Etruscan Inscriptions in the Royal Ontario Museum

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1. At the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, I viewed (8/14/01) two Etruscan inscriptions on cinerary urns of a cylindrical type common at Chiusi.[1] The urns were published in Hayes 1985 under the catalogue entry numbers G13 and G15.[2] Another inscription on a cinerary urn of this same type, G14,[3] was published by Hayes in *Studi Etruschi* (Hayes 1975) and so was included in Rix's compendium of Etruscan texts (ET Cl 1.2484).[4] G13 and G15 seem to have been overlooked.

2. Inscription G13 was painted in dark red on the round lid of the urn in sinistroverse direction (photograph 1).[5] Hayes (1985: 166) transcribed G13 as in (1).[6]

(1)   **vepnep viσcna . l . seχ**

Hayes' reading may be improved upon in several ways. First of all, the third letter of word one is *tau*. The oblique cross bar dissects the vertical near the top ⊤. The final letter must be *iota*. A short dash of red paint appears near the bottom of the vertical stroke, but this is accidental or perhaps the result of the scribe not cleanly lifting his brush from the surface of the ceramic.[7] The first word is **vetnei**, a feminine family name. In two places words are separated by punctuation in the form of a colon. This dividing sign is visible after **vetnei** and after *lambda*. A single dot stands between the *alpha* of **viσcna** and the following *lambda*. It is probable that the lower dot is no longer visible. A revised reading of the inscription is given in (2).

(2)   **vetnei : viσcna · l : seχ**

2.1 The letterforms in this inscription are typical of those found in other 2nd century B.C. inscriptions from Chiusi. According to Maggiani's classification of Etruscan alphabets of the Hellenistic Age (Maggiani 1990), the letterforms in G13 may be categorized as *Tipo II, settentrionale, II sec. a.C.*[8] The lowermost oblique stroke of *epsilon* and *wau* is elongated and it meets the vertical just below the mid-point; the topmost stroke in both letters is short and slightly bowed. *Nu* has the form Ͷ. *Khi* is an inverted arrow ↓. The crossbar of the *alpha* descends very gently in the direction of writing.

2.2 The interpretation does not present problems. The inscription is a funerary text. The deceased is a female whose family name **vetnei** is accompanied by a metronymic phrase **viσcna · l : seχ**. The separation of the inflectional ending -l of the genitive from its nominal base **viσcna** and the placement of a dividing point between the two must be an error on the part of the painter. A more accurate transcription of this inscription is in (3).

(3)   **vetnei : viσcna{}l : seχ** 'Vetnei, daughter of Viścna'

2.3 The family to which the deceased belonged is well represented in funerary inscriptions at Clusium. The name, in various morphological incarnations,[9] is attested in 18 inscriptions (**vetnal** gen. sg.: ET Cl 1.773, 1.1452, 1.2657, ETP 187; **vetnaliσa** gen. sg. + articular pro.: Cl 1.1029. 1.1840, 1.2305, 1.2306; **vetnei**: Cl 1.1686; **vetinal** gen. sg.: Cl 1.941; **vetinei**: Cl 1.1688, 1.1689; **vetenei**: Cl 1.1691; **vetanal** gen. sg.: Cl 1.1312, 1.1313, 1.1350; and **vetanei**: Cl 1.107, 1.322).[10] The name is also found nearby at Perusia (Pe **vetnei**: 1.845; 1.1047), but only in two inscriptions. **viσcnei**, the family name of the mother of **vetnei**, is not attested in inscriptions recovered at Clusium, but the stem from which it was built, **viσce**, is, both as a masculine family name (ET Cl 1.54; 1.820) and as a *cognomen* (Cl 1.1041; Cl 1.1200). Outside of Clusium the family name **viσcenei** ([with anaptyxis ?],) appears as a *cognomen* on a funerary inscription from Arretium (ET Ar 1.73). The name **viσcna**, without accompanying onomastic phrase, was incised on a vase from the *Ager Saenensis* (ET AS 2.7).

3. Inscription G15 runs in sinistroverse direction around the upper rim band of the cylindrical body of the urn (photographs 2 & 3). The transcription of Hayes (1985: 168) is reproduced in (4).

(4)   **larθ velχite · vipinal**

Hayes' reading is correct, except that he does not indicate the punctuation that is visible between the personal name and the family name of the deceased. (5) is the correct reading for G15.

(5)   **larθ · velχite · vipinal** 'Larθ Velχite, (son) of Vipinei'

3.1 Two scribes were responsible for incising G15. The family name **velχite** and the metronymic **vipinal** were written by one hand. The letters in these words were incised in a reasonably neat fashion (photograph 2). They are, for the most part, uniform in size and spaced equidistant from one another. The personal name **larθ** was added by

another hand. The letters were crudely incised and were positioned awkwardly with respect to one another (photograph 3). The *alpha* and the *rho* are larger than other letters in the inscription. The scribe who incised this word failed to write within the boundaries of the upper band that encircles the urn. The band is demarcated by a groove, above which most of the letters were written. The tail of the *rho* and the oblique bars of the *alpha* of **larθ** descend far below the groove. In contrast to the *alpha* of **vipinal**, in which the medial bar is horizontal **A**, the medial bar of the *alpha* of **larθ** descends sharply toward the right in the opposite direction of writing **A**.

The letterforms in **velχite · vipinal** may be classified as *Tipo II, settentrionale, II sec. a.C.* (Maggiani 1990), but some shapes do not match those in the model script.[11] For example, the topmost oblique stroke in *epsilon* and *wau* is not bowed. And whereas the lowermost oblique stroke of *wau* is elongated, this is not the case for *epsilon*. All of the oblique bars of this letter are roughly equal in length **Ⅎ**. *Tau* has the form **T**, the oblique dissecting the vertical at the top without sloping too noticeably in the direction of writing.

3.2 G15 is also a funerary text. The deceased is remembered by his personal name and family name **larθ velχite**, which are followed by a metronymic **vipinal**, the feminine form of the family name of the deceased's mother (**vipinei**). The family name of the deceased, **velχite**, confirms Clusium as the point of origin of the urn. Six inscriptions, all from this area, may be attributed to members of this family. Two inscriptions refer to males named **larθ velχite** (ET Cl 1.576, 1.577).[12] A third inscription names the husband of the deceased as a member of the **velχite** family (**velχites** gen. sg., ET Cl 1.1721). Female members of the family (**velχiti**) are attested in ET Cl 1.466, 1649 and 1650.

The mother of the deceased belonged to the **vipina** family. To judge from the number of funerary inscriptions with this name, the family was particularly prominent at Clusium. In the nominative case alone there are 27 masculine forms **vipi** and 27 feminine forms **vipinei** for a total of 54 funerary inscriptions referring to members of this family during the neo-Etruscan period (4th c. - 1 c. B.C.).[13]

4. Hayes (1985: 167-168) dates G13 and G15 to the 2nd-1st c. B.C. based on the morphology of the cinerary urn. This date is borne out by the shape of the letterforms of the inscriptions.

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Abbreviations

Ar	= Arretium
AS	= Ager Saenensis
CIL	= Pauli & Danielsson, *Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum*
Cl	= Clusium
Co	= Cortona
ET	= Rix, *Etrusckishe Texte*
ETP	= Wallace, Shamgochian & Patterson, *Etruscan Texts Project Online*
Pe	= Perusia

Footnotes

1. In the summer of 2005 my colleague, Dominique Briquel, informed me that one of his students, Fabrice Poli, had recently completed a study of these same inscriptions. His paper will appear in the next issue of *Studi Etruschi.* My colleague also kindly forwarded to me his own discussion of Hayes G15. This paper will also appear in *Studi Etruschi.*

2. Each catalogue entry in Hayes 1985 has commentary and photographs. Unfortunately, the photographs are not of sufficient quality to permit the reading of inscriptions G14 and G15 in their entirety. Most of G13 can be made out, but the first and the last letters cannot be seen clearly.

3. In Hayes 1975: 103-104 G14 is transcribed as **larθia : titi : maçx[– – –]**. According to Hayes (1985: 168), the editors of *Studi Etruschi* were responsible for the reading of the third word. Hayes labeled the reading 'highly conjectural'. Indeed, the stylized sketch of the remains of the painted letters given by Hayes (1985: 168) does not appear to support the reading proposed by the editors. However, it appears to me as if the

reading **maçx[** is the correct one. If the second letter is an *alpha*, it is larger than the *alphas* of **larθia***.* The upper part of the letter, where the oblique strokes converge, is missing. It may originally have been painted on the lip or rim of the lid. This line of reasoning is suggested by the fact that the rightmost stroke begins to arc leftward toward the edge of the upper band. The letterform after *gamma* is illegible to me.

4. Rix published the inscription, ET Cl 1.2484, with a minor addendum. He read the fourth letter as **u**, and the third word as the *cognomen* **maçu[tia]**, for which it was possible to cite **macutia** (ET Cl 1.2483) as a *comparandum.*

5. Throughout the paper linguistic forms in the Etruscan alphabet are transcribed in bold. Epigraphic conventions: Square brackets [a] indicate letters that have been restored or can no longer be read; curly brackets { a } indicate characters erroneously written by the scribe; the underdot **a** indicates characters that are damaged and/or no longer clearly legible. Grammatical abbreviations: gen. = genitive; pro. = pronoun; sg. = singular. References to Etruscan inscriptions are from Pauli & Danielsson (CIE), Rix 1991 (ET) and Wallace, Shamgochian & Patterson 2004-2005 (ETP).

6. Hayes' transcriptions are updated in light of a more current system of transcription. Greek *sigma* **σ** for a palatal sibilant /š/; **s** stands for a dental /s/. The dental and velar aspirated stops are **θ** and **χ** respectively.

7. The inscription was discovered on the lid of the urn during cleaning (Hayes 1985: 166).

8. For discussion, see Maggiani 1990: 188-191. Following the schema proposed in an earlier article (Maggiani 1984), the letterforms belong to a subtype of the 'regularized' variety, C4.

9. The masculine stem is **vetna**; the feminine is **vetnei**. The forms with medial vowel, **vetinei, vetenei, vetanal** and **vetanei**, are to be explained by *anaptyxis* (see Rix 1984: 217), by morphological renewal (**vetnal** ⇒ **vetenal** under influence of **vete**), or by a combination of the two.

10. Morphologically related forms, **vetni** and **vetini**, are found at Clusium (**vetni**: Cl 1.1684; **vetini**: Cl 1.1685) and Cortona (**vetni**: Co 1.23).

11. The alphabet appears to have features of *Tipo II, Etruria settentrionale, III sec. a.C.* (no. 2) and *Tipo II, Etruria settentrionale, II sec. a.C.* (no. 1).

12. G15, ET Cl 1.576 and ET Cl 1.577 have the same onomastic phrase, **larθ velχite vipinal**. ET Cl 1.576 and ET Cl 1.577 may refer to the same person. ET Cl 1.576 was incised on a ceramic *tegola*, which could have been set up at the entrance to the tomb. G15 and ET Cl 1.577 probably refer to persons belonging to two generations of the **velχite** family. ET Cl 1.577 was painted on a ceramic *olla* (CIE I, 606). Punctuation is in the form of a colon (:). As noted in §3, G15 was incised along the upper band of the body of the urn and a single dividing point was used to separate the words.

13. For other case-forms for this family name see the indices in Rix 1991, Bd. I.

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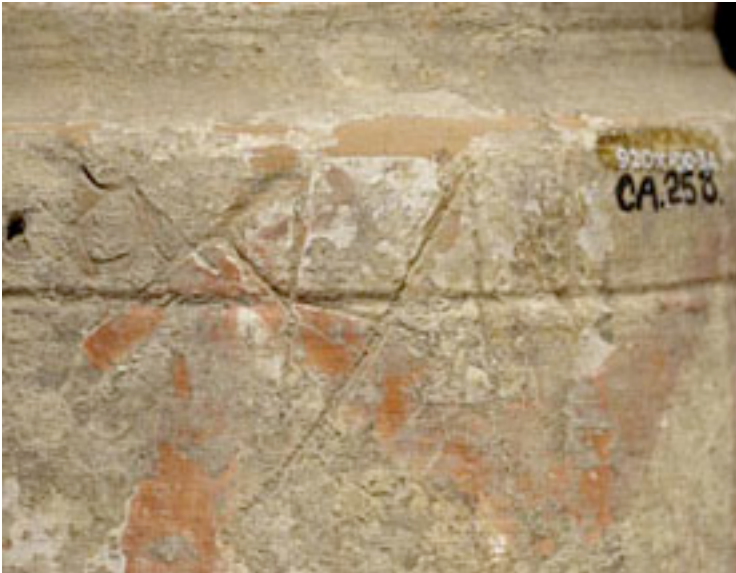
PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Inscription G13. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.
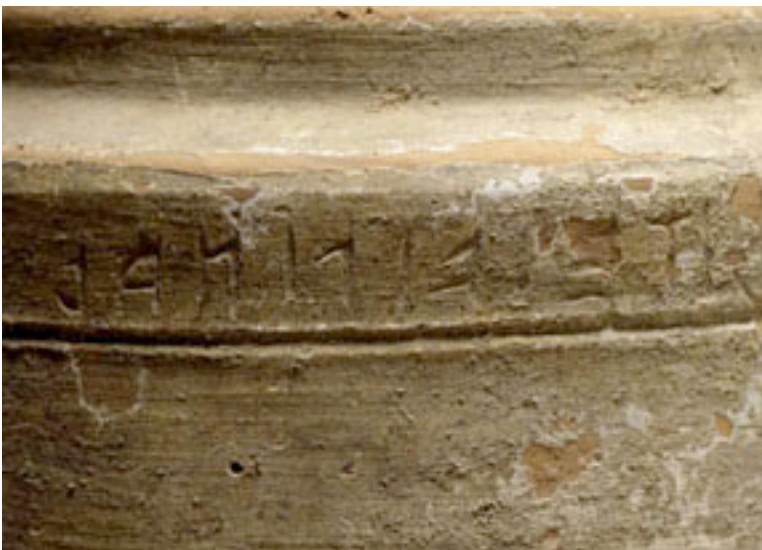
2. Inscription G15. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Ontaio Museum.

3. Inscription G15. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.