

The birth of epigraphic culture in the western Mediterranean: Sicilian epigraphic culture in the later Hellenistic period.

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RESUMEN

Sicilia desarrolló a partir del periodo arcaico una cultura epigráfica compleja y original. Partiendo de los datos obtenidos en el marco del proyecto *I.Sicily*, este trabajo tiene como objeto analizar la cultura epigráfica siciliana en época helenística. La mayor parte de las inscripciones de este periodo son griegas, con la presencia ocasional de documentos púnicos, oscos y latinos. Nuestro análisis se centrará en las inscripciones realizadas en piedra, aunque contempla también algunas en bronce, en particular de carácter honorífico, que son típicas de la isla. La práctica epigráfica y la evidencia lingüística sugieren la existencia de una arraigada tradición epigráfica local, muy condicionada por el contexto cultural helenístico mediterráneo, que permaneció inmune a la influencia romana prácticamente hasta época de Augusto.

SUMMARY

Sicily has a vibrant and individual epigraphic culture from the Archaic period onwards. Using the data available from the *I.Sicily* project, this paper surveys the epigraphic culture of the island in order to contextualise and analyse epigraphic practice on the island in the Hellenistic period. The material is predominantly Greek in this period, with a minor presence of Punic, Oscan, and Latin. Analysis concentrates on lapidary epigraphy, but includes a discussion of bronze epigraphy and honorific practices on bronze, which show distinctive local features. Epigraphic practices on the island, and the linguistic evidence in particular, suggests an independent and distinctively Sicilian epigraphic tradition that belongs within the wider Hellenistic Mediterranean context and is almost wholly unaffected by Roman practices until the Augustan period.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sicilia; periodo helenístico; epigrafía; inscripciones honoríficas; inscripciones en bronce; lingüística histórica; romanización.

KEY WORDS: Sicily; Hellenistic; Epigraphy; honorific inscriptions; bronze inscriptions; historical linguistics; Romanisation.

INTRODUCTION

It is something of a cliché to insist that Sicily is different, but Sicilian culture constantly defies easy categorisation in our attempts to make sense of the ancient Mediterranean. This challenge is no less true in the epigraphic sphere than in other areas. The western Mediterranean is traditionally seen as fundamentally Latin-speaking, contrasted with the Greek-speaking East (at least as defined by epigraphic evidence). Sicily of course sits at the ‘crossroads’, and is neither East nor West. The premises implied by this workshop’s title are twofold: on the one hand that the second and first centuries BC constitute a key period for the birth of epigraphic culture in the western Mediterranean; and on the other, that Roman (epigraphic) culture played a fundamental role in the process of gestation. In a previous study I have suggested that the Hellenistic period more broadly, and in particular the third and second centuries BC, does indeed constitute a key moment for the development of epigraphic culture in the western Mediterranean; but I have also tried to insist upon the need to consider

Roman epigraphic culture in this period — without overly privileging Roman influence or ‘Romanisation’ — as merely one developing culture among several, situated within a broader set of trends that might better be considered ‘Hellenistic’.¹ In this paper I shall briefly consider the particular case of Sicily against this wider problematic. Sicily does not fit easily into the general patterns implied by the workshop’s theme: this might simply imply that Sicily needs to be treated apart; alternatively, it offers a significant challenge to overly Romanocentric models of western Mediterranean epigraphic culture.²

EPIGRAPHIC CULTURE IN ANCIENT SICILY

It is no less of a cliché to insist upon the relative epigraphic poverty of ancient Sicily.³ However, this insistence looks increasingly strained. A good estimate for the number of inscriptions on stone from ancient Sicily would now be *c.* 5000, equivalent to *c.* 200 inscriptions / 1000 km², which compares very favourably with the general, if unsatisfactory, figures that have been generated in the past for other areas of the Roman empire — even if still falling far short of key regions such as Latium, Campania, or parts of the Greek East.⁴ Two points are fundamental: Sicilian epigraphic culture begins in the Archaic period, and perhaps two-thirds of all Sicilian lapidary epigraphy is in Greek. At the same time, it is undeniable that both the main quantitative and qualitative growth in Sicilian epigraphy begin in the Hellenistic period, ~~and~~ with a further very substantial increase in the period of the High Empire. Latin epigraphy on the island is itself heavily concentrated in the first three centuries AD (fig. 1).⁵

¹ Prag 2013a. None of this is meant in a spirit of polemic: the workshop at Rome was an immensely friendly and constructive occasion and I am very grateful to the organisers, and to F. Beltrán and B. Díaz in particular, for the invitation and the opportunity to pursue this debate further in such congenial company and surroundings.

² For earlier assessments of Sicilian epigraphy in this period, see *e.g.* Tribulato 2012a, Prag 2007, and the many contributions of Giacomo Manganaro, such as Manganaro 1999a and 1964.

³ For simplicity, all Sicilian lapidary inscriptions will be cited by *I.Sicily* number alone. These numbers can be resolved, with full details of other publications, as URLs of the following form: <http://sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk/inscription/ISic0000>.

⁴ See *e.g.* Harris 1989: 268 and Edmondson 2002: 44-45. The *I.Sicily* project (<http://sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk>) already records over 3,200 lapidary texts; we expect to add at least another thousand in the coming months, including unpublished material identified in museum and soprintendenza stores in Siracusa and Catania.

⁵ All ‘statistics’ presented in this paper can only be impressionistic, since the available data is the result of accidents of survival, recovery and publication. The figures used here are derived from the available dataset of over 3,200 lapidary texts currently recorded (and freely accessible / downloadable) in *I.Sicily* (see <https://isicily.wordpress.com/data-in-isicily/> for more information).

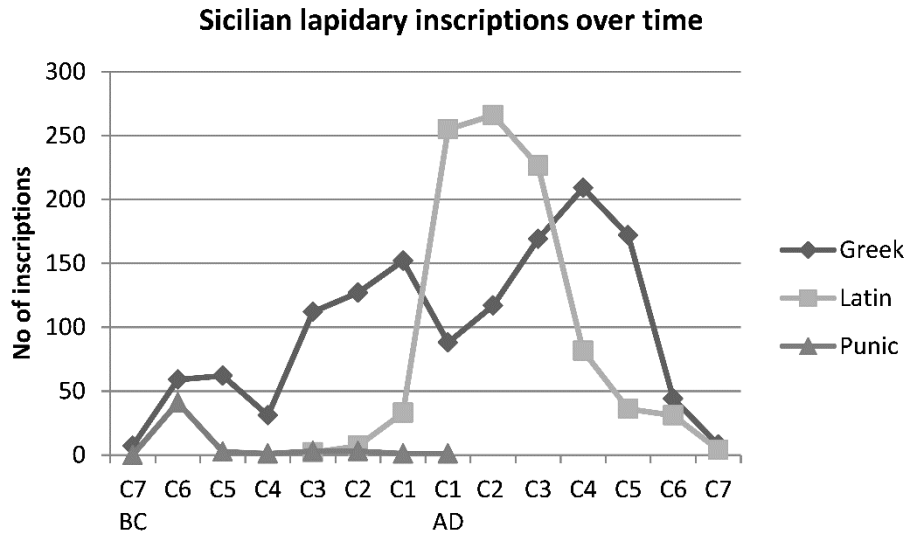


Figure 1. Frequency of Greek, Latin, and Punic lapidary epigraphy on Sicily over time (other minor languages are omitted). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016, $n = 2352$ dated inscriptions out of a total of 3231 recorded stones. Data analysis and visualization was aided by Daniel's XL Toolbox addin for Excel, version 7.1.4, by Daniel Kraus, Würzburg, Germany (www.xltoolbox.net).



Figure 2. Distribution of lapidary inscriptions across Sicily in all languages (VII-V cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 179$. Map prepared using Tableau Public 10.1, with a map-base from OpenStreetMap.

Categories of Sicilian inscriptions on stone C7-C5 BC

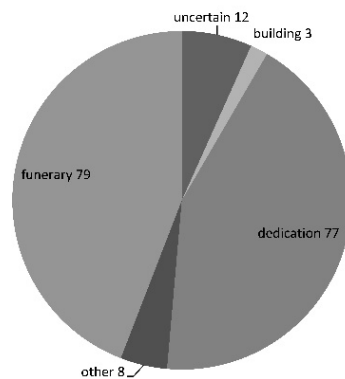


Figure 3. Types of inscription on stone in Sicily (VII-V cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 179$. Data analysis and visualization was aided by Daniel's XL Toolbox addin for Excel, version 7.1.4, by Daniel Kraus, Würzburg, Germany (www.xltoolbox.net).

Types of stone in Sicilian inscriptions C7-C5 BC

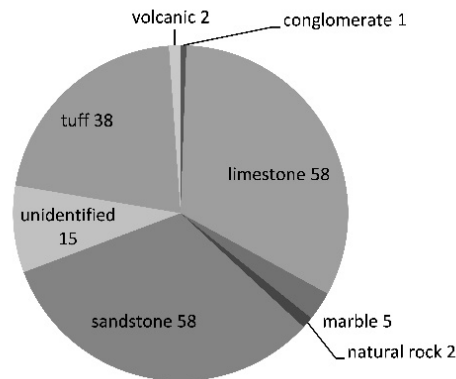


Figure 4. Types of stone used for inscriptions in Sicily (VII-V cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 179$. Data analysis and visualization was aided by Daniel's XL Toolbox addin for Excel, version 7.1.4, by Daniel Kraus, Würzburg, Germany (www.xltoolbox.net).

ARCHAIC / CLASSICAL SICILY

It is possible to draw a fairly clear distinction between the epigraphy of Archaic/Classical Sicily and that of the island in the Hellenistic period: the justification for doing so rests on the one hand in differences in patterns of epigraphic culture visible between the two periods, and on the other in an apparent gap in epigraphic practice broadly attributable to the fourth century BC.⁶ The earliest Sicilian epigraphy belongs to perhaps the very end of the seventh century BC. The epigraphy of Sicily in the seventh to fifth centuries BC (at least 180 stones, to which must be added a significant body of material on ceramic and metal, not yet systematically catalogued) has a relatively limited geographical distribution, focused on the southern half of the island: the two primary centres of production are the Greek colony of Selinus and the Phoenician colony of Motya (fig. 2). Archaic lapidary epigraphy on the island is principally restricted to funerary and votive epigraphy (fig. 3). The high volume of recorded material from Selinus and Motya reflects above all votive practices

⁶ Notwithstanding a small but steady increase in inscriptions attributable to the fourth century, the reality of this gap seems genuine.

in sanctuaries, while the majority of material at Selinus and elsewhere is funerary. The very occasional instances of building inscriptions appear to be confined to religious buildings, such as the text on the steps of the Temple of Apollo at Syracuse: arguably texts of this sort merge into the category of dedication.⁷ Curiously, the clearest example of a monumental public text which does not fall into either of these categories is one of the handful of surviving Sikel lapidary inscriptions (a language showing affinities to the Sabellic languages of Italy, attested in south-east Sicily in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, and which employs the Greek alphabet when written), from the gateway of the ancient site at Mendolito near Adrano.⁸ As yet, the other Sicilian indigenous language, Elymian, has not produced any monumental epigraphy.⁹ Texts in this period are almost entirely engraved on the relatively poor local stone (fig. 4). Only five texts are known to me from the period on marble (necessarily imported), one each from Selinus, Gela, Naxos and Akrai, together with an inscribed *kouros* from Megara Hyblaea.¹⁰

HELLENISTIC SICILY

Although the material that can confidently be dated to the fourth century is exiguous (perhaps *c.* 25 texts), it already begins to show some indications of the shifting patterns of practice that become clear in the Hellenistic period, with the appearance of more monumental and higher quality texts and a wider geographical distribution.¹¹ Considering the Hellenistic period as a whole (fourth to first centuries BC) several clear trends emerge from the lapidary material (a minimum of 435 texts). The first is a steady increase in the number of inscriptions from the fourth to the first centuries. Secondly, texts are overwhelmingly in Greek, with only a handful of Punic texts in the west, a small body of Oscan texts from third-century Messana, and a low-level, gradual intrusion of Latin in the second half of the period (*c.* 20 texts, see below and *cf.* fig. 1). Thirdly, lapidary inscriptions are now attested right across the island, in clear contrast to the south-eastern and south-western focus of activity in the earlier period (fig. 5). Although it remains the case that there is a concentration of material in the coastal urban centres, the penetration into the eastern (plain of Catania and the Hyblaeon plateau) and western interiors of the island is clear, as is the adoption of epigraphy in the centres of the north coast where earlier colonisation was rare. Fourthly, the variety in the types of text being inscribed also increases (fig. 6). Funerary epigraphy constitutes just over 50 % of this material, which is significantly less than the more typical situation both in Sicily and

⁷ ISic0822; note also the substantial altar, perhaps of Apollo Temenites, at Siracusa (ISic3011); substantial dedicatory texts on stone include that from Temple G in Selinunte (ISic1087), as well as the Sicilian dedications at Olympia and Delphi (see conveniently Harrell 2002 and Cavaliere 2013).

⁸ ISic3364 (on which see Agostiniani 2009, and Cordano 2012 emphasising the broader set of material from Mendolito); see Poccetti 2012 for an overview of Sikel epigraphy.

⁹ See Marchesini 2012 for an overview.

¹⁰ ISic1566 (Selinus); ISic3148 (Gela); ISic1425 (Naxos); ISic1048 (Akrai); ISic1435 (Megara Hyblaea).

¹¹ *E.g.* the architecturally grand funerary monument of Lissias from the environs of ancient Helorus (ISic1475) or the substantial marble base for a dedication to Hermes from Agrigento (ISic1489). Dating Sicilian inscriptions is notoriously difficult, since few texts offer clear internal criteria for dating, and dating by letter forms from such a relatively small and widely distributed sample is perilous.

elsewhere where funerary epigraphy tends to constitute *c.* 75 % of surviving material.¹² Dedications make up another 15%, but the rest is a very disparate body of public epigraphy, including decrees, building inscriptions and other euergetic texts, public accounts, lists of various sorts, and above all honorifics (slightly over 10%). Fifthly, the diversity of materials employed also increases (fig. 7), especially the use of higher quality stone, whether carefully sourced Sicilian stone (higher quality limestones, such as so-called ‘pietra di Taormina’, or the red brescia from the area around San Marco d’Alunzio), or more expensive imported marbles (which make up almost 10 %).¹³ The increased use of volcanic stone (black basaltic lava stone) reflects the increased epigraphic practice in the areas around Mount Etna and the Lipari islands.

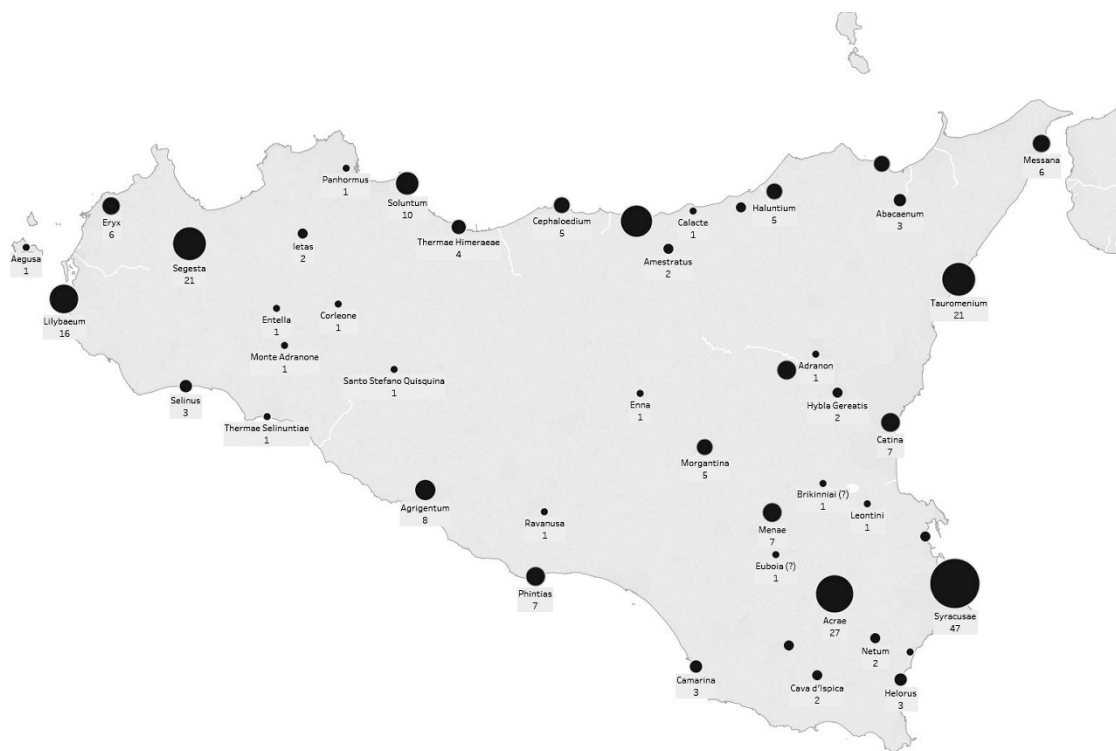


Figure 5. Distribution of lapidary inscriptions across Sicily in all languages (IV-I cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; *n* = 279 (a further 154 from Lipara and 2 from Melita are not shown). Map prepared using Tableau Public 10.1, with a map-base from OpenStreetMap.

¹² The huge body of funerary material preserved on the island of Lipara is significant and apparently exceptional in this regard (Bernabò *et al.* 2012): in the dataset used here it constitutes some 2/3 of the recorded Hellenistic funerary material, and is simultaneously underreported; if it were to be excluded, then funerary epigraphy would constitute only 30 % of the surviving material from this period.

¹³ Wilson 1990: 237-242 on sources and use of stone in Sicily.

Categories of Sicilian inscriptions on stone C4-C1 BC

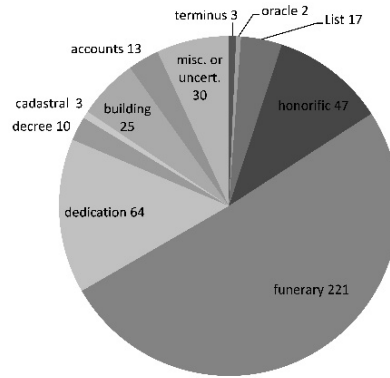


Figure 6. Types of inscription on stone in Sicily (IV-I cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 435$. Data analysis and visualization was aided by Daniel's XL Toolbox addin for Excel, version 7.1.4, by Daniel Kraus, Würzburg, Germany (www.xltoolbox.net).

Types of stone in Sicilian inscriptions C4-C1 BC

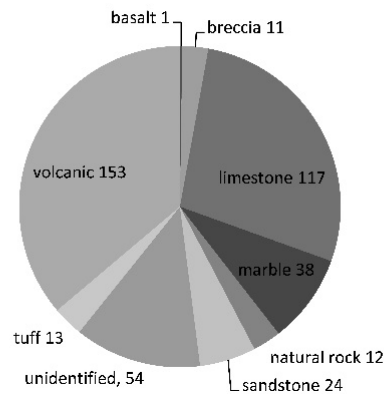


Figure 7. Types of stone used for inscriptions in Sicily (IV-I cent. BC). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 423$. Data analysis and visualization was aided by Daniel's XL Toolbox addin for Excel, version 7.1.4, by Daniel Kraus, Würzburg, Germany (www.xltoolbox.net)

By the third century, this developing 'Hellenistic' epigraphic culture is clearly visible. This might be least unexpected in the case of Syracuse, in particular in the flourishing period under the reign of Hieron II (*c.* 269-215 BC), and in the wider south-east, the broader kingdom of Syracuse; but further afield, cities as diverse as Oscan Messina in the north-east and Elymian Segesta in the far west show similar developments. At the monumental end of the spectrum, theatres at Syracuse, Morgantina and Ietas all include inscriptions (ISic0824, 1490, 2745). Third-century honorific statue bases are known from Syracuse (ISic0824, 3331, 0823), Segesta (ISic2940, 1112), and Akrai (ISic1037). Lists (of magistrates, etc.) are known from Syracuse and Phintias (ISic3345, 4340). Messina produces several monumental texts in Oscan, two of which record a major building project dedicated to Apollo (ISic1620 and 2816; also 1621, 1623).

Hellenistic texts in Sicily are notoriously difficult to date, but without doubt the quantity of material increases substantially in the second century. It is clear that this expansion of public epigraphy goes hand in hand with the increasing monumentalisation of

the urban centres of Sicily:¹⁴ the development of monumental *agorai* and the associated display of honorific statuary and epigraphy has been well discussed recently for the cases of Segesta and Halaesa in particular, and this is the period when honorific texts especially become more widespread.¹⁵ However, this is also the point when the epigraphic display of public documents as monuments in their own right emerges — most significant in this respect are the cadastral text from Halaesa and the account inscriptions from Tauromenion, as well as the magistrate lists and other texts from Akrai.¹⁶

All of this could be considered typical Hellenistic practice, and belongs within a wider set of socio-cultural developments on the island; but the extent to which Sicilian epigraphic culture also illustrates its own distinctive traits must be emphasised. This is most obvious linguistically: Sicilian Greek remains strongly and distinctively Doric. As Susan Mimblera has noted, “There are practically no inscriptions entirely in *koine* until the end of the Hellenistic period”, and Cicero felt obliged to quote Sicilian Doricisms for his Roman audience (*proagoros* and *anexia*, Cic. *Att.* 5.11.5; *Verr.* 4.50).¹⁷ Sicilian epigraphy of this period also produces instances of near unique practice suggesting a considerable cultural independence (although also suggesting connections, for example, with the western Greek mainland) — unusual relief and polychrome inscribed texts offer two examples of this.¹⁸ However, one of the most distinctive material features of Sicilian epigraphy is the use of bronze.

BRONZE EPIGRAPHY IN SICILY¹⁹

This paper has focused principally on lapidary epigraphy, exploiting the data available in *I.Sicily*. However, the use of metal in Sicilian epigraphy, and particularly bronze, is an important aspect that deserves brief examination to complement the lapidary focus.²⁰ Some fifteen civic decrees are attested epigraphically from Hellenistic Sicily, to which one might reasonably add similar texts from Malta and Rhegium (as part of the same cultural region), as well as several fragmentary texts, and a small dossier of decrees by associations at Syracuse.²¹ The majority of these texts are preserved on bronze (seven from Entella, one from Nakone, two from Agrigentum, one from Malta, one from Rhegium, and a duplicate

¹⁴ For this broader theme in Hellenistic Sicily see Prag 2015 and Campagna 2011.

¹⁵ Burgio 2012 (Halaesa); Angeletti 2012 (Segesta); cf. Campagna 2007 on epigraphy and euergetism in Sicily.

¹⁶ Halaesa (ISic1174, 3651); Tauromenion (ISic1247-1255, 2985-2987, 3081, 3082); Akrai (e.g. ISic1028-1035, 1038, 2965).

¹⁷ Mimblera 2012a: 248-249; cf. Mimblera 2012b. For the relationship of Sicilian Doric to Sicilian identity see Willi 2008 and 2012.

¹⁸ Prag (forthcoming 2017).

¹⁹ The following section prefigures a more detailed study in my forthcoming edition of the bronzes from Halaesa (*SEG* 59.1100).

²⁰ Bronze is not the only metal used, and the number of lead *defixiones* in particular is worthy of note (Ms Thea Sommerschild, University of Oxford, is currently preparing a new corpus of the c. 63 *defixiones* from Sicily, which will be incorporated into *I.Sicily*), as are the various private documents on metal such as house-purchase contracts (see most recently Souza 2016).

²¹ For a survey of Sicilian decrees in their broader institutional context, see Rhodes and Lewis 1997: 314-321.

pair from Halaesa), and a recently recovered text from Kaleakte (Caronia), although preserved on stone, contains the instruction for its inscription in two bronze copies, which has interesting implications for discussions of survival.²² Fragments of bronze plaques are occasionally mentioned in excavations of Sicilian sites also.²³ The extensive use of bronze in Sicily for public epigraphy, in particular in the Hellenistic period, but also earlier, has been noted before; the extent of the phenomenon is in part obscured by very fragmentary survival.²⁴ Louis Robert long ago made the case that the inscribing of public documents on bronze (in Greek) was a regional feature, principally to be found in Thessaly and central Greece, the Peloponnese (especially Arcadia, Elis, and the Argolid), western Greece, southern Italy, and Sicily.²⁵ The number of examples known has steadily increased over the last century, and the narrowness of that distribution begins to look increasingly suspect.²⁶ The argument from silence / lack of evidence, in the face of bronze's obvious portability and clear value in reuse, is a dangerous one.²⁷ The growing volume of archaeological evidence for the display of such texts makes the point emphatically.²⁸ Isolated but very striking examples from Asia Minor, such as the Hanisa decree and the Lycian treaty with Rome, should serve as a clear warning, since it is difficult to imagine that they are not representative of a wider phenomenon.²⁹ Nonetheless, it remains true that certain regions, particularly from mainland Greece westwards, produce greater quantities of public epigraphy on bronze (just as, in the

²² Entella: Ampolo 2001 nos. A1-3, B1, C1-3; Nakone: Ampolo 2001: Nakone A; Agrigentum *IG* XIV.952 and 954+add.; Malta: *IG* XIV.953; Rhegium: *IG* XIV.612 = *I.Reggio Calabria* 1; Halaesa: *SEG* 59.1100; Kaleakte: *SEG* 59.1102 and now Arena 2016.

²³ From Halaesa, Carettoni 1961: 303; from Monte Iato, Isler 2012: 234 with n.41.

²⁴ Observed e.g. by Dubois in *BE* 1990, 858; Manganaro 2000 (cf. 1999b: 61-63). See Arena, *Iscrizioni* I, no. 76 for an early C5 BC bronze (?eastern Sicily); *Nomima* I.1 = Arena, *Iscrizioni* III, no.84 for bronze fragments of an archaic law on homicide (Monte San Mauro, Sicily).

²⁵ See esp. Robert in 1936: 47-48; *Hellenica* X (1955), 289-90; the point was reprised, e.g., in *BE* 1956.15, 1961.154, 1968.251, 1969.266, and Robert 1963: 469; cf. Guarducci 1967-78: I, 434-437; Ritti 1969: 329-331. De Hoz 1999 and Poccetti 1999 offer wide-ranging discussions of the use of metal in general in Italy and the western Mediterranean.

²⁶ See previous note for extensive examples collected by Robert; Crema 2007: 249-252 adds further examples. Robert was insistent in 1936 that the phenomenon was not found, e.g., at Athens or Delphi, nor in the Aegean islands in general; he stuck to this view despite the emergence of examples from these areas (so e.g. *BCH* 1899: 514 (Delphi); *BCH* 1904: 271 no. 1, 1947-8: 236-8 and allusions to more in *IG* XI.2.199 B 87 and *I.Délos* 1409 BA II 113 (Delos) were all dismissed as 'isolated' examples; note also, for Athens, Stroud 1963 (no comment on the use of bronze in *BE* 1964.118) and *BE* 1972.105 (remarked as strange)).

²⁷ Robert (*REG* 1966: 735-6) was in fact prepared to make this point himself in relation to Corinth, arguing that one should imagine much of the missing epigraphy of pre-Roman Corinth to have been on bronze; compare Haensch 2009: 177 with Eck 2015: 144 n.63.

²⁸ For archaeological evidence of display of such tablets (the tablets themselves now lost): Bell 2007: 122 with n. 34 and fig. 2 (Morgantina, Sicily); Maniscalco and McConnell 2003: 173 with fig. 22 (Palike, Sicily); Agrigentum (De Miro and Fiorentini 2010: 82). Beyond Sicily, Argos provides a particularly striking case, a single bronze text surviving (*BCH* 1953: 395-397), but the archaeological evidence shows the ghosts of over 100 plaques (des Courtils 1981, cf. Crema 2007: 251). Literary sources reinforce the point: e.g. Cic. *Verr.* 2.112, cf. 4.145.

²⁹ Hanisa decree, second-/ first-century BC: Robert 1963: 457-523 with plate 1; Lycian treaty with Rome, 46 BC: Mitchell 2005. The Lycian treaty undercuts previous emphasis upon the Hanisa text's uniqueness and the Halaesa bronzes likewise show the Hanisa text not to be the *unicum* it is often claimed to be. Similarly noteworthy, the Hadrianic bronze stele from Naryka in E. Locris (Jones 2006, with at 1 n. 2 a typically minimising view of bronze in the Greek world; Knoepfler 2006; Knoepfler and Pasquier 2006). Note Tac. *Ann.* 3.63 for passing reference to Roman bronze decrees in temples in Asia Minor. Ferrary (2009: 64) is less negative than most, whereas Eck (2015: 144-147) adopts a strong, negative, and remarkably universalising view of the (none-)use of bronze in 'the Greek world'.

Roman period, the surviving material from Spain stands out), and explanations need to be sought out for this, whether historical or archaeological. It is also of note that certain categories of inscription are more widely inscribed on bronze: in particular honorific texts (of all sorts) and legal texts.³⁰

In Sicily, alongside the relatively extensive use of bronze, there is a further distinctive practice, now beautifully illustrated by the remarkable case of the first-century BC bronze honorific text from Halaesa surviving in two duplicate copies: the production of two copies, one for public display and one for the private use of the individual honorand.³¹ The direct parallels for this particular honour are all from the Sicilian orbit: the texts cited previously from Agrigentum, Malta, Rhegium, and Kaleakte.³² The engraving of texts in multiple copies for display in diverse locations is in itself unremarkable.³³ The specific practice at issue is that of providing an engraved copy of the text for display to a private individual.³⁴ It is a commonplace to find cities sending a record of the honours that they have decreed for an individual to the city of the honorand (usually described as either τὸ ψήφισμα, or ἀντίγραφον), although these are generally imagined to be portable and perishable copies on papyrus, painted board, etc. Such records are commonly entrusted to special ambassadors, and on occasion those ambassadors are further charged with requesting that the city of the honorand in turn erect an inscription recording the honours.³⁵

Similar acts are occasionally (but less frequently) recorded as directed to individuals; as Louis Robert observed, these are generally individuals of high status (royal officials in particular) for whom their *polis* of origin is essentially irrelevant in the context.³⁶ Common to almost all of these acts, and made explicit to varying degrees, is the assertion that the purpose of this is both so that the euergetism of the individual should be recognised and honoured, and so that the body decreeing the honours should be seen to be capable of honouring its benefactors. The ambassadors concerned are often charged with making this explicit.³⁷ The

³⁰ Note, for instance, the prevalence of bronze in the material collected by Ritti 1969 (honorifics, especially *proxenia*) and by Van Effenterre and Ruzé in *Nomima* (legal texts); cf. Williamson 1987 for Roman legal texts on bronze.

³¹ *SEG* 59.1100, of which I have an edition in hand.

³² Above, n.22. Compare Cic. *Verr.* 4.145, a bronze copy of an honorific decree from Syracuse personally given to Cicero and his cousin (*Id non modo tum scripserunt, verum etiam in aere incisum nobis tradiderunt*).

³³ Examples of public decrees such as treaties would be otiose; multiple inscription (in public locations) of honours for individuals, all Hellenistic in date, in e.g. Ma 2000: dossier no. 23 (Xanthos); Helly 1973: no. 18 (Gonnoi); *I.Histriae* 1-3 (Histria).

³⁴ In contrast to the Hellenistic examples which follow, Roman practice in relation to individuals, as in the *SC de Asclepiade*, is clearly different: see Ferrary 2009: 66-67.

³⁵ E.g. *IG* IX.12.3.750 (Amphissa to Skarphea, first half C2 BC); *IG* XI.4.1054 (Theangela to Delos, second half C3 BC); Dunant and Pouilloux 1957: no. 170 (Assos to Thasos, early C1 BC); *ibid.* nos. 169-172 are all examples of such honours publicly engraved in the honorand's home city (Thasos); cf. Marek 1984: 141; Boffo 1995: 100 (on Demosthenes 36, 64, etc.).

³⁶ E.g. Helly 1973: no. 40 (Gonnoi, first half C2 BC, honours for two citizens of Phalanna, with letter and *antigraphon* sent to both the honorands and their city); Robert and Robert 1983: 194 collects examples; see also Knoepfler 2001: no. XIII (Eretria, very end of the C4 BC) with discussion pp. 223-225.

³⁷ E.g. Robert 1936: 90, ll. 10-14 (Theangela); Helly 1973: no. 18, ll. 13-17 (Gonnoi); Robert and Robert 1983: no. 16, ll. 4-7 (Amyzon).

crucial term, often repeated, is ὑπόμνημα.³⁸ The relationship at stake is precisely the reciprocal one of euergetism, and is of a part with the very act of engraving such decisions, itself “an act which publicized and perpetuated the decisions, and thus played a self-conscious role in the honours offered by the cities.”³⁹ Many of the honours conferred in such decrees, such as statues and crowns, are intended to sustain this relationship, not least through the expectation of display. Crowns are particularly relevant, since they are commonly destined for private display, just as the bronze copies of the decrees in question here are so intended. Aeschines was explicit on the point: “the crown that is proclaimed in the assembly, no one dedicates, but he is permitted to keep it, that not only he, but also his descendants, having the memorial in their house, may never become disloyal to the democracy.”⁴⁰ Interestingly, explicit references to crowns are almost entirely absent from surviving Sicilian honorifics, notwithstanding their graphical depiction on several surviving copies (*e.g.* on the Malta and Halaesa texts); on the other hand, there appears to have been a widespread practice in Sicily of granting the honorand a personal copy in bronze of the decree in their honour, and the function of this particular honour cannot have been radically different from that of, *e.g.*, a crown.

Given the very familiar and well-documented Roman use of bronze, it might be tempting to try to link the Sicilian practice to the Roman orbit.⁴¹ However, the Sicilian practice very clearly has its own trajectory, is linguistically Greek, and is chronologically prior. Recently, F. Beltrán Lloris has argued for an association between the Sicilian practice of an honorific personal second copy of these decrees (often, but not always, proxeny decrees) and the later Roman practice of the *tabula patronatus*.⁴² He has argued that the Roman *tabulae* evolve out of a combination of this distinctive Sicilian practice (which, as argued immediately above, is itself best understood against the wider background of Hellenistic honorific practice), and Roman traditions of *hospitium*, themselves evidenced first in the form of *tesserae hospitales*; more speculatively, he has suggested an evolution for the *tabula patronatus* in the Punic area of the Roman provinces, although the supporting evidence for this last idea is all of a later date.⁴³ The important point is that we recognise the potential for other epigraphic traditions to influence the developing practices at Rome. In this specific case, what is in turn particularly notable is that Sicily has not produced a single example of a *tabula patronatus* in the imperial period.⁴⁴ In other words, in the world of bronze and honorific practices, Sicilian epigraphy walks its own path — if it is to be connected to anything, it is the practices of western Greece in the same period.

³⁸ *E.g.* Dunant and Pouilloux 1957: no. 169, ll. 24-30 (Thasos, a decree of Samothrace, C1 BC). Explicit in the Halaesa text (*SEG* 59.1100 A.21) and the Agrigentum example, *IG* XIV.952, ll. 23-25, and similarly restored in the Kaleakte decree (Battistoni 2010: 113 ll. 13-14).

³⁹ Ma 2000: 184.

⁴⁰ Aeschin. 3.47 (Loeb transl.).

⁴¹ Specifically on the Roman tradition of bronze epigraphy, see Mitchell 2005: 178-185 with bibliography, Ferrary 2009, Eck 2009: 111-112, and now Eck 2015. The use of bronze for public documents as a whole still deserves further discussion.

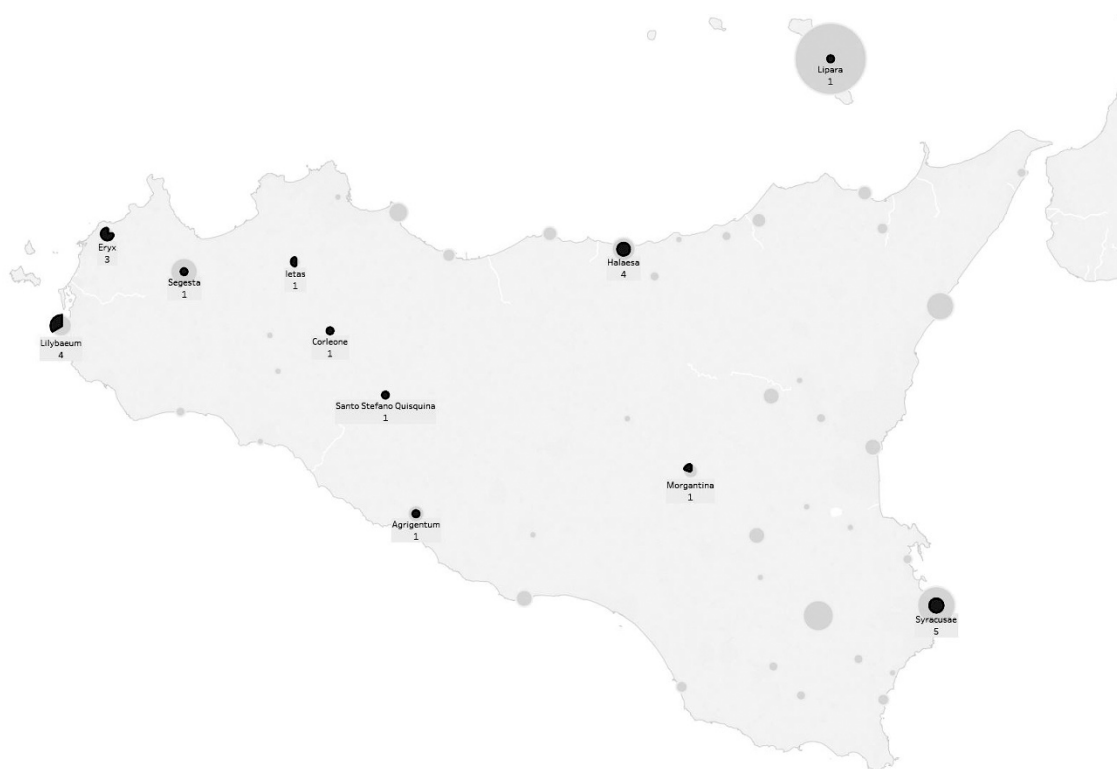
⁴² Beltrán 2010.

⁴³ Prag 2013a instead argues for the view that the practice of exchanging *tesserae hospitales* is part of a phenomenon which extends well beyond the Roman West in both time and space.

⁴⁴ For this practice see now the comprehensive study of Díaz and Cimarosti 2016.

LATIN EPIGRAPHY IN HELLENISTIC/REPUBLICAN SICILY

Returning to lapidary epigraphy, this impression of Sicilian independence is reinforced when we come to consider the presence and possible influence of Latin epigraphy and epigraphic culture on the island.⁴⁵ The first official Roman presence on Sicily came in 264 BC with the crossing of Roman forces to the island.⁴⁶ A Roman magistrate was regularly present in the west of the island from at least 227 BC, and the entire island passed under Roman control with the sack of Syracuse in 212 BC. The earliest Latin epigraphy is contemporary with this process — a milestone from near Corleone in the west, probably of 252 BC; and a probably third-century dedication to Apollo, probably from Halaesa on the north coast.⁴⁷ However, the quantity of pre-Augustan Latin epigraphy is tiny (c. 20), in particular if one considers the fact that Sicily was a pacified *provincia*, in very close proximity to the Italian peninsula and with a substantial Italian presence on the island.⁴⁸ The presence of Italians and Romans is clearly attested onomastically in the Greek epigraphy of the island.⁴⁹



⁴⁵ Brief observations already in Prag 2007: 251, 259-260, and esp. Tribulato 2012b.

⁴⁶ Prag 2012 offers an overview of the Roman conquest; cf. Brennan 2000 for detailed examination of the institution of praetorian control.

⁴⁷ ISic0610 (see Prag 2006); ISic0469.

⁴⁸ For Roman and Italian migration to the island, see Frank 1935, Frascchetti 1981, Anastasi 1999, Pinzone 1999.

⁴⁹ Striking examples include the *prostatai* in a Greek dedication to Demeter from Avola, south of Syracuse (ISic3013); the names in a first-century **BC defixio BC** from Lilybaeum (*SEG* 34.953, Curbera 1997); and a third-century *opus signinum* inscription from Megara Hyblaea (ISic3391). Exceptional is a Greek *defixio* with an appended list of Latin names in Latin of c. 200 B.C., also from Lilybaeum (*SEG* 49.1301).

Figure 8. Distribution of Latin inscriptions across Sicily (IV-I cent. BC). Locations with Latin inscriptions are highlighted and labelled; the presence of texts in other languages is indicated in pale grey (compare fig. 5). Data from *I.Sicily*, as of 22.6.2016; $n = 23/433$ (2 from Melita excluded). Map prepared using Tableau Public 10.1, with a map-base from OpenStreetMap.

The Latin epigraphy of Republican Sicily shows several very clear patterns. Firstly, with the obvious exception of Syracuse, seat of the Roman governor, the texts come almost entirely from the western part of the island (fig. 8): one might speculate as to whether this in some way reflects the more mixed, less Hellenic origins of the western half of the island, and/or the quantitatively weaker epigraphic culture in this region. On the other hand, it may reflect earlier Roman/Italian presence in the west, and the trading links between western Sicily, north Africa, and Italy.⁵⁰ The exception to this pattern is the northern coastal *polis* of Halaesa, for which one might suggest the impetus of commercial relations with the bay of Campania.⁵¹ Secondly, although the texts are something of a mixture, principally funerary, dedicatory and building texts, two aspects are worthy of comment: on the one hand, in almost all cases where the text survives sufficiently to allow us to tell, the Latin texts were erected by Romans; on the other, while the rare texts erected by Roman magistrates are in Latin,⁵² honours for Roman magistrates, of which there are more, are all in Greek;⁵³ and the solitary exception, honours for a Scipio at Halaesa, was not erected by Sicilians at all, but by immigrant *Italici* (honours at Halaesa for Roman magistrates and others are otherwise all in Greek in this period).⁵⁴ Thirdly, many of the Latin texts offer clear examples of linguistic interference, generally suggestive of the dominant influence of the local Greek linguistic and epigraphic culture.⁵⁵ For example, the *Italici* honorific just mentioned and a fragmentary text of c.100 BC from the area of the so-called Oratory of Phalaris in Agrigentum both employ the Greek use of the accusative for the honorand.⁵⁶ The very occasional instances of Latin funerary inscriptions from the end of this period also suggest the dominant influence of local Greek epigraphic culture.⁵⁷ Overall, this pattern of dominant Greek Sicilian epigraphic culture persists down to the Augustan period. The later first century BC offers a number of Greek texts showing the increasing presence of Rome: for example, the last two of the Taormina financial inscriptions use the Roman calendar and other elements, while calques of

⁵⁰ A new Latin dedication (ISic4368) set up in Lilybaeum by the Frentrani '*qui colunt in Sicelia*' (*sic*) encourages this view; see Ampolo 2016.

⁵¹ See conveniently Facella 2006: 203-214.

⁵² ISic0610, Aurelius Cotta, a milestone; ISic0723, C. Norbanus, recording building works(?); ISic0538, dedication by anonymous propraetor.

⁵³ ISic1260; ISic1178; ISic1101; ISic0612; ISic3419; and note that Verres was honoured in Greek in Syracuse (Cic. *Verr.* II.2.154: *soter*).

⁵⁴ ISic0583.

⁵⁵ Many of the key examples are discussed in detail in Tribulato 2012b: 302-319, to which add now the unique form '*Sicelia*' in ISic4368.

⁵⁶ ISic0583 and ISic0616 (*cf.* Campagna 2007: 119); for this use of the accusative, see Adams 2003: 658-661.

⁵⁷ ISic0618 is a Latin funerary stele from Syracuse with the vocative + *salve* formulation, familiar as vocative + *chaire* in eastern Sicilian funerary epigraphy (but Wilson 1990: 321 notes the rarity of relief sculpture on Sicilian funerary inscriptions, and the substantial relief of a plough on this stone probably reflects Italian practice); ISic0348 (probably Catania), a bilingual funerary inscription with the same formulation, but with *ei* in place of Latin long *i*, which, combined with the uncertain Latin letter forms, is suggestive of a writer more familiar with Greek (Adams 2003: 48-51 and Korhonen 2004: no.74).

Latin terms such as *municipium* and *duumvir* are relatively frequent.⁵⁸ Latin epigraphy rapidly takes over in the first century AD, contemporary with the imposition of Roman *coloniae* and grants of Latin rights, but the Latin texts continue to show Greek influence. In her study of this phenomenon, Olga Tribulato has observed that “the Greek calques from Latin are clearly limited to the sphere of public life and administration, while those from Greek reflect a more varied interaction. We may speculate on whether borrowing from Latin was not in fact passive rather than active.”⁵⁹

CONCLUSIONS

S. Mimbriera has suggested that the continued use of Doric in Hellenistic Sicilian Greek might in part “... be due to the fact that Sicily soon developed a close relationship with Rome, and so must have cut its ties with Greece”, with the result therefore that “... the Attic-Ionic *koine* would have had a smaller impact in Sicily than in other parts of the Greek world.”⁶⁰ This is an attractive hypothesis (although Sicilian links with western Greece look to be strong throughout the Hellenistic period), but it is important, in light of the overall patterns in the epigraphic evidence, to be clear what this might mean. Greek epigraphic culture flourished in this period, in parallel with the continued use of Doric (and it is of course the primary evidence for the continuity of Doric). Latin epigraphic culture constitutes a very minimal presence on the island. Furthermore, the use of Latin, seemingly entirely by immigrants, often betrays the influence of the prevailing Greek epigraphic culture, and before the Augustan period it is virtually impossible to see the impact of a distinct Latin epigraphic culture. In this regard, it is worth recalling the small dossier of Oscan texts from third-century Messana. These are distinctive for using the Greek alphabet, while nonetheless showing central Italian Oscan features in their particular use of Greek letters. N. Zair has recently commented that, “Altogether, these spellings suggest that the inscriptions from Messina may have been written by Oscan-speakers who spoke a different dialect from that of Oscan-speakers in Lucania and Bruttium, and were at any rate conversant with the conventions of the Oscan alphabet, and actively choosing to use them. This fits in with our historical evidence for a Campanian or Samnite origin of the Mamertini in Messina.”⁶¹

In other words, in the Hellenistic period, incoming groups to Sicily, Campanian, Roman, or otherwise, found a strongly established local linguistic and epigraphic culture, and either made more or less conscious efforts to adapt their own practices to this, or made more or less direct use of the local epigraphic traditions in order to express themselves.⁶² Sicilian epigraphic culture can be considered in broadly ‘Hellenistic’ terms, and yet it shows many individual elements that set it apart. The challenge for any historical analysis is to situate this

⁵⁸ ISic2985, ISic2986 (Taormina); ISic1190 (τὸ μουνικίπιον, Haluntium); ISic0814 (ἐπὶ δυῶν ἀνδρῶν, Agrigentum).

⁵⁹ Tribulato 2012b: 321.

⁶⁰ Mimbriera 2012a: 248-249.

⁶¹ Zair 2016: 165.

⁶² This might be set alongside other evidence for both linguistic (Will 2008) and ethnic (Prag 2013b) identity in this period.

rapid growth of a Sicilian Hellenistic epigraphic culture within its wider western Mediterranean context. Similar challenges apply to assessing the broader growth of urban hellenistic culture on the island under Roman rule. There is a strong case to be made that Roman rule was the catalyst for that growth, although not the source of the epigraphic or urban culture.⁶³ whether that argument might be extended across the western Mediterranean is more difficult to assess, since teasing apart the chronology of different local epigraphic practices is far from straightforward.⁶⁴ With the possible, speculative exception of the development of the *tabula patronatus* in the western provinces, it is, however, difficult to see any direct lines of influence between Sicilian epigraphic culture and the contemporary evolution of Roman — Latin — epigraphic culture. When the latter arrives on the island, it does so fully formed and can clearly and readily be correlated with the changes in urban and institutional structure on the island, and above all Roman colonisation.⁶⁵ The extent to which Sicilian culture as a whole impacted upon Roman culture in the third century BC, however, in the age of the Punic wars, is perhaps deserving of a fresh reassessment.

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⁶³ See now Prag 2015.

⁶⁴ cf. Prag 2013a.

⁶⁵ Prag 2002.

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