

ROBERT M. KERR

Latino-Punic Epigraphy

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42

Mohr Siebeck

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42



Robert M. Kerr

Latino-Punic Epigraphy

A Descriptive Study
of the Inscriptions

Mohr Siebeck

ROBERT M. KERR, born 1968; studied Semitic languages and comparative linguistics.

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The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Nehren on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

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For my *shining* stars
Jaap, Fíonnah, Iain

Tiocfaidh ár lá!

In the seas of time you float serene,
Oh! silver stars of nations born,
And you draw a tear to free men's eyes,
Through dungeon bars forlorn.

Oh! star of Erin, queen of tears,
Black clouds have beset thy birth,
And your people die like morning stars,
That your light may grace the earth.

But this Celtic star will be born,
And ne'er by mystic means,
But by a nation sired in freedom's light,
And not in ancient dreams.

– Roibeard Gearóid Ó Seachnasaigh MP –
(*9.iii.54-†5.v.81)

Éirí Amach na Cásca 1916-2010

Preface

This work is an attempt to present the complete corpus of what are usually known as «Latino-Punic Inscriptions». The last attempt to offer a synthesis of this material was VATTIONI 1976.¹ The major drawback of this work is the fact that it is largely based upon printed editions of the texts and not images of the epigraphs themselves. In the present work, I have strived to remedy this problem where possible. Since in the past, many rather fantastic interpretations of these texts have been published based on the presumption that these texts were composed in *vulgar* Punic, I have gone to some length to describe the orthographic system used and show that the phonology and morpho-syntax is that of a (North-West) Semitic language. Furthermore, the fact that these texts are fully vocalised means that they provide important first-hand phonological information.

Largely due to the lack of good editions, Pheonico-Punic and especially «Late Punic» customarily only play a marginal rôle in Semitic studies. It is hoped that with the appearance of this work, JONGELING 2008 and JONGELING–KERR 2005, these texts will have become more accessible to the scholarly world. In many ways this work is intended as a complement to the former and both are detailed analyses of the findings presented in a more general fashion in the latter work.

The original version of this work was defended as a doctoral thesis at Leyden University on Ash Wednesday 2007. Due to the introduction of output financing, the loss of academic integrity to pernicious management ideology and the general demise of European Higher Education ensuing from the Bologna Process, certainly the less said about this the better. I am nonetheless much beholden to my teacher Dr Karel Jongeling (formerly of the Department of Hebrew & Aramaic and the now defunct Department of Comparative Linguistics). Anyone familiar with the subject will see his influence throughout the work. Furthermore, without his long-term engagement in this field, and his many publications on Punic in North Africa, the present work would not have been feasible. In addition, he read this work countless times – not only improving its contents, but also in the process remedying many typos and generally improving the style. The fact that he has since been dismissed due to academic incompetence after thirty-three years, in *punica fide* – partly due to the appearance of his 2008 monograph which was judged to be too academic – and made a manager in the Faculty Social and Behavioural Sciences, heralds yet further sordid tidings of Pallas Athena's violate defloration.

In Leyden I am nevertheless grateful to three generations of Hebrew professors, namely Messrs. Hoftijzer, Muraoka and Gzella for advice and insight. The latter also kindly agreed to act as *promotor*. Furthermore, the numerous conversations with Dr M. Kossmann on matters Berber saved me from many pitfalls. My former superior, the *Interpres*

¹ To my knowledge, the monographs announced by KRAHMAL'KOV (e.g. 2001: xiv) on both these texts and the Punic passages of Plautus' *Poenulus* have not yet appeared.

Legati Warneriani Prof. J. J. Witkam (former head of the now defunct Oriental Department of the Leyden University Library) gave me the room to pursue epigraphy during my time as adjunct curator. Prof. J. Borghouts impressed upon me the need to undertake autopsy on the epigraphs themselves. Prof. J. Oosten (the former head of the now defunct Centre for Non-Western Studies) generously facilitated me with a travel grant in a most uncomplicated fashion to undertake an uncertain journey to Libya. Mr. R. Smitskamp, a former employer and the former proprietor of the famous *Antiquarium* provided me with the necessary books on the most generous of terms thus enabling me to write autonomously in my free time. Elsewhere, Prof. J. Adams (All Souls College, Oxford) was exceedingly liberal with his time and knowledge on Latin, especially the idiosyncrasies of North African Latin, and kindly invited me to Oxford. Mme G. Di Vita-Ervard (*EPHE*, Paris) availed me of her vast knowledge of Roman North Africa, made the trip to Libya a success and corrected my readings where necessary based on her own study. Miss J. Reynolds (Newnham College, Cambridge), a tireless pioneer of Tripolitanian epigraphy, gave many an insightful comment. Finally, the fact that my old mentor Prof. W. Röellig (Tübingen) agreed to act as referee means more to me than any degree. Although I remain solely responsible for the shortcomings of this volume, the input of these savants has hopefully minimised such. To all, my sincere thanks.

With regards to the volume itself, I thank the editors of the series *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* for accepting a tome somewhat far removed from their core interests. The publishers Mohr Siebeck too, especially Dr H. Ziebritzki, deserve thanks for their willingness to publish yet another Punic book and being patient when the completion seemed quite distant *prægnantibus causis*. Ms T. Mix again tirelessly mediated between the required format and the limits of X_YT_EX. Capt. T. Milo (of Decotype, Amsterdam) kindly offered his typographic expertise, especially when my typesetting abilities were surpassed.

I note here the timely appearance of an internet edition of *IRT* (see bibliography) with the original photographs. The readings proffered in this work should always be used in conjunction with the images provided by that indispensable epigraphical tool. *In pro pro*, this work is where possible based on personal autopsy of the originals. In this edition, especially in chapter 3, the commentary, we have mostly disregarded the more impossible suggestions which have been published in the past, especially when they have no epigraphical support. Where I can make no sense of a text, I admit as much. For Phoenico-Punic grammatical and lexical information in general, I have used *PPG* and *DNWSI* which unquestionably embody the current *status quæstionis* (see also JONGELING–KERR 2002, 2004).

Without the help of friends, this work would never have been completed, even in true Kerr fashion: *sero sed serio*. *Pars pro toto*, it is a pleasant duty to gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement of Johnny Cheung, Wouter & Swanette Jukema, Michael Sookchoff & Katrina Blacklock, Paul & Eileen Mosca, the *Struikheide-bende* and especially Margriet de Bruine.

Raibeart Mártainn MacGhillechearr
Holy Thursday, 2010

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Abbreviations

AAf	Antiquités Africaines
AAH	Acta Antiquæ Hungaricæ
AArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiæ Scientiarum Hungaricæ
ACME	Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell' Università degli Studi di Milano
AÉ	L'année épigraphique: revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine
AEA	Archivo Español de Arqueología
AHw	see VON SODEN 1965-1981
AION	Annali, Istituto Orientale di Napoli
AJ	The Antiquities Journal
AJP	The American Journal of Philology
AJSLL	The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
AncSoc	Ancient Society
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AR	L'Africa Romana
BAC	Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB	see BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS 1952
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester
BN	see MARICHAL 1992
B&O	Bibbia e oriente
CAD	see GELB <i>et al.</i> 1956-
CC	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout, 1953ff.)
CIJ	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judicarum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CIS	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> , pars prima, Paris, 1880
CLE	see ENGSTRÖM 1912
CP	Classical Philology
CQ	The Classical Quarterly
CR	The Classical Review
CRAIBL	Comptes Rendus à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
CSAI	see AVANZINI 2004
CSJ	Cairo Scientific Journal
CT	Les Cahiers de Tunisie
DCPP	see LIPÍŃSKI 1922
DISO	see JEAN-HOFTIJZER 1965
DUL	see OLMO LETE-SANMARTÍN 2003
DNWSI	see HOFTIJZER-JONGELING 1995
DS-NELL	Dutch Studies on Near Eastern Languages and Literatures
EH	see BERTHIER-CHARLIER 1955

G	see LOEWE-GOETZ 1932
⊗	Septuagint (ed. RAHLFS)
GAG	see VON SODEN 1995
GÄS	see DILLMANN 1899
Ges ¹⁸	see DONNER-MEYER-RÜTERSWORDEN 1987ff.
GH	see JOÜON 1947 (vel JOÜON-MURAOKA 1996, 2006)
GIF	Giornale Italiano di Filologia
GLECS	Groupe Linguistique des Études Chamito-Sémitiques
GM	Göttinger Miscellen
GSH	see MACUCH 1969
GvG	see BROCKELMANN 1908-13
HALOT	see KOEHLER-BAUMGARTNER et al. 1994-2000
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
IdAltava	see MARCILLET-JAUBERT 1968
IF	Indogermanische Forschungen
IFCCarth	see ENNABLI 1975-1991
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Græcæ</i> 1903-
IGUR	see MORETTI 1968-1990
ILAfr	see CAGNAT-MERLIN-CHATELAIN 1923
ILAlg	see GSELL-ALBERTINI-PFLAUM 1922-1976
ILCV	see DIEHL 1924-1931
ILMN	<i>Le iscrizioni latine del Museo nazionale di Napoli</i> (Napoli 2000)
ILS	see DESSAU 1892-1916
ILT	see MERLIN 1944
InscrAqu	see BRUSIN 1991-1993
IPT	see LEVI DELLA VIDA-AMADASI GUZZO 1987
IRT	see REYNOLDS-WARD PERKINS 1952
IRTS	see REYNOLDS 1955
JA	Journal Asiatique
JaAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JAL	Journal of African Languages
JALL	Journal of African Languages and Linguistics
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JEOL	Jaarbericht ... Ex Oriente Lux, Leyden
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JP	The Journal of Philology
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
JRS	The Journal of Roman Studies
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JSOT(SS)	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Supplement Series)
JWAL	Journal of West African Languages
K	see KEIL 1855-80
KAI	see DONNER-RÖLLIG 1966-69/2002
KB	see KOEHLER-BAUMGARTNER 1985
KSG	see NÖLDEKE 1966
LA	Libya Antiqua
LPE	see JONGELING-KERR 2005
LS	Libyan Studies

Ⲙ	Masoretic Text (ed. Stuttgart)
MAD	see KHANOUSSI–MAURIN 2002
MAIBL	Extraits des Mémoires présentées par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
MartAfr	Martyres Africaines, cf. MONCEAUX 1905
MEFR	Mélanges de l'école française de Rome
MUSJ	Mélanges de l'Université Sainte Joseph
NSI	see COOKE 1903
n.F.	neue Folge
n.s.	nova serie
OA	Oriens Antiquus
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLP	Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica
OLZ	Orientalische Literaturzeitung
PAT	see HILLERS–CUSSINI 1996
PBSR	Publications of the British School at Rome
PL	Patrologica Latina (ed. J.-P. MIGNE 1844ff.)
PPG ¹	see FRIEDRICH 1951
PPG ²	see FRIEDRICH–RÖLLIG 1970
PPG ⁽³⁾	see FRIEDRICH–RÖLLIG 1999
PRECA	Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft
Q	Qurʾān
QAL	Quaderni di Archeologia della Libia
RAF	Revu africaine
RAL	Rendiconti Academia dei Lincei
RB	Revue Biblique
RÉL	Revue des études Latines
RÉS	Recueil d'épigraphie Sémitique, Paris, 1900
RGW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RIL	see CHABOT 1940-1941
RM	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie
RO	Rocznik Orientalistyczny
RSF	Rivista di Studi Fenici
RSO	Rivista degli Studi Orientali
RT	Revue Tunisienne
⊗	Peshitta (ed. Leyden)
SEL	Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici
SO	Studia Orientalia, edited by the Finnish Oriental Society
SM	Studi Magrebini
SPC	see BERTRANDY–SZNYCER 1987
SSL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
Ⲛ	Targum (ed. SPERBER)
TA	see CURTOIS–LESCHI–PERRAT–SAUMAGNE 1952
TAD	see PORTEN–YARDENI 1986-1989
TRE	see ELMAYER 1997
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
UG	see TROPPEL 2000
Ⲛ	Vulgate

VO	Vicino Oriente
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WÄS	Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, Berlin
WdO	Die Welt des Orients
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
{ }	grapheme, graphemic rendition; in quoted lexemes, dittography
//	phoneme, phonemic rendition
^	contraction (does not indicate vowel length)
< >	inserted text
()	inserted text (in translations); resolution of abbreviations (in inscriptions)
D	<i>Doppelungsstamm</i> (=Hebrew <i>Piel</i> , Arabic form II etc.)
f	feminine
G	<i>Grundstamm</i> (=Hebrew <i>Qal</i> , Arabic form I etc.)
impv	imperative
m	masculine
N	<i>passive conjugation</i> (=Hebrew <i>Nifal</i> , Arabic form VII etc.)
pas	passive voice
pc	prefix conjugation (so-called 'imperfect')
pl	plural
PN	personal name
ptc	participle
sc	suffix conjugation (so-called 'perfect'); singular communis
Y	<i>Yiphil</i> (=Hebrew <i>Hifil</i> , Arabic form IV etc.)

Introduction

Latino-Punic and its Linguistic Environment

The present study

The scope of this investigation is to describe the grammar of *Late Punic*, i.e. Phoenico-Punic as attested in North Africa during the Roman era. The major emphasis of this study lies on the corpus of what is customarily known as ‘Latino-Punic’ inscriptions. However, as I am convinced that the language of these texts is to all intents and purposes Phoenico-Punic in Latin guise, I also discuss features of the Graeco-Punic texts from El-Hofra and the partially vocalised neo-Punic texts from the region: due to their use of vowel-letters, they are especially valuable as comparative data for the fully vocalised Latino-Punic texts. Where relevant, we also use comparative information from other Semitic languages, especially from the near cognate and well attested sister-tongue, biblical Hebrew (in the Tiberian tradition).

Although this study, as has just been mentioned, is primarily concerned with the Latino-Punic corpus, other material such as the *Poenulus* and comments by the St Augustine will be brought to bear when deemed relevant. As the inscriptions in question are somewhat stereotype, most of the emphasis has been put on spelling and phonology (section 1) – the syntax and morphology (section 2) of these texts is largely what one would expect from a comparative (North-West) Semitic point of view. Due to the use of the Latin alphabet, some discussion of Latin orthographic practices, especially those of the contemporaneous epigraphs from the same region, was necessary. Here several points must always be borne in mind: spelling and phonology are two different entities and must never be confused. Secondly, with regard to the Latin of the treated inscriptions, we have the testimony of the local spoken Latin and not Classical Latin (cf. GEIST-PFOHL 1969: 17-18). Lastly, ‘spelling mistakes’ should only be posited as a last resort, when all other credible options have been considered (cf. LIPIŃSKI 2003). We have found that in the corpus under investigation, where the texts are interpretable, the spelling can mostly be explained and is to all intents and purposes systematic. One must attempt to interpret what has been written down. A slightly different problem are the mistakes committed by the (mostly illiterate, cf. e.g. JONGELING 1996: 69-70 for a striking neo-Punic example) lapicides when copying a text onto

the stone (cf. MEYER 1973: 3, 44). Often they had difficulties in interpreting the individual letters and converting them from the cursive *Vorlage* to uncial characters, especially when their occurrence was rare, such as the grapheme {z} which in its cursive form bears a striking resemblance to the Greek *στυμα* (cf. §1.3.2) or digraphs (cf. ad Gasr el-Azaiz LP 1, MEYER *op. cit.* 42).

We hope that the compendious treatment of the Latino-Punic corpus proffered here will make it more accessible to Semitists and those interested in Roman North Africa. Until now the data from these texts has often been largely lacking in such works (e.g. KRINGS 1995), partially due to their inaccessibility, but also due to the somewhat fantastic interpretations which they have been given.

The corpus

The present study encompasses some sixty-nine Latino Punic texts, all of which emanate from the coastal and pre-desert regions of what is commonly known as Tripolitania (in the modern *Great Socialist Peoples' Libyan Arabic Jamahiriya* – الجماهيرية العربية الليبية الشعبية الاشتراكية العظمى). This collection is largely based on that of VATTIONI 1976, with the inclusion of texts published since then: namely Nawalia LP 1, Libya OU LP 2 and several hitherto unpublished epigraphs, resp. Wadi Chanafes LP 1, Wadi Ghalbun LP 1. The present author, along with Dr K. Jongeling, was able to examine many of these texts in Libya in December 2003 (the notable exceptions being the Leptian texts, Libya OU LP 1 and 2) and improve the received readings in many cases. One text included by Vattioni (*art. cit.* 550 = BROGAN-REYNOLDS 1960: 53 + pl. 19) from Gasr Isawi must be seen as Latin (cf. REYNOLDS 1985). Several others such as Bir el-Uaar L(P) 1, Gasr Zugesh L(P) 1, Ghadames L(P) 2 have been included – although they seem to be Latin, they might contain some Punic elements. Some nine other texts have been included (Breviglieri LP 1, Dukakra LP 1, Gasr Bugar LP 1, Gasr es-Suq el-Oti, Ghadames LP 1, Ghirza LP 2, LP 3, Miragen Ngosta LP 1, Wadi Beni Musa LP 2), although we are unable to interpret a single word – these in my opinion are in all likelihood Punic texts, although due to wear and damage they are difficult to read, and as is the case with neo-Punic inscriptions, when the familiar formulae are not followed, interpretation becomes exceedingly difficult. We have also included in the present corpus the two Graeco-Punic texts from El-Hofra, the *tophet* of *Cirta Regia* (modern Constantine – قسنطينة in Algeria) as they follow the similar orthographic principles and represent a phonology similar to that of the Latino-Punic corpus. For the sake of completeness, we have also included the text in Greek characters from Wasta (in Syria), although it has no relationship with the present corpus except that it in all likelihood is composed in Phoenician – it plays no role in my grammatical discussion.

There are two additional texts that have not been included, namely the text in Greek characters from Lepcis Magna published by M. R. LALOMIA (1974; cf. also GARBINI 1986: 82 with additional bibliography) as the interpretation is rather uncertain (although both *PPG*³ and *DNWSI* tentatively accept the interpretation of the last word βινω as the suffix conjugation 3ms in the D-stem + suff. 3ms of the root √bny ‘to build’). Similarly, the hesitant interpretation of *RIL* 665 as Punic posited by GARBINI (1967; IDEM 1986: 81) seems most unlikely in my opinion. Other inscriptions might be included in the corpus, but not enough is preserved to make such a claim with any certainty, e.g. *IRT* 902 from the well-known Latino-Punic find-spot Ghirza with just the Libyan name *Isicva[r]* being preserved (cf. ad Bir ed-Dreder LP 4). One might also mention *IRT* 905 from Wadi Chanafes, also just a single Roman name *Mercvri*, but interestingly enough in its Punic form (cf. ad Sirte LP 2 and pp. 40-45).²

Finally, we have not included the Latino-Punic ostraca in the present study. These texts are somewhat different with regard to content from the lapidary corpus. Additionally, the use of the cursive Latin ductus makes the interpretation somewhat difficult, and hence worthy of a study of their own. At present such ostraca are known from Bu Njem (*BN* 146, MARICHAL 1992: 240, cf. also IDEM p. 5, the photograph is difficult to read; these texts were reported as ‘lost’ during our visit to Libya), Wadi el-Amud (cf. MATTINGLY-ZENATI 1984: 18, BARKER et al. *op. cit.* i 284 with fig. 9.13; these texts are presently being prepared for publication by R. Tomlin, D. J. Mattingly and the present author) and two unpublished ones from Silin (near Lepcis Magna, *non vidi*, mentioned by AMADASI GUZZO 1990: 108).

With regard to the designation of the texts themselves, I have opted for the system employed by my teacher Dr Karel Jongeling for the neo-Punic corpus (cf. IDEM 1984: 2 for an exposition), as I have done in my previous publications on this subject (KERR 2001a, 2003, 2005): here a prefixed ‘LP’ denotes Latino-Punic, ‘L’ Latin and ‘G’ Greek. The neo-Punic texts cited are prefixed with an ‘N’ (for a complete listing of these texts cf. JONGELING-KERR 2005: 96-104 and now the complete edition, JONGELING 2008), ‘P’ indicates a Punic text – Phoenician texts are cited following *KAI*. My interpretations of the LP-texts is to all intents and purposes the same as those in the former work inasmuch as they were discussed, the major difference being that in the present work, all of the available material is discussed.

² We note here that MATTINGLY in BARKER et al. 1996: i 141 goes too far when he takes this as a “one-word dedication to Mercury”, especially since *IRT* a.l. reports it as “fallen from the door of a fortified farm-house.” In all likelihood it represents the remains of a dedicatory inscription (cf. e.g. Gasr el-Azaiz LP 1).

The genre

As was mentioned in the preceding, the texts of the corpus under study are, as is often the case with Phoenico-Punic epigraphy relatively speaking, rather stereotypical in nature. As with contemporaneous Latin inscriptions from the area, the majority of the texts are epitaphs. The exceptions – Bir Shmech LP 1, Breviglieri LP 1 and Gasr el-Azaiz LP 1– are all dedicatory building inscriptions (Bauinschriften) for fortified farms (scil. *centenarium* vel *nasiba*, cf. comm. a.l.), the exception being Lepcis Magna LP 1, a text naming a local manufacturer of clay tiles.

Although the present body of texts is somewhat limited, we should not exclude future discoveries. Since the region has been subject to a relatively intense survey (the UNESCO-sponsored *Farming the Desert* campaign, meticulously and speedily published in BARKER et al. *op. cit.*), we suspect that most of the large funerary structures or mausolea that bore inscriptions have been discovered. New finds will in all likelihood be dedicatory inscriptions from the now collapsed front entrances of the several hundred fortified farms whose remains litter the region – should an attempt ever be made to systematically excavate these.

Other Sources

In this study, as has been mentioned, we will occasionally draw upon sources external to the said body of epigraphs, namely Punic loan-words in Latin and Greek, the testimony of St Augustine, who knew that the *lingua punica* was closely related to the language of the Hebrew Bible and hence used it to explain biblical *cruces interpretationis*, as well as Plautus' comedy the *Poenulus*. However, since the grammatical section of this study, as was noted above, is primarily concerned with orthography and phonology, the former two sources are of limited usefulness. The first can be hazardous as we do not usually know when or where a specific word was borrowed, nor what happened to it once borrowed (cf. also PPG p. vi), and each of these loans is need of an individual investigation. There are however exceptions, for example words that refer to things specifically Punic in Latin inscriptions from North Africa (i.e. there is no textual transmission involved), such as *mibil* 'citizenry' (cf. infra p. 79 and in greater detail KERR 2006). The testimony of St Augustine is, as we shall see, extremely valuable evidence for the widespread survival of Punic in North Africa during the fourth and fifth centuries AD, and generally correlates well with the phonology of the corpus under discussion (e.g. *salus* 'three' displaying the shift accented /ā/ > /ō/ > /u/, cf. infra p. 53 esp. n120).

With regard to the *Poenulus*, primarily thanks to the work of SCHRÖDER (1869), GRAY (1922-1923), SZNYCER (1967) and GRATWICK (1969, 1971), we can now be somewhat more optimistic than was Henry Fielding when he noted on the semantic value of the lexeme ‘liberty’ that “I am inclined to doubt whether there be any simple universal notion represented by this word, or whether it conveys any clearer or more determinate idea than some of those old Punic compositions of syllables preserved in one of the comedies of Plautus, but at present, as I conceive, not supposed to be understood by any one” (*Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* July 21). Enough of the Punic passages of this play remain intelligible to determine that lines 94off. represent an orthography compatible with that of Plautus – in any case pre-Augustan – whilst 930off. is a later version probably made when the Plautine corpus was canonised in the Augustan age,³ and which displays striking similarities with the Latino-Punic inscriptions, especially with regard to the use of the grapheme {y} (cf. §1.1.4.4, pp. 86ff.) and the rendition of the plosives (§1.2, pp. 105ff.). The latter version is roughly contemporaneous with at least the earliest more-or-less datable Latino-Punic epigraphs (Zliten LP 1, Lepcis Magna LP 1), and one wonders whether this later rendition was made by a Punic speaker (a slave in Rome?) having some familiarity with the Tripolitanian practise to render Punic with Latin graphemes. Although the text(s) have suffered at the hands of copyists, and we will probably never be able to entirely recover the Punic, at least with the materials presently available, we have included those lexemes and morphemes in this study whose interpretation I view as fairly certain (the danger of this approach is admittedly that we use only those forms which concur with what we have gleaned from the inscriptional evidence). Again, a new comprehensive treatment of the evidence, more ambitious than that of Szyner, is a research desideratum.

The Language

In this study, we attempt to demonstrate that the language of the Latino-Punic corpus is Phoenico-Punic and behaves much like any other (North-West) Semitic language, as is also the case with the neo-Punic inscriptions. In both cases, one must note that the respective designations do not denote a language classification based on linguistic criteria, but rather to the script employed. In my opinion,

³ On the necessity for determining the Plautine corpus and standardizing the text of the genuine *palliata*, largely the work of Accius, Stilo, Servius Claudius (on whose skill in this regard cf. Cicero, *Fam.* 9.xvi.4 “hic versus Plauti non est, hic est”), Ælius and his pupil Varro which resulted in the *fabulæ Varroniane*, i.e. in all likelihood the twenty-one plays which have survived, see in general REYNOLDS-WILSON 1991: 19-21 (and *in extenso* DEUFERT 2002). I note here the, in my opinion unsuccessful, attempt of GLÜCK-MAURACH (1973) to elucidate the Punic passages. MAURACH 1998 leaves the Punic largely un-commented. Note also OPELT 1966, FALLER 2004.

the language rendered by both scripts (and in *Poen.* 930-939) is to all intents and purposes the same (this is correctly noted in KRAHMALKOV 2000, 2001, who however unfortunately designates the language as ‘Neo-Punic’) and possibly to some extent contemporaneous. It might best be described as ‘Late Punic’, and conventionally speaking denotes inscriptions dating from after the Roman conquest of Carthage in 146 BC.

This language in both scripts (and also the earlier Graeco-Punic texts from El-Hofra) seems somewhat odd at first glance vis-à-vis other phases of the same language or other Semitic languages written in the traditional consonantal script. This oddness is however mostly restricted to phonology and orthographic practice. In the neo-Punic texts, the traditional consonantal orthography was replaced by a more phonetic system, made possible by the loss of the guttural consonants as phonemes (cf. §1.1.2, p. 38), which then were to some extent used as vowel letters (cf. §1.1.3, pp. 38ff.). This development had already occurred previously, as is witnessed by some Punic inscriptions (which generally speaking pre-date the fall of Carthage, cf. p. 49). In Tripolitania – where Punic seems to have survived as a language of the local elite at Lepcis Magna into the third century AD (note e.g. Septimius Severus, cf. *infra*; note also the well executed lapidary neo-Punic ductus in use until the end of the first century AD), and further inland until even later – the usage of vowel letters is rather systematic and restricted largely to Latin and Libyan (proper) nouns. Elsewhere, especially e.g. at Guelma (cf. JONGELING 2003b), its usage is more unsystematic as well as common in Semitic lexemes. This change in orthographic practice is in all likelihood due to the replacement of Punic by Latin in official matters, hence also the loss of traditional scribal training in Punic. Again here we must stress that orthography and phonology are two entirely different matters, and when one ‘breaks through’ the orthographic practice of the neo-Punic texts, one finds a Semitic language.

These comments are even more applicable to the Latino- (and Graeco-) Punic texts. Whereas in the neo-Punic corpus, historical spellings give some foothold, these texts can by definition not be spelt historically. Here again, when one distinguishes decisively between grapheme and phoneme, then one is a step further in comprehending what was written. In the present study we have to some extent attempted to explain the orthographic system used in the Latino-Punic inscriptions by comparing them with (non-classical) spellings found in Latin inscriptions from Roman North Africa.⁴ Surprisingly, this has not really been done

⁴ Several methodological points must be noted here. Firstly, most of the Latin inscriptions employ a historical spelling. Exceptions are by definition the rendition of indigenous (scil. Punic and Libyan) names. Also, as the Roman Empire was large and somewhat cosmopolitan, not all phonetic oddities are necessarily due to an ‘African’ accent (for example the rendition of {x} as {ks} and {ss}). Most profitable in this regard are inscriptions from the interior where Romanisation was but superficial and the chances are greater that we are dealing with indigenous attempts to

until now. Nonetheless, I note here that my findings are by no means exhaustive, and make no claim to have described the peculiarities of North African Latin in any detail, but merely to have brought forward some correlative evidence for spellings found in the Latino-Punic inscriptions. Noteworthy points discussed in this investigation are the tendency to reduce all unaccented vowels (cf. esp. §1.1.4.5 pp. 100ff.) and the aspiration of the plosives (§1.2, pp. 105-126, esp. e.g. 123f.). A detailed areal study of the Latin inscriptions from Africa undertaken by one more well-versed in the historical grammar of Latin than is the present author, would certainly produce further evidence on the substrate influence.

Here we must unequivocally note that the grammar of the Latino-Punic inscriptions is more or less homogeneous. There does seem to have been a standard system for rendering Punic in Latin letters in Tripolitania during the first centuries AD, seemingly based on the written rendition of the colloquial Latin of the region. Although in the past, numerous creative suggestions have been made when attempting to interpret these texts (especially by Elmayer and Krahmalkov, and to some extent also by Vattioni as well), which often posit otherwise unattested and unprecedented sound-changes, these must be discarded. Although much remains to be done before these texts are comprehensible in their entirety, future research should be pursued in a more systematic fashion, and especially paying more attention to the orthographic practice used.

The *Sitz im Leben*

The Latino-Punic corpus, with the exception of the texts from Sirte, emanates from Tripolitania, either from the coastal region (the so-called *Gefara*, cf. in general Barker in BARKER *op. cit.* 4-8) and the pre-desert (the *Gebel*). The corpus from the coast comprises of the Leptian inscriptions (Lepcis Magna LP 1-4, Libya OU LP 1; also the unpublished ostraca from Silin mentioned in the preceding) and the texts from Bir el-Uaar (L(P) 1), Breviglieri (LP 1-2), Gasr Doga (LP 1) Nawalia (LP 1), Al-Qusbat (LP 1), Zliten (LP 1) and seemingly also Libya OU (LP 2). The other texts were all found in the pre-desert region.

The coastal texts represent the earliest datable texts: Zliten LP 1 is dated to the first century AD (cf. comm. a.l.) whilst Lepcis Magna LP 1 has a *terminus ante quem* of 132-135 AD. These texts attest to the survival of Punic in this city which

render the prestige language. Especially useful in this regard are the ostraca from Bu Njem that can be dated between 254 and 259 AD (cf. MARICHAL 1992: 9), i.e. roughly contemporaneous with the Latino-Punic corpus, from the same region – the Tripolitanian pre-desert – and probably also part of the same frontier defence system as the ‘fortified farms’ (cf. infra). In addition, the names are mostly African, and at this period it would have been rather unlikely that all too many non-local soldiers would be stationed at this defended oasis, a military back-water by all accounts.

is corroborated by the testimony of classical sources, notably Sallust (86 BC-AD 34) who noted (*Bellum Jugurthinum* 78) with regard to the inhabitants of this city “eius civitatis lingua modo convorsa conubio Numidarum, legum cultusque pleraque Sidonica”⁵ -cf. too St Jerome, *In Galatas* II “Prætermitto Carthaginis conditores Tyrios ...”). Regardless of whether Lepcis Magna was of Sidonian, Tyrian (Strabo xvi ii 22-23, Silius Italicus) or Carthaginian (Pliny, *hist. nat.* v iv 27) foundation, its Punic identity remained long intact. This can be seen for example from a pair of recently published inscriptions found at Tyre (REY-COQUAIS 1986: 597-600, IDEM 2006: 49f.) in which Tyre is honoured as Lepcis Magna’s *metropolis*, one in Latin:

Col(onia) Vlpia
Traiana Avg(usta)
Fidelis Lepcis
Magna Tyron et svam metropolin⁶

and the other in Greek:

Κολωνία Ούλπια Τρα[ιανή Αύ-]
γοῦστα Πιστή Λέπκ[ις Με]-
γάλη, Τύρον τήν κα[ί έαυτῆς]
μητρόπολιν διά [πρεσβευ- vel έπιμελη]
του Δομιτίου Αβδ- ...
ιερέως

These two texts have as a *terminus post quem* the reign of Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Traianus) AD 98-117 who gave Lepcis her colonial status, and as *terminus ante quem* that of Septimius Severus who in 198 renamed his native city (*SHA Sev.* i 2; see in general LETTA 1986: 531-546) as *Colonia Septimia* (*IRT* 283, 286). The major relevance of these texts is that they bear first-hand witness to the survival of a Punic identity in this city in the second Christian century, which supports the literary testimony that is sometimes doubted.

Such evidence on the continued usage of Punic in this city (and hence in all likelihood Tripolitania as well) comes from the *Scriptores Historiæ Augustæ* ‘Severus’ who was “canorus voce, sed Afrum quiddam usque ad senectum sonans” (xix 9-10 although he was “...Latinis Græcisque litteris ... eruditissimus ...” i 4). Nonetheless, his sister was an outright embarrassment: “cum soror sua Leptitana ad eum venisset vix Latine loquens, ac de illa multum imperator erubesceret” (xv 7) who was quickly sent home. Although this work is of inconsistent value as a historical source, its information fits in well with the general picture

⁵ “The language alone has been altered by their intermarriages with the Numidians; their laws and customs continue for the most part Sidonian.”

⁶ The use of Latin in this inscription points to an African origin. Note, however, the Hellenising use of the accusative instead of the expected Latin dative.

sketched by the classical sources discussed in this and the following section. In addition, there is no reason why this datum should be mentioned here, were it not to some extent historical.

For the interior too we have some information on Punic in the period under discussion, e.g., Procopius (*De bello vandalico* 2.x.20: πόλεις τε οικήσαντες πόλ- λας ξύμπασαν Λιβύην μέχρι στηλῶν τῶν Ἡρακλείων ἔσχον, ἐν ταῦθ'α τε καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ τῇ Φοινίκῳ φωνῇ χρώμενοι ἄκηγται;⁷ cf. also *Buildings* 6.iii.9f.: Τριπόλεως τῆδε τῆς καλουμένης τὰ ὄρια ἐστὶ. Μαυρούσιοί τε βάββαροι ἐνταῦθα οἰκοῦσι, Φοινικικὸν ἔθνος⁸) and Arnobius (*Commentarii in Psalmos civ*, PL 53 col. 481 "...sermone punico a parte garamantum, Latino a parte Boreæ, barbarico a parte meridioni ... ac barbaris interioribus vario sermone numero viginti duabus linguis, in patris tecentis nonaginta et quattuor"; we will discuss this interesting passage in greater detail in the following section). The texts from the coastal region (Bir el-Uaar L(P) 1, Breviglieri LP 1-2, Gasr Doga LP 1, Nawalia LP 1, Al-Qusbat LP 1) and the rest of the corpus from the interior all seem somehow connected with what are generally known as 'fortified farms', which we have discussed in some detail elsewhere (KERR 2005, see also BARKER et al. *op. cit.* esp. 111-197, EUZENNAT 1985, REBUFFAT 1988). Briefly stated, sometime during the third century AD, the Roman authorities replaced the expensive regional frontier defence system consisting of forward positioned posts defending the three major oases at Bu Njem, Gheriat el-Gharbia and Ghadames (which always have water) at the edge of the pre-desert (with the intention of depriving trans-Saharan raiding parties of the ability to replenish their water supplies before continuing on north to the rich coastal regions; initiated during the reign of either Diocletian or Septimius Severus) with a system of self-sustaining flood-water farms with defensible farmsteads. In other words, settlement was used as a defence mechanism by creating an impenetrable inhabited buffer zone, i.e. "the farmers of the *gebels* and the steppe [i.e. pre-desert] increasingly barricaded themselves and so, incidentally and somewhat uncertainly, barricaded the province" (WHEELER 1955: 121). Indeed, such was a common Roman strategy of the period, that was also employed elsewhere (cf. LEWIN 1988, NICASIE 1997: 121-146, esp. 141-143; and WALDHERR 1989, 1992 for Proconsular Africa), where the comparison with a similar system along the geographically similar *limes Palestinæ* is most striking.

The question remains, who were the inhabitants of these farms? Based on the evidence available, all that can be said with certainty is that we are in all likelihood dealing with an indigenous population. Although Latin inscriptions (figures between thirty and sixty thousand are usually cited in the secondary

⁷ "They (scil. the Phoenicians) established numerous cities and took possession of the whole of Libya as far as the Pillars of Heracles, and there they have lived even up to my time, using the Phoenician tongue."

⁸ "Here are the boundaries of Tripoli, as it is called. It is inhabited by the barbarian Moors, a Phoenician race."

literature) outnumber Punic inscriptions from all periods in North Africa, when one examines the Tripolitanian interior, the picture changes. If we look at the surviving epigraphy from particular areas we note the following: The ‘Eastern Gebel’ (*IRT* 865-879 + 877a and 878a), of the sixteen recorded inscriptions, four are illegible (870, 874, 877a, and 878a), two are uncertain (865/Bir el-Uaar L(P) 1; 878/Gasr Zugesh L(P) 1) and one is official (thus obviously in Latin, 868). Of the remaining ten, three (873/Gasr Doga LP 1, 877/Breviglieri LP 1 and 879/Al-Qusbat LP 1) are in Latino-Punic – now also Nawalia LP 1 and Libya OU LP 2 must be added to this number – some forty-two percent of the total. When we enter the pre-desert, this percentage increases. For the ‘Middle and Lower Sofeggin Basin’, *IRT* records some thirty texts (886/Bir Dreder, 21 texts, 887-894 + 894a), of which one (890) is illegible and another (887) is official. Of the remainder, twenty-five or eighty-nine percent are in Latino-Punic. In the Wadi Zemzem (*IRT* 895-906), we again exclude two (895f.) because they are official, one is an anomalous (897), three (902, 904, 905) are fragments and one (903) is only known from a rough copy, forty percent or two of the remaining five are Latino-Punic. The preceding totals must however be revised in light of new finds from Wadi Chanafes and Wadi Ghalbun:⁹ For the pre-desert region *in toto* we then have some thirty-four Latino-Punic texts vs nine Latin texts, i.e. seventy-nine percent of the known texts are in Latino-Punic. We would then agree with GRAHAME 1998: 94 “that Punic was the vernacular language” in the Tripolitanian pre-desert in the first half millennium AD.

Although modern literature usually designates the inhabitants of these structures with Libyan tribal names given by Classical geographers for tribes of the region (e.g. BARKER et al. *op. cit.* i 46, 162, 319-325, 348 *Macæ*, REBUFFAT 1985: 252) we have our doubts.

Theoretically speaking, there are three options: i) Roman colonists or veterans; ii) Libyan (i.e. Berber) tribesmen; or iii) Punic colonists. The first can be dismissed with quite quickly on account of the limited amount of Latin epigraphy, the Libyan onomasticon (though often in conjunction with Latin cognomina), the rather poor quality of the Latin attested and a general absence of things Roman. The second option was accepted by the Barker et al. in *Farming the Desert* and GRAHAME 1998. BARKER c.s. summarises their point of view as follows: “the beginnings of Romano-Libyan farming in the pre-desert can best be understood as a process of sedentarization of the local *Macæ* tribe following the Roman pacification and provincialisation of the Tripolitanian hinterland, as the region came under direct Roman territorial control in the late first century AD” (*op. cit.* i 348).

⁹ L-P texts from Wadi Umm el-Agerem LP 1 and 2, Wadi Chanafes and Wadi Ghalbun, (the latter two published in this study for the first time), Gheria el-Gharbia LP 1, *IRT* 828, Wadi Beni Musa LP 1 and 2, Wadi Uaeni LP 1; Latin texts from Wadi Gurgur (cf. appendix), Wadi el-Amud, we exclude here the two neo-Punic texts) and Gasr Isawi (cf. *supra*). These numbers are only provisional; only systematic excavations of the pre-desert *gsur* will yield more definitive results.