

## The etymology of the toponyms *Thagaste* (Numidia) and *Tegueste*, *Tagaste*, *Igueste*, *Teguisse* (Canary Islands): tracing back from Proto-Amazigh to Paleo-Amazigh

### *La etimología de los topónimos Thagaste (Numidia) y Tegueste, Igueste, Teguisse (Islas Canarias): una remontada desde protoamacigo al paleoamacigo*

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**Abstract:** Thanks to the maturity reached by Amazigh historical linguistics in recent years, it is no longer reckless to undertake the complex analysis of ancient testimonies of the language—especially toponymy, ethnonymy, anthroponymy, and phytonymy—in highly heterogeneous literary and epigraphic sources (Latin, Greek, Libyan, and Neo-Punic). The study proposes a classification of Amazigh (Berber) dialect groups based on residual and diffusion areas, which provides the framework for an extensive linguistic reconstruction. It also re-examines the etymology of the Numidian toponym *Thagaste* and the Canarian *Tegueste/Tagaste* on the basis of solid phonological and morphological reconstructions, highlighting the broad relevance of Amazigh historical linguistics for the study of the ancient world in North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Canary Islands.

**Keywords:** Amazigh toponymy of North Africa, Amazigh toponymy of the Canary Islands, Paleo-Amazigh, Proto-Amazigh, Amazigh dialectal classification, *Thagaste*, *Tegueste*, *Tagaste*

**Resumen:** Gracias a los avances recientes de la lingüística histórica amaciga, es posible abordar con mayor rigor el análisis de los testimonios antiguos de la lengua —especialmente toponimia, etnonimia, antroponimia y fitonimia— en fuentes literarias y epigráficas diversas (latinas, griegas, líbicas y neopúnicas). El estudio propone una clasificación de los grupos dialectales amacigos basada en zonas residuales y de difusión, que sirve de marco para una amplia reconstrucción lingüística. Asimismo, se revisa la etimología de los topónimos nómida *Thagaste* y canario *Tegueste/Tagaste* a partir de reconstrucciones fonológicas y morfológicas sólidas, destacando la relevancia de la lingüística amaciga para el estudio del mundo antiguo en el norte de África, la Península Ibérica y Canarias.

**Palabras clave:** Toponimia amazigh del norte de África y de Canarias, paleoamazigh, protoamazigh, clasificación dialectal del amazigh, *Thagaste*, *Tegueste*, *Tagaste*

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## **1. Introduction: The Amazigh cluster over time**

Amazigh (or Berber) constitutes a cluster of several dozens of dialectal variants that can be classified, for convenience, in five living groups. Following the theoretical framework of J. Nichols (1992), we assume broadly, according to the current state of research in Amazigh historical linguistics, that two of these groups belong to residual zones and the other three to spread zones (see the map below).

### **1.1. Residual zones**

(a) Northern Amazigh comprises three major variants (Tašlḥiyt, Tamaziyt and Kabyle), two minor variants spoken in Western Rif (Šanhāža of Srayr and Ġumāra)<sup>1</sup>, and a language spoken in the Babor mountains (Tasaḥlit), which was previously classed as “Far Eastern Kabyle” (see Garaoun 2024). Until the early Middle Ages, Northern Amazigh constituted a continuum that encompassed, at least, all the regions that lay between the Atlantic Ocean north of the Dra valley and the Aurès mountains to the east, and possibly further east as well<sup>2</sup>. All the confederations and tribes that were assigned by medieval historians to the Mašmūda (the stock to which the Barġwāta and the Almohads belonged), along with many others, spoke a form of Northern Amazigh. The language of the ancient Numidians may have been Northern Amazigh – onomastics (toponymy, ethnonymy, anthroponymy) seems to support this assumption (see Múrcia 2011b) – but the linguistic evidence of Libyan epigraphy is at present not solid enough. We cannot take it for granted that the language of Mauri was strictly Northern Amazigh, since the linguistic evidence in ancient Mauretania is scarcer than in the central regions of Zeugitana, Byzacena and Numidia.

(b) Until the twentieth century, Eastern Amazigh comprised three linguistic relics: Ghadamsi, spoken in the oasis of Ghadames, south of Byzacena; Awžili, spoken in the oasis of Awžila, south of Cyrenaica; and Central Nefusi, spoken in the central part of the Nefusa mountains (Jadu,

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1 As both Šanhāža of Srayr and Ġumāra came into existence as the effect of migrations of Šanhāža tribes during late Antiquity (see Lazarev 2025, 225-231), it can be assumed that their language was originally Western Amazigh, as it was probably the language of many Middle Atlas and Eastern High Atlas groups. However, the features of their variants are synchronically far closer to Tašlḥiyt than to Western Amazigh (Zenaga, Tetsrerret), probably because of the effect of long-term contacts with indigenous populations of “Mašmūda” stock (see Kossmann 2017).

2 See Souag (2017) for substratum evidence.

Fasato, Nalut), south of Tripolitania. Ghadamsi and Central Nefusi show a notable degree of affinity, while Awżili is the most aberrant (see Kossmann 2020, 284-285; Souag 2023). Eastern Amazigh was spoken in many other oases and mountain regions of Libya and Western Egypt before being Zenatized or Arabized.

## 1.2. Spread zones

Historically, the pre-Saharan steppes and the Central and Western Sahara have been the most important spread zones in the Amazigh milieu:

(c) Western Amazigh is probably the first known split from Proto-Amazigh. Today it comprises two endangered languages, Zenaga, in southern Mauritania, and Tetserret, which is spoken by a couple of tribes surrounded by Iwəlləmmədān Tuaregs in Niger (see Lux 2013). Western Amazigh was probably a rather heterogenous branch within the Amazigh cluster. Ancient Getulians might have spoken an old form of Western Amazigh (see Múrcia 2025b, § 3.5, 96-101). Some Getulian tribes penetrated into the Roman *limes* of Numidia after the defeat of the Musulames, led by Tacfarinas, in the first century CE. Others penetrated into the Tingitana possibly after its evacuation by the legions at the end of the third century CE. However, most Western Amazigh-speaking groups moved from the bordering steppes of the late Roman Empire firstly southwards to the Central Sahara – where they became long-distance nomadic pastoralist populations thanks to the introduction of the dromedary during the first centuries of the Common Era – and then westwards to the Western Sahara. Whilst the homeland of the Western Ṣanhāža tribes was the Dra Valley and the northern regions of the Western Sahara before the arrival of Islam, the Eastern Ṣanhāža tribes were the forerunners of the Tuaregs in Central Sahara (see Taine-Cheikh 2021). They may have been the first Saharan Amazigh groups to adopt the veil, although at an uncertain point in time. Some groups (Ġumāra and Ṣanhāja of Srayr) moved northwards as far as the Western Rif in Late Antiquity, and some migrations towards the Middle Atlas, Central and Eastern High Atlas may also be ancient (see Lazarev 2025).

(d) Tuareg is the only outspring of Southern Amazigh. Despite its widespread diffusion across the Central Sahara and the northern fringes of the Sahel, its degree of homogeneity points to a chronologically well-defined ethnogenesis during the early Middle Ages and a highly cohesive (though still segmentary) society over most of its history. Around the fifth century CE,

the depletion of the water table of Fezzan (in the country of the Garamantes) and other regions where extensive agriculture was practised led to the abandonment of underground irrigation canals known as *foggaras* (in Amazigh *efəli* ~ plural *ifālan* or, simply, *targa* ~ plural *targiwen* / *tirgg<sup>w</sup>in*) and to mass migrations towards Saharan regions and radical changes in the economy of these groups. In Central Sahara the Tuaregs superseded many Šanhāža groups that spoke Western Amazigh and were partially assimilated into Tuareg segmentary groups<sup>3</sup>. These included the Ilāmtāyān (*Lamta* in medieval Arabic sources), the Inəssufa (*Masūfa* in medieval Arabic sources) and the Igdalān (*Ġudāla* in medieval Arabic sources); the latter eventually adopted Songhay; the only exceptions were Tetseret-speaking groups of the Āyttāwari and the Eklan of the Kel Əylal. The Tuaregs probably took some practices of domestication of the dromedary from the Šanhāža (and probably from the Hawwāra, who played a role in the Tuareg ethnogenesis) as well as the long-range transhumant livestock economy and the tanning of leather for the manufacture of skin bags and nomadic tents.

(e) Zenatic is the last major Amazigh branch to arise. The original Zanāta nomadised close to the shores of Tripolitania around the eighth century, and, contemporary to the Arab Islamic conquest (see Lazarev 2020, 383-396; Kossmann 2020, 283-284), involved other eastern groups in their migrations firstly to the east – the languages of the oases of Siwa, Foqaha and Sokna are now considered as Zenatic, see Souag 2020 – and thereafter to the west until, mainly for political and religious reasons, they reached Mağrib al-Aqṣā and al-Andalus. Zenatic Amazigh superseded most of Northern Amazigh variants spoken in the steppes, oases and mountain regions except for those spoken in the High Atlas, Middle Atlas (the Zenatic-speaking confederations of the Ayt Warayn and the Ayt Syruššn are the only exceptions), Sus Valley, Anti-Atlas, Western Rif and Djurdjura. The spread of Ibadi Islam in Northern Amazigh may have strengthened the role of Zenatic Amazigh as lingua franca and contributed to the Zenatization of eastern and western Nefusa (only Central Nefusi remains an Eastern Amazigh language, though highly Zenatized, see Souag 2023), Zwara, and the oases of Mzab and Wargla.

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3 The Western Amazigh substratum of many Central Saharan oases has been pointed out by Souag 2010 and 2015.

### 1.3. Extinct branches

Additionally, other Amazigh branches became extinct in a variety of circumstances. Let us mention four different cases:

(f) The ancient settlers of the oases of Western Egypt (including Ammon/Siwa) and the Libyan tribes of Cyrenaica might have spoken different forms of Paleo-Amazigh, but it has not yet been possible to classify their languages within the Amazigh cluster.

(g) The Hawwāra, who may have arisen out of the ancient Bauares (Múrcia 2024), were probably an independent branch of the Amazigh cluster. However, their language has not left a modern descendant, since most of the Hawwāra tribes were Arabized either in Northern Africa or in al-Andalus, while others assimilated to Amazigh groups of different stock. Since at least the end of the second century CE, the Bauares had been long-distance nomads who transhumed from the Saharan Atlas in the south to the highlands of the Mauretania Caesarensis, Sitifensis and Numidia. They may have been the forerunners of the Zanāta in the steppes of these ancient regions of Roman Africa and in the oases located south of the *limes* (see Fentress & Wilson 2016 for a different scenario).

(h) The subgrouping of “Canarian Amazigh” has not yet been elucidated, in spite, firstly, of the survival of a growing corpus of more than 200 panels of Libyan inscriptions (Mora Aguiar 2021a and 2021b; Springer Bunk 2025); secondly, of sparse testimonials of unequal reliability collected from written sources of the fourteenth-seventeenth centuries (Wölfel 1965; Mora Aguiar & Springer Bunk 2024; Reyes García 2011); and, thirdly and most importantly, of a rich toponymic heritage of about 3,300 substrate units in the whole archipelago (Trapero & Santana Martel s/d; Sosa Martín 2021, 411-414). Progress in the knowledge of Canarian Amazigh requires a critical edition of the heterogeneous documentary evidence (in Castilian, Genoese, Portuguese, French) of the ancient language (or languages) of the Canary Islands, which will allow the analysis of the philological evidence together with toponymic and epigraphic data on the basis of the important advance in Amazigh historical linguistics.

(i) Strictly speaking, “Andalusi Amazigh” cannot be considered as a distinct branch. Groups belonging to all the Amazigh branches converged in the medieval Iberian Peninsula, with the sole exception of Southern Amazigh. A branch of the Kel Ažžār, which over time became a significant component of

the crystallisation of the Tuareg people, arrived in al-Andalus probably before it had become properly Tuareg and played a significant role in the construction of the irrigation systems in the Horta of Valencia during the early Middle Ages, taking into account that they named one of the most ancient *séquiés*, that of *Benàger* (Esquilache 2018, 385-399; Múrcia 2023, 66-67). Eastern Amazigh and Hawwāra (eighth-tenth centuries), Zenatic Amazigh (eleventh century), Western Amazigh of Almovids (twelfth century) and Northern Amazigh (Mašmūda) of the Almohads (thirteenth century) were all present in medieval al-Andalus (Múrcia 2022b, 2025a).

#### 1.4. The autonym “Amazigh” today and over time

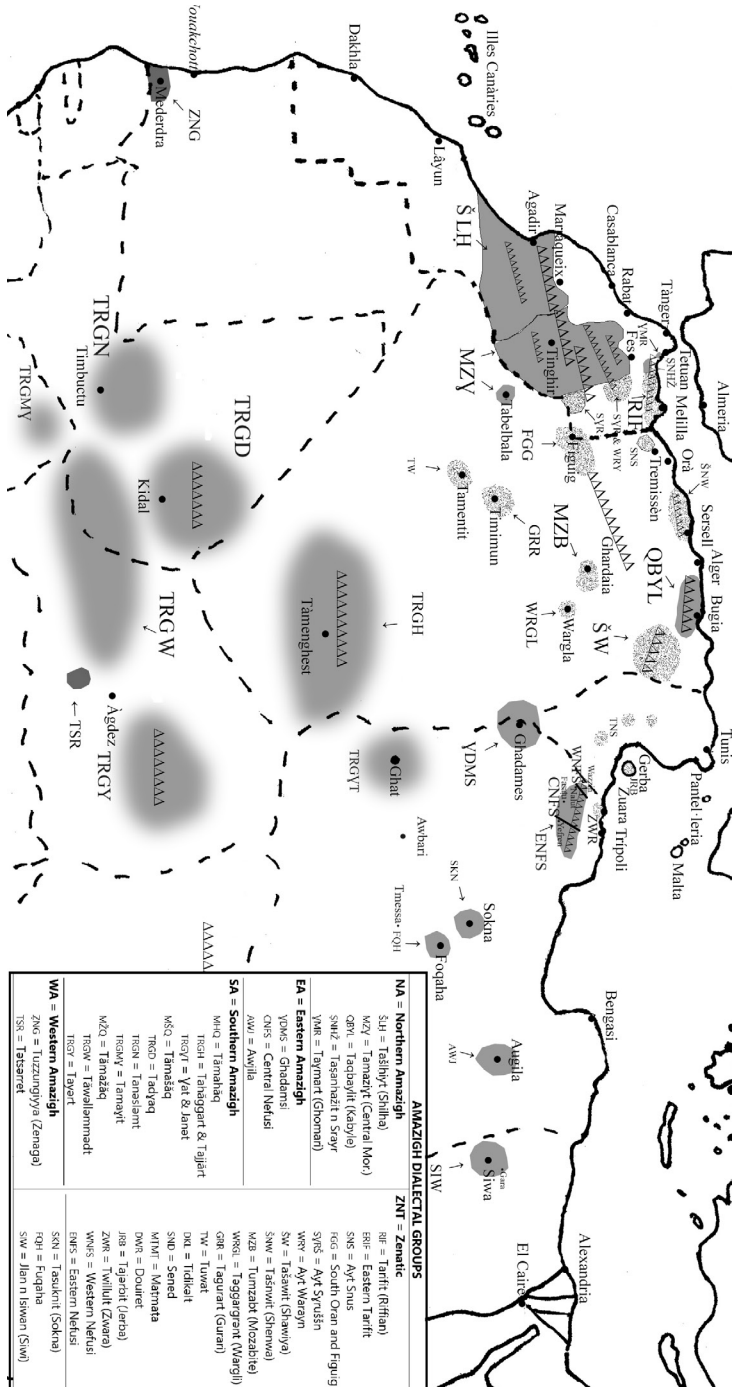
Let us end this section with some general remarks:

(a) Despite the diversity of natural habitats and economies, and despite the vast (both geographical and chronological) distances between some dialects, almost all of the aforementioned groups identify themselves as “Amazigh” (singular *amaziy* ~ pl. *imaziyn*, and variants *āmašəy* ~ pl. *imažəyān*, *āmašəy* ~ pl. *imušay*, *āmahəy* ~ pl. *imuhay*, *mazoy* ~ pl. *imaziyən*, etc.) and as speakers of the “Amazigh” language (*tamaziyt* and variants *tmaziyt*, *tāmažəq*, *tāmašəq*, *tāmahəq*) (see Brugnatelli 2021).

(b) Most of the designations used over time by scholars for the whole people or for some groups are exonyms (*Maurus*, *Berber*, *Tuareg*, *Kabyle*, *Šilha*, etc.); others are not, but are used synecdochically by extension of their original range (Λίβυες, *Afri*, *Šanhāža*, *Zanāta*, *Mašmūda*).

(c) The earliest unequivocal records of the autonym of the Amazigh people date back to the first century CE and are ubiquitous until the end of Antiquity (see Múrcia 2025b, § 3.4, 87-96) in Latin, Greek and, sporadically, Coptic sources in North Africa by the name of *Mazices*, *Mazaci*, *Muzuc*, *Mazuci* (even the feminine *Tamazucensis*), Μαζικες, Μασικες and Ματρζ.

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Map: Dialectal groups of the Amazigh cluster

## 2. Discussion of previous etymologies

Several etymologies have been suggested for the Numidian toponym *Thagaste* and the Canarian *Tegueste* / *Tagaste*, which will be discussed here on the basis of the recent advances in Amazigh historical linguistics:

(a) *Thagaste* was related to Shawi *tayust* ~ pl. *tīyusin* ‘plot of land planted with trees’ (definition in Huyghe 1907, 429), ‘plot on the edge of the river’, by G. Mercier (1924, 277) and accepted by Pelegrin (1949, 95). This noun is unattested outside Shawi, and it is uncertain to which lexical family it belongs. The pattern of the stem is -cuc-, with a plain high vowel as the vowel slot, which is different from the vocalization that *Thagaste* and *Tegueste* apparently reflect.

(b) *Tegueste* and *Iguesta* were tentatively related by Wölfel (1965, 764-765) to (1) *aggəz* ‘to go down’, (2) *əyəz* ‘to dig’, (3) *tagust* ‘picket, stake’ or (4) *agəz* ‘to take care of’. Since (3) has been suggested by other authors and (1) will be discussed in the context of a new proposal (see below, § 4), here only (4) will be discussed in detail. As for (2), it can be rejected at the outset because *y* and *g* are not mixed in Amazigh except for very special contextual situations. A noun *taggazt*, attested in all Tuareg dialects as well as in Tetserrēt (a Western Amazigh language), is derived from the verb *agəz*, whose semantics are manifold:

- Tāhəggart: primary verb *agəz* ‘to guard, to keep, to preserve, to watch over, to take care of, to look after; to find, to meet’; abstract noun of action *tugguzt* ‘guarding, keeping, custody, conservation, care’; concrete noun of action *təggazt* ~ pl. *təggazen* ‘safeguard, backup’, also referring to the ‘divine safeguard’; noun of agent *əmagaz* ~ pl. *imagazən* ‘guardian, the one who guards, keeps, takes care of (a person, animal or something); careful person’; concrete noun of action *təmaguzt* ~ pl. *timugaz* ‘small provision of food sent ahead by a caravan loaded with food’ (Foucauld 1951-1952, vol. 1, 490-491; Ritter 2009, vol. 1, 117 and 700).
- Tāmažəq: primary verb *agəz* ‘to protect someone from something, to save someone from something, to safe (God), to preserve, to guard, to keep, to preserve; to find someone safe and sound; to inherit, to enter into possession of something’; abstract noun of action *aggaz* ~ pl. *aggazən* ‘protection, safeguard, conservation, keeping; heritage’; concrete noun of action *taggazt* ~ pl. *taggazen* ‘protection, safeguard, conservation; heritage, heredity, inheritance, hereditary character (from good to bad characteristics)’; noun of agent *əmagaz* ~ pl. *imagazən* ‘protector, guardian,

preserver’; noun of instrument *təzagəzt* ~ pl. *tizugaz* ‘aid, fallback procedure, something temporary, fortune/crisis provision, supplementary provision’ (Prasse, Alojaly & Mohamed 2003, vol. 1, 260).

- Tămašāq: primary verb *agəz* ‘to encounter (by chance), to run into (a situation); to save, to keep someone from something, to guard, to watch over (a flock)’; noun of action *taggazt* ‘encounter (by chance), running into (a situation); saving, keeping, guarding, watching over a flock’ (Heath 2006, 272).
- Tudalt: primary verb *agəz* ‘to protect, to keep; to inherit; to find’, abstract noun of action *aggaz* / *iggoz* ‘protection, keeping; inheritance; finding’, concrete noun of action *taggašt* ~ pl. *taggažen* ‘protection, salvation; inheritance’ (Sudlow 2009, 68).
- Hawad and H. Claudot report the use of *tagast* in a traditional Tuareg proverb: « *əmmus ax yənyäl iyän əbāwel tagast-nnet* » ‘If the milk is spilled (poured on the ground), another shelter is its protection’ (Hawad & Claudot-Hawad 1984, 176)<sup>4</sup>.
- Tetserret (aorist) *-agəš-* ~ perfective *-əgaš-* ‘to protect’ (Lux 2013, 531).
- The Proto-Amazigh reconstruction of the primary verb and the most important deverbative noun is unproblematic: aorist stem *\*-agəz-* ~ perfective stem *\*-ugəz-* ‘to guard, to keep, to preserve, to watch over, to take care of, to look after’, that is to say a basic light verb whose pattern is *-včvc-*, like *\*-agəm-* ~ perfective stem *\*-ugəm-* ‘to draw water’ (see van Putten 2023, 298); abstract deverbative noun *\*aggaz* (that of *\*-agəm-* is likewise *\*aggam* ‘water mining’), concrete deverbative noun *\*taggašt*. From the point of view of Paleo-Amazigh, it is known that “emphatic” consonants (pharyngalised at least since the Middle Ages), which are currently mostly voiced, were voiceless in ancient times (Múrcia 2016, 52-58; Múrcia 2022a, 309). As a matter of fact, *\*š* is still voiceless in Tetserret. Hence, *\*taggašt* ‘protection, safeguard, conservation’ is a sound rendering of this noun in case it is antique. Unfortunately, as this lexical family is only attested in Tuareg and in Tetserret (in which it could be a borrowing from neighbouring Tawəlləmmədt Tuareg), it is doubtful whether it should be

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4 On the polysemy of *ebāwel*, see the whole study by the authors (Hawad & Claudot-Hawad 1984). The spilling of milk refers to the transmission of inheritance: When a woman has no daughter to pass on the chain of which she is a link, the *ebāwel* milk can only return to her less distant matrilineal relatives (sisters, matrilineal parallel cousins or sisters’ daughters).

reconstructed for the protolanguage. Besides, there are phonetic and semantic difficulties as well: from a phonetic point of view, \**taggašt* must be reconstructed with a geminated *gg*, which is not supported by toponymic attestation, although this is not a conclusive inconvenience given the indirect nature of the toponymic sources. From a semantic point of view, it is difficult to establish a geographical meaning for *taggašt*. The meaning of ‘place from which someone can watch over a territory (because it overlooks a valley and acts as a shelter against potential enemies)’ should rather be rendered by a *nomen loci*. For all these reasons, this etymology should be considered unsatisfactory, though not impossible.

(c) *Tegueste* is related to Tǎwǎllǎmmǎdǎt Tuareg *gǎsǎt* ‘to wet slightly, to moisten the flour’, whose only attested deverbative noun is *agǎsi* (Prasse, Alojaly & Mohamed 2003, vol. 1, 249) by I. Reyes García (2011, 396), who suggest for the toponym an etymon \**tegǎsǎt* ‘wet’. This etymology has some problems. Diatopically, the verb and the action noun of this small lexical family are unattested outside the Iwǎllǎmmǎdǎn confederation, and so they are unlikely to be ancient. Moreover, the postulated etymon \**tegǎsǎt* ‘wet’ may not be an adjective but a noun, and cannot explain the derivative *Iguesta*, for which an etymon \**igǎsǎt* ‘wet’ is suggested; in this case, the prefix should be *e-* and, more importantly, a *-t* suffix is impossible for a masculine noun.

(d) *Thagaste* has been related to Modern Northern Amazigh (1) *tagg<sup>w</sup>st* ‘belt’ or, alternatively, (2) *tagust* ‘picket, stake’, by Haddadou (2012, 482-484). Neither proposal is viable either phonetically or semantically. In the case of (1), *tagg<sup>w</sup>st* comes from Proto-Amazigh \**taβgǎst*. As for (2), which is only attested in Northern Amazigh; the vowel slot of the stem of *tagust* is consistently *u* in all languages.

(e) Although this possible etymology has not been noted, let us mention in passing that *tagast* is a rare phytonym in Tašlhiyt. Stroomer (2025, 2368) recorded it in Taznaŷt and defined it as an ‘indeterminate plant name’.

### 3. Attestations and locations of the toponyms

(a) Ancient Numidia’s *Thagaste* was located on the upper course of the Bagrada river, the sources of which were at Thubursicu Numidarum, 35 km to the west. The site itself and its surroundings have yielded numerous stelae inscribed in Libyan abjad and on Numidian coins. Latin inscriptions and literary texts have produced the variants *Thagaste*, *Thagastis*, *Thagastem*

(accusative), *Tagaste*, *Tagastae*, *Tagastis*; the attested demonyms are *Thagastensis*, *Tagastensis* and *Tagastenus*<sup>5</sup>. It is difficult to assess the authenticity of the variant *Τάγασσα*, which appears in the *Θρόνος Ἀλεξανδρίνος* (Gelzer 1893, 26, line 131), since the source of this work is the nomenclature collected by Philippe Labbé in 1661 from previous sources (see Honigmann 1961, 127-207). The excavations, which have never been systematic, are spread over three hillocks, one of them called *Sidi Messaoud* (with a koubba) or *Lolivier de Saint Augustin*. The neighbouring heights, reaching altitudes of some 1400 metres, overlook the Bagrada valley.

(b) In the Canary Islands there are four toponyms *Tegueste/Tagaste*, one in Tenerife and the other three in Gran Canaria. *Tegueste* (textual variants *Tegeste* and *Teguexte*) is attested in Castilian documents from 1464 onwards (« *el rey de Tegueste* »: Reyes García 2011, 396). In contrast, *Tagaste* only appears in modern documents (*Hoya de Tagaste*, *Umbría de Tagaste*, 1997: Reyes García 2011, 396), which makes it difficult to ascertain how close an *a* vocalization would be to the pronunciation of this noun in Canarian Amazigh. *Tegueste* in Tenerife, which is the most famous, has two distinct geographical areas: a mountainous eastern zone, corresponding to the foothills of the north-western end of the Punta de Anaga; and a fairly flat central-western zone, corresponding to the valleys of *Tegueste* and *Socorro*. The Cabezo de las Torviscas is the highest point in *Tegueste* at 950 metres above sea level. *Tegueste* is crossed by several ravines, the main ones being *la Goleta*, *Agua de Dios* and *el Rodeo*. *Tegueste* in Gran Canaria, in *Gáldar*, near the *Hoya de Pineda*, is now a small hamlet located in the vicinity of an aboriginal troglodyte settlement on the southern slopes of *Coronado*, where the caves were exploited in the past and used for residential and agricultural purposes. A variant form *Tagaste* appears in two microtoponyms of the neighbouring municipality of *Tejeda*, *Umbría de Tagaste* ('shaded area', because it is on the northern slope or the ravine) and *Hoya* ('depression, pit') *de Tagaste*, located at an altitude of 750 metres.

(c) Furthermore, there are two toponyms *Iguste* in Tenerife that might be the masculine (with augmentative meaning) of the feminine noun analysed in this study. The earliest attestation of *Iguste* (variants *Yguste*, *Guste*) dates

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5 See the discussion of the ancient epigraphic and literary sources for *Thagaste* and geohistorical accounts of the site in Tissot 1884-1888, vol. 2, 385-387; Lancel 1972-1991, vol. 1, 784; vol. 4, 1481; Lepelley 1979-1981, vol. 2, 175-184; Lancel 2002, 259; Desanges, Duval, Lepelley & Saint-Amans 2010, 234-235.

back to 1594 (Reyes García 2011, 272). Igueste de San Andrés and Igueste de Candelaria are both located on the slopes of ravines. Igueste de San Andrés is located on the slopes that flank the final section of the Barranco de Igueste, on the southern slope of the Punta de Anaga. The highest altitude of the town is 823 metres, at the Lomo de las Chamuscadas. As for Igueste de Candelaria, it is located in the upper part of the municipality of Candelaria, at an altitude of 700 metres above sea level, and has a particularly steep slope.

(d) During the Norman colonization of the Canary Islands in the fifteenth century, sources refer to a valley named *Teguisse* (variant *Teuguisse* in Torriani), which was located on the western slope of the Guanapay volcano on the island of Lanzarote. The site, a major pre-European settlement, has been identified as the Gran Aldea mentioned in the Norman chronicle (see the sources in Reyes García 2011, 397).

(e) For geohistorical reasons, it is uncertain whether the microtoponym *Tagast*, south of the western edge of the Pre-Pyrenees in the *comarca* of Berguedà, should be included in this study. In the mountain range located 8 km north-east of Berga, *Tagast* is known mainly as the name of the famous spring and a torrent that are found on the way up from the sanctuary of Corbera towards Rasos de Peguera. But since ancient times it has been the name of the whole of the large massif, which, having been given to the monastery of Poblet, is named *Tagast* in the *Cartulari de Poblet* and in other Latin documents of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: « *Portus quod vocant de Tagast* »<sup>6</sup>. J. Coromines, who assessed the striking similarity with the Numidian *Thagaste* and the Canarian *Tegueste*, decided on a pre-Roman substrate origin for the *Tagast* of Catalonia and concluded that the resemblance of *Tagast* to *Thagaste* and *Tegueste* is a mere coincidence, which is a plausible explanation (Coromines 1989-1997, vol. 7, p. 206). Admittedly, Arabic and Amazigh toponyms north of the Llobregat river are scarce. In the time of al-Andalus, Berguedà was a border territory until it became dependent on the County of Cerdanya, from which it separated briefly to become the County of Berga at the beginning of the eleventh century. Berguedà was part of the *at-Tağr al-Ašlā* ‘Upper March’, an administrative and military division in north-eastern al-Andalus.

6 « Si s’ha salvat el nom antic per anomenar la font és perquè aquesta font, abundosa i riquíssima, és allí el lloc per excel·lència on s’apleguen els pastors de les ramades, i on el caminant, exhaust de la violenta pujada, ja es pot aturar i refer-se » ‘If the old name of the spring has been saved, it is because this rushing and rich spring is the place where the shepherds of the flocks gather *par excellence*, and where the walker, exhausted from the punishing climb, can stop and refresh himself’ (Coromines 1989-1997, vol. 7, 203-204).

Therefore, it is not impossible that there might be some isolated Amazigh toponyms from the Andalusian period<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4. Dialectal distribution of the proposed descendant

The lexical family of the etymon that is suggested in this study for the toponyms *Thagaste* / *Tegueste* is attested in three different Amazigh branches (see above § 1): Northern, Western and Southern Amazigh. In Northern Amazigh it is only usual among the tribes of the Middle Atlas and the Eastern High Atlas, whereas in Tuareg it is only usual among the eastern dialects of the Kel Tămašăq.

(a) Middle Atlas Tamaziɣt (aorist) *-guss-* ~ (perfective) *-guss-* ‘to be on a slope, to be inclined (a place, a terrain), to be downhill’, *aguss* ~ pl. *igussn* ‘slope, sloping terrain’, *igissi* ~ pl. *igissitn* ‘inclination, tilt, declivity, incline, slope’ (Taïfi 2016, 261)<sup>8</sup>.

(b) Eastern Middle Atlas Tamaziɣt of the Ayt Wirra tribe of the Ayr Sri confederation (around Lqsiba): noun *agussu* ~ pl. *igussutn* and diminutive *tagussutt* ~ pl. *tigussutin* ‘inclination of the terrain, steep descent’, factitive derivative (from the noun *igissi*) *sgiss* ‘to be inclined relative to the horizon, to be on a slope, to be downhill’ (the inclination is considered from top to bottom); noun of action of the factitive derivative *asgiss* ‘being inclined (a terrain)’ (Oussikoum 2013, 201).

(c) Eastern High Atlas Tamaziɣt of the Ayt Mryad and Ayt Hdiddu tribes of the Ayt Yaflman confederation: primary verb (aorist) *-ggussa-* ~ (perfective) *-ggussa-* ‘to be on a steep slope downhill; to be inclined’ —for instance, *iggussa yigr* ‘the land is on a downward slope’— (Aziz Baha and Fatima Outeha, p.c.), deverbative noun *igissi* ~ pl. *igissitn* ‘way downhill’ (*tawada s izdar* in Amazigh, Haddachi 2000, 93, who also reports the metaphorical use *igissi n tudrt* ‘the downhill of life’).

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7 Puigvert (1995) suggested that *Āger* (in the *comarca* of Noguera), almost as northerly as *Tagast*, is a toponym of Amazigh descent. On the Amazigh toponymy of the Upper March of al-Andalus, see Sarr 2021, who deals basically with toponyms of Aragon that come from Amazigh ethnonyms.

8 The DGLAI (*Dictionnaire Générale de la Langue Amazighe de l'IRCAM*) includes *igissi* ‘inclination’ and *tagussut* ‘steep descent’ without dialectal indication. Consulted online <https://tal.ircam.ma/dglai/> on 20/06/2025. The noun *igissi* ‘inclination’ is also reported in the *Vocabulaire des reliefs amazighe-arabe-français* made by the Centre de l'Aménagement Linguistique de l'Ircam, Rabat 2022, 25.

This Northern Amazigh lexical family is probably cognate to the following one attested in Eastern Tuareg and in Zenaga:

(d) Tāmašāq Tuareg: primary verb *ḡuss* ‘to go south’, deverbative noun *aḡuss* ‘south’ (Heath 2006, 264), *agus* ‘south’ (Prasse, Alojaly & Mohamed 2003, vol. 1, 249).

(e) Zenaga: primary verb (perfective, third person masculine singular) *y-äggussä* ‘he went southwards’, factitive derivative *y-äžggässä* ‘he led southwards’, deverbative noun *oḡguss / äwḡguss* ‘south; southwards’ (Taine-Cheikh 2008, 222; Nicolas 1953, 318).

## 5. Proto-Amazigh reconstruction of the proposed descendant

In spite of the difference in meaning between ‘to be on a downward slope’ in Northern Amazigh and ‘to go south’ in Western and Southern Amazigh, the structural resemblance between Tamaziyt *iggussa* ‘he is on a downward slope’ and Zenaga *yäggussä* ‘he went south’ is striking, and the evolution in meaning might have been ‘to be on a downward slope’ > ‘to go south’. This lexical family can be reconstructed as follows:

(a) Primary verb: the simple comparison between Tamaziyt and Zenaga allows an intermediate reconstruction (aorist) *\*-əggussu-* ~ (perfective) *\*-äggussa-* ‘to be on a downward slope’ > Western Amazigh and Tuareg (only Tāmašāq) ‘to go south’. It is clearly a heavyweight verb, that is, a verb whose stem contains three or more vowel slots (see van Putten 2024, 307-310). Since this verb seems of the same (or, at least, similar) type as (aorist) *\*-əḡḡallā?-* ~ (perfective) *\*-äḡḡullā?-* ‘to swear’ (van Putten 2024, 325), a Proto-Amazigh reconstruction (aorist) *\*-əggassā?-* ~ (perfective) *\*-äggussā?-* might be postulated for this verb. Even though the form and meaning are similar to the more widespread verb *\*äggəz* ‘to go down’, it should be considered a case of paronymy.

(b) Abstract noun of action *\*aguss* ‘inclination, descent’ > ‘south’. Northern Amazigh *agussu*, which shows a thematic stem with two vowel slots, should be considered a later development.

(c) Concrete noun of action *\*te-gess-e* ‘slope, downhill’, whose augmentative masculine derivative is *\*e-gess-e*. Both *\*-e* and *\*-a* are feminine suffixes of deverbative nouns and primary nouns. The stem of *\*te-gess-e* shows the same pattern -cvc(c)- as many other deverbative nouns, such as *\*te-βädd-e* ‘standing, height’ (← *\*-äβädd-* ‘to stand’), but also as some primary nouns, such as

\**ta-gārs-a* ‘ploughshare’ and \**ta-māsn-a* ‘desert’. The metaphonic rule that resulted in the dissimilation of the vowel of the prefix of state in Proto-Amazigh has been described by M. van Putten (2019a) as follows: \**a-/ta-* > \**e-/te-* *Că* unless, later in the word, there is a vowel *a*, *i* or *u*, that is to say a “cardinal” vowel<sup>9</sup>. Alternatively, the ending *-i* in *igissi* can be analysed synchronically as part of the nominal stem if we consider the possibility of the loss of a glottal stop as the third radical, as Proto-Amazigh nominal stems cannot end in a vowel. Nominal stems ending in a vowel (usually *-i*) come from \**-əʔ* according to van Putten (2019a, 2-3; *idem* 2019b, 302-303), especially in nouns of agent and other deverbative nouns with prefix *m-* (van Putten 2016, 24; 2019b, 302)<sup>10</sup>. Hence, an alternative reconstruction would be \**i-gessəʔ* for the masculine noun and \**tegessəʔe* for the feminine one.

## 6. Paleo-Amazigh analysis

### 6.1. Assimilation of a consonantal cluster \*st > ss

The comparative method does not allow us to go back to the state of things in Paleo-Amazigh prior to the crystallisation of Proto-Amazigh, in which for this lexical family we can only reconstruct a stem containing *ss*. Here we shall not discuss the tricky question of non-morphemic *t*, that is to say *t* that is neither the feminine nominal suffix nor the verbal and nominal prefix<sup>11</sup>. Here, we will only discuss the specific contexts of possible assimilation \**st* > *ss*. As a matter of fact, there are several hints that allow us to trace the situation further back:

(a) Ancient borrowings from Latin point to *st* > *ss*: accusative *a(u) gustu(m)* ‘eighth month of the solar calendar’ > Zwara *awussu* and Ghadamsi *awəşso* ‘heat wave, forty-day period beginning on July 12’ (Kossmann 2013, 74; Múrcia fc, § 3.p), as opposed to *yušt*, which is a later relexification through Arabic (cf. Egyptian Arabic *ayustus* and Andalusí Arabic *ayušt / ayustuh*), as shown by the changes *g* > *y* and *st* > *št*, which reveal an Arabic mediation (Kossmann 2013, 72-76); *castru(m)* ‘fortress’ > *yasru* ‘fortified warehouse,

9 See the analysis of some toponyms from ancient Africa Proconsularis in which this metaphonic rule seems to work, \**tefārde* ‘pasture’ and \**teġämme* ‘dwellings of a community including their agropastoral spaces’, in Múrcia 2025b, §§ 3.1 and 3.2, 68-83.

10 The apparent exceptions involve the loss of a glottal stop as the third radical, such as Tuareg *ekālli* ← *ākəl* ‘to spend the day’ < \**ākləʔ* (van Putten 2016, 20; *idem* 2019b, 303).

11 See Kossmann (2021, 18-20) and van Putten (2019b, 284) for intervocalic contexts of *t* lenition in Pre-Proto-Amazigh.

pantry', which is certainly a direct borrowing from Latin, since the change  $k > \gamma$  (*causa > tayawsa*) is expected only in Amazigh (Múrcia 2022a, 303-310).

(b) Some ancient toponyms survived until the Middle Ages and, therefore, underwent regular changes over time. *Thagaste* is only attested in Antiquity, because the town took another name afterwards (*Sūq Ahrās*). In contrast, another ancient toponym from Numidia, *Theueste*, underwent a progressive assimilation  $st > ss$ , as shown in the forms *Tabassa*, *Tabassā* (Lewicki 1951-1952, 447-448), *Tibissa* and *Tibassa*, which are found in medieval Arabic sources (Forstner 1979, 299-301) for the same location, modern *Tbassa* (*Tebessa* in French transcription). The assimilation  $st > ss$  for the toponym *Theueste* / *Tebessa* was already pointed out by Vycichl (2005, 38), a phonetic change that Lewicki (1951-1952, 448) attributed to Afroromance, which is also possible. Of course, the variant of *Thagaste* mentioned in the Θρόνος Ἀλεξανδρίνος (Gelzer 1893, 26, line 131), Τάγασσα, would attest the evolution  $st > ss$  for this toponym as well. However, E. Honigmann (1961, 127-207) argued that, although it was previously considered that the Θρόνος Ἀλεξανδρίνος drew from sources of the sixth-eighth centuries, it should be considered the result of modern scholarship. Anyway, there is no trace of *Thagaste* / Τάγασσα in Arabic sources of the Middle Ages (Forstner 1979, 30, 34, 146).

(c) Some ancient nouns containing *st* show irregular behaviour:

- a. In kinship terminology we can find suppletive stems for the number opposition of some nouns. The suppletive plural of \**yälle* (> Ghadamsi *yälle*, Kabyle *yəlli*, Tašlḥiyt *illi*, etc.) 'my daughter' is \**yāste* > Tašlḥiyt *isti* 'my daughters' (Souag 2025a, 181-182). Yet in Kabyle (Dallet 1982, 920) and in Figuig (Kossmann 1997, 521; Yeou 2022, 649) we find *yəssi* and in Nefussa *tiyəssi* 'my daughters' (Di Tolla & Shinnib 2020, 217).
- b. Tamaziɣt *fəst* / Tuareg *fəstu* 'to remain silent' vs. Tašlḥiyt *fss* (yet noun of action *ifsti* 'silence') / Ghadamsi *fäss* / Zenaga *ufuṣṣi* < Proto-Amazigh \**əffästāʔ* (van Putten 2024, 321-322).
- c. Awżila *ayast* (van Putten 2014, 255) vs. Tašlḥiyt *iyss* and *iyəss* Kabyle < Proto-Amazigh \**ekāst* 'bone' (Souag 2025b, 19).
- d. Tašlḥiyt *tastit* 'spider' vs. Tamaziɣt *tassit*, Kabyle *tissit*.
- e. Zenaga *täšši* ~ pl. *ətšiʔdʔan* 'cow', Tuareg *tast* / *tesut* ~ pl. *tisita* / *titan*, Kabyle *tafunast* (which is a suppletive singular) ~ pl. *tisita* / *tistan*, Tašlḥiyt *tafunast* (the same suppletive noun) ~ pl. *tisitan* < Proto-

Amazigh *\*ta-st-e* ~ pl. *\*tə-sita*. The assimilated result *\*tassi* has been replaced by *tafunast* and other designations in most of the Amazigh variants probably because of its irregular outcome and maybe also because of paronymy to *tissi* ‘drink’ and other nouns. The important point here is that it is obvious that the *t* in the plural is a radical that was lost in the singular stem a long time ago because of assimilation *\*st* > *ss*.

(d) The internal reconstruction of some Proto-Amazigh nouns containing *ss* points to a possible assimilation of a consonant cluster: *\*talasse* ‘foam’, *\*temässe* ‘fire’, *\*emess* ‘tool’, etc. However, it is uncertain that *ss* is the result of *\*st* in all these nouns, as in some instances we know that *ss* can be the result of another consonant cluster, like Tašlhiyt *asf* ~ pl. *usfan* ‘day’ (Stroomer 2025, vol. 1, 408) > *ass* ~ pl. *ussan*, which is by far the most widespread form of this noun.

(e) The Tuareg name for ‘master, owner, lord’, *mäss* (feminine *mässa*), is probably the continuator of Paleo-Amazigh *\*mäst*, since this lexeme seems to underlie some ancient anthroponyms found in Latin sources of North Africa of the kind of *Masties* (AE 1988, 1126), *Masthalul* (IRT 886b), *Mastliuam* (IRT 732), *Mastalai* (CIL VIII 23700), *Mastara* (IL Afr II 2768) and the theonym *Mastiman* mentioned in the *Iohannis* by Corippus (V, 38; VIII, 307), and especially in Libyan epigraphy, in which <mst> and <mst?> not only are ubiquitous personal names but also appear in many anthroponymic sequences, such as <msty>, <mstyb>, <mstk>, <mstl>, <mstr>, <mstr?>, <msts>, etc. (Rebuffat 2018, 82-83).

Therefore, we cautiously suggest a Paleo-Amazigh (and Pre-Proto-Amazigh) analysis in which *ss* can be the result of the progressive assimilation of the consonant cluster *st*. Hence, the primary verb would be in Pre-Proto-Amazigh (aorist) *\*-əggastä?* ~ (perfective) *\*-äggustä?*, the abstract noun of action *\*a-gust* and the concrete noun of action *\*te-gest-e* / *\*te-gestə?*-*e* and *\*e-gest-e* / *\*e-gestə?* or, as we shall see in the next section, *\*ta-gast-e*.

## 6.2. Pre-Proto-Amazigh vocalization of the nominal stem

(a) The evolution of Pre-Proto-Amazigh stems -cac(c)ṽc- to -\*cec(c)ṽc- has been described by van Putten (2019a) and can be exemplified in the light of the following examples:

- a. Pre-Proto-Amazigh *\*a-za?mār* ~ pl. *\*i-zä?mar-än* ‘lamb’ > *\*a-zamār* ~ pl. *i-zamar-än* > Proto-Amazigh *\*e-zemār* ~ pl. *\*i-zamar-än* > Modern Northern Amazigh *izimr* ~ pl. *izamarn*

- b. Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**a-zăʔkār* ~ pl. \**i-zăʔkar-än* ‘rope’ > \**a-zakār* ~ pl. \**i-zakar-än* ‘rope’ > Proto-Amazigh \**e-zekār* ~ pl. \**i-zakar-än* > Modern Northern Amazigh *izikr* ~ pl. *izakarn*
- c. Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**a-dakāl* ~ pl. \**i-dakal-än* ‘palm of the hand’ > Proto-Amazigh \**e-dekāl* ~ pl. \**i-dakal-än* > Modern Northern Amazigh *idikl* ~ pl. *idakaln*
- d. Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**a-fayār* ~ pl. \**i-fayār-iwän* ‘serpent’ > Proto-Amazigh \**e-feyār* ~ pl. \**i-fayār-iwän* > Modern Northern Amazigh *ifyr* ~ pl. *ifayriwn*
- e. Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**ta-ays-e* ~ pl. \**ti-ays-iwen* ‘sheep’ or ‘goat’ > Proto-Amazigh \**te-ys-e* ~ pl. \**ti-ays-iwen* > Modern Northern Amazigh *tixsi*, Tuareg *teyse* ~ pl. *tays-iwen*

As we can see from these examples, the plural stems have not undergone mid-vowel metaphony.

(b) Proto-Amazigh \**te-gest-e* / \**te-gestəʔ-e* ‘slope, downhill’ might come from Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**ta-gast-e* / \**ta-gastəʔ-e*. As for \**e-gest-e*, it may be a later derivative from \**te-gest-e*; but, if we draw from \**e-gestəʔ*, it would be a direct deverbative noun as well. A similar evolution is found in the toponym of Africa Pronconsularis *Paradae* in the first century BCE, which evolved from C<sub>1</sub>aC<sub>2</sub>vC<sub>3</sub>äy (Pre-Proto-Amazigh \**parädäy*) into C<sub>1</sub>äC<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>e (\**tephärde* > Proto-Amazigh \**tefärde* ‘pasture’), as shown in *Pheradi* (*Maius*) > *Feradi* since the third century CE (Múrcia 2025b, 68-75). The mid-vowel metaphonic rule was probably triggered backwards, that is to say the feminine suffix \**-e* (ultimately < \**-äy* according to van Putten 2018) triggered the change of the stem vowel from \**a* to \**ä* [e] or \**e*; and, after the prefixation of the morpheme of state, the vowel of the prefix *a-/ta-* assimilated dilatorily to *e/te* and a plain stem vowel shortened, in this case leading to the syncope of the high short vowel ə. Hence, \**ta-gastəʔ-e* > \**te-gest-e* (alternatively, \**ta-gast-e* > \**te-gest-e*) and \**a-gastəʔ* > \**e-gesti* (alternatively, \**e-gest-e* < \**te-gest-e*).

### 6.3. The ending \**-e*:

The Latin transcription of the ending of the toponym *Thagaste* / *Ta-gaste* reflects a feminine Amazigh noun in *e*, as in the instances of *Theueste*, *Thelepte*, *Tepelte*, *Tacape* and other ancient toponyms of a similar structure. The feminine suffix in *-e* can also be in adapted into *i* in Latin, as in *Pheradi Maius* (Múrcia 2025b, § 3.1, 68-75) and *Thamugadi*. In the case of (nomi-

native) *Tagastae*, the ending is probably a hypercorrection, which is also found in *Tacapae* and *Thaenae*, although in the oldest attestations it could also record the ancient ending \*-ǎy before monophthongization. *Thagastis* is an analogical adaptation to a nominative form of a third declension noun, as *Thagastem* is an analogical accusative. Theoretically, *-e* could be analysed as a mere paragogical vowel of the Latin adaptation of the toponyms; *Thagaste*, *Theueste*, *Thelepte*, *Tepelte* would therefore be Latin phonetic adaptations of Paleo-Amazigh feminine nouns with suffix *-t*. This analysis is less plausible for two reasons: firstly, it would make no sense for *e* to be chosen in Latin as a paragogical vowel instead of an ending typical of consonant stems (*-is* in this case), since this type of adaptation is not found in toponyms from other provinces of the Empire; second, we would have to admit that the lexemes of these names are all biconsonantal. And, although in some cases the loss of a weak radical from the original language through adaptation can reasonably be argued, an analysis in which the lexemes of these names are triconsonantal, as is the case with most of the Proto-Amazigh verbal roots, is structurally less disruptive. Besides, the diachronic evolution of the toponyms that have survived beyond Antiquity, as in the aforementioned name of *Theueste* > *Tibassa* / *Tibissa* in Arabic sources, is probably to be understood phonologically and morphologically as a minimal Arabic adaptation of medieval Amazigh / *tebesse*/.

## 7. Conclusions

(a) The etymological analysis that has been conducted in this study is only possible now that Amazigh historical linguistics has achieved a degree of maturity in which reliable reconstructions of the phonology and of the verbal and nominal morphology of the protolanguage are available. On the basis of Proto-Amazigh reconstructions it is now possible to attempt the challenging analysis of the ancient attestations of the language (toponymy, ethnonymy, anthroponymy and phytonymy, for the most part) in highly heterogeneous sources ranging from Greek historians and geographers from the fifth century BCE to Libyan and Neo-Punic inscriptions, and Latin and Greek texts of Roman, Vandal and Byzantine times. We have seen that tracing back from Proto-Amazigh to Paleo-Amazigh is methodologically challenging, as the linguistic data prior to the third century CE appear to be Pre-Proto-Amazigh, although this should still be taken as a provisional estimate.

(b) The Canarian toponym *Tegueste* is probably a cognate of Numidian *Thagaste*. The Paleo-Amazigh analysis of this noun leads to *\*ta-gast-e* ‘slope, downhill’, a deverbative concrete noun derived from the verb (aorist) *\*-əggastǎʔ-* ~ ~ (perfective) *\*-ǎggustǎʔ-* ‘to be on a slope downhill’, whose continuator is attested in three different branches of the Amazigh cluster: Northern, Western and Southern. The *lautgesetzlich* reconstruction of this lexical family in Proto-Amazigh leads to *\*te-gess-e* or, alternatively, *\*te-gessǎʔ-e*. Still, there are solid grounds (see above, § 6.2) for suggesting a progressive assimilation of the consonantal cluster *\*st* > *\*ss* prior to the crystallisation of Proto-Amazigh.

(c) The toponym *Teguisse*, which referred to a pre-hispanic settlement located on the western slope of the Guanapay volcano on the island of Lanzarote would reflect *\*te-gesse-e*. It could therefore be tentatively claimed that the Amazigh character of this part of Lanzarote indicates a settlement later than those of Tenerife and Gran Canaria, since the assimilation *\*st* > *\*ss* is accomplished in *Teguisse* but not in *Tegueste*. However, a systematic study of the toponymy and other linguistic evidence is necessary in order to be able to draw solid conclusions.

(d) Similarly, the mid-vowel metaphonic rule that led to the rise of the stem vowel *\*a* > *e* (triggered by the feminine suffix *\*-e*) *\*te-gest-e* did not yet work in Paleo-Amazigh when the Numidian toponym *Thagaste* was first attested. Another recurrent Canarian toponym, *Iguste*, can be analysed as the masculine derivative (with augmentative meaning) of the former, *\*e-gest-e*, or, alternatively, as a direct deverbative noun *\*e-gestǎʔ* > *\*e-gesti*. In either reconstruction, it is probably a cognate of modern Middle Atlas and Eastern High Atlas Tamaziyt *igissi* ‘slope, downhill, steep descent’, which reflects the phonemic merger in Northern Amazigh of the Proto-Amazigh contrast between *\*e* and *\*i*.

(e) Both *Tegueste* and *Iguste* are well attested in Castilian texts from Tenerife and Gran Canaria since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively, and the preservation of the consonantal cluster *st* may be a hint of an ancient settling of Amazigh-speaking communities in the Canary Islands, about which at present little is known for certain.

(f) At the same time, the mid vowel metaphonic vocalization that Castilian adaptations *Tegueste* and *Iguste* apparently reflect may reveal a situation that is already Proto-Amazigh.

(g) Two more microtoponyms of Gran Canaria named *Tagaste* – which have not been recorded until very recent times – challenged the earlier assumption, and it might also be argued that this slight vowel change was either an independent evolution of Canarian Amazigh or a particular Castilian adaptation of the vowel system of the pre-Hispanic language.

(h) From the point of view of semantics, all the locations named *Thagaste*, *Tegueste*, *Tagaste*, *Teguisse* and *Iguste* coincide in the designation of slopes, whether human settlements or unpopulated spaces crossed by ravines or gullies.

(i) The inclusion of the Catalan toponym *Tagast* in this study is problematic, as the remnants of Amazigh toponyms in the western edge of the Pre-Pyrenees in the time of al-Andalus are scarce and dubious according to the current state of research. Yet *Tagast* was already attested in its current form in Latin texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it still names a torrent that flows down a steep mountain range. Hence, even if the hypothesis of a pre-Roman substrate may be plausible, the possibility that *Tagast* is a legacy of Amazigh groups of the Upper Marches of al-Andalus cannot be ruled out.

(j) This monographic study highlights the wide-ranging implications of Paleo-Amazigh, since Amazigh linguistic evidence is not only ubiquitous in all kinds of sources of North Africa from Antiquity until modern times but also resonates in the Iberian Peninsula, especially during the Middle Ages and in the Canary Islands probably over a longer period of time, with a complex stratification of settlements. In this vast field of study, though, the research carried out to date has barely scratched the surface.

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