

ETRUSCAN AND OSCAN INSCRIPTIONS
IN HERMITAGE MUSEUM OF LENINGRAD

In the Italic collection of Classical department of Leningrad Museum of Art (Hermitage) there are seven objects bearing inscriptions. Four of them have been already reported by a number of scholars. Thus, an Etruscan bronze mirror (V-505) representing Venus and Adonis with surrounding figures and adjoined inscriptions *turan, atumis, tusna, zirna, mean, munḏγ, aχviser, alpan, haḏna* was already known to Gerhard, who published it in the 4th volume of his «Etruskische Spiegel» (1). Unfortunately, this mirror is now in such a bad state that some of these inscriptions have become almost entirely illegible. One can clearly see only two words: *haḏna* and *alpan*. Hardly distinguishable are *turan, atumis, tusna, zirna*. Another Etruscan mirror (V-1872) with inscriptions *aχle aivas* beside Ajax with Ahill's dead body was described by Voščinina in 1947 (2). An Oscan inscription on an Italic cantharus (B-1790) painted in white letters (26-30 mm high) *upils/ufiis* was included by Zvetaieff in his collection of Oscan inscriptions (3).

Of considerable interest is an Oscan bronze stamnos (V-591) (height 38,5 cm; diameter of mouth 22 cm) decorated with two bearded heads of Satyrs on oval plates under its both handles (fig. 1). This stamnos was found in a tomb near S. Maria di Capua Vetere and first published by Minervini in 1854 (4). Since then it has been considered lost. It was purchased by Hermitage Museum from Campana's private collection in 1862 and erroneously regarded as an Etruscan one.

The clear-cut inscription scratched on the upper rim round the mouth runs from right to left without syllabic interpunctuation or word-division (fig. 2, 3). The characters are Etruscan but the language is Oscan. It reads:

vinuχsveneliisperacisestamtetetvenileiviniciiu
i.e. vinuχs veneliis peracis estam tetet venilei viniciiu

(1) GERHARD E., *Etruskische Spiegel*, IV, Berlin, 1867, Taf. CCCXXII; FABRETTI A., CII, 2494 bis.

(2) VOŠCININA A. I., *Očerki istorii drevne-rimskogo iskusstva*, Leningrad, 1947, p. 28; a duplicate of this mirror was published by GERHARD E., *op. cit.*, III, Taf. CCXXXIV; FABRETTI A., CII, 483.

(3) ZVETAIEFF I. V., *Sylloge inscriptionum Oscanarum*, Petropoli, 1878, N. 54; see also R. v. PLANTA, *Grammatik der oskisch umbrischen Dialekte*, Strassburg, 1892-1897, N. 122; CONWAY R. S., *The Italic Dialects*, Cambridge, 1897, N. 91; WEEGE FR., *Vasculorum Campanorum inscriptiones Italicæ*, Bonnæ, 1906, N. 62; VETTER E., *Handbuch der italischen Dialekte*, Heidelberg, 1953, N. 113; BOTTIGLIONI G., *Manuale dei dialetti italici*, Bologna, 1954, N. 57.

(4) MINERVINI G., in «Bullettino archeologico napolitano», nv. sr. II, tav. VII, 5-6; interpretation p. 137 ff.

Minervini's reading *aeraciam* instead of a correct *P.eracis estam* results from a careless drawing in which he missed four letters. This reading, afterwards adopted by a number of scholars (5), caused additional difficulties in interpreting this important inscription, which Prof. E. Vetter considers to be the oldest one in Oscan language (6). The first character in the word *peracis* is certainly somewhat unusually written but still I do not see any reason to read it *a*, for there are no traces of a cross-stroke in this otherwise quite distinct sign. A long oblique stroke may be a slip of the writer while executing the hasta of the letter *p*.



Fig. 1: Bronze stamnos V-591, Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

According to Prof. Pisani (7) the whole inscription can be translated as follows: Vinucus Venelius Peracius (?) istam dedit Venili Vinicio.

Besides these monuments the Hermitage Museum possesses a cinerary urn and two fragments of bronze vessels with Etruscan inscriptions which, as far as I know, are still unpublished.

1. G-2669. An Etruscan urn of painted terracotta (fig. 4). Length of

(5) CONWAY R. S., *op. cit.*, N. 99; WEEGE Fr., *op. cit.*, N. 37; FABRETTI A., CII, 2753, tav. XLVIII, reads *aeraci sestam*. Minervini's facsimile was correctly improved by GARUCCI R., in « *Bullettino archeologico napoletano* », nv. sr. II, p. 109; CORSSSEN W., in « *Zeitschrift f. vergl. Sprachforschung* », XI, 406; R. v. PLANTA, *op. cit.*, N. 176; PISANI V., *Le lingue dell'Italia antica oltre il latino*, Torino, 1953, N. 20 D.

(6) Letter to the author of 17-IV-1958.

(7) PISANI V., *op. cit.*, p. 72.

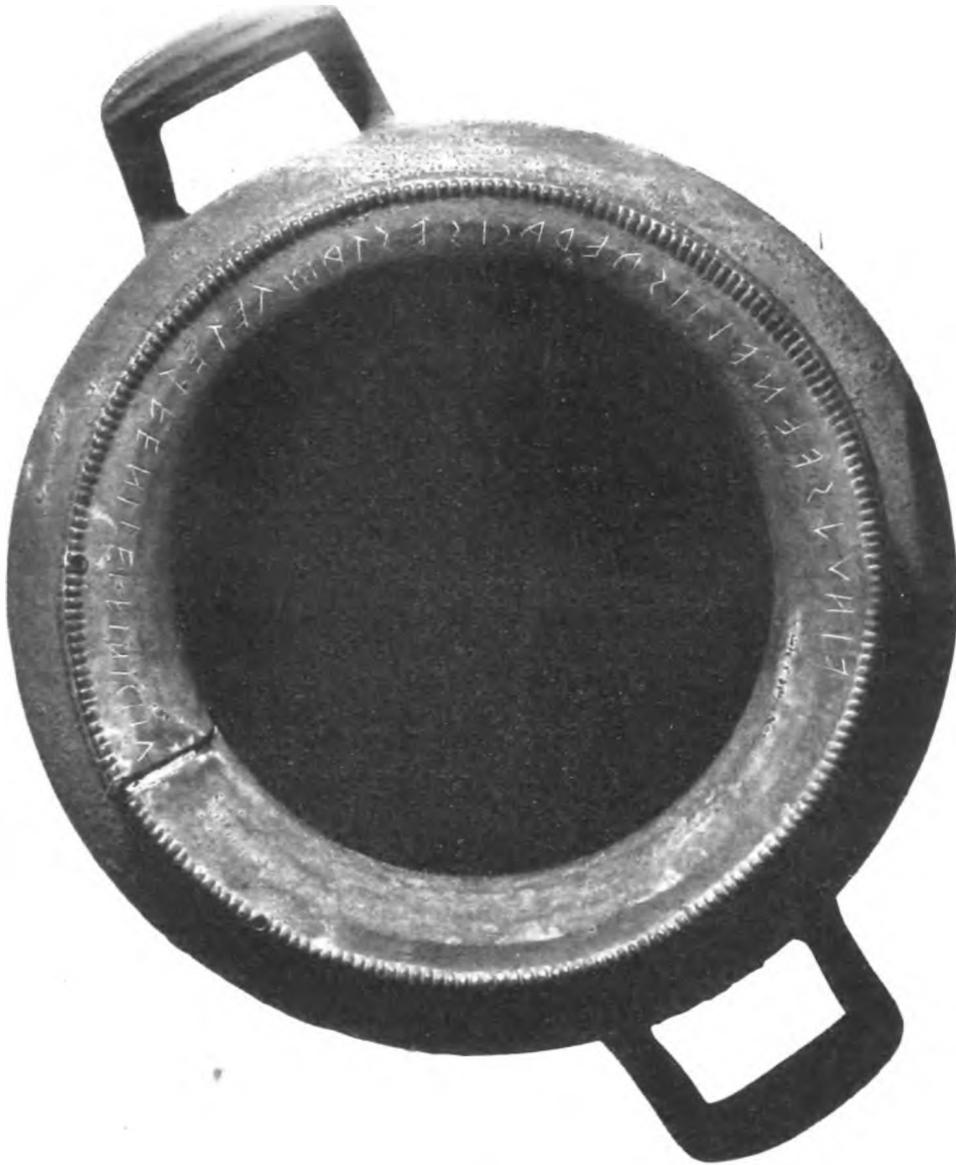


Fig. 2: The inscription of bronze stamnos V-591.

VIIIIINIRIIEEPEEYETEMWYETEEFEEHIEIRIINICIA
FINATRENEEIIIVEDPCIREKEMWYETEEFEEHIEIRIINICIA

Fig. 3: Facsimile of inscription on bronze stamnos V-591.

chest 43 cm; width 18,5 cm; height 27,5 cm. Its top is a little wider than the base. The lid is 47,5 cm long and 26 cm wide.

This urn was bought at a curiosity shop in 1940. It seems to belong to the third or late fourth century B. C. Provenance is unknown, but I think it most probably found its way to Leningrad from Chiusi, its subject, form of the alphabet and inscription itself showing striking resemblance to some Chiusine urns of that period. The front of the chest represents a well-known scene of a duel between Eteokles and Polyneikes at the moment the brothers are killing each other. Behind them two winged deities are standing with burning torches, ready to carry off their souls (8). The cover is decorated with a semirecumbent male figure.

The inscription is painted in red letters (20-22 mm high) which in some places are badly obliterated today (fig. 4,5). It reads:

αθ :vetu :m[a]rcias :arnθal



Fig. 4: Cinerary urn G-2669, Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

ΑΘΝΕΤΟΥΜΑΡΚΙΑΣΑΡΝΘΑΛ

Fig. 5: Facsimile of inscription of cinerary urn G-2669.

(8) Representations of this scene are found on numerous terracotta urns in Italian and European museums. Cp. M. JOHNSTONE, in « St. Etr. », VI, pp. 451-452.

ϑ in *arϑ* and *t* in *vetu* are certain; after *m*, which is highly probable, follows a space of badly effaced surface in which not more than one letter can be inserted; *l* is also certain.

This inscription should be compared with a group of those from Chiusi represented by CIE 2184 (cinerary urn) *au: vetu: marciaϑ*; CIE 2185 (tombstone) *arnza: vetu: ma*; and CIE 1957 (cinerary urn) *vl: vetu: marciaϑ: arϑnu*. I think it quite possible that both CIE 2185 and our inscription stand for Arnt Vetu (son) of Marcia (and) of Arnt, the diminutive *arnza* (CIE 2185) instead of *arϑ* being used to distinguish the name of the defunct from the homonymous name of his father rather than to indicate his young age (9). Poggi noticed that in such cases the patronymic is usually omitted (10).

2. Two fragments of bronze vessels which once were in the private collection of N. P. Likhachev, a Russian antiquarian of the second half of the 19th century. The Hermitage Museum acquired them as a permanent loan from the Museum of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences in 1938. They are distinctly seen to be parts of two different vessels.

(a) V-2624. A fragment of a bronze vessel (15 cm long) with an inscription scratched in Etruscan letters (10-12 mm high) running from right to left (fig. 6, 7). Provenance is unknown.



Fig. 6: Fragment of bronze vessel V-2624.



Fig. 7: Facsimile of inscription of fragment V-2624.

(9) POGGI V., in « Museo italiano di antichità classica », I, Firenze, 1885, p. 271; BUONAMICI G., *Epigrafia etrusca*, Firenze, 1932, pp. 275-276.
 (10) POGGI V., *op. cit.*, p. 376.

Closely examining this fragment I could see vague traces of what appears to be a hardly visible stroke, represented by a dotted line inside the third-last character on fig. 7. However it may have nothing to do with the letter itself. The inscription seems to contain an Etruscan word *alpan* which must denote some female deity, the meaning resulting from an above mentioned mirror (V-505), on which we find the same word beside a female figure. What may be the meaning of the rest of this fragmentary inscription remains an open question, the solution of which I leave to more experienced specialists.

(b) V-2625. A fragment of a bronze vessel (14,5 cm long) with an inscription scratched in Etruscan letters (9-14 mm high) running from right to left (fig. 8, 9). Provenance is unknown.



Fig. 8: Fragment of bronze vessel V-2625.

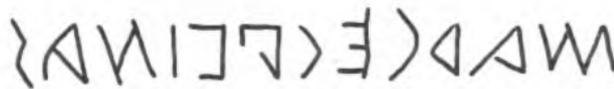


Fig. 9: Facsimile of inscription of fragment V-2625.

I think it probable that this fragment reads *marce cavinas*, though the reading of the second letter in the word *cavinas* as *a* (Oscan [N]?) seems to me very doubtful. Maybe such interchange of Etruscan and Oscan letters indicates to some southern border-region as birth-place of our inscription. (Prof. Pallottino suggests Campania) (11).

Marce is an Etruscan praenomen masc., known from many inscriptions; *cavinas* is genitive of a nomen gentile in *-na* (12). However it is hard to decide what may be the meaning of the whole inscription as a certain part of it has been probably for ever lost.

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(11) Letter to the author of 22-V-1958.

(12) Cp. *cavinei* CIE 44, 433; *cavenas* Test. lin. etr. 162; *kavini* Test. lin. etr. 453; lat. *Gavinna*, *Cavin(n)ius*, *Gavinnius*, *Gaven(n)ius*; see also SCHULZE W., *Zur Geschichte der lateinischen Eigennamen*, Göttingen, 1904, p. 76-77.