

Lionel Galand
"T(h)" in Libyan and Canarian place-names*

1. The problem of "T(h)-" in place-names

1.1. Many place-names in ancient North Africa have an initial "T-" or "Th-" and, since the accepted opinion is that the language then spoken was the old form of Berber, one is tempted to compare such names with Berber feminine nouns, most of which bear the mark "t-". The same can be said of Canarian place-names, and initial "T-" might be and indeed has been taken as evidence of a connection between Canarian and Berber (Vycichl 1987: 52).

There is no reason to stop at this point and, considering the existence of place-names with initial "A-" in ancient North Africa and in the Canary Islands, it may seem legitimate to draw a parallel between those names and Berber masculine nouns in "a-". And again, the comparison has actually been made (Peyras 1988: 190 ff.).

1.2. I do not intend to object to the principle of such procedures, which certainly are a means of exploring the mysterious fields of Libyan (i.e. the language or languages of ancient North Africa) and Canarian. But I think it necessary to keep in mind the whole situation in which the phenomena appear, so that the information they are supposed to yield may be properly evaluated. The object of the present paper is therefore to sketch the problem of gender in Berber nouns, in order to ascertain to what extent Berber data can help us analyse Libyan and Canarian names.

1.3. Two preliminary remarks must be made:

a) Place-names are perhaps the most conservative part of the linguistic material, so that, even if Libyan really is old Berber, a place-name in ancient North Africa may be pre-Libyan (pre-Berber), since prehistorians know of the presence of populations prior to Berbers in the area. Why, then, should every place-name be referred to Berber ?

b) The grammatical gender of ancient African place-names (assuming that the language or languages to which they belong did make use of genders, and disregarding the probable existence of dialectal differences) remains unknown in most cases, if not all. What can be concluded from the treatment those names received in Latin, for instance ? If that treatment means anything at all, then we have to discard a name like T(h)uburbo from the feminine group, since the full form is T(h)uburbo Maius (neuter !), not " *T(h)uburbo Maior". Canarian place-names raise similar problems. There is a risk of circularity in arguing at the same time that a name in "T-" is feminine because it looks like Berber feminine nouns, and that Libyan or Canarian are akin to Berber because they display the same marks of gender.

2. Nouns in Berber; an outline

2.1. Berber nouns, including modern place-names, can be classified in three groups: Group I is rather heterogeneous and would be best defined as consisting of those nouns which belong neither to Group II nor to Group III. Some are relicts of an ancient vocabulary: fad "thirst", laz "hunger", mddn "people". Others refer to close kinship: baba "my father", g^wma "my brother", etc. A place-name like Mṛṛak^{wš} "Marrakech" could be assigned to Group I.

Group II is represented by a large number of nouns with an initial consonant "l-", which is the Arabic article. They have been borrowed from Arabic (or through Arabic) and they retain the article once for all, whatever function they fulfil: lqayd

"chief (of a tribe)", lflus "money", lxdmt (fem.) "work", etc. Before certain consonants, the article "l-" is subject to phonetic assimilation, as it is in Arabic: *lsuq > ssuq "market", a word to be found in place-names too.

Group III includes the bulk of nouns, those which are considered as representative of Berber morphology. But they need not be genuine Berber words: many were borrowed from another language and received a Berber form. Masculine nouns of Group III have an initial vowel: adrar "mountain", agadir (probably from Phoenician origin) "wall" or "fortified collective granary", itri "star", etc. Feminine nouns in the singular have "t-" before the vowel and also, in most cases, a final "-t": tafukt "sun", tilist "fleece" etc.

Comparison with other Hamito-Semitic languages (Arabic for instance) shows that in an earlier stage final "-t" was the proper mark of gender (Cohen 1988: 20), a mark which is used to point to a range of various specifications, and not only sex. In Berber, initial "t-" probably appeared before the nominal stem as a part of "ta", feminine of "wa" (and without explicit masculine mark: "a", a pronoun which often became the nucleus of demonstratives, but was also used as a kind of article and finally stuck to the noun, thus forming with it a single word: *a-drar > adrar, *ta-fukt > tafukt, etc. The hypothesis was elaborated by Vycichl (1957), and there are good reasons to accept it, so that we can consider initial "t-" as diachronically second to final "-t".

There are facts, though, which do not fit in and have to be accounted for. Final "-t" is missing in the plural and sometimes also in the singular: tig^wmma "houses", tilasiwin "fleeces", and tamgra "harvest", tizi "pass (through mountains)", etc. To explain the plural forms, Basset (1952: 23) suggested that Berber, in a former stage, did not oppose genders in the plural (1), but, even if we accept his opinion, we are still faced with the problem of those nouns that have no final "-t" in the singular.

Basset observed that "-t" does not occur when the stem ends in "-a" or "-i", but this is not a rule, as is shown by taydit "bitch", and I had rather put things the other way round: feminine nouns without final "-t" end in "-a" or "-i". Furthermore, with rare exceptions, those nouns are isolated, I mean that they are not opposed to masculine forms, whereas taydit (not *taydi) is the feminine of aydi "dog". The situation might lead to the conclusion that "-t" disappeared under certain phonetic conditions, say after a vowel, unless an opposition had to be maintained with a masculine form. But of course this is rather guesswork.

Whatever lacunae subsist, I think that any comparison between Libyan or Canarian and Berber should allow for the present situation in Berber and its historical background. Nay, comparing a "t" with a "t" would be meaningless if we failed to consider the frame in which they appear.

3. Libyan and Canarian data: a discussion

3.1. Data (2) from ancient North Africa (ANA) and from the Canary Islands (CI) will be discussed at the same time for the sake of brevity, but that does not imply the recognition of any privileged relation between those areas. Now, what do we observe in the onomastic material?

- Place-names in "T(h)---t(vowel)", which might correspond to modern nouns in "t---t": ANA Thinissut, Tigit, Thagaste, Thelepte, Theueste; Tupusuctu, etc.; - CI Taburiente, Tacote, Tagomate, Tagojaite, Tagarajita, etc.

- Place-names in "T(h)-", without a final "-t": ANA Tacape, Thabraca, Tipasa, Thugga, T(h)uburbo-Maius, etc.; - CI Taganana, Tagoja, Tamanca, etc.

At first sight, then, the situation looks very much the same as in Berber. But questions arise as soon as one proceeds with further investigations.

3.2. Are those place-names feminine? - Neither Libyan

nor Canarian sources reveal the gender of place-names (as to other sources, see § 1.3.b). Personal names can be of some help, on condition that we know whether a man or a woman is named. It then appears that forms with initial "T(h)-" are not necessarily feminine, as is shown by the names of Tacfarinas, the famous rebel, or Taufia, a warrior (but also a place-name; Wölfel 1965: 720). Even names in "T---t" may apply to men: Chabot (1940) registered fourteen such names, out of which one is feminine (Tšblt, according to Février 1956: 270), two (Tkdt, Tštt) refer to men, one (Trlt) may be the name of a man; there is no clue for the rest of them (3). Could one be satisfied with the objection that a feminine noun or name may be transferred to a man (cf. French "La Fontaine")?

3.3. Are final "ta/e/i" rightly identified with final "-t" ? Chabot (1940) records four personal names in T---t', where "" (H in Chabot) probably represents a vowel. But again nothing proves that those were names of women. At any rate the presence of the final vowel should be accounted for.

3.4. How is it that names with final "-t" are not so frequent as might be expected for remote periods, when "-t", the genuine mark of the feminine gender (§ 2.1), should be - or so it seems - much better exemplified ? Some facts can help us to an answer:

a) Names in "-t" do exist in ancient North Africa, mainly in the West. Ptolemy the Geographer mentions many places or rivers the names of which had a "-th" ending: Iagath, Akmath, Thikath, Dorath, Assarath (river), etc. In a few cases, the ending still exists today as a feminine mark: the rivers Molokhath (Ptolemy) and Masath (Pliny) are called Mlwit (< *Mluyt ? < *Mlukt ?) and Masst by the Berbers.

b) There are reasons to think that many names with final "-a" might be allomorphs of names in "-at". Greek and Latin transcriptions of Libyan names in "-(a)n" usually drop the last consonant and have the ending "-a": a well-known example is

Massinissa, spelled Msnsn in Libyan and in Punic. But the problem of "-t" is not merely one of transcription. Some names apparently have two forms, one with "-t", the other without "-t", sometimes in the same author. Pliny mentions the town Sala and the river "eiusdem nominis" ("of the same name" / V, 5), then calls that same river Salat (V, 9); Ptolemy says Sala (IV, 1, 2, p. 576: the town; IV, 1, 2, p. 579: the river, genitive) and Salata (IV, 1, 2, 576: the river, genitive); there are other variants (4). The name of the river Masath (Pliny, V, 9), today Masst in Berber (see above), takes the form Massa in Ptolemy (IV, 6, 2, p. 731: genitive). The river Darad(os) (Ptolemy, IV, 6, 2, p. 731: genitive) or Darat (Pliny, V, 9) is now named Dra. A few Canarian examples might belong here: Taco / Tacote (Díaz Alayón 1987: 145) and perhaps Tagoja / Tagojaite (147, 148).

Oscillations between Ø and t occur elsewhere. Tuareg verbs of the type *dalət* "to be green" do not retain the consonant "t" in all syllabic structures: *dalätmät* "you (fem.) are green" / *dalim* (but *dalätäm* is not excluded) "you (masc.) are green". In the Arabic dialects of North Africa, a feminine noun like *mdīna* "town" may become *mdīnət* in certain constructions (Marçais 1977: 166). There is a vague resemblance between those phenomena, but each of them must be studied in the system to which it belongs and no general statement can be made for the moment.

3.5. When was the initial element "(t)a/i-" incorporated in Berber nouns and when did it lose its previous function and value (§ 2.1) ? - Rössler (1958: 107), Chaker (1984: 269) and Vycichl (1987: 52) are of opinion that the change had not yet occurred in Libyan times. If they are right as I believe they are, then we must assume that Libyan names in "T(h)-" are phrases with two constituents, a determinative and a noun. *Shilha*, in Southern Morocco, has place-names (microtoponyms) with the demonstrative *ann* "that"; the article is not uncommon in French as like "*Le Havre*" (Galand 1980). So the case of Libyan names

would not be unique. Another possibility would be to take "T(h)a/i-" as the nucleus of a construct like Shilha "ta mlluln" literally "that (fem.) being-white" - "the one which is white" (cf. the ancient place-name Thamallula !). One could also quote Tuareg names of the type "I n-" (masc.) or "Ti n-" (fem.) "one of -" (Galand: 1986). If we suppose such names existed in Libyan, we must also admit that for some reason they favoured the feminine gender: forms in "A-/I-", though not unknown, are comparatively rare, as Chaker (1984: 269) observed for personal names. Moreover, there are cases when one may be reluctant to split a name into two words: such forms as Thala, Thugga impress as looking very much like single words, not phrases, and a few pairs can be found that remind of the present opposition of gender in Berber: J. Desanges kindly drew my attention to two of them: Alele(n) (Pliny, V, 35: accusative) / Talalati (Itin. Ant., 76, 7) and Balla (Pliny, V, 37) / Tabalati (Itin. Ant., 75, 3). On the other hand, if the present system already existed in Libyan, should not the number of Libyan names in "A-" or "I-", "Ta-" or "Ti-" be much larger than it is?

As to Canarian, it raises similar difficulties. Vycichl (1987: 52), who regards Canarian as a Berber language, thinks that the "article" (t)a/i-, still independent in Libyan, is treated as a mere element of the word in Canarian. But the number of Canarian nouns and names in (t)a/i-, though rather important, does not seem to reach the expected level. Pairs like Tanausu / Atanausu (with a + ta !) induce to be cautious when describing the functions of "a" and "ta" (names quoted by Díaz Alayón 1987: 118). Finally, attention must be paid to forms that look Berber and are not, as Canarian "Talisca" which, according to Díaz Alayón, is of Lusitanian origin.

4. Mine is by no means a negative attitude. The problem of the relation between Libyan and Berber, or Canarian and Berber, is extremely complex. Even connections that seem evident, such as might be inferred from the existence of names in

"T(h)---t", raise difficult questions which cannot be answered without weighing pros and cons. But on the whole, doubt is more rewarding than quickly accepted hypotheses.

Notes:

* An abridged version of this paper was presented to the Commission d'histoire et d'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord (Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques), Paris, on the 20th of February, 1989.

(1) On the occasion of the Journée d'études linguistique berbère, Paris, March 11th, 1989, W. Vycichl argued (if I correctly understood), that a few Berber nouns like *tiġaṭṭn* "goats" combine the marks "t" (fem.) and "n" (plur.).

(2) African names are easily found in Chabot (1940), Müller's edition of Ptolemy (1901), Desanges' edition and rich commentary of Pliny (1980), Lassère (1977). Many Canarian names are listed in the very good book by Díaz Alayón (1987) and, of course, in Wölfel (1965). There are many other sources. - The question of the phonetic value of "T-" and "Th-" in Greek and Latin transcriptions is not dealt with here; the difference may be purely graphic or actually phonetic (cf. the variants of t in Berber); I assume that in any case a dental consonant is meant.

(3) In respect of those difficulties, it is interesting to note that Février (1956: 271) wrote: "Je propose donc l'hypothèse 'de travail' suivante. En libyque beaucoup de noms propres féminins n'auraient pas une forme féminine."

(4) Variants with "th" or even with "g": see Desanges (1980: 96 and n. 7), who speaks of an extension of the stem.

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"T(h)" in libyschen und kanarischen Ortsnamen (Zusammenfassung von Helmut Stumfohl)

Professor Galand berührt eine grundsätzliche Frage, die für die Beziehungen zwischen dem Altkanarischen und dem Libyschen und damit für die Frage des Verhältnisses zum Berberischen wesentlich ist: es ist die Frage, ob die zahlreichen Ortsnamen mit/oder initialem und/oder finale "t-" bzw. "-t" (oder "th" in der Anlautposition) als weiblich aufzufassen sind. Die altlibyschen Ortsnamen dieses Typs wurden zuerst durch M. Gustave Mercier gesammelt (*Journal asiatique* 25, 1924, pp. 189-320). Eine ähnliche Parallele könnten die modernen berberischen Ortsnamen darstellen, die mit "a-" beginnen. Wenn Libysch eine Vorstufe des Berberischen ist, dann gilt für die Antike, daß es auch vorberberische Ortsnamen unseres Typs geben kann.

Berberische Substantive lassen sich, besonders vom Anlaut her, in drei Klassen einteilen: 1) in heterogene, die keines dieser Elemente enthalten; 2) in die mit "l-" beginnenden, worin sich der arabische Artikel verbirgt, der fest geworden ist; und

3) die zahlreichste Gruppe, solche mit "a-" und mit "t-" bzw. "th-" beginnende und/oder mit "-t" endende (im Singular): t-afuk-t "Sonne". Für die hamito-semitischen Sprachen gilt, daß "t-" im Anlaut früh als weibliches Formans aufgefaßt wurde; im Berberischen scheint diese Entwicklung später eingetreten zu sein: ein ursprüngliches Pronomen "t-", "th-" wird über eine demonstrative Stufe zum Artikel, der endlich fest mit dem Wort verschmolzen wird wie auch der männliche in "a-". Dies führt zur Frage, ob die antiken libyschen Ortsnamen so zu verstehen sind, wobei die Frage unberührt bleibt, wie das grammatische Geschlecht eines Ortsnamen überhaupt zu verstehen sei. Wir haben etwa Thinissut, Tigit, Tacote etc. Der Name des Rebellen Tacfarinas sollte uns warnen; Tkdt (nicht vokalisiert) ist ein Männername.

Dazu kommt ein statistisches Element: Sollte vor allen Dingen die Gruppe auf "-t" weiblich sein, dann wäre eine größere Häufigkeit zu erwarten. Dazu kommen die Doppelformen, wie Sala (eine Stadt) und der dazu gehörige Fluß Salat (nach Plinius). Die mit "t-" bzw. "th-" anlautenden Namen könnten auch durch Zusammenrückung einer Fügung entstanden sein. Ein weiteres Element des Zweifels ergibt sich aus einem abgeleiteten statistischen Argument: Wörter mit sehr kurzem Wortkörper wie Thala, Thugga zerlegt man ungern weiter: Sie machen einen ursprünglichen Eindruck. Ferner: Wenn Wörter in "i-", "ta-ti" beginnend weiblich sind, sollten sie nicht schon im Libyschen häufiger sein? Aber die antike Fügung "Thuburbo maius" zeigt, daß man diesen Ortsnamen als Neutrum auffaßte. Sollte die betreffende Vorsilbe "t-" bzw. "th-" im Altkanarischen weiblich bezogen sein, warum ist die Zahl dieser Wörter nicht größer? Dazu kommen Paare, wie Tanausu / Atanausu. Galands scharfsinnige Überlegungen zeigen wieder einmal, daß die Beziehungen zwischen dem Altkanarischen und dem Libysch-Berberischen nicht einlinig, sondern komplexer Natur sind, sodaß jede direkte Abgleichung fragwürdig bleibt.