

KAR[IS] BRIT[TIUS]: A REINTERPRETATION OF VETTER No. 112*

One of the great mysteries of the history of southern Italy, if studied from a purely literary point of view, is the ethnic composition of the Greek cities in the era of the Oscan and Roman conquests. Ancient authors paint a most gloomy picture of those cities which were conquered by the Oscan peoples at the end of the 5th century B.C. or later, saying in some cases that the entire Greek population was slaughtered (Cumae, 421 B.C.),¹ in others that the entire élite was slaughtered (as happened during the capture of Rhegium by Campanian mercenaries in 275 B.C.),² and in yet others that the remainder of the Greek population was kept in a state of dire subjection (Paestum, 410 B.C.).³ While not wishing to minimize the horrors of war, these lurid tales must be an over-simplification of the actual situation. It is not readily plausible that entire Greek populations disappeared so abruptly.

The problem, however, lies in the fact that there is little contemporary material which can be used as corroborative evidence. By the time a substantial body of epigraphic material appears, in the 1st century A.D., the native populations (both Greek and Oscan) appear to have been subsumed under a homogeneous layer of Romanisation, or to have disappeared altogether.⁴ Archaeologically, there is reason to believe that Paestum, at least, was not sacked during the Lucanian conquest, and that a substantial element of Greek culture persisted until the founding of the Roman colony there in 273 B.C.⁵ The epigraphic record for southern Italy is sparse until the early empire, leaving historians to try to reconstruct ethnic changes from a few small scraps of linguistic and onomastic data. At Cumae, however, a small group of Oscan inscriptions survives, dated to the 2nd century B.C., which may cast some light on the ethnicity of the population.

This said, epigraphic evidence for the Oscan population of Roman Cumae is comparatively slight and frequently fragmentary in form. One of the most contentious texts is a fragmentary epitaph of the 2nd century B.C., published by Maiuri and by Vetter,⁶ and subsequently the subject of a number of proposed emendations.⁷

It is an inscription in the Oscan alphabet on a rough-hewn tufa block, apparently from a chamber tomb, and consists only of the name of the deceased. The stone has suffered extensive damage, and only the first part of each element of the name survive. The original reading of the text, as proposed by Maiuri, is as follows:

Kadi[s] | Brit[ties]
(Lat. Cadi[us] | Brit[tius])

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¹ Livy 4.37.1, 44.12; Diod. 12.23.2, 76.4, 14.101–3; Front. *Strat.* 2.3.12; Polyaeus 2.10.2.

² App. *Samn.* 9.1–3, 12.1; Front. *Strat.* 4.1.38; Livy 28.28.1–7, 31.31.6–8, *Per.* 12, *Per.* 15; Pol. 1.6.8, 7.1; Dion. Hal. 20.4.1–5.5; Dio 9.40.7–12.

³ Aristox. ap. Athen. 14.632a–b. See G. Pugliese Carratelli, 'Sanniti, Lucani, Bruttii e Ialioti dal secolo IV a.C.' *Atti di 8° Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia* (1972), 37–54; A. Fraschetti, 'Aristosseno, i romani e la "barbarizzazione" di Poseidonia' *AION* 3 (1981), 97–115; J. Pedley, *Paestum* (1990), 97–112.

⁴ On the problems of the disappearing Greeks see F. Costabile *Municipium Locrensiensium* (Naples, 1978). ⁵ J. Pedley, *Paestum* (1990), 97–112.

⁶ A. Maiuri, 'Cuma—Altre stele sepolcrali con iscrizione Osca' *NSc* 1913, 53–4, E. Vetter, *Handbuch der Italischen Dialekte* (Heidelberg, 1953), No. 112.

⁷ F. Ribezzo, 'Studi e scoperte di epigrafia osco-lucano nell'ultima decennio' *RIGI* 8 (1924), 83–100, P. Poccetti, 'Un Brettio a Cuma' *PdP* 39 (1984), 43–7.

This reading can be supported by reference to the onomastics of Campania, although the *nomen* is an unusual one. Brittius, and its alternative forms Brettius or Bruttius, is a name of ethnic derivation and is widely distributed in all parts of Southern Italy. Kadius, although rare, is not unknown, and examples of the name are found at Interpromium, Asculum and Abellinum.⁸

However, this reading is uncertain. Damage to the stone at the crucial point has obscured the final letters of each name. An alternative reading, *Kari[s] Brit[ties]* (*Cari[us] Brit[tius]*), appears to be more accurate, but the lack of corroborative onomastic evidence from Southern Italy has cast doubt on this.⁹ *Car[ius]* is a *nomen* which has no known onomastic parallels in southern Italy.

The name has also been interpreted as *K. Ari[us] Brit[tius]*,¹⁰ but this is unsatisfactory. It implies the existence of a *cognomen* at a date when these were still quite rare apart from in certain very specific social contexts.¹¹

Most recently, Poccetti¹² has suggested that the difficulties would disappear if it was interpreted as a transliterated Greek name, an Oscan rendering of the Greek name *Χαρ[ης]* (*Χαρ[ις]*?) *Βρετ[τιος]*. On this reading, *Βρετ[...]* is reconstructed as *Βρετ[τιος]* and is interpreted as an ethnic rather than a patronymic.

A possible parallel for this, albeit translating in the opposite direction, from Oscan to Greek, is found in a series of 2nd and 1st century Greek epitaphs from Rhodes. These commemorate Italian settlers of Bruttian origin.¹³ They contain a mixture of Greek and Oscan names, some of the immigrants having apparently taken Greek names, but all are expressed in the form name + ethnic, rather than name + patronymic. This is a highly anomalous onomastic form by Italian standards, but is documented in the Greek world, although much less common than name + patronymic, or name + patronymic + ethnic. The name could, therefore, be taken as potential evidence for the survival of Greek onomastic types at Cumae, as well as evidence of Kares's ethnic origins.

However, none of these hypotheses solve the problem convincingly. Maiuri's reading of Kadis (Cadius) appears to be the more dubious of the two possibilities, but his interpretation of Brittius as part of a normal Oscan onomastic structure is plausible.¹⁴ A third possibility, that it is a *cognomen*, can almost certainly be excluded, given the early date of the piece, and the Oscan context.¹⁵

There remains, however, the problem that the most likely reading, *Karis* (Carius), is also the most problematic in terms of finding onomastic parallels, although this is not in itself an insuperable problem. The reading of *Karis* as an Oscanized form of *Χαρ[ης]* is the most attractive possibility, but the reconstruction of the second element of the name as *Βρετ[τιος]* is problematic. Poccetti's suggestion that it is an ethnic, analogous to those found on Rhodes, must be rejected. The use of an ethnic instead

⁸ CIL 9.3050, 9.6086 and 10.1158.

⁹ Vetter, No. 112, Poccetti, 43–7, Maiuri, 53–4; R. S. Conway, *The Italic Dialects* (Cambridge, 1897), 222.

¹⁰ Vetter, 112; Poccetti, 43–7.

¹¹ On the development of *cognomina* see I. Kajanto *The Latin Cognomen* (Helsinki, 1970).

¹² Poccetti, 43–7.

¹³ G. Pugliese Caratelli 'I Brettii a Rodi' *ASCL* 17 (1948), 1–7.

¹⁴ M. Lejeune, *Onomastique Latine* (Paris, 1981), 35–41. For examples cf. C. D. Buck *A Grammar of Oscan and Umbrian* (Boston, 1904), No. 40.

¹⁵ Lejeune, *OL* 35–41; Kajanto, *ibid.*, 63–70. Very few of the 2nd- and 1st-century B.C. names at Cumae include *cognomina* and some of the examples which do occur are dubious. In at least one instance, that of G. Eburis Pomponius (H. Warmington, *Remains of Old Latin*, 4, No. 1614), the apparent *cognomen* seems more likely to be an Oscan patronymic, taken from the *nomen* of the father, and with the filiation or libertination omitted.

of a patronymic (rather than in addition to it) has parallels in the Greek epigraphy of Italy, most notably from Velia and Naples, but it is relatively rare, and occurs in rather different contexts. The most frequent instances are, as for the Bruttians on Rhodes, those of Greek immigrants from the eastern empire, who are identified on their tombstones by name, patronymic and the name of their native city.¹⁶ Patronymics are not usually found in Oscan names—these mostly have the characteristic Italic structure of *praenomen* + *nomen*—but ethnics are also very rare in Oscan onomastics.¹⁷

If we attempt to place this inscription in its historical context, the notion of a Hellenising Bruttian being commemorated in Greek but explicitly advertising his non-Greek origins appears to be somewhat implausible. Greek was not the primary language of Cumae, which had been an Oscanized city since the 5th century, and of all the peoples of southern Italy the Bruttians were the most resistant to Greek culture. There is no obvious motive for the use of an ethnic in this instance, and plenty of reasons why such a thing should be avoided.

Poccetti's evidence is from the Italian community on Rhodes, where many Italians identified themselves as such by adding an ethnic to their name.¹⁸ It was common practice in Greek to include an ethnic as part of a name when outside ones own state, and this custom was frequently adopted by Italians in the Aegean, although most of them do not give a specific place of origin. Apart from Greeks from southern Italy, who would in any case have followed the Greek onomastic tradition, most Italians refer to themselves in Greek texts as *Ῥωμαῖοι*, or more rarely as *Ἰταλικοί*, and retain the Italian onomastic form of *praenomen* + *nomen* rather than adopting a Greek name.¹⁹ The Bruttians on Rhodes are very much the exceptions which prove the rule in giving themselves a more specific ethnic description.

The explanation may lie in the political situation after the Punic wars. During Hannibal's invasion of Italy, most of the Bruttians revolted against Rome and became some of his staunchest allies, supporting his cause until he was forced to return to Carthage in 203 B.C.²⁰ As a result, Bruttium was very harshly treated by Rome in the post-war years.²¹ If, as is possible, the Bruttian community on Rhodes were exiles or their descendants, there is a very good reason why they might want to make a point of differentiating themselves from Romans. The adoption of Greek onomastic forms may be an indication that this was a long-term and more integrated community, not a more mobile group of *negotiatores*, as were many other Italians in the Aegean.

At Cumae, on the other hand, many of these considerations would not apply. Cumae had been captured by the Oscan-speaking Campanians in 421 B.C., after which much of the Greek population fled, and it rapidly became linguistically and culturally Oscanised.²² It acquired the status of *civitas sine suffragio* in 338 B.C., and thus had a very close connection with Rome, remaining a loyal ally during the 2nd Punic War.²³ In 188 B.C., Cumae had formally requested Roman permission to replace Oscan by Latin as its official language, an act which may have been the

¹⁶ SEG 32.921 and 922. SEG 16.583. Data from Cumae, Naples, and the Aegean, indicates that the form name + ethnic is much less common than name + patronymic or name + patronymic + ethnic.

¹⁷ One of the few examples is Dekis Hereiis Dekieis Saipinaz (Buck, No. 40), a native of Saepinum.

¹⁸ Poccetti, 43–7; Pugliese Caratelli, 1–7.

¹⁹ J. Hatzfeld *Trafiquants Italiens dans l'Orient Hellénique*. (Paris, 1919), and 'Les Italiens Residents a Delos' *BCH* 36 (1912), 5–218.

²⁰ Livy 24.1.1–3.15; App. *Hann.* 9.57.

²¹ P. A. Brunt *Italian Manpower 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* Oxford 1971, 353–75.

²² Diod. 12.23.2, 76.4, 14.101–3.

²³ Livy 24.1.1–3.15.

prelude to a grant of full Roman citizenship.²⁴ Against this loyalist background, it seems unlikely that any Bruttian should wish to make an overt point of his ethnic origins, as this may carry distinct overtones of anti-Roman tendencies.

To return to the inscription itself, a more satisfactory explanation can perhaps be suggested by abandoning Poccetti's reconstruction of *Brit[...]* as a Greek ethnic, while accepting his basic reading of the text as *Kari[s] Brit[ities]*. This can readily be interpreted as an Oscanised form of the Greek name *Χαρ[ης]* (or *Χαρ[ις]*?) *Βρετ[τιου]*, using the more usual form of name+patronymic, rather than name+ethnic.

What we now seem to have is a Graeco-Oscan name of a type which is well-attested both in Campania and amongst some Campanians in the Greek East. Names composed of a Greek name and Oscan patronymic, or alternatively an Oscan name and Greek patronymic, are also documented from Velia and Naples.²⁵ Indeed the examples from Naples include a series of epitaphs from a chamber tomb of the 1st century A.D. in which a family alternated Greek (Epilytos) and Oscan (Trebios, Vibios) names over a number of generations, producing a pattern of Oscan name+Greek patronymic and Greek name+Oscan patronymic.²⁶ The same phenomenon is also found among Southern Italians in the Aegean, including the Cumaean ephebe, Attinos Herakleidou, a victor in the games at Oropos in c. 80 B.C.²⁷

By interpreting the inscription along these lines, it remains consistent with the onomastic history both of Cumae and of Southern Italy as a whole during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. Greek and Oscan features continued to co-exist, even after Latin became the predominant language. In doing so, they reflect the multi-cultural and multi-lingual nature of the city, and the intermingling of Greek and Oscan populations.

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²⁴ Livy 40.42.13, Varro ap. Gell. 11.1.5.

²⁵ IG 14.660, AE 1912, 218, Levi, *Mon. Ant.* 1926, 378–402, IG 14.615.

²⁶ Levi, *Mon. Ant.* 1926, 378–402.

²⁷ IG 7.417. A second Cumaean, Abris Kaikou, appears on the same victory list. For other examples amongst South Italians in the east cf *BCH* 36, 84–6 (including the Herakleote Titos Satyrionos, his son Titos Titou, and his grandchildren Theodora, Satyros and Posidippos; or the Tarentines Demetrios Dazou and Parmenion Dazymou, whose patronymics indicate Messapian connections) and IG 12.3.1233 (Noumerios Leontos of Tarentum).