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# Crossing thresholds: the lexicalization and performance of memory in early imperial funerary inscriptions from Sicily

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*Crossreads: text, materiality and multiculturalism at the crossroads of the ancient Mediterranean. CROSSREADS has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme Grant agreement No. 885040*

## 1. Introduction

- 1 Memory is externalised in the cemetery through language (Assmann [2010: 36]; Isurin [2017: 32]). In the early imperial (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) Sicilian cemeteries of Syracuse, Catania, and Termini, a post-colonial multicultural and multilingual people negotiate individual and collective memory through the diction of their funerary inscriptions (Crellin [2022]; Prag [2024]). Beyond bilingual interference and convergence phenomena, we observe the creation of a semiotic repertoire to flexibly activate memories, and related identity representations in the cemetery. Cemeteries are, following Foucault, heterotopic spaces with language / diction as a gatekeeper. The following paragraphs introduce the reader to the conceptualisation of memory, the situation in early imperial Sicily, and the concept of heterotopia.
- 2 Memory is, psychologically, “the faculty of encoding, storing[,] and retrieving information” and falls into sensory (not consciously controlled), short-term, and long-term memory (Zlotnik & Vansintjan [2019: 2]). Storing in and retrieving from long-term memory are of interest here. Memory can be acquired by instruction (semantic memory) or experience (episodic memory) (Assmann [2010: 37]). Memory falls into

individual and collective memory, and the latter with Assman [2010] into social, political, and cultural memory. That is, memories can be specific to the individual (personal memory), a group of people (social memory), an organised body (political memory), or a cultural setting (cultural memory) (Assmann [2010: 40])<sup>1</sup>. They differ not only in scope and perspective of encoding but also in length of storing and triggers for retrieving (Isurin [2017: 16]; Rothberg [2013: 363]).

- 3 Written cultures develop an “archive” and a “canon” with the archive being the totality of events, etc. stored and the canon being those events, etc. that “a society has consciously selected and maintains as salient and vital for a common orientation and a shared remembering” (Assmann [2010: 43]). Colonialism, as in early imperial Sicily, “involves a break in the intergenerational communicative memory of a colonized group” and “the imposition of a foreign canon of cultural memory” (Rothberg [2013: 361])<sup>2</sup>. Commemorations, such as tombstones, are a mechanism of (re)constructing and maintaining memories (Isurin [2017: 25]) drawing on the social mechanism of language (Isurin [2017: 32]) in its material (tomb) and environmental (cemetery) contexts. They are thus the “*lieu de mémoire*” *par excellence* (Rothberg [2013: 363])<sup>3</sup> The Sicilian tombstones illustrate the multi-directionality of memory where “multiple pasts jostle against each other in a heterogeneous present” (Rothberg [2013: 372]) and where collective memory and identity representation are inextricably intertwined (Isurin [2017: 21]).
- 4 Sicily was colonised by Greek speakers, initially of Ionic Greek until the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC and subsequently Doric Greek in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC (Mimbrera [2012a: 191]; Mimbrera [2012b: 223]; Cerchiali *et al.* [2004])<sup>4</sup>. In 409 BC, the Carthaginians (from North Africa) brought destruction to the island (Mimbrera [2012a: 191]); in 211 BC, the Romans (from Italy) colonised the island (Mimbrera [2012b: 229]). From 21 BC onwards, Syracuse, Catania, and Termini were Roman veteran colonies (Prag [2024]). The inscriptions of interest fit here as they date from 1 BC to AD 401.
- 5 In the early imperial period (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD), (i) Latin, the colonisers’ language, and Greek, the language on the island, are used alongside each other, (ii) their prominence in the private and public spheres varies in a seemingly area-specific way (Korhonen [2017]; Prag [2024]), and (iii) biculturalism, i.e. the use of the Greek and Roman writing systems alongside each other, survived (Crellin [2022: 201]). The last point indicates two communities of practice on the island (see Unwin, Hughes & Jewson [2007]; Crellin [2022]; Prag [2024])<sup>5</sup>. Finally, the period sees the arrival of Christianity on the island which is specifically obvious in the material from the catacombs, the Christian underground cemeteries (esp. Korhonen [2004]; Korhonen [2011])<sup>6</sup>.
- 6 Cemeteries are heterotopic, i.e. they are real sites that constitute counter-sites where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault [2008: 3]). Heterotopias exist in all cultures, can change function (e.g. European cemeteries between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries), juxtapose several incompatible spaces in one space (e.g. gardens), and be linked to slices in time (e.g. fairgrounds). They “presuppose a system of opening and closing” (Foucault [2008: 7]) (e.g. prisons) and “have a function in relation to all the space that remains” (Foucault [2008: 8]) (e.g. brothels). Cemeteries are “unlike ordinary cultural spaces” yet “connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery” (Foucault [2008: 3]). This article is interested in how the Sicilian cemeteries of early imperial

Syracuse, Catania, and Termini represent, contest, and invert identity discourse(s) in a society at a crossroads<sup>7</sup>.

- 7 The three research questions addressed break down the question to *what extent the creation of individual and collective memory and the reactivation of remembrance entail the creation of a lexicon and / or diction?* Diction is divided into semantic-lexemic, syntactic, and pragmatic phrasemes by means of Mel'čuk's [2023] Sens-Texte framework.
- 8 1. How is the link between the living and the dead conceptualised for the individuals involved, esp. the deceased honorand and the living dedicator? [syntactic phraseme]  
 2. Why do inscriptions in different languages (Greek, Latin) and from different cities differ in their enacting of identity choices with reference to the community's memory? [pragmatic phraseme]  
 3. What phrasemes symbolise, index, or iconise memory and remembrance (in the sense of the lexicalisation of a concept) in the funerary (and honorific) inscriptions? [semantic-lexemic phrasemes]
- 9 The below falls into five sections. Section 2 introduces the reader to the dataset (the I.Sicily database), the tool for data collection (Sketch Engine), and the framework for data analysis (Sens-Texte framework). Section 3a addresses research question one, Section 3b research question two, and Section 3c research question three. Section 4 summarises the results, draws conclusions, and provides an outlook for further work with the still growing I.Sicily database.

## 2. Methodology

- 10 In Mel'čuk's Sens-Texte framework, a phraseme is a complex sign since the "signifier includes more than one component" (Mel'čuk [2023: 29]). A complex sign AB is compositional when  $AB = A \oplus B$  (Mel'čuk [2023: 29-32]). This means that compositionality is categorical<sup>8</sup>. Depending on the type of components that make up the signifier, phrasemes fall into semantic-lexemic, syntactic, and pragmatic phrasemes (Mel'čuk [2023: 38]). This article divides up diction in this way.
- 11 In semantic-lexemic phrasemes, the signifier consists of lexemes (Mel'čuk [2023: 40]) and the signified can be compositional (collocation) or non-compositional (idiom) (Mel'čuk [2023: 43 and 50]). In syntactic phrasemes, the signifier is non-segmental and "contains ... a syntactic operation" (Mel'čuk [2023: 185]). The signified of syntactic phrasemes is usually non-compositional and it is unclear "whether compositional syntactic phrasemes are possible" (Mel'čuk [2023: 192]). In pragmatic phrasemes, situational constraints apply to the signified. Mel'čuk [2023: 162] calls this a "special communication situation." One type of such a situation is "ritualized social situations" (Mel'čuk [2023: 162]). While a "special communication situation" may be better described in the terms of genre, register, and style (Biber & Conrad [2009]; Fendel [2024a]), the funerary and honorific inscriptions from Sicily certainly fall under "ritualized social situations". Their diction is situationally conditioned and constrained.
- 12 This article focusses on three groups of phrasemes: semantic-lexemic phrasemes containing a lexeme referring to *memory* in the signifier, the syntactic phraseme of asyndesis as applied between the reference to the deceased (*lived*) and the one to the dedicator (*set up*), and the pragmatic phraseme *Dis manibus (sacrum)* '(sacred /

memorial) to the spirits of the dead’ which appears like a genre marker at the beginning of funerary inscriptions. Examples of funerary inscriptions from the data dample that contain several of the relevant phrasemes are shown in (1) and (2)°:

(1) ISic001332 (from Catania)

<p>[Θ(εοῖς)]Κ(αταχθονίοις)          [- - ? - -]οςἔζ[ησεν]          ἔτ[η.ζ]μῆνε[ς- - ? - -]          ἐπ[οίη]σεν αὐτοῦ ἡ          σύ[μβ]ιος μνήμησ          [χ]άρις</p>	<p>[Th(eois)]K(atakthoniois)          [--?--]osez[ēsen]          et[ē .]zmēne[s -- ?--]          ep[oiē]sen autou hē          su[mb]ios mnēmēs          [kh]arin</p>	<p>‘To the subterranean deities. ---os lived for -7 years, - months. His wife made (this) for his memory.’</p>
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- 13 In (1), the pragmatic phraseme ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’ appears at the beginning of the inscription, the syntactic phraseme of asyndesis seems to appear in the first sentence, yet with the caveat that there is a gap between the finite verbs meaning ‘to live’ and ‘to do’, and a semantic-lexemic phraseme built around a lexeme referring to memory (here μνήμη *mnēmē* ‘memory’) appears at the end of the inscription.

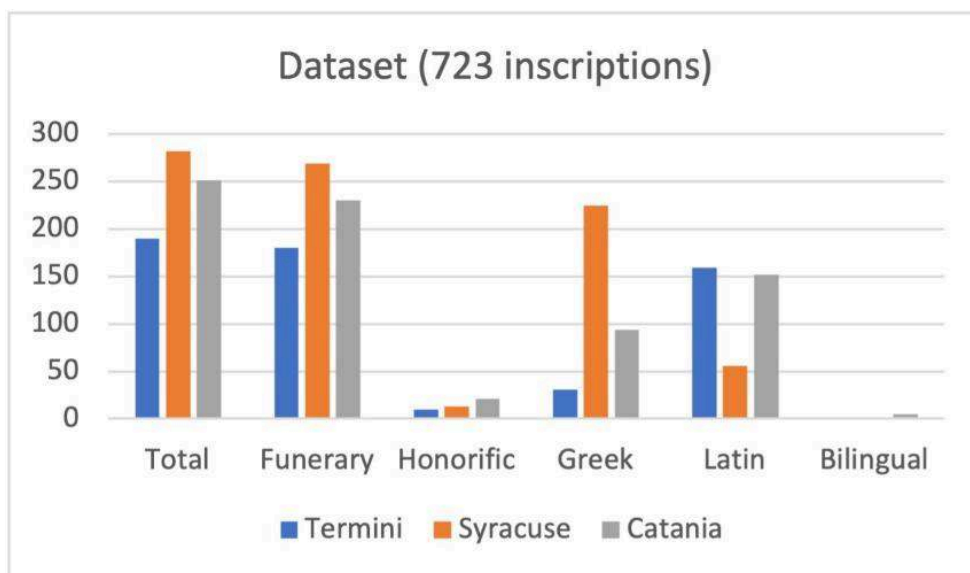
(2) ISic003248 (from Catania)

<p>[.Oc]tavius T(iti)f(ilius)[- - ? - -]          [Co]rnelianus v[ixit]          [annis]XXII ( / ) mens(ibus)I[. .]          [T(itus ?)Octavius( ?)][- - ? - -] charmo[- - ? - -]          [et- - ? - -].Spendu[sa]          [pare]ntes [fec(erunt)h(oc)]m(onumentum)s(ive)s(epulchrum)          [- - ? - -]</p>	<p>‘Octavius Cornelianus, son of Titus, lived for 22 years and (?) months. Titus Octavius ... and Spendusa, the parents, made this. This monument or tomb ...’</p>
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- 14 In (2), the pragmatic phraseme ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’ is missing, which may be due to damage to the stone but cannot be verified as the inscription is no longer intact, the syntactic phraseme of asyndesis seems to appear in the first sentence, yet here too with the caveat that there is a gap between the finite verbs meaning ‘to live’ and ‘to do’, and a semantic-lexemic phraseme built around a lexeme referring to memory (here *sepulchrum* ‘memorial’) appears at the end of the preserved inscription text.

- 15 The phrasemes of interest are collected in the funerary and honorific inscriptions from the Sicilian cities of Termini, Syracuse, and Catania. The three cities provide a sufficiently large and intact corpus of such inscriptions which has recently been autopsied and re-edited. Inscriptions date from the early imperial period (1 BC to AD 401)<sup>10</sup>. They have been collected, (re-)examined, and annotated in the *Crossreads* project and are openly available on the ISicily database (Prag & Chartrand [2019]; Prag [2021]). Figure 1 provides an overview of the corpus sample by place, text type, and language<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 1. Dataset



- 16 The parameters of date, provenance, and text type were applied on 9 May 2024. The database is still growing. A larger-scale study, diachronically and diatopically, has to await further data being added. Ca. 350 yet unrecorded inscriptions from the catacombs especially from Syracuse are intact enough to allow for analysis (Prag, pc). Inscriptions are cited with their ISicXXXXXX number which is a stable identifier (for cross-links, see the database).
- 17 The inscriptions are fragmentary, dialectally diverse, and multilingual<sup>12</sup>, thus posing challenges for tokenization, lemmatization, and part-of-speech tagging. The corpus has been tokenized by means of the PyEpiDoc tokenizer (see <https://github.com/rsdc2/PyEpiDoc>) and lemmatized and POS-tagged by means of the PROIEL model via the UDPipe (see <https://lindat.mff.cuni.cz/services/udpipe/run.php>). Manual correction has been applied to this output. The corpus is lemmatized in Attic-Ionic Greek and classical Latin even if wordforms show alternative spellings for diachronic, diatopic, or diastratic reasons (e.g. ISic001649 *bixit* for *vixit*). Abbreviations are resolved. The output .conllu file has subsequently been converted into a .vert file and the corpus has been implemented into Sketch Engine, a digital corpus-analysis tool (McGillivray & Kilgarriff [2013]; Fendel & Ireland [2023]; Fendel [2024b]). The Latin corpus consists of 371 inscriptions (3,577 tokens) and the Greek corpus of 352 inscriptions (2,763 tokens). 5 inscriptions are in fact bilingual (from Catania and Syracuse)<sup>13</sup>.
- 18 Subsamples for each type of phraseme of interest were collected by means of the collocation tool in Sketch Engine. The sub-samples were converted into .excel sheets and manually annotated for further parameters. Inscriptions that are fragmented such

as not to allow evaluation as to the function (e.g. onomastic vs. noun) or embedding (e.g. phraseme vs. free structure) of relevant items are tagged as *lost* for exclusion during analysis. The .excel files are openly accessible here: DOI 10.5287/ora-7egbyjjbb.

### 3. Analysis and interpretation

19 The below examines phrasemes reflecting the lexicalization of memory in Kay and Allan’s [2015: 96] sense, i.e. the situation of a concept “ha[ving] a large vocabulary allowing for a good deal of discrimination among various aspects of the concept.” Here, all types of phrasemes rather than only “vocabulary” are included. A highly lexicalised concept “reflects the evolution of speakers’ reactions, attitudes, perceptions and awarenesses of that concept” (Alexander & Anderson [2014: 67]) as human language does not allow for redundancy, from a variationist perspective. The below assesses how relevant phrasemes permeate texts. The broader focus on phrasemes, rather than lexemes, allows to inspect a diction of memory in the Sicilian inscriptions.

#### 3.1. Asyndesis: Individual remembering (Latin in Catania)

20 The syntactic phraseme of interest is asyndesis. Asyndesis is the “connectorless juxtaposition” of verbal kernels (Rosén [2011: 137]; Mazzanti [2020: 80]), e.g. *he came, he saw, he won*. Asyndesis figures “in the paradigms of superordinators and asymmetrically connecting function words” in Latin (Rosén [2011: 146]; Mazzanti [2020]; Mazzanti [2023]) whereas Greek prefers copulative connectors, e.g. *δέ de* ‘but’ and *καί kai* ‘and’, in comparable environments (Rosén [2011: 138-139])<sup>14</sup>. The focus here is on asyndetic linkage of finite verbs which show no subject continuity or object sharing, unlike in *he came, he saw* but as in *he died, they built* (Denniston [1950: 99-109] on “full” asyndeton; Luraghi [2003]; Luraghi [2004]).

21 Data collection was done by drawing lemma-based concordances for *βίωω bioō* ‘to live’ and *ζάω zaō* ‘to live’ in the Greek and *vivo* ‘to live’ in the Latin corpus. The second verbal kernel of interest was a verb meaning ‘to put, to establish’<sup>15</sup>. If this was absent, the passage was excluded. The mean distance between the two verbal kernels was recorded, given Mazzanti’s [2020; 2023] findings of its relevance in asyndetic settings in Latin, along with subject continuity and the linear order of events. Table 1 shows the Greek and Table 2 the Latin data.

Table 1. Asyndesis in Greek

	V2 finite	Mean distance	Subject continuity	Linear order of events	Verb of putting	of Provenance	Total
V1 finite	16 (incl. 1 LOST)	5.6	–	put-live (3) live-put (13)	ποιέω ποιέω ‘to make’ (15) LOST (1)	Catania (16)	16
	5	2	5	put-live (3) live-put (2)	ποιέω ποιέω ‘to make’ (1)	Catania (2) Syracuse (3)	5

					κεῖμαι <i>keimai</i> 'to put' (4)		
V1 non-finite	1	4	-	live-put (1)	ποιέω <i>poiēō</i> 'to make' = 1	Catania (1)	1
	24 (incl. 1 LOST)	1.2	23	put-live (18) live-put (5) LOST (1)	ποιέω <i>poiēō</i> 'to make' (4) κεῖμαι <i>keimai</i> 'to put' (19) LOST (1)	Catania (9) Syracuse (15)	24
							46

Table 2. Asyndesis in Latin

	V2 finite	Mean distance	Subject continuity	Linear order of events	Verb of putting	of Provenance	Total
V1 finite	48 (incl. 1 LOST)	5.63	- (incl. 1 LOST)	live-put (44) put-live (3) LOST (1)	<i>comparo</i> 'to institute' (1) <i>depono</i> 'to put down' (1) <i>facio</i> 'to make' (43) <i>pono</i> 'to put' (2) LOST (1)	Catania (38) Syracuse (4) Termini (6)	48
	3	1.33	3	put-live (2) live-put (1)	<i>facio</i> 'to make' (1) <i>sino</i> 'to fix' (2)	Catania (1) Termini (1) Syracuse (1)	3
	-	3	3	live-put (3)	<i>depono</i> 'to put down' (1) <i>pono</i> 'to put' (1) <i>restituo</i> 'to restore' (1)	Catania (3)	3
V1 non-finite	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
							54

22 Tables 1 and 2 show the following: (i) Greek allows regularly for V1 ('to live') to be non-finite and thus to provide a circumstance for V2 ('to put'), e.g. ISic001769 ἐνθάδε κεῖτε

ζῆσας *ent<sup>h</sup>ade keite zēsas* ‘he was put here having lived’. These instances are not asyndetic. By contrast, V1 and V2 are finite in all except three instances in Latin. (ii) Greek has a preference for the order live-put when V1 and V2 are finite as does Latin. (iii) Subject continuity is regularly preserved in Greek, primarily by using passive κέῖμαι *keimai* ‘to be put’ with the deceased as the subject. These structures are not asyndetic. Subject continuity is the exception in Latin.

- 23 The outlier in Tables 1 and 2 is three Latin inscriptions from Catania in which V1 is finite but V2 is infinite: ISic000396 *vixit ... deposita*, ISic000619 *vixit ... positus*, and ISic003251 *vixit ... restitutus*<sup>16</sup>. The Greek pattern has been replicated, i.e. the combination of a finite and a non-finite verb, and the sequence otherwise preferred in asyndetic structures, i.e. live-put, has been preserved. Yet the non-finite verb is not V1 (‘to live’) but V2 (‘to put’). The non-finite verb is following the finite verb, as it would in Greek combinations of finite and non-finite verbs. The subject is the deceased. This is an instance of Matras and Sakel’s [2007] pattern replication, i.e. the import of a non-segmental structure without any phonological material (Matras [2009: 236]), rather than polysemy copying (Heine & Kuteva [2005: 100-103]), i.e. word-by-word transposition. The pivotal feature seems to be the combination of a finite and a non-finite verb with the finite verb preceding the non-finite verb and the reference to the deceased in the subject slot.
- 24 Given the rarity of the structure and its diatopic limitation to Catania, this may be an instance of bilingual interference (Muysken [2010: 272]; Matras [2010: 68]). Bilingual interference refers to the ad-hoc drawing on multiple rather than one language when forming an utterance due to individual multilinguality (Fendel [2022: 3]; Hamers & Blanc [2000]). Features thus created are perhaps best described in the sense of Sampson’s [2016: 19] E(nlargin) creativity, i.e. “creativity that enlarges or expands our system(s)” by breaking the existing system rules intentionally or unintentionally (see also Bergs [2019]). The feature may never take root in the language variety but can serve as an index, i.e. it has become associated with a particular situation dimension and invokes it when used (Bentein [2019: 123]), especially in the context of an otherwise phraseologically fixed environment.
- 25 A circumstantial participle of a putting verb combined with a finite living verb profile living as primary and setting up a resting place as circumstantial. Conversely, a formally asyndetic structure “presents the relationship between the extralinguistic referents designated by the elements that constitute the asyndetic sequence as one between entities that are (a) separate from one another and / or (b) juxtaposed or connected with each other with little or no intermediation” (Vatri [2020: 231]; Luraghi [2003: 191]; Bonifazi, Drummen & Kreij [2016: para. II.3.4.2 68]). This means that the deceased and the living dedicator are separate but linked and that the previous life and the present dedication are sequential and discourse-pragmatically of equal value. Latin and Greek have different preferences for the profiling of the link<sup>17</sup>. This is why individuals may creatively draw on both repertoires in order to reflect their own conceptualisation of the link, as in the three Latin inscriptions from Catania.

### 3.2. *Dis Manibus (Sacrum)*: Collective remembrance (Greek in Catania)

- 26 The pragmatic phraseme of interest is *Dis manibus (sacrum)* ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’. The phraseme is specific to a “special communications situation”, i.e. a “ritualized social situation” (Mel’čuk [2023: 162]). It appears regularly as the first element of a funerary inscription (Korhonen [2004: 246-247]) and may constitute a genre marker (Korhonen [2011: 119]). Genre markers are “specialized expressions” that are “usually once-occurring in the text, in a particular place in the text” (Biber & Conrad [2009: 16]). They are a culturally expected feature in a specific text variety, such as *Dear [name]* at the beginning of a letter (see Fendel [2022: chap. 8]). The genre marker seems to be a feature of the Latin (cf. Prag [2024]) rather than the Greek epigraphic tradition, which explains code-switches (cf. Muysken [2000]) as in ISic001307 where the inscription is Greek but *Dis manibus (sacrum)* ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’ is Latin in Latin script<sup>18</sup>. Korhonen [2004: 248] suggests that the word-by-word translation of the phraseme into Greek (polysemy copying) is due to Latin influence in Catania.
- 27 The phraseme is often morpho-syntactically independent from the rest of the inscription in Latin. This points to the phraseme having taken Heine and Kaltenböck’s [2021: 5] “quantum leap”, i.e. the phraseme is divorced from the sentence grammar and transferred into the discourse grammar (from the propositional onto the interpersonal level in the terms of functional grammar). Claridge and Arnovick [2010: 179-181], labelling this pragmaticalisation, detail that the divorce from the sentence grammar is clear from the phraseme’s (i) extension of scope, (ii) decategorialisation, and (iii) extra-sentential positioning (see also Koev [2022: 18]). Pragmaticalised and non-pragmaticalised patterns can co-exist for some time (see Debaisieux [2016] on French *parce que* ‘since, because’; Fendel [2024a] on *προσέχω τὸν νοῦν* *prosekhō ton noun* ‘to pay attention (to)’).
- 28 Data collection was done by drawing lemma-based concordances for *θεός* *t<sup>h</sup>eos* ‘god’ and *δαίμων* *daimōn* ‘divine power’ in the Greek and *dis* ‘god, spirit’ in the Latin corpus. The phraseme is regularly abbreviated. In early imperial times, abbreviations are a feature of the Latin epigraphic tradition (Prag [2024]) as are word dividers in the form of dots or ivy leaves. These are applied more often to prosodic words and phrases than to morphosyntactic words and are applied inconsistently by this time (Crellin [2022: 196-199])<sup>19</sup>. Abbreviations and word dividers are recorded. Table 3 shows the Greek and Table 4 the Latin data.

Table 3. *Dis Manibus (Sacrum)* in Greek

Abbreviation	By abbreviation	Word dividers	At the start	Functions as		Provenance	Total
				Direct object	Indirect object		
YES	ΘK = 26	8	24	-	9	Catania (18) Syracuse (7) Termini (1)	32

	ΘKA = 1	-	1	-	-	Catania	
	ΘKI= 1 (only one with all three components)	-	1	-	1	Catania	
	ΘKΣ = 1	1	1	-	1	Catania	
	ΘKX = 2	-	2	-	-	Catania (1) Termini (1)	
	ΘX = 1	-	1	-	-	Syracuse	
NO	n / a	1	3	-	1	Termini (1) Syracuse (1) Catania (1)	3
		-	1	-	1	Catania (1)	1
Total							36

Table 4. Dis Manibus (Sacrum) in Latin

Phrase	By abbreviation	Word dividers	At the start	Functions as		Provenance	Total
				Direct object	Indirect object		
<i>Dis Manibus</i>	52 <sup>20</sup>	28	65	-	12	Catania (18) Termini (40) Syracuse (7)	65
<i>Dis Manibus Sacrum</i>	71 <sup>21</sup>	35	70	35	-	Catania (66) Termini (1) Syracuse (4)	71
	-	1	1	1	-	Termini	1
	-	-	1	1	1	Syracuse	1
Total							139

29 Tables 3 and 4 show the following: (i) The phraseme is more common in Latin than in Greek. In Greek, it appears in 26% of all inscriptions from Catania, in 10% from Termini, and in 4% from Syracuse, in Latin, in 55% of all inscriptions from Catania, in 26% from Termini, and in 20% from Syracuse. The phraseme is most common in Latin and Greek in inscriptions from Catania followed by those from Termini and least common in those from Syracuse. (ii) The phraseme is syntactically integrated in 36% of all instances in

Greek (as an indirect object) and in 35% of all instances in Latin (more often as a direct than as an indirect object). (iii) The phraseme is abbreviated in 88% of all Greek instances and 90% of all Latin instances. The shorter version of the phraseme, i.e. without the *sacrum* element, is abbreviated in a variety of forms in Greek and Latin. It is the predominant option in Greek but not in Latin. For the longer version, i.e. with the *sacrum* element, the abbreviation is standardised in Latin (with the only exception being ISic000359 from Catania) and it is the predominant option in Latin but not in Greek for which there is only one relevant instance (ISic001299 from Catania).

- 30 The observations show that Catania and to a lesser extent Termini were the centres of contact and that Latin epigraphic tradition was adopted not only phraseologically but also practically (cf. abbreviations). However, there was adaptation of the phraseme. Firstly, the Greek inscriptions prefer the in Latin inscriptions dispreferred shorter form of the phraseme with the exception of ISic001299 from Catania, possibly because it was less standardised as the variety of available abbreviations shows. Secondly, the Greek inscriptions lexically prefer general θεός *theos* ‘god’ over δαίμων *daimōn* ‘divine power’ with the exception of ISic003223 from Catania, which seems a conscious choice given that δαίμων *daimōn* ‘divine power’ was available. Thirdly, the Greek inscriptions show variation between καταχθόνιος *katak<sup>h</sup>thonios* ‘native’ (28 in total, Catania= 18, Syracuse= 7, Termini=3), κατακθόνιος *katak<sup>t</sup>thonios* ‘native’ (4 in total, all from Catania) with an unaspirated guttural before the aspirate, and simplex χθόνιος *k<sup>h</sup>thonios* ‘native’ (4 in total, Syracuse= 2, Catania= 2, including ISic003223). While the phonetic variant seems to be a diatopic variant of Catania, the simplex vs. complex adjective seems to attest to the phraseme still being under construction.
- 31 The *Dis manibus (sacrum)* ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’ phraseme seems to be a case of convergence of the Greek and Latin traditions (Muysken [2010: 272]; Matras [2010: 68]). This is akin to what we witness in similarly multilingual communities in another type of genre marker, epistolary formulae, in early Byzantine Egypt especially in the village of Kellis (Fendel [2022: chap. 8]; see also Bentein [2019]). The hypothesis of integration especially in Catania ties in with Korhonen’s earlier findings. Korhonen [2017: 354] drawing on Berry’s [2005] model of acculturation characterises Catania as evidencing “integrazione” as opposed to the “separazione” in Syracuse and somewhere between “assimilazione” and “marginalizzazione” in Termini (see Prag [2012: 49] on polis identity).
- 32 In sum, we observe creativity at the societal (especially *polis*) level. The contact feature seems to have taken root in the language variety and serves as an index towards the Latin / Roman tradition of remembrance rites. However, societally, the cemetery while not as conspicuous as the forum is still a space which everyone is linked to (see Section 1), thus if there was a societal discourse pushing for one or the other epigraphic tradition, it would have impacted. Furthermore, practically, Prag [2024] argues that the communities of practice, including their stonecutters, were still separate in the early imperial period such that a less subtle expression of a mixed identity, e.g. a code-switch, may have been impossible due to the available stonecutter not offering services in both languages (but see famously ISic000470, the bilingual stonecutter inscription, from Palermo).

### 3.3. The semiotics of social memory: Symbols, indices, and icons (Latin and Greek in Syracuse and Catania)

- 33 Semiotics traditionally distinguishes between an icon, e.g. for volume, i.e. there is a resemblance between form and meaning, an index, e.g. for fire, i.e. there is contiguity of form and meaning, and a symbol, e.g. for radioactivity, i.e. there is an arbitrary relationship between form and meaning (Peirce [1933]; Bentein [2019]). While Unicode images are used here, the funerary inscriptions draw on “the primary symbol system that defines the framework for individuals’ memories” (Pennebaker & Banasik [1997: 4]), i.e. language (Isurin [2017 : 32]).
- 34 The event of memory is the reference point. The concepts of icon, index, and symbol are used to relate terms that directly or indirectly refer to memory to the event of memory. The event of memory happens in the mind. Thus, lexemes with a referential meaning of memory, remembrance, and the like ( ) are icons as there is a contiguous relationship between them and the event of memory. Lexemes with a referential meaning of heart, mind, and the like ( / ) are indices as a metonymic relationship holds with emotions and thoughts in the mind, including nostalgia and remembrance (Kraska-Szlenk [2014]). Lexemes with a referential meaning of monument, tomb, and the like ( ) are symbols as an arbitrary relationship holds between them and the event of memory. A monument, tomb, and the like is an inanimate object outside of the mind and is related to the event of memory in that it may trigger it because the mind may make an association based on socio-cultural experiences or norms.
- 35 A funerary inscription thus (i) symbolises a memorial, (ii) indexes remembrance, and (iii) iconises remembering, explicitly or implicitly. Implicit mentions are Halliday and Hasan’s [1976: 284-286] collocation, i.e. the appearance of “lexical items that often occur in the same lexical environment.” We broaden from the narrowly lexical focus to the diction in general. Explicit mentions are Halliday and Hasan’s reiteration, i.e. “the repetition of a lexical item [...] the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item [...] and a number of things in between – [...] a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate” (Halliday & Hasan [1976: 278]). We broaden from the narrowly lexical focus to the diction in general<sup>22</sup>.
- 36 Data collection was done in two steps. First, Sketch Engine’s Wordlist feature was set to operate on lemmata in order to draw up a list of all the lemmata that appear in the Greek and Latin sub-corpora. These were inspected for relevant lexemes. The following results:

Greek: εἰκὼν *eikon* ‘image’, ἤτορ *ētor* ‘heart’, θυμός *t<sup>h</sup>umos* ‘soul’, κῆρ *kēr* ‘heart’, μῆνυω *mēnuō* ‘to reveal’, μῆνυσκω *mimnēskō* ‘to remind’, μνεῖα *mneia* ‘remembrance’, μνημεῖον *mnēmeion* ‘memorial, remembrance’, μνήμη *mnēmē* ‘remembrance, memory’, μνημόσυνον *mnēmosunon* ‘remembrance, memorial’, σῆμα *sēma* ‘sign’, στήλη *stēlē* ‘stele’, ταφή *tap<sup>h</sup>ē* ‘burial’, τάφος *tap<sup>h</sup>os* ‘funeral rites, tomb’, τύμβος *tumbos* ‘tomb, grave’, ὑπόμνημα *h<sup>u</sup>pomnēma* ‘reminder, memorial’, ψυχή *psuk<sup>h</sup>ē* ‘soul, mind’.

Latin: *loculus* ‘little place, coffin’, *locus* ‘place’, *memoria* ‘memory, remembrance’, *momentum* ‘moment’ (misspelling for *monumentum*), *monumentum* ‘monument’, *ornamentum* ‘decoration, embellishment’, *sepulcrum* ‘grave’, *spiritus* ‘soul’, *statua* ‘statue’ (see also Thomas [2021] on the semantic field).

For relevant items, data collection was done by drawing lemma-based concordances.

37 Relevant instances were classified into representing a symbol, an index, or an icon and by whether the relevant lexeme appears within a lexicalised phrase, i.e. a phrase that has become an idiomatic, often semantically non-compositional lexical unit (Lipka [1981:120])<sup>23</sup>, or within a formulaic environment. Formulaic environments were defined based on the phraseological studies of the funerary inscriptions especially by Korhonen. For Latin, these are the *Dis Manibus Sacrum* phraseme and the phrases ‘place of X’ (Korhonen [2011: 98]), ‘X lived / was put / died and Y made it’, and ‘here rests in peace X’ (Korhonen [2011: 119]). For Greek, these are the phrases ‘place of X’ (Korhonen [2011: 98]), ‘X lived / was put / died and Y made it’, frequently with the  $\mu\eta\acute{\nu}\mu\epsilon\varsigma \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\nu$  *mnēmēs kharin* formula (Korhonen [2004: 249]), and ‘peace be with X’s mind / soul’. Table 5 shows the Greek and Table 6 the Latin data.

Table 5. Memory in Greek

Type	Lexicalised phrase	Within formula	Provenance	Total
Monument [symbol]	–	3	Catania (6) Syracuse (7)	13 34 %
Mind / heart [index]	5	1	Catania (1) Syracuse (6)	7 18 %
Remembrance / memory [icon]	13	11	Catania (7) Syracuse (11)	18 47 %
Total	18 47 %	15 39 %		38

Table 6. Memory in Latin

Type	Lexicalised phrase	Within formula	Provenance	Total
Monument [symbol]	–	12	Syracuse (3) Termini (9) Catania (7)	19 73 %
Mind / heart [index]	1	–	Catania (1)	1 4 %
Remembrance / memory [icon]	3	2	Syracuse (4) Termini (1) Catania (1)	6 23 %
Total	4 15 %	14 53 %		26

- 38 Tables 5 and 6 show the following: (i) The memorial monument (symbol) is more frequently referred to in the Latin than the Greek inscriptions. Many relevant instances appear in the phrase ‘place of X’ with unspecific *locus* ‘place’ in the Latin inscriptions; in the Greek inscriptions, descriptive τάφος *taphos* ‘funeral rites, tomb’ and τύμβος *tumbos* ‘tomb, grave’ predominate. (ii) Reference to memory and remembering (icon) is more common in Greek than in Latin. This is partly explained by the fact that Greek μνήμη χάριν *mnēmēs kharin* ‘for the purpose of remembrance’, occasionally abbreviated as MNH, lacks a Latin equivalent in the data (Korhonen [2004: 248-249])<sup>24</sup>. All six instances come from Catania. (iii) References to the heart / mind (index) seem to be a Greek-specific phenomenon. The only Latin instance, *ultimum spiritum ago* ‘to breathe one’s last’ (ISic000083), is a euphemism for ‘to die’ and thus referring to the deceased rather than the dedicator.
- 39 Unlike the syntactic and pragmatic phrasemes discussed, the semantic-lexemic phrasemes are not part of the culturally determined frame of the inscription and thus offer flexibility to individuals and social groups. A development shared between Latin and Greek is that lexemes referring to events are used to refer to the memorial monument, i.e. ISic001015 ὑπόμνημα *hypomnēma* ‘reminder’ and ISic001724 μνημεῖον ‘remembrance’ (both Syracuse) along with *memoria* ‘memory’ twice in ISic000781 (Catania, bilingual Hebrew-Latin inscription)<sup>25</sup> and in ISic001682 to replace *sacrum* in the *Dis Manibus Sacrum* phraseme (Syracuse)<sup>26</sup>. Generally, this is a regular development from *nomen actionis* via *nomen acti* and *nomen instrumenti* to *nomen loci* (Panagl [2020: 394]; see also Häusle [1980: 29-40]; Ferrua [1941: 233-235]). However, firstly, the intervention into a fixed phraseme such as the *Dis Manibus Sacrum* phraseme is noticeable (ISic001682, Syracuse). Clearly, the writer was able to analyse the components of the phraseme and varied the self-reference to the place. Secondly, if we believe Ferrua’s [1941: 233-235] hypothesis that *locus* / τόπος *topos* ‘place’, τάφος *taphos* ‘funeral rites, tomb’ and τύμβος *tumbos* ‘tomb, grave’ index Christianity and assume that the pragmatic phraseme *Dis Manibus (Sacrum)* indexes pagan settings, a concretised event noun may be a conscious deviation in order to find neutral ground and to refocus from group membership (pagan vs. Christian) onto function, i.e. remind the living to do their duty in remembering the dead.
- 40 Various phrasemes exist to index the Christian surroundings of the early imperial period (e.g. Dresken-Weiland [2020]; Ferrua [1941: 235]) in which both the Latin and Greek epigraphic traditions are embedded and by which they are transformed. E.g. the genitive case of μνήμη *mnēmē* and *memoria* respectively is used to describe the deceased, i.e. ‘X of great / good / etc. memory’ (Greek: ISic000947 from Syracuse, ISic001009 from Syracuse, ISic001653 from Syracuse, ISic001659 from Syracuse, ISic001762 from Syracuse; Latin: ISic001642 from Syracuse, ISic001654 (twice) from Syracuse)<sup>27</sup> and phrases exist to wish peaceful rest to the deceased, e.g. εἰρήνη τῆ ψυχῆ *eirēnē tē psukhē* ‘peace be with his soul’ (ISic003126 from Catania) akin to Latin *requiescit in pace* ‘here rests in peace’.
- 41 A case of *Usurpation* (Agosti [2020: 45]), i.e. the adoption of epic phraseology, its decontextualization, and reuse in a possibly Christian funerary setting, is ISic000406, a Greek-Latin verse inscription from Syracuse. The phrase ἐν στήθεσσι ἔχω *en stēthessi ekhō* ‘to have in mind / at heart’ is a regular verbal multi-word expression with a noun metonymically referring to considering / thinking in the ἐν ... ἔχω *en ... ekhō* frame (cf. Fendel [submitted]; Saeedi [2017]). In literary texts, the phraseme fell out of productive

use in the Hellenistic period. This is shown by a lemma-based proximity search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* on ἐν en, στῆθος stēthos, ἔχω ekhō, with the second and third lemmata appearing within five words of the first, the search result filtered for instances in which the noun appears in the dative case (singular and plural), and manually corrected for instances of the phraseme, also removing all the repetitions. The phraseme appears nine times in archaic Greek (pre 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC) in Homer, Hesiod, and Theognis with the noun always in the plural and unaccompanied by a determiner phrase; it appears ten times in classical Greek (5<sup>th</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC) where the noun can be singular and accompanied by a determiner phrase (seemingly since Plato). From the Hellenistic period onwards (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC onwards), the phraseme appears almost exclusively in quotes from Homer and Hesiod, thus no longer functioning as an active part of the living language. This makes it an ideal candidate to be usurped<sup>28</sup>.

- 42 There were alternatives to the explicit mention of the memorial monument, dedicator's locus of remembering, and event of remembering. The alternative to mentioning the memorial monument would be to focus on the 'having been put' thus refocussing from the site onto the deceased's resting there (see Section 3.1). The alternative to mentioning the dedicator's mind / heart would be mentioning his creating the monument and thus refocussing from thoughts onto actions (see Section 3.1). The alternative to mentioning the event of remembering is the genre and its function, i.e. funerary inscriptions are created as a reminder of the deceased (see Section 3.2).

## 4. Summary and conclusion

- 43 The article has explored the diction of the funerary (and honorific) inscriptions from three early imperial (1 BC to AD 401) Sicilian cities, i.e. Catania, Termini, and Syracuse. By means of the *I.Sicily* Sketch Engine corpus, three sub-samples were drawn reflecting syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic-lexemic phrasemes in the sense of Mel'čuk's Sens-Texte framework.
- 44 The data used to assess the conceptualisation and representation of the link between the deceased honorand and the living dedicator points to choices made at the personal level. The syntactic phraseme of asyndesis in the context of the link between the verb phrases referring to the deceased honorand ('to live') and the living dedicator ('to put') shows signs of bilingual interference (in the sense of pivot-matching) in three Latin inscriptions from Catania: ISic000396 *vixit ... deposita*, ISic000619 *vixit ... positus*, and ISic003251 *vixit ... restitutus*. While the asyndetic link would have been the preferred option in Latin, we find the finite verb plus participle option yet with the reference to living as the finite verb unlike in the Greek frame. The honorand seems to have been made the focal point with the dedicator serving as a circumstance. In an asyndetic frame, the deceased and the living dedicator are separate but linked, and the previous life and the present dedication are sequential and discourse-pragmatically of equal value. The three Catanian inscriptions idiosyncratically rearrange this situation while simultaneously bearing witness to many individuals' bilinguality.
- 45 The data used to assess the interaction and distinction of communities of practice by language and locality as regards funerary rites points to choices made at the cultural level. The pragmatic phraseme *Dis Manibus (Sacrum)* 'sacred / memorial' to the spirits of the dead' shows signs of convergence of phraseology between the Greek and Latin communities of practice. While originally a feature of Latin funerary inscriptions, it

appears in 26% of all inscriptions from Catania, in 10% from Termini, and in 4% from Syracuse and the Latin habit of abbreviation is adopted in 90% of all the Greek instances of the phraseme. However, the Greek community of practice prefers the short version, equivalent to *Dis Manibus* ‘to the spirits of the dead’ and the lexeme for ‘god’ rather than ‘divine power, spirit’ (θεός *t<sup>h</sup>eos*) thus adapting the adopted phraseme. The prevalence of the convergence phenomenon in Catania reflects mutual integration of communities of practice in Catania (cf. Korhonen [2017: 354]).

- 46 The data used to assess the lexicalisation of the concept of memory from the perspective of semiotics points to choices made at the personal and social-group levels. The semantic-lexemic phrasemes built around lexemes referring to the memorial monument, the mind / heart, and the event of remembering fall semiotically into symbols, indices, and icons. Latin and Greek lexemes referring to events have been concretised into referring to the memorial monument, thus creating a neutral option vis-à-vis Christian *locus*, etc. and pagan *sacrum* in ISic000781 from Catania, ISic001015 from Syracuse, and ISic001724 from Syracuse. The metrical Latin-Greek inscription ISic000406 from Syracuse shows *Usurpation* of epic phraseology into possibly Christian surroundings in the phrase ἐν στήθεσσι ἔχω *en stē<sup>h</sup>essi ek<sup>h</sup>ō* ‘to have in mind / at heart’. Various phrasemes involving reference to the event of remembering exist, e.g. the genitive case of μνήμη *mnēmē* and *memoria* respectively is used to describe the deceased, i.e. ‘X of great / good / etc. memory’ (all from Syracuse), possibly to index the Christian surroundings of the early imperial period. The semantic-lexemic phrasemes are not part of the culturally determined frame of the funerary inscription and thus offer flexibility to individuals and social groups.
- 47 The article distinguished individual from collective memory, and divided the latter with Assman [2010] into social, political, and cultural memory. The phrasemes discussed constitute the diction of funerary inscriptions. Tables 7 to 9 divide the phrasemes into those that represent cultural, social, and personal memory and record in column three whether the focus of a phraseme is the monument (memorial), the agents (dedicator, deceased), or the event (remembrance).

Table 7. Cultural memory

	Type of phraseme	Focus	Location(s)
θεοῖς (κατα)χθόνιοις (ἱερὸν) <i>t<sup>h</sup>eois katak<sup>h</sup>t<sup>h</sup>onios (<sup>h</sup>ieron)</i> ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’	Pragmatic	Monument	All
<i>Dis Manibus (Sacrum)</i> ‘(sacred / memorial) to the spirits of the dead’	Pragmatic	Monument	All
Asyndesis (Latin)	Syntactic	Agents	All
Asyndesis (Greek)	Syntactic	Agents	Catania

- 48 While early imperial Sicily seems to form a cultural space, smaller sub-groups, especially the Christian and *polis* communities (cf. Korhonen [2017: 354]), could express distinctive identity and memory choices. From a post-structuralist perspective, identity

is “multifaceted, fluid and dynamic, and thus constantly being constructed and (re)negotiated, and as both an individual and social phenomenon” (Ayres-Bennett & Fisher [2022: 16]). Table 8 shows that outside the genre-related frame (the syntactic and pragmatic phrasemes), communities could (re-)structure memory.

Table 8. Social memory

	Type of phraseme	Focus	Location(s)
μνήμης χάριν <i>mnēmēs k<sup>h</sup>arin</i> ‘for reasons of remembrance’ [event]	Semantic-lexemic	Process	Catania
Greek μνήμη <i>mnēmē</i> and Latin <i>memoria</i> in the genitive case when added to an adjective describing an individual [deceased]	Semantic-lexemic	Process / Agent	Syracuse
ἔν στήθεσσι ἔχω <i>en stē<sup>h</sup>essi ek<sup>h</sup>ō</i> ‘to have in mind / at heart’	Semantic-lexemic	Process / Agent	Syracuse
εἰρήνη τῆ ψυχῆ <i>eirēnē tē psuk<sup>h</sup>ē</i> ‘peace to X’s soul’	Semantic-lexemic	Process	Catania

- 49 Caution is needed due to transmission bias (Hoffmann [2005: chap. 8]) with regard to one-off instances and in particular with regard to those indexing Christian surroundings, because material from the catacombs is still being added. Table 9 shows the subtle variations that reflect personal nuancing in an established phraseological frame.

Table 9. Personal memory

	Type of phraseme	Focus	Location(s)
<i>Dis Manibus Memoriam</i>	Pragmatic	Monument	Syracuse
ὑπόμνημα <i>h<sup>u</sup>pomnēma</i> ‘reminder’; μνημεῖον ‘remembrance’; <i>memoria</i> ‘memory’	Semantic-lexemic	Monument	Syracuse, Catania
Asyndesis between ‘to live’ and ‘to put’ replaced by participial structure (Latin)	Syntactic	Agents	Catania

- 50 Personal variation focusses on the conceptualisation of the link between deceased and dedicator and the function of the memorial monument and reflects the dedicators’ bilinguality. Variation highlights personal experience of collective remembrance (cf. Isurin [2017: 13]).
- 51 The Sicilian tombstones illustrate the multi-directionality of memory where “multiple pasts jostle against each other in a heterogeneous present” (Rothberg [2013: 372]) and

where collective memory and identity representation are inextricably intertwined (Isurin [2017: 21]). The lexicalisation in Kay and Allan's [2015: 96] sense, or perhaps diction-ization, of the concept is productive in the sense of extensibility (Barðdal [2008: 24-25]; Baayen [2009: 902]; Sampson [2016: 19]) yet the applicability of phrasemes is regulated by their indexing function (Bentein [2019]). The syntactic phraseme indexes respect to the dead but can be individually varied to signpost subtly engagement with the respective other community of practice. The pragmatic phraseme indexes the pagan past but also cultural convergence in the funerary space. The semantic-lexemic phrasemes index the Christian present and Sicilian *polis* identity.

- 52 The article has conceptualised cemeteries with Foucault as heterotopic spaces with language / diction as a gatekeeper<sup>29</sup>. The cemetery while linked to it is separate from the public sphere, which explains the absence of data on political memory. The cemetery thus becomes a space for reflection on the differences between (i) individual, social, and cultural memory, (ii) pre-colonial (pagan) past and imperial (Christian) present<sup>30</sup>, and (iii) language and identity choices. This reflection is externalised by means of the symbol system of language (cf. Isurin [2017: 32]). While at the cultural level we see convergence (with customisation), at the social and individual levels flexibility prevails in the diction of the funerary inscriptions. The peculiar diction-ization of memory and remembrance in the funerary context of a multicultural society is not specific to early imperial Sicily but pertains widely in a globalised world.

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## NOTES

1. Assman [2010] splits Halbwachs' [1992] [1925] seminal notion of collective memory into social, political, and cultural memory. Isurin [2017: 36], by contrast, defines the conceptual boundaries of collective memory by three contrasts: collective memory vs. collective remembering, history vs. collective remembering, individual vs. collective remembering. Bartlett [1995] [1967] insists on memory in rather than memory of the group, therein acknowledging that a group is made up of individuals rather than being a monolith.
2. Sicily has undergone multiple waves of incoming powers. By the Roman period, indigenous languages, such as Sikel, still attested in earlier inscriptions and their writing systems are no longer attested and instead Greek (with various dialectal colourings) and Latin have filled this space (e.g. Prag [2020], Mignosa [2021]). The three cities selected for in-depth analysis, Syracuse, Catania, and Termini, are somewhat more under the grip of Roman imperial power since they had become veteran colonies in 21 BC, i.e. the local population either yielded or retreated from these spaces (Korhonen [2012: 333-334], Shepherd [2009]). This article uses the terms 'pre-colonial' and 'post-colonial' specifically with regard to the event of a new group of people gradually taking over the socio-cultural space, i.e. the Christian community throughout the Roman period.
3. The theory goes back to Halbwachs, who “argued that social forces shape even seemingly individual memories by providing a framework or ‘language’ through which subjects recall their pasts” (Rothberg [2013: 362]).
4. While the influence of the Attic-Ionic koine was perceivable in Hellenistic times (3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC), it appears to have been less pronounced than in other regions around the Mediterranean (Mimbrera [2012b: 249]).
5. Additionally, the application of interpuncts as word/phrase dividers and of abbreviations is noticeable.

6. The catacomb material starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> c. AD (Korhonen [2011]; Tanasi et al. [2023]; Ferrua [1941]).
7. Discourse analysis seeks to determine how “socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world” are “created”, “maintained”, and “held in place over time” (Phillips & Hardy [2002: 6]).
8. Mel’čuk [2023: 53] dismisses transparency as a “psychological property of idioms” (vs Sheinfx et al. [2019]).
9. Text and translation are cited according to the I.Sicily database, see <http://sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk/inscription/ISic001332> for ISic001332 and <http://sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk/inscription/ISic003248> for ISic003248.
10. Narrow date ranges are currently unavailable. The I.Sicily database retrieves dates from past editions, i.e. from editor’s instinct concerning content and letter form (Prag, pc). This makes it impossible to trace micro-steps in socio-cultural developments, such as Christianisation. However, the edicts of Milan (AD 313), which ended the persecution of Christians, and Thessalonika (AD 380), which made Christianity the state religion, fall towards the end of the period of interest.
11. Korhonen’s [2004: 239] observation of Catania and Syracuse being monolingually Latin in the public sphere is not borne out by the data.
12. Multilinguality is visible at all levels, i.e. code-switching, ad-hoc borrowings, or interference phenomena (Fendel [2022: chap. 2]).
13. Bilingual inscriptions are assigned to the Greek or Latin portion of the corpus based on the language that accounts for comparatively more text.
14. Diachronic differences exist. Archaic Latin (3<sup>rd</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC) seems to have favoured asyndetic structures in certain environments (Mazzanti [2020]; Mazzanti [2023]) in which later varieties prefer subordinate-clause markers. Roman Greek (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) licences asyndetic structures in certain environments where subordinate-clause markers would have been preferred in earlier varieties (Bentein [2015: 107-110]).
15. In the Latin and Greek inscriptions, in asyndetic contexts, this is predominantly the doing verb (*facio*, ποιέω *poieō*) rather than a verb meaning ‘to set up’ (e.g. ἀνατίθημι (*ana*)*titēmi*).
16. ISic000396 supplies the date of when the deceased was laid to rest with the participle, but this does not change the syntactic relationship between the finite verb and the circumstantial participle. ISic000619 mentions how long the deceased served in the army and lived in the form of adverbial accusatives with the finite verbs, but the participle is separate from these numeric values. The omission of the verb meaning ‘to be’ would be an option to assume, the alternative option would be to assume a circumstantial participle in the right periphery of the sentence, which has been assumed here because there is no indication of damage to the inscription at the end. In ISic003251, the first *Restitutus* is part of a proper name (*Refrius Restitutus*), the second *restitutus* is less clear particularly as it is not combined with *Refrius* and the inscription is broken off after it.
17. The syntax-discourse interface which is relevant to the discursive value of the syntactic phraseme asyndesis differs between the two languages (Foley [2007: 363-364]). Thus, while from an iconic and semiotic perspective, we would qualify the link indicated as different, its embedding in the system provides part of the explanation for this (see also Altshuler & Truswell [2022]). The focus here is on one specific context that is embedded in a formulaic frame and the instances of interest come from a diatopically specific area. Generalizations are impossible.
18. Purnelle [1999] catalogues script-switches, i.e. the Latin phraseme in Greek script, from the city of Rome in early imperial times. The Sicilian data sample does not contain a similar instance.
19. While absolute frequencies are decreasing in Latin, the relative frequency of punctuation increases in Greek (Crellin [2022: 203]). This indicates a contact phenomenon. Note also e.g. ISic000341 with word dividers inside of words seemingly separating syllables.

20. DisM = 2 (Catania, Termini); DisMan = 1 (Termini); DM = 46 (Termini = 30, Catania = 13, Syracuse = 3); DMlost = 2 (Catania, Syracuse); DMn = 1 (Catania).
21. DMS = 70 (Catania = 65, Syracuse = 4, Termini = 1); DisMSac = 1 (Catania).
22. See similarly Koortbojian [2005] on *mimesis*, i.e. a descriptive representation, vs. *phantasia*, i.e. a presentation of cues to be decided upon, in Roman funerary monuments.
23. In lexicalisation, the mechanisms of reanalysis and analogy affect the lexicon (Hopper & Traugott [2003: 58]).
24. Latin *memoriae causa* or *memoriae gratia* (Häusle [1980: 32]) does not appear in the data but may appear in the catacomb material still to be added.
25. The variation in a Hebrew-Latin bilingual inscription (ISic000781 from Catania) is noticeable as we may hypothesize that the writer (or the one who commissioned it) was keen to express their personal remembrance and identity choices based on their choice of a bilingual inscription.
26. *memoriam* functions syntactically as the object of the verb *posuit* '(she) set up'. The integration of the pragmatic phraseme *Dis Manibus (Sacrum)* into the syntax is attested regularly, i.e. with *sacrum* as the direct object of *facere* 'to make'.
27. Ferrua [1941: 235] considers this Christian. Without a self-declaration, references to specific aspects, e.g. the holy trinity, or contextual features, e.g. christograms or provenance from the catacombs, the link between diction and context is difficult. The *I.Sicily* database does not record a Christian vs. pagan context of production. Onomastics are not drawn upon as a supporting piece of evidence due to the lack of a large-scale study for Sicily akin to the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* for Egypt and due to the fact that the relationship between name and named is often highly complex which has been shown e.g. for Egypt (see also Fendel [2022: 51-52] with further references).
28. There may be a double function in that the phraseme may also acquire the indexical value of pointing to a higher register, an educated writer/commissioner, or even the pagan past (see Eckert [2008] on indexical fields).
29. It is not the case that Latin or Greek become confined to the cemetery and language choice becomes the threshold phenomenon but rather that subtle choices can be made to reflect identity choices as has been shown. While the funerary inscriptions are set into a relatively rigid formulaic frame, there seems to be room for minor variation for individual or social-group-related reasons. The *I.Sicily* database can be filtered alternatively e.g. for building inscriptions, dedications, or lists of magistrates. A direct comparison with other inscription types regarding the lexicalisation of memory is impossible due to phraseological constraints and function-related content choices.
30. As with every situation of change, the Christian takeover was gradual, i.e. there is no strict cut-off point at which pagan thought suddenly disappears entirely.

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## ABSTRACTS

The article explores the diction of the funerary (and honorific) inscriptions from three early imperial (1 BC to AD 401) Sicilian cities, i.e. Catania, Termini, and Syracuse. By means of the *I.Sicily* Sketch Engine corpus, three sub-samples were drawn reflecting syntactic (asyndesis), pragmatic (*Dis Manibus (Sacrum)*), and semantic-lexemic (symbols, indexes, icons) phrasemes in the sense of Mel'čuk's Sens-Texte framework. The article conceptualises cemeteries with

Foucault as heterotopic spaces with language / diction as a gatekeeper. The cemetery thus becomes a space for reflection on the differences between (i) individual, social, and cultural memory, (ii) pre-colonial (pagan) past and imperial (Christian) present, and (iii) language and identity choices. This reflection is externalised by means of the symbol system of language. While at the cultural level we see convergence (with customisation), at the social and individual levels flexibility prevails as the diction of the funerary inscriptions reflects. While early imperial Sicily seems to form a cultural space, smaller sub-groups, especially the Christian and *polis* communities, could express distinctive identity and memory choices. Individual variation focusses on the conceptualisation of the link between deceased and dedicator and the function of the memorial monument and reflects the dedicators' bilinguality. This kind of variation highlights personal experience of collective remembrance.

Le présent article étudie la formulation des inscriptions funéraires (et honorifiques) de trois villes siciliennes du début de la période impériale (1 av. J.-C. à 401 apr. J.-C.), à savoir Catane, Termini et Syracuse. Grâce au corpus I.Sicily Sketch Engine, trois sous-échantillons ont été constitués, reflétant les phrasèmes syntaxiques (asyndèse), pragmatiques (Dis Manibus (Sacrum)) et sémantico-lexémiques (symboles, indices, icônes) au sens de la théorie Sens-Texte de Mel'čuk. L'article conçoit les cimetières selon Foucault comme des espaces hétérotopiques dont la langue / formulation est le gardien. Le cimetière devient ainsi un espace de réflexion sur les différences entre (i) la mémoire individuelle, sociale et culturelle, (ii) le passé précolonial (païen) et le présent impérial (chrétien), et (iii) les choix linguistiques et identitaires. Cette réflexion est extériorisée par le système symbolique de la langue. Si, au niveau culturel, on observe une convergence (avec la personnalisation), aux niveaux social et individuel, c'est la flexibilité qui prévaut, comme le reflète la formulation des inscriptions funéraires. Alors que la Sicile impériale semble former un espace culturel, des sous-groupes plus restreints, en particulier les communautés chrétiennes et les *polis*, ont pu exprimer des choix identitaires et mémoriels distincts. Les variations individuelles se concentrent sur la conceptualisation du lien entre le défunt et le rédacteur de la dédicace et sur la fonction du monument commémoratif, et reflètent le bilinguisme des rédacteurs de la dédicace. Ce type de variation met en évidence l'expérience personnelle du souvenir collectif.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** I.Sicily, funerary inscriptions, Sketch Engine, multilingualism, Sens-Texte approach, heterotopia

**Mots-clés:** I.Sicily, inscriptions funéraires, Sketch Engine, multilingualisme, théorie Sens-Texte, hétérotopie

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