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## RED LETTERS AND PHOENICIAN WRITING

The appearance of the words *ποινικαστάς* and *ποινικάζεν* in the recently discovered inscription from Crete (BM 1969. 4—2.1) has again raised the question of how various words containing the element *φοινικ-* came to be applied to writing. R. F. Willetts has referred with approval to “the possibility that the original meaning of *ποινικάζεν* was something like ‘to make red’ and had no direct connection with ‘Phoenician’”.<sup>1</sup> He is taking up a suggestion expressed with more caution by L. H. Jeffery and A. Morpurgo-Davies in their original publication of the inscription, where their note on the word includes the following: “Debrunner has pointed out that in Greek *-άζω* rather than *-ίζω* is normally used to form verbs derived from colour names. Obviously this is not sufficient to prove that the original meaning of *ποινικάζω* was something like ‘to make red’, and had no direct connection with ‘Phoenician’; but this possibility should be kept in mind.”<sup>2</sup>

But the first part of this statement lacks foundation and is surely misleading. The notion that *-άζω* rather than *-ίζω* is normal for verbs derived from colour names is not borne out by an investigation of the examples: one may cite *γλαυκίζω*, *ἐπιξανθίζω*, *ἐπιφοινικίζω*, *κοκκινίζω*, *κροκίζω*, *κυανίζω*, *λευκα(ν)θίζω*, *μελανίζω*, *ξανθίζω*, *παρὰκροκίζω*, *πορφυρίζω*, *πρασίζω*, *πρασινίζω*, *πυρρίζω*, *ὕπολευκανθίζω*, *ὕπολευκίζω*, *φοινικίζω*, *χαλκανθίζω*, *χαλκίζω*, *χλωρίζω* and *χρυσίζω*, beside only a very limited number of *-άζω* verbs, namely *ιάζω*, *πολιάζω*, *ὕποπελιάζω*, *χλοάζω* and *πυρράζω*, the first three of which have stems ending in an iota, so that in any case *-ίζω* is not to be expected for phonological reasons<sup>3</sup>. This leaves *χλοάζω*, found in Aristotle and elsewhere, and *πυρράζω* attested only at Matthew 16.2, though in the Septuagint *πυρρίζω* occurs in the same sense (five ex-

<sup>1</sup> Kadmos 11, 1972, 97.

<sup>2</sup> Kadmos 9, 1970, 133, referring to Debrunner's *Griechische Wortbildungslehre* 1917, 122; cf. Willetts loc. cit. n. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Debrunner op. cit. 127, comparing the nominal ending *-ιάδης* beside the non-existent *\*-ιίδης*, etc.; even so, *ἵειν* ‘to be like rust’ is attested in Dioscorides.

amples in Leviticus 13.19 to 14.37). Debrunner in fact makes no remark about the relative frequency of -άζω and -ίζω in colour words; all he says is that -άζειν frequently alternates with -οῦν or -αίνειν to form verbs derived from certain adjectives, including a number of adjectives expressing 'colour', 'dampness' and the like. He cites πελιός 'dark blue' giving πελιαίνειν and πελιοῦν 'make dark blue' beside ὑποπελιάζειν 'be dark blue'; similarly ὑγρός, ὑγραίνειν, ὑγραίνειν 'to be wet', περκνός, περκαίνειν, περκάζειν 'to be dark' (cf. Homeric ὑποπερκάζειν η 126). If it followed the analogy of verbs of this type, one would expect φοινικάζειν to mean not 'to make red' but 'to be red'. Now it is true that certain -άζω verbs, derived from adjectives, are found in a transitive sense, including the Homeric ἰσάζω 'to make equal' (M 435; also intrans. 'to be equal' in later Greek) and ἐτοιμάζω 'to make ready'. But all known 'colour' verbs in -άζω are intransitive: ἰάζω 'to be violet' or 'to be green', πολιάζω 'to become or be grey', χλοάζω 'to be green' and πυρράζω 'to be red'. It is also worth noting that where colour adjectives form verbs in -ίζω the verbs have an intransitive sense very much more commonly than a transitive one: thus, out of the twenty-one -ίζω verbs listed at the start of this paragraph, only ξανθίζω and ἐπιξανθίζω are found in a transitive sense (the former also occurs intransitively), while the remaining nineteen are intransitive only, including φοινικίζω beside the transitive φοινίσσω.

From this evidence one must conclude (a) that the formation of ποινικάζειν with -άζω rather than -ίζω does not constitute an argument for connecting it with φοῖνιξ in its sense 'red' rather than any of its other senses; and (b) that, if nevertheless the basic meaning of the verb had been to do with the colour red, its most likely sense would have been intransitive 'to be red', which provides no satisfactory explanation of ποινικάζειν as now attested with a meaning of 'to write' or 'to record', parallel to μναμονεῦεν in the inscription.

The existence of a verb φοινικάζω 'to write' was unsuspected until the appearance of the new Cretan inscription, but several other words derived from φοῖνιξ have long been known to be connected with writing, notably φοινικήια as a noun (also adj. with γράμματα) but also φοινίκια, φοινικικά (both adj. with γράμματα), φοινικογράφος and ἐκφοινίξαι (? 'read' in Hesychius). Although these words may have come to be used in this specialised sense independently of each other and in different parts of Greece, it is likely that they were first applied to writing for one and the same reason. What ways are there of explaining how derivatives of φοῖνιξ came to be associated with writing?

The etymology of φοῖνιξ is a complex field where conjectures abound,

but the main point relevant to this problem is that, by the time of the adoption of the alphabetic script in Greece, the word φοῖνιξ itself, together with several related forms, was already being used in at least five senses:

- (a) the personal name 'Phoenix';
- (b) the ethnic name 'Phoenician' (as a noun and an adj.);
- (c) the colour 'red' or 'purple' (as a noun and an adj.);
- (d) the 'palm tree' producing dates;
- (e) the mythical bird 'the phoenix'.

It is as a proper name (a and b) that the word is most frequently used in the Homeric poems, but other senses (c and d) are also found there, and the fifth sense (e) occurs as early as the Hesiodic Fragments (304 M—W). Linear B texts from Pylos and Knossos contain several examples of words beginning *po-ni-ke-* and *po-ni-ki-* which are plausibly interpreted as being connected with (c) red and (d) palm<sup>4</sup>.

It is an open question which of these senses is the earliest, but fortunately this does not affect the problem before us, which is how the word came to be applied to writing<sup>5</sup>. From the linguistic point of view, verbs in -άζω do not show any notable restriction in their semantic reference. Thus, theoretically at least, φοινικάζω could have had as its primary sense (a) 'to be a devotee or supporter of Phoenix' (cf. Ἰακχάζω, Πυθιάζω), (b) 'to favour or be like Phoenicians' especially in speech or action, 'to do the Phoenician thing' (cf. Αἰγυπτιάζω, γαλλάζω), (c) 'to be of the colour φοῖνιξ, to be red' (cf. πυρράζω), or possibly transitive 'to make something red' (cf. ἰσάζω, though see above on colour words), (d) 'to do some action like, with or to a date-palm' (cf. συκάζω 'to gather fruit of a συκῆ', ἀμπυκάζω 'to bind with an ἀμπυξ'), or (e) 'to do some action like, with or to a phoenix-bird' (cf. μηρυνάζω 'to ruminate, like a μήρυξ (a ruminating fish)', θυννάζω 'to spear a tunny').

Which of these meanings, some of them very hypothetical, is most likely to have given rise to a developed sense of 'to write'? More than one answer is possible without invoking too far-fetched a theory of the semantic development involved, but the most plausible must seem to be

<sup>4</sup> Morpurgo, *Myc. Graec. Lexicon* 1963, 252f.; Chadwick and Baumbach, *Glotta* 41, 1963, 254f. with references; the suggested connection with (e) 'phoenix' or 'griffin' (so Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents* 1956, 344f.) is not now generally accepted.

<sup>5</sup> Even if one accepts that φοῖνιξ 'red' is the ultimate origin from which the other senses developed (see Frisk, *Gr. etym. Wörterbuch* s.v. φοινός and the discussions there cited), this does not make it any more likely than one of the other meanings as the immediate source for the word's connection with alphabetic writing.

an extension, direct or indirect, from the ethnic 'Phoenician'. The verb φοινικάζω need not of course have been derived directly from Φοῖνιξ: it might well be more reasonable to suppose that some noun meaning 'Phoenician letters' provided the bridge. The rendering 'to do φοινικήια' (so Jeffery and Davies, *Kadmos* 9, 132) explains the meaning of the word but not its morphology. It may be suggested that possibly an equivalent in Crete of Ionic φοινικήια 'letters' was φοινικικά<sup>6</sup>, so that φοινικάζω could have arisen either from \*φοινικικάζω by haplology or alternatively from a haplological form of φοινικικά: cf. the variant Φοινικά beside Φοινικικά in the text of Herodotus VI. 47.<sup>7</sup> However this may be, an explanation connecting the words for writing with φοῖνιξ in its ethnic sense has the major advantage that the Greek alphabet was undoubtedly derived from a Phoenician source, as is proved by the shape and value of the letters, their names, and their order in the abecedarium. Certainly as far as φοινικήια 'letters' is concerned, an explanation from the ethnic was widely current in antiquity from the fifth century onwards<sup>8</sup>, and it has been generally favoured ever since.

Even so, it is not the only explanation put forward, and it would be wrong to close our minds to other possibilities. Two in particular are worth considering, namely a connection with (c) the colour red and (d) the palm tree. To take the latter first, a theory said to be favoured by Cretans was that the term φοινικήια (γράμματα) originated from the practice of writing on palm leaves<sup>9</sup>. Philologically there is nothing implausible in this, since the adjective φοινικήιος is well attested not only in its sense 'Phoenician' but also as 'belonging to the palm tree' (both meanings occur in Herodotus, who uses φοίνικεος in the sense

<sup>6</sup> Cf. esp. Φοινικὰ σήματα Κάδμου Timo (of Phlius, Megara and Elis) Fr. 61 (= 58 Wachsmuth); Φοινικοῖς γράμμασι Chron. Lind. B 15 (= FGrHist III B Nr. 532 B 3) and Diod. Sic. V. 58.3 (see also next note) speaking of Lindos, beside Φοινίχεια (γράμματα) at III. 67.1 and V. 74.1.

<sup>7</sup> Φοινικός, though not admitted by Liddell and Scott<sup>9</sup>, is very frequent in MSS for Φοινικικός: other examples occur at Hdt. III. 37 and Thuc. VI. 46. Those found in texts of later authors are too numerous to be discussed here, but note especially Diod. Sic. V. 58.3 Φοινικοῖς γράμμασιν edd., φοινικοῖς codd. This question will be more fully treated elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> Herodotus V. 58; Ephorus, FGrHist II Nr. 70 F 105; and many subsequent references: see K. Sethe, 'Der Ursprung des Alphabets' in *Nachrichten d. Gött. Ges. d. Wiss., Geschäftliche Mitteilungen* 1916/17 Heft 2, esp. p. 90 with n. 2; cf. Jeffery in *Europa, Festschrift Grumach*, 1967, 152—66.

<sup>9</sup> Photius and the Suda s.v. φοινικήια γράμματα. The same explanation is ascribed to Eteoneus and Menandros in Schol. Dion. Thrac., *Gram. Graec.* I. iii p. 184 22f. Hilgard (= FGrHist I Nr. 10 F 9).

'red'). But this ambiguity may itself have given rise to the theory<sup>10</sup>, and reliable evidence for writing on palms is certainly lacking. Pliny's statement "in palmarum foliis primo scriptitatum" (N. H. XIII. 69) may well result only from learned theorising: compare his account of the supposed origin of folded tablets (*tabellae geminae*) from the flanges of the palm leaf (N. H. XIII.30). Earlier writers mention many uses of the palm in various parts of the world — for clothing in Africa, for matting among Arabs, and so on<sup>11</sup> —, but none refers to it as a writing material, and indeed there seems no reason to believe that any such use existed even in countries where the palm tree was indigenous<sup>12</sup>. This explanation of φοινικήα from the palm tree may have been inspired by the wish to deny the fact that letters had a foreign origin: compare Skamon's derivation of φοινικήα from Φοινίκη, a daughter, otherwise unknown, of an early Attic king Aktaion<sup>13</sup>. Theories of this kind are much more likely to be the result of fanciful speculation, perhaps inspired by local patriotism, than a genuine memory preserved by tradition<sup>14</sup>.

We turn to the possible connection with φοῖνιξ 'red'. There is evidence that incised letters were sometimes painted over in red (and more rarely in other colours)<sup>15</sup>. But one cannot tell how extensive this practice was, and it may well have been restricted to carefully written letters intended to be permanent, its purpose being to make the letters easier to read. Many of the earliest surviving Greek inscriptions are graffiti on the dark surface of painted pottery, and obviously these letters were never painted red. Red paint is sometimes found in association with letters, as on the terracotta metopes of the late seventh century Temple of Apollo at Thermon<sup>16</sup>, where not only the letters but substantial parts of the painted figures and other decoration are in red, and on the rim, with a carefully incised dedicatory inscription, of a sixth century marble

<sup>10</sup> So Jeffery, *Local Scripts* 51 n. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hdt. IV. 43; Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.* IV. 2. 7, IX. 4. 4.

<sup>12</sup> For discussions of writing materials used in the ancient world generally, see G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing* 1948, esp. 8—17, 78—87; A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, rev. J. R. Harris, 1962<sup>4</sup>, 361—6, esp. 364; H. Brunner's chapter 'Schreibmaterial' in U. Hausmann (ed.), *Allgemeine Grundlagen der Archäologie* 1969, 303—15.

<sup>13</sup> Jacoby, *FGrHist* III B Nr. 476 F 3; cf. Hesychius s.v. φοινικήα γράμματα.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. Rehm and G. Klaffenbach in Hausmann op. cit. (n. 12), 343 f., n. 4 on the Cretan theory; Jacoby, *FGrHist* III b (Commentary) p. 377 on Skamon.

<sup>15</sup> M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca* I, 1967, 457 f.; an early example from Gortyn is referred to by Jeffery and Davies, *Kadmos* 9, 153, n. 47. See Pliny, N. H. XXXIII. 122 on the use of minium for this purpose.

<sup>16</sup> See H. G. G. Payne in *BSA* 27, 1925/26, esp. 124 f.; one is illustrated in J. Charbonneaux, R. Martin and F. Villard, *Archaic Greek Art* 1971, 5, Ill. 3 (in colour).

bowl from Lindos<sup>17</sup> (though there the whole bowl was painted red and not merely the inscribed rim). Painted inscriptions on pottery seem to be written in the same colour as the main part of the decoration — usually dark brown or black. It is true that the vast bulk of archaic Greek writing is lost, but our knowledge of writing on perishable materials at other periods and in other parts of the ancient world does not suggest that red was typically used: ordinary ink in the classical period was black (cf. μέλαν 'ink', Latin *atramentum*, and accounts of its preparation from soot<sup>18</sup>). Among the Egyptians and Romans writing was predominantly black, and the use of red ink was confined to special purposes, like titles and headings in books and legal codes (hence English 'rubrics')<sup>19</sup>. It is difficult to believe that the colour red was ever so characteristic and distinctive of alphabetic writing that it could have given rise to terms like φοινικήια for letters and φοινικάζω for the act of writing itself<sup>20</sup>.

For this reason it is hardly surprising that one does not find much support among Greek writers for the theory that φοινικήια might be connected with φοῖνιξ in its sense 'red'. Euphronios, an Alexandrian grammarian of the 3rd century B.C., is named in the scholia to Dionysius Thrax<sup>21</sup> as explaining the word "ὅτι διὰ λίλτου τὸ πρότερον ἐγράφοντο, ὃ ἐστι χρωμά τι φοινικοῦν." Possibly the distinct suffixes of φοινικήιος and φοινίκεος 'red' made this explanation less obvious than one from 'Phoenician' or 'palm'. In Latin, however, 'puniceus' meant both 'Phoenician' (or 'Carthaginian') and 'red' (i.e. 'the Punic colour'<sup>22</sup>, cf. in English 'Prussian blue', 'turquoise', 'indigo'), and this gave rise to a curious aetiological twist among patristic and monastic writers. Writing in the 7th century, Isidorus, bishop of Seville, recognises

<sup>17</sup> C. Blinkenberg, Lindos II. 1, 1941, p. 200 no. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Vitruvius VII. 10; Pliny, N. H. XXXV. 41—3; cf. Driver op. cit. (n. 12), 31, 86, and Lucas op. cit. (n. 12), 361—3

<sup>19</sup> See G. Posener, 'Sur l'emploi de l'encre rouge dans les manuscrits égyptiens' in JEA 37, 1951, 75—80; for Rome see Ovid, Tristia I. 1. 7; Juvenal XIV. 192; Quintilian XII. 3. 11.

<sup>20</sup> It is true that the phrase φοινικᾶ γράμματα means 'red letters' at Dio, Hist. Rom. XL. 18; but it occurs in his account of the sail-like banners of Crassus in the war against the Parthians and evidently refers to embroidery or appliqué-work in dyed cloth. The context makes it clear that the red colour was special and distinguished the general's troop.

<sup>21</sup> Loc. cit. (n. 9) in a passage where various suggested etymologies are preserved, some of them very fanciful.

<sup>22</sup> See J. André, Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine 1949, 89, though the reference in Varro (Ling. Lat. V. 113) which he cites means only that Varro regarded Lat. *purpura* as a word of Punic origin; but the connection of the colour *puniceus* with Carthage is clear elsewhere: cf. Tibullus II. 3. 58.

the affinity of the Greek and Latin alphabets with the Hebrew (though he mistakenly supposes that this proves Hebrew to be the source of the languages themselves). He ascribes the invention of the Greek alphabet to Phoenicians, and explains from this fact the use of red ink in the rubrics of manuscript books: "Graecarum litterarum usum primi Phoenices invenerunt. . . . Hinc est quod et Phoeniceo colore librorum capita scribuntur, quia ab ipsis litterae initium habuerunt."<sup>23</sup> A more elaborate account of the matter appears in the work of Ranulph Higden, a Benedictine monk of Chester, born near the end of the 13th century, who compiled a *Polychronicon* or *Universal History*, which gained wide popularity from the 14th to the 16th centuries: over a hundred Latin MSS of the work survive, and translations were made into English, one of which was revised and printed by Caxton in 1482. Another 15th century version may be quoted here: "Phenix the sonne of Agenoris toke to these Feniceonnes somme redde letters, wherefore that colour was callede *pheniceus*, and after a letter chaungede hit was *puniceus*. And for cause men of that cuntre were the firste fynders of letters we wryte vn to this tyme the capitalle letters with a redde color, that we may represente theyme to be the firste fynders of letters."<sup>24</sup>

Both a 'palm-leaf' theory and a 'red letter' theory have been revived in a new form in recent years, by scholars who have suggested that the term *φοινικῆα* could have been applied originally to Bronze Age syllabic writing rather than to the Phoenician alphabet. Thus G. E. Mylonas understands the legend of Kadmos as "most probably" referring to the introduction of letters painted in red colour, and suggests that these painted letters may be identified with the Linear B script<sup>25</sup>. F. M. Ahl on the other hand supposes that the term *φοινικῆα* originally referred to writing on palm leaves or on clay tablets of palm-leaf shape: "Cadmus was a Mycenaean, and the writing he brought to Thebes was

<sup>23</sup> *Etymologiarum* I. iii in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 82, col. 75f.

<sup>24</sup> From MS Harl. 2261 (about 1432—1450 A.D.) at *Polychronicon* I. xv in C. Babington's edition (Rolls Series 1865) I, 129. Higden himself had good cause to pick out his initial capitals in red: the first letters of the 60 chapters in his first book spell out in acrostic fashion 'Presentem cronicam compilavit frater Ranulphus Cestrensis monachus'!

<sup>25</sup> *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* 1966, 204. But the painted Linear B inscriptions are in various colours: see J. Raison, *Les vases à inscriptions peintes de l'âge mycénien* 1968, 18, on the inscribed jars from Thebes, where the signs are not only in red but also in brown and black (on light grounds) and in white and pink (on dark grounds). It seems reasonable to infer that in Mycenaean times as in the Archaic and Classical periods writing, when painted, could be done in any conveniently available colour which provided a suitable contrast with the background surface.

Linear B, which may have been known to Greek-speaking peoples then or later as φοινικήια γράμματα.”<sup>26</sup> The chief attractiveness of these suggestions is that they solve the apparent chronological difficulty in the tradition that the hero Kadmos, who was thought of as belonging to a period before the Trojan War, introduced writing, whereas the Phoenician alphabet was not adopted until some centuries later. But when the evidence as a whole is considered, it seems unlikely that φοινικήια ever referred to anything but the alphabetic script. The art of writing was lost to the Greeks for nearly half a millennium, and it would be extraordinary if a name for it had not only survived all through that period but also then turned out to be applicable to a different form of script after the earlier one had been forgotten, for a different reason from that for which it had originally been used. There would seem to be no justification for resorting to a hypothesis which involves a remarkable coincidence of this kind unless an alternative explanation is not available, and in the present case it is much simpler to suppose that the anachronistic attribution of letters to the hero Kadmos resulted from the fact that the Phoenician origin of the alphabet was known (or guessed, perhaps even from the name φοινικήια), and that Kadmos was famous in Greek legend as being a Phoenician<sup>27</sup>. Another theory of the same sort which was already current in early classical times ascribed the introduction of letters, no less anachronistically, to Danaos (from Egypt), and one may assume similarly that this first arose among Greeks who had become aware of the great antiquity of Egyptian civilization<sup>28</sup>.

We conclude that the appearance of ποινικάζεν and ποινικαστάς in Crete at a date around 500 B.C., while of absorbing interest for many reasons, does not tip the balance of probability away from the old explanation of φοινικήια and related words applied to writing as having arisen from Φοῖνιξ in its sense ‘Phoenician’ in favour of an explanation invoking its sense ‘red’ or any of its other senses. It lies beyond the

<sup>26</sup> ‘Cadmus and the palm-leaf tablets’, *AJPh* 88, 1967, 188—94, where he cites the analogy of the English word ‘leaf’ in the sense of a piece of paper, which “*no longer designates the actual material from which the pages of a book are made*” (p. 194 n. 20, our italics). But this meaning of ‘leaf’ is an example of a very common type of semantic extension (cf. ‘root’, ‘branch’, etc.), and certainly tells us nothing about the writing materials used by any former speakers of English.

<sup>27</sup> For the contrary view, that his Phoenician origin was a relatively late accretion to the legend of Kadmos, see esp. A. W. Gomme, ‘The legend of Cadmus and the logographi’ in *JHS* 33, 1913, 53—72, 223—45, and F. Vian, *Les origines de Thèbes* 1963, 51—69; but there are substantial counter-arguments to this opinion, and it is hoped to set these out in Ch. IV of R. B. E.’s projected book on the Kadmos legend.

<sup>28</sup> See Jeffery in *Europa, Festschrift Grumach* 1967, 153.



scope of this article to consider how strong a claim Crete might have to be the place where the Phoenician alphabet first reached Greek soil<sup>29</sup>, but it is worth recalling that Crete, as well as Boeotia, has traditional links with Phoenicia, especially in the legend of Kadmos and several of its ramifications<sup>30</sup>. There seems no good reason to deny that Greeks of the archaic period could have been aware that their alphabet was originally adopted from a Phoenician source, and since not only the alphabet itself but also several technical terms to do with writing are connected with the Semitic world — notably βύβλος and its derivatives with the Phoenician town of Byblos, probably δέλτος, Cypr. δάλτος ‘writing tablet’<sup>31</sup>, and the names of many of the separate letters, ἄλφα, βῆτα etc. — it is natural to suppose that the various words derived from φοῖνιξ have been applied to writing because Φοῖνιξ meant ‘Phoenician’. In the absence of stronger evidence in its support, the theory of ‘red letters’ as an explanation of ποινιάζεν can have only the status of a very remotely conceivable alternative.

### Post-script

Since our article was submitted, P. Chantraine has expressed his support for the ‘red letter’ explanation of φοινιάζω in his discussion ‘A propos du nom des Phéniciens et des noms de la pourpre’<sup>32</sup>. The arguments put forward there are partly morphological and partly semantic, but they do not seem to be at all convincing.

On the morphological question (the formation in -άζω) enough has been said in the earlier part of our article, but one further point may now be made. As a parallel formation comparable with φοινιάζω in the supposed sense ‘to make red’ Chantraine cites περκάζω as meaning “devenir foncé” et parfois “rendre foncé” (his pp. 13f.; cf. the second paragraph of our article). But even if περκάζω is counted as a colour adjective (it may be thought to express the intensity or evenness of coloration rather than a particular colour), the verb is not satisfactorily

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jeffery and Davies, *Kadmos* 9, 1970, 152f.

<sup>30</sup> See our note ‘Some traditional links between Crete and Boiotia’ in *Teiresias* 2, 1972, 2—5.

<sup>31</sup> See E. Masson, *Recherches sur les plus anciens emprunts sémitiques en grec* 1967, 61—5, though she has doubts about the Semitic derivation of βύβλος (*ibid.* 101—7).

<sup>32</sup> *Studi Classici* 14, 1972, 7—15, esp. 12—15. We are indebted to Dr. John Chadwick for drawing our attention to this article and for making it quickly available to us.

attested in a transitive sense<sup>33</sup>. His other examples ἀυγάζω and σκιάζω are not formed from adjectives of colour.

With regard to the semantic problem, it is hard to see why Chantraine (his pp. 12f.) should be reluctant to accept that τὰ φοινικήια on its own could mean 'letters', when the evidence of Hdt. V. 58 and of the well-known inscription from Teos (see his p. 15) shows that it did so. As far as the word φοινικογράφος is concerned, Chantraine writes that the inscriptions from Lesbos in which it occurs are of Hellenistic date and that "l'origine phénicienne de l'alphabet devait être largement oubliée" (his pp. 14f.). This seems to underestimate both the Greeks' knowledge of their own past and their fondness for antiquarianism. Certainly the whole question of the Phoenician origin of letters was widely discussed in late classical and Hellenistic times: cf. esp. Ephorus (of Kyme!) at the reference cited in our note 8, and Jacoby's remarks on the sources of the Lindian Temple Chronicle, FGrHist III b (Commentary) p. 447 with his note 49.

<sup>33</sup> The solitary example (Dioscorides V. 2.1) cited here by Liddell and Scott is deceptive: ἡ μὲν (sc. ἄμπελος) ... οὐ περκάζει τὴν σταφυλὴν. While this might be an instance of the transitive use of an intransitive verb (for this tendency in Hellenistic times see Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, § 148; Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* II. i, 87f.), it could equally be an accusative of respect (cf. Schwyzler-Debrunner, *Griechische Grammatik* II, 85 with examples); such a construction is readily paralleled from Dioscorides himself: compare τῶν τὴν κοιλίαν ῥευματιζομένων V. 6.5 with κοιλίᾳ ῥευματιζομένη V. 6. 17. This interpretation gains support from Dioscorides' use of περκάζω intransitively elsewhere in the same passage: σταφυλῆς μήπω περκαζούσης V. 5.1 and ὀμφακας μήπω περκαζούσας V. 32. 1.