenius, and other dictionaries.

<sup>5</sup> "Die Nacht, da man das Fest weihet"; חַג הַתְּקֹדֶשׁ meaning in the first place: "für sich etwas heiligen, weihen."

<sup>6</sup> Wildberger 1982: 1209: "Subj. zu *wdqth* ist nicht etwa folgende חַג --das hitp. kann kaum einfach als pass. Verstanden werden, wie das manche für dieser Stelle annehmen--, sondern eine unbestimmtes 'man' (Q<sup>3</sup> liest *uwydqth*). חַג steht im acc. limitationis."

sical Hebrew at least strengthens the supposition that *b<sup>c</sup>lšy<sup>l</sup>k* is the subject of the verbal form. To suppose that the frequent use of this verb combined with a subject that is somehow related to the temple might prove *b<sup>c</sup>lšy<sup>l</sup>k* to be a priest of *b<sup>c</sup>l ʔdr* seems to stretch the argument too far, although it is, of course, not impossible.

Perhaps we may even proceed further in the same way. Both in Is 30: 29 and in 2C 31: 18 the hitpa'el of *ʔṭp* seems to have a nominal complement that might be called an object<sup>7</sup>. Should Siegfried & Stade's interpretation be correct, then *t hmzbh* ... in our text may also be explained as the object of the verb in line 1. If this is in fact the case, then the construction subject - object - verb, as supposed by Friedrich-Röllig-Amadasi (1999: §332), is not attested in this text; the second and last sentence, beginning with *hmlkt* in line 4, is an example of a pre-posed object, which is not against the basic rules of Northwest-Semitic grammar. Whether this second sentence should be connected to the first one as an explanatory one, or be interpreted as a juxtaposed one that stands on its own is difficult to decide, but we are inclined to suppose that this is at least the more probable way to explain this text. Note that the first object, following the verb, has the introductory object marker *t*, whereas the pre-posed object does not, although both objects are definite.

In line 4 it is possible to read *btm* or *bnm*. The first expression, however, is so well attested in Punic votive texts, that it is attractive to also read it in this text. For the combination of *mlkt* and *btm*, one may compare *lmbmlktm btm* in Lepcis Magna N 18 (*KAI* 124; *IPT* 26; *IRT* 338), where *btm* renders *de sua pecunia* in the Latin counterpart of the Punic text, or *p<sup>l</sup> lmbmlktm btm* with the Latin parallel *de sua pecunia facienda coeravit* in Lepcis Magna N 19 (*KAI* 126; *IPT* 27; *IRT* 318, 347).

The word *slm* in line 5 has been given explained several different explanations. Février (1949: 23) thinks of a form of *šlm*, 'perfect', while Lidzbarski (1915: 288-289) proposed to interpret this word as the plural of an unknown *sl*. Levi Della Vida (1964: 309), supposed *slm* to be the sing. + suf. 3psm of a word *sl* meaning 'entrance' or 'pallisade'. It seems most probable that the word is the direct complement of the preceding *kt<sup>c</sup>b* (the reading *km<sup>c</sup> kn<sup>c</sup>* at the end of line 5 and the beginning of line 6 as proposed by Lidzbarski 1915 *ibid.*, and followed by Röllig, *KAI* a.l., is highly improbable). Röllig, *KAI* a.l., has remarked that it is possible to read *šlm*, 'statue', instead of *slm*. As the form of *s* and *š* are occasionally difficult to discern in Neo-Punic script, this is an attractive proposition, as it leaves us with a word that is at least well known in Northwest-Semitic. The expression *ktb šlm* probably indicated something like a blue-print, a design.

The expression *bt<sup>ʔ</sup>tm btm* occurs also elsewhere, viz. in Lepcis Magna N 16 (*KAI* 121; *IPT* 24; *IRT* 321-323.), where it is also followed by a form of the causative if il of *qds*: *hnb<sup>c</sup>l* ...

<sup>7</sup>Several other verbs in Classical Hebrew used in the hitpa'el may be construed with an object, cf. e.g. *יָרָה*, hitp. to confess; *נָדַב*, in the hitp. used with the meaning to volunteer, to offer voluntarily; cf. also *בִּינָה*, hitp. to behave intelligently, to turn one's attention to (with object).

*bt<sup>2</sup>rm btm p<sup>c</sup>l w<sup>2</sup>yqdš*, and in Lepcis Magna N 13 (*KAI* 120; *IPT* 21; *IRT* 319), where, however, the context is broken. In both texts *IPT* and *KAI* read *bn<sup>2</sup>rm* instead of *bt<sup>2</sup>rm*, but the combination with *btm* both in Lepcis Magna N 16 and Bir Tlelsa N 1, and the fact that the name *rm* is not attested elsewhere, makes the reading proposed by Février (1954: 77), very attractive. In this article, Février points to the concurring use of *mktb* and *t<sup>2</sup>rt* in the Milkpiles epitaph, and note, of course, also the concurring use of the if'il of *qdš* and *t<sup>2</sup>r*. It is probable, therefore, that the derivations of the roots *ktb* and *t<sup>2</sup>r* have different but complementary meanings. The suffix *-m* in *bt<sup>2</sup>rm* is interpreted as a pronominal element referring to the subject of the verb by Friedrich-Röllig-Amadasi (1999: §332) in Lepcis Magna N 16. It seems to us that it rather refers to *kt<sup>c</sup>b* mentioned just before it.

The text may be read as follows (- indicates the ivy leaves present in the text):

1) lb <sup>c</sup> l <sup>2</sup> dr - htqdš	/ləbal addir itqaddeš/
2) b <sup>c</sup> lšylyk bn m <sup>c</sup> rq <sup>2</sup> cwy <sup>c</sup> ny	/balšillek bən marqe aviani/
3) t hmzbbh š hmqnt š <sup>c</sup> br <sup>2</sup>	/t ammizbe š amiqno' š abur ə/
4) š <sup>c</sup> g <sup>c</sup> š bšm hmlkt btm km	/š uga š bušm amalako' bətum kəmo/
5) bkt <sup>c</sup> b šlm bt <sup>2</sup> rm btm	/bəktab šalm bəturim bətum/
6) - h̄ydš w <sup>2</sup> yqdš -	/iddeš wə iqdiš/

- 1) To the mighty Bal has consecrated for himself
- 2) Balshillek, the son of Marcus Avianus,
- 3) the altar of cattle, of cereals o-
- 4) f cakes, of perfume; the work completely as
- 5) in the design, according to its plan, at his own expense
- 6) he renewed and consecrated.

This interpretation of the text from Bir Tlelsa leaves only Lepcis Magna N 16, N 18 (= *KAI* 124; *IPT* 26; *IRT* 338), and Qalat Abi s-Siba N 1 (= *KAI* 165) as examples of the word order subject - object - verb. It should be noted that these three texts are all Punic-Latin bilinguals, which also exhibit other points of Latin influence<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps Latin influence on this point is rather the exception and only to be found in a few instances.

<sup>8</sup>Lepcis Magna N 16 offers at least the following parallels: *mysql<sup>2</sup> r̄y ornator patriae, mh̄b d<sup>c</sup>t htmt amator concordiae, p<sup>c</sup>l w<sup>2</sup>yqdš faciendum coeravit idemque dedicavit*; Lepcis Magna N 18: *g<sup>c</sup>y bn hn<sup>2</sup> lmbšm g<sup>c</sup>y bn bnm m<sup>c</sup>qr Caius Annonis filius nomine [Cai] Annonis filii nepotis k<sup>c</sup>s lp<sup>c</sup>l wh̄tm faciendum curavit, bktbt dbr<sup>2</sup> hbt testamento*, while Qalat Abi s-Siba N 1 begins with a remark, although not echoed in the Latin parallel, clearly embedded in the style of Latin funerary texts: *sbq y<sup>2</sup> r̄k y<sup>2</sup>qr<sup>2</sup> t p<sup>c</sup>s r̄š<sup>c</sup> l hms̄bt*, comparable to e.g. *quisque preteriens titulum scribturn legeris* (cf. for this text Jongeling 1996: 75-76).

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