◆ ETRUSCAN NOTES ◆

ETR.> .Lat.& GK.
form(a)>morphe
supulu>alovus
cleva>aulik(os)
zeri>iurus
Lupu>pello
svalc>clavus
naces>secun(dus
merx>lu\crum
urthanik\e=
cantharus
mulv\eni=
volum\enis
Aveles Feluske=
Silva Exsulare
tusurthir=
reposit(orium)
(ati) nacnuva=
(--)avunculus
T\RUTNVT=
DIVINATOR
HERCULE(M)=
MELQARTH

RESXU\ALE
=
UXER\CULA

little   wife

THE ETRUSCAN CRYPTOLECT   Copr. 1996 H.T. Bryer

A NEW THEORY ON THE ORIGINS AND LANGUAGE OF THE ETRUSCANS

The question of Etruscan origins has vexed investigators for more than two thousand years. Linguists have sifted through the languages of the world searching for clues to unravel the mystery of this enigmatic people and their perplexing language, but to date no clear relationship has been shown to exist between the Etruscan language and any other known language. As a result the etymological method of studying Etruscan, which has given little in the way of positive results, has been in disrepute with serious scholars for more than a century.

The progress which has been made in understanding the Etruscan vocabulary has come from a combination of methods. These include careful studies of bilingual inscriptions, analysis of Etruscan or reputed Etruscan words found in ancient Latin and Greek glosses, the archaeological context of the inscriptions, internal evidence, and comparisons of Etruscan text formulas with that of other ancient languages.

SATNAL:pLANETAS
LUCAIR : RECUL
SRAn : ARS
Menerfa : aphrenum

IN RETRO

Although Etruscan is an unknown language in the sense that it cannot be assigned to any language family, it is not an undeciphered language. Etruscan is written in an archaic Greek alphabet and can be read phonetically with little difficulty. Using a combination of methods with slow and steady progress Etruscologists have come to understand much of the Etruscan grammar and the fairly certain meanings of more than two hundred words.

Using the Etruscan vocabularies contained in Massimo Pallottino's *The Etruscans* 1975, and Larissa Bonfante's *Etruscan* 1990, as a basis for reliable comparison, I will demonstrate that in fact Etruscan is a cryptolect which was ingeniously devised by the Etruscan priestly and ruling castes, who based it on an early unrecorded dialect of Latin. Like their cousins the Celtic Druids (who possessed a cryptic speech called Ogham) the Etruscan Haruspices framed their secret language for both religious and secular reasons.

The mention of Etruscan in connection with arbitrarily contrived speeches, cants, jargons etc. may sound far fetched, Etruscan is an ancient language whereas the notices of cant and other secret languages are of more recent

occurance , with one exception and this is Shelta, the language of the Irish Travelers or Tinker clans. Shelta is a cant or arbitrarily contrived speech which the eminent Gaelic scholar Kuno Meyer believed to have been at one time the possession of the Filid or ancient poets of Ireland, and to be the same as the cryptic speech called Ogham. In his article, *On The Irish Origin and Age of Shelta, Journal of The Gypsy Lore Society, Vol.2, no.5, pp.257-66.* Meyer stated that Shelta is mainly a systematic perversion of the pre-aspirated Gaelic spoken in Ireland anterior to the eleventh century, that in Irish manuscripts there were mentions and records of it under various names and, that though now confined to tinkers, its knowledge was once possessed by Irish poets and scholars, who, probably were its original framers. Kuno Meyer goes on to describe the processes by which Shelta words were fabricated from the Irish ones, and it is with these same processes applied to Latin words that we will begin to understand how Etruscan words were formed.

In *Shelta the Caird's Language , reprinted from the transactions of the Gaelic Society, Inverness, 1899-1901,* David Macritchie, and F.S.A. Scot combine the researches of Kuno Meyer, and several other scholars with their own to throw light on the construction of Shelta:

" A certain portion of Shelta consists of ordinary Gaelic words pronounced backwards. Thus 'mac' son, becomes 'kam'; 'da' two, becomes 'ad ' or 'od '; 'carr' a wagon or car, becomes 'rag'; 'naoi' nine becomes 'ayen', etc. . Sometimes to the word obtained (from back-slang), a suffix is added: 'thal-osk' day, from 'lath-a' [for this inversion took place before 'latha' had been refined into 'la-a']; 'thur-og' rag, from 'brat'. Or the final is changed as in 'nup' neck, from Irish 'muin'. The several other processes consist of prefixing or suffixing an arbitrary letter or letters to a word, or by the transpositioning of letters or syllables as is illustrated by " 'acharam' tomorrow , from Irish 'amarach', and by ' mugathon' fool, instead of 'amadan' ".

Using the simplest method of disguising words, that of spelling or pronouncing certain Etruscan words backwards some interesting results can be obtained by using Latin and in a few cases Greek to explain word formation. We must keep in mind that Etruscan possessed only the voiceless stops *k, t,* and *p,* they changed the letters *g, d,* and *b* when these appeared in Greek, Latin, or Umbrian.

To begin with, it is almost certain that *form(a)* (form) came into Latin via Etruscan from Greek *morph(e)* (form); a perfect example of Etruscans reversing a borrowed word before adding it to their own vocabulary in order to disguise its meaning from the uninitiated. In a similar case, the Latin word for lead, *plumbum* (of unknown origin), may have been derived from the Greek word for lead, *molubdos,* as Latin *plum(b)* is the phonetic reverse of Greek *molub(d),* (Gk. *b* = Etr. *p)* .

Etruscan *spur* (city) is practically the phonetic reverse of Lat. *urbs*

Druids and Etr. Priest

Little has been said of the similarities that existed between the Druidic and Etruscan priesthoods. Here follows two accounts made by Romans chronicling the roles played by Druids and Etruscan priests in warfare:

The first being an account by Livy (book vii, 17) of a fourth century battle between the Romans and the combined forces of the **Etruscan** Tarquinians and Faliscans:

"The Romans were at first defeated, the Roman soldiers having been terrified by the sight of the enemy's priests advancing like furies, brandishing snakes and lighted torches. The soldiers retreated in disorder to their trenches;"

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Tacitus describes an almost identical scene taking place when the Romans invade **Celtic** Briton:

"Drawn up on the seashore was a dense mass of armed warriors. Among them bearing flaming torches, ran women with funereal robes and disheveled hair like furies, and all around stood Druids, raising their hands to heaven and calling down dreadful curses."

2

THE CANTHARUS

URTᴙ
(abrev. of *urthaneke*)

MINI URTHANEKE ARANTHUR

Me cantharus Aranthur
(I am Aranthur's cup)

This inscription was generally thought to mean "Aranthur dedicated me", solely on the basis that the theoretical suffix of *urthaneke (*eke) resembled the suffix of *Muluvanece*(to offer, dedicate). I believe that *URATHANEKE is* Lat,.Greek, *cantharus (*drinking vessel with handles) in reverse form.

cf.
MI:QUTUN:LEMAUSNAS
(I am the pitcher of Lemausnas)

(city) interestingly the Etruscan quarter of Rome was called *Subura*. As Lat. *urbs* is of obscure origin, and the Latin Romans evidently learned the concept of cities from the advanced Etruscans, We must first ask the question "where did the Etruscans come by their term for city?". In the eighth century B.C. one of the first major cities in Italy to which the Etruscans were exposed to was the Greek port city of Sybaris, it also became their major trading partner. It is quite possible that *Sybaris* which according to Etruscan orthography would be written **Supuru*, also became their ultimate designation for *city*. This scenario would leave Lat. *Urbs* a second hand borrowing (*Sybaris* > *Suburu*> *urbis*).

One of the reasons why Etruscan has remained so confusing to linguists is that a number of prominent Etruscan words were formed from the reversed suffixes of Latin words, often with an adhering consonant, the resulting Etruscan word stems appear to have no connection with the Latin words from which they were derived, ultimately leading to the common consensus that Etruscan is a non-Indo-European language. A good example of this process is the Etruscan word *lauchum (king)*, which bears no resemblance to its Latin equivalent *rex, regis* (king), but Etr. *lucair* (to rule) can easily be recognized as a reverse version of Latin *regula* (rule), the Etr. *C* represents both the Lat. hard *C* (k), and Lat. *G*, cf. Lat. *Graecus* (Greek), Etr. *(Creice)* Greek. Some other examples are the Etr. morphemes, *nets'* from *haruspicene, urth* > *cantharu(s)*, *trut* > *divinator* (with prothetic *t*), *tus'* > *reposit(ory)*, *mul* > *volum(en)*, etc. .

In comparing the Etruscan word *netsvis* with its Latin equivalent *haruspex*, one would be hard pressed to find any similarities, for *haruspex* is formed from the Proto-Indo-European roots *gher'* (gut, entrail), and *spek* (to observe), but if you take the Etr. word *nethsrac*, pronounced *nyee(pt)surach* (haruspicine), in its reverse form, i.e. *cars'then* , the distinctive Italic, Indo-European nature of Etruscan becomes evident, Lat. *harus*= Etr. *cars*, Lat. *picine*=Etr.*then*, cf. also Etr. *athumic (noble)*, *Nethune*, with Lat.*optimus (noble)*, *Neptune*).

Etruscan has two words for mirror, one which is *malena*, is transposed from Lat. *lamina*, meaning any thin piece of metal etc. (note that only the root *lam* was reversed while the suffix *ina,ena* has remained in place). The other Etruscan word denoting mirror is *malstria*, which appears to be composed of the Etr. root *mal* (malena) ,and *stria* which is possibly a retro version of Latin *aeratus* (made of bronze), thus *malstria* = *aeratus lamina*.

On the shorter version of the Etruscan-Punic bilingual inscription from Pyrgi, Etr. *cleva* has been translated from the Punic version as referring to a precinct or enclosure built for the goddess Athena. *Cleva* or *cleua* is possibly derived from Lat. *aulikus* (court),or Greek *aulikos, aule* (court,dwelling), in retro .

The Etruscan word or root *tus'*, which is generally understood to mean funerary niche, or repository, bears no Latin affinities. It is the longer version of this word *tusurthir* which holds the secret to understanding how the Etruscans composed it by retroverting the Latin word *reposit* or as they pronounced it *reypauzuit*.

The Etruscans had a very unusual method of recording time, at the close of each year they ceremoniously drove a year nail into the wall of the temple of the goddess *Nortia* (the Fortuna of Volsinii) to record its passing. The Latin expression *Clavus anni* (the beginning of the year) finds its origin in this Etruscan year nail ceremony, as do the dating terms used on Etruscan funerary inscriptions which incorporate the Etruscan words, *sval* (alive), *svalce* (lived), *avil* (year), *ril* (at age of...years),and *lup, lupu* (to die). The variants of *svalce* are all derived from Latin *clavus* (nail, year nail) in retro, and the variants of *lup, lupu*(to die) stem from the root reversal of Latin *pello (drive)* .Thus the inscription *AVILS LXX LUPU* can be read as *nail, or nails 70 driven* i.e. this person lived to see seventy nails driven. Other combinations of these words are used such as *LUPU AVILS XXV* (he nailed nail-*s* 25), *LUPU AVIL RIL LII* (he drove year nails to the number of 52), *SVALCE AVIL LXVI* (nailed year nail 66) etc. . When the Etruscans inscribed *ziva* (the dead, deceased) on their funerary monuments it is likely that they were referring to their own parents and grandparents, therefore it seems logical that Etr. *ziva (avi-s)* = Lat. *avi* (forefathers, ancestors).

In Etruscan law terminology *zeri* is believed to mean a legal action or rite. I believe it to simply be *juris* or as in early Latin *iurus*, again reversed by the Etruscans to hide its meaning from the uninitiated. *Cecha* (ceremony,right,law: praetor), *cechase,* and *cechaneri* (titles of Etruscan magistracies) possibly could have been derived from Lat. *juridicus* in retro *irenachec* .

A case of complex syllabic transpositioning may be found in the Etruscan word for *sun* which is *us il* , it appears to be a cryptolect of Latin *so lis* , i.e. *(os sil)*.

There are a series of Etruscan words which appear to have been formed from Latin by the dropping of initial consonants and sometimes the following vowel. Thus we have *itus (* ides, middle) from Lat. *(m)edius; am* (to be) from Lat. *(s)umma;* *ati* from *(m)ater,* *apa* from *(p)apa,* *ateri* (paternal) from Lat. *(p)atrius* (parental); Etr. *ais* (god)from Lat. *(d)eus;* Etr. *ac* (make,offer) from Lat. *(f)ac(io);* Etr. *car, cer* , (make,build) from Lat. *(fa)cere; Etr *lein* (to die) from Lat. *(si)leo* (cease), *(si)len(s)* (the dead)., *cleva*(room court) from Lat. *(con)clavus* (or from *aulik-os* in retro), etc.. The Etruscan name for Venus *Turan* believed to mean 'lady' , 'mistress" (she is usually represented on Etruscan mirrors as mature and dignified), may be derived from Latin (ma)trona. Compare also *Tages* possibly from Latin *(pro)digium (prodigy)*, and *(a)dagium (proverb)*.

Atri, Atrium is both a word and architectural feature believed to have been borrowed by the Romans from the Etruscans. It was the main, and entrance room of the Roman house, and the hall of temples and public buildings. The residential atrium was a place where the family's treasured ancestral masks were displayed, and in public atria the images of city fathers lined the walls. Since it is has been noted that Etr. *ateri* = Lat. *(p)atrius* would it not seem logical that *atrium* , a sacred place in the home set aside

YEAR NAIL

RETRO-LINGUISTICS may be a missing principal in the accepted rules governing how words were formed. It matters not that it occured for reasons of secrecy, as in the case of the Druids and Etruscans, for many of these words have come down to us and can only be explained through retro-linguistics. Retro-linguistic formation may explain these Latin words of *unknown origin which heretofore have not been connected with Etruscan:

*CAUPo *from* PAUCus
*SPATium > TOPOS
*SAGitta > GHAISo
*CATena > TEXum
*TUBus > BOTulus
*CAPso > PUXos
*TEMporis > METor
*SEQUI > QUES
*FURor > RABer
*PRAVus > VERPa
etc.

MEDI
Tyrrhenians

The Greeks called the Etruscans *Tyrrhenoi* and *Tyrsenoi.* The Etruscan term of self designation *Rasenna* is possibly derived from *Tyrsenoi* by the loss of the initials *(Ty),* i.e. *rsenoi,* and a change of the Greek suffix*(oi),*to a Latin suffix*(a).* *Tyrsenoi, and Tyrrhenoi,* are simply Greek dialectical versions of Latin *Terrenus (earthen, of the earth)* in the sense of earthling, human being, from Lat. *Terra* (earth,soil), Compare Latin *homo (man, human being)* from Lat. *humus* (earth,soil), and *Erecthonius (Gk., born of the soil)* the mythological king of Athens . All Of these terms ,*Tyrrhenians, homo,* Erecthonius, stylize the people whom they are applied to as aboriginals, autocthons sprung from the land itself, and are traceable to the Proto-Indo-European roots, *ters* and *dhghem.*

to honor the fathers, derive from *p-atrium* instead of the commonly accepted notion that it finds its origins in the Latin word *ater,* which means black, gloomy, malicious, poisonous, and also forms the basis for Lat. *'atrox'* (terrible, horrible) .

It has been assumed that Latin words of obscure origin which deal with religious, technological, civil, or military institutions are likely of Etruscan origin. In the religious area I theorize that (with Etruscan intermediation) Lat. *cura* (cure, curate) derives from *(sa)cra,* and Lat. *caerimonia* (ceremony) derives from **(sa)cramonia* which has survived in its nasalized form *sanctimonia.* The Etruscans were an elite people, when it came to military matters they were the masters, leaders, and officers. They depended on the *humiles* (lower classes of people) to fill the ranks of common soldiers (*miles*), thus I believe that Lat. *miles* (soldier) and *militia* (army) are Etruscanized versions of *(hu)miles* and *(hu)militas.* Two Latin words used to denote actor, *Ludio* (actor, gladiator),and *histrio (*player, actor), earlier *istrio,* are refered to in ancient Latin glosses as Etruscan words. *Ludio,* I believe, is the Etruscanized masculine version of Latin *(g)ladiator,* cf. Lat *ludia.*(female gladiator, actress) and *ludus* (public games). As there may have been a fine line between the *histrionics* of a performer in the sacred *mysteries , and an istrio* (actor) in a profane play, all that it took was the Etruscanizing loss of an initial *M* to change a **mysterio* into an *istrio .*

Sprinkled throughout Etruscan texts there are words which are purely Latin, a few examples are Etr. *tur* (to give) from Lat. *dare* (to give), Etr. *tev* (to show, see) from Lat.*tuor* (see), cf. Etr. *tevarath* (referee, judge, observer); Etr. *clan, clens* (son, dependant) from Lat. *Cliens* (dependents of the pater familias), and Etr. *pulum-chva (stars, i.e. heavenly objects) which is* a compound of Latin *polus* (pole star, heaven) and Etr. *cver* (things,objects).

In his pioneering book, *The Etruscans* p.217, Massimo Pallittino, the father of modern Etruscology calls attention to the question of the originality of Etruscan linguistic structures, stating:

> "Generally speaking, the construction of the simpler, more easily analyzable sentences shows remarkable analogies with Latin: e.g. a gentitive precedes the noun it qualifies, the verb comes last in the sentence, etc."

One may wonder that if Etruscan is in fact an artificial language based on Latin, why then did not any of the great Roman men of letters have knowledge of its construction and pass down to us at least his suspicions on the matter. One may have, in the person of Titeus Lucretius Carus , in his poem *De Rerum Natura* ,6, pp.381-2, where he speaks of unrolling backwards the sacred verses of the Etruscans, in hope of discovering the hidden will of the gods:

> "non Tyrrhena retro uoluentem carmina frustra / indicia occultae dium perquirere."

HOW HERCULES DRAWS NOURISHMENT

eca: sren:tva: ichnac: hercle: unial: clan: thra: sce

(behold : art :observes:(as to)how : Hercules : Juno's : son :draws:nourishment)

ECCA: ARS: TUOR: ATQUE\N-AC :"   :   "   CLIENS : TRAHO: ESCA
                            retro

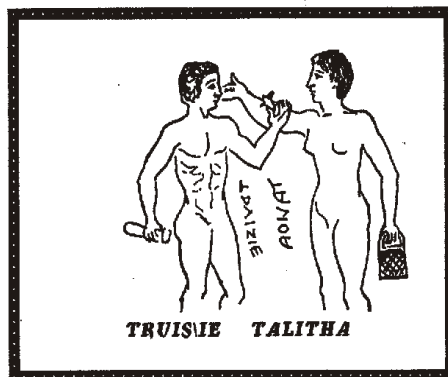Latin   Latin   Latin   Latin   (Etr. suffix)   Latin   Latin   Latin

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DETERMINED   CONTESTANT

TRVIS\IE   TALITHA

from retro Latin   CERT\US   ATHLET\A   Lat.>Greek
                        (determined)   (contestant,wrestler,athlete)

(From Gerhard, *Etr. Spiegel,III, t.115*)

Discrepancies

Archaeologists have no problem rationalizing a continuum of material culture running from the earlier Iron age civilizations of central Italy until they first encounter traces of an Etruscan presence (c.750 B.C) in the form of inscriptions in what they perceive to be an utterly different language. A language alien not only to all of the Italic and Indo-European languages that surrounded it, but alien to every language ever known to have existed on this planet.

If the primary language that the Etruscans spoke was so utterly different and freakish, why then did the elite families of Rome send their young men to Caere in Etruria for their education? The Roman historian Livy, speaking of an earlier period, plainly stated this fact:

"I have texts which prove that it was the usual custom in those days to instruct young   (cont.)

This statement from Livy would seem to indicate that the Etruscans were skilled teachers of the Latin language and litera-ture.

If the Etr-uscans were not na-tive Latin speakers (besides their secret language which was jealously guarded and only spoken when se-crecy necessitated it, when in the presence of aliens) then why do the dialects that are spoken in present day Tuscany present char-acteristics that are closer to Latin than any that are spoken in other Romance territo-ries? It is also inter-esting to note that a Tuscan dialect gave rise to the Italian liter-ary language.

HERCULES IN THE COILS OF HIPPOLYTE

HERUCEL   **MLACUX** = Greek kuklom(a)

written backwards   *(a)MOLKUK*

Hercules is in possession of the queen of the Amazons, Hippolyte's magic girdle , but now it is obvious that she wants it back. There may be a humorous play on words here, for Hercules is not only girdled with the belt, *cingulum (*in retro, *mulugnic),* he is also wrapped in the coils (Greek, *kukloma,* in retro *a-molkuk)* of Hippolyte.

scene from an Etruscan mirror, from E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Speigel* ,Berlin 1843,T.364

IT'S eLeMeNtary

The Etruscans were a mediocentric people, their day began at noon and concluded at noon on the following day. They put particular emphasis on the middle day of the month, the *itus* (ides), which was sacred to Tinia (Jupiter). When they laid out a new town or temple, it was the central spot, the *munth* (mundus), from which all other factors emanated, the place (microcosm) where the priest positioned himself to observe and interpret the celestial signs of the universe (macrocosm). *Munth,* the cardinal point from which order was made out of chaos, which gave us the Latin word *mundus,* which signifies order, neatness, the world, universe, and was also the name applied to (*Munthu)* the young woman who was the cosmetician in wedding adornment scenes depicted on Etruscan mirrors.

And when the Etruscans borrowed and adapted their alphabet from their neighbors and cultural mentors the Greeks, phonetics dictated that they couldn't call it after its PRIMARY letters, the *alphabeta,* for the Etruscans had no use for and had discarded the letter *B* . So in characteristic manner this mediocentric people chose to designate this new magical acquisition after its three CARDINAL letters L M N , by calling it the * *ALUMUNTU,* which is attested to in the Etruscan word *alumnathe* (sacred society, alumni). This is interesting because Latin *alumnus* (student,foster son) is beleived to be derived from Lat. *alere* (to nourish). When **ALUMUNTU* came into Latin in the form *ELEMENTUM,* it primarily meant a letter of the alphabet, latter it came to designate first principal, the elements, and rudiments. **ALUMUNTU* is also a representation of the Etruscan alphabet in condensed form , and with further condensation, that of the Etruscanizing loss of the initial(s) we come upon *MUNTU, MUNTH* (Lat. *MUNDUS*), the ultimate microcosm, a paucity of characters that represent the whole alphabet, a magical system of naming and keeping in order every thing in the universe. An alphabet between whose first and last letters (the *alpha* and the *omega* of the Greeks, and the *alpha* and *infinis* '8' of the Etruscans) exists everything that ever was or ever will be, until the end of time.

(* unattested forms)

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