Dissertation Summary

The Greek language in Sicily between the Hellenistic Period and Late Antiquity: A contribution from an epigraphic corpus

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Abstract

My PhD dissertation (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale), entitled “Il greco in Sicilia fra età ellenistica e tarda antichità. Un contributo da un corpus epigrafico” (transl. “The Greek language in Sicily between the Hellenistic Period and Late Antiquity. A contribution from an epigraphic corpus”) offers a comprehensive analysis of the Greek language in post-classical Sicilian inscriptions, paying specific attention to the contact with other languages—especially Latin—and to the lexical and formulaic specificities of Christian epigraphy.

Keywords

Sicilian language – epigraphy – linguistic contact – Greek in Sicily – Doric – koine – koina – linguistic variation – Greek phonology – linguistic identity

1 Introduction

Although the Greek language in Sicily is a well-studied topic, most scholars have focused on its archaic and classical phases (Arena 1992, 1994, 1996 1998; Willi 2008), its epichoric variation, and the creation of the *κοινά* (Mimbrera 2012). Far fewer studies (e.g., Korhonen 2011, 2016, Tribulato 2012) are devoted to the Greek language in Sicily during the Roman period, and no monograph is dedicated to the topic. My dissertation investigates the Greek language after the Classical period on the basis of the epigraphic evidence, with a particular focus on the developments of the local *κοινά* and on the linguistic contact between Greek and Latin. The typological variety of the corpus offers access to a diverse range of individuals who belonged to different social strata and is therefore able to be analyzed with respect to sociolinguistic differences. My research describes the diachronic and diatopic variation of Greek within the multilingual landscape of Sicily throughout the Roman period and up to the end of the 7th century CE, and determines to what extent the epichoric Greek language maintained its local features.

2 Data and methodology

The entire corpus of Greek Sicilian inscriptions exceeds 1000 individual texts, the majority of which are Hellenistic, Roman and Late Antique. Because of this large number, I have worked on a smaller corpus of 500 private and public inscriptions, on stone and on metal, that offer either a complete, or at least a comprehensible, text. These inscriptions come from many different geographic areas of Sicily: Syracuse (35.4%), Katane/Catina (20.4%), Tauromenion/Tauromenium (5.6%), Acrae (4.6%), Thermai Himerai/Thermae Himerae (4.2%), Messana (3.6%), Kentoripa/Centuripae (2.0%), Panormos/Panormus (1.8%), Halaisa/Halesa (1.8%), Halontion/Haluntium (1.8%), Entella (1.6%), Lilybion/Lilybaeum (1.6%), Ispica (1.4%), Neton/Notum (1.4%), Kamarina/Camerina (1.0%), and Segesta (1.0%). Furthermore, there is a small percentage (less than 1%) of inscriptions from Apollonia, Cephaloedium, Phintias, Lipara, Melita, Menae, Mytica and Tyndaris. In my FileMaker Pro database, I have provided each entry with a description of the monument, a quality photograph when possible, a brief philological commentary, the text with an apparatus, and a translation. Because of the inevitable limits necessitated by thesis work, I have mainly dealt with edited material, though I have often made my own textual emendations and interpretations.

Although my research was primarily linguistic in focus and my goal was to offer a description of the Greek language in Sicily based on the surviving epi-

graphic record, I have also paid particular attention to epigraphic typology and to the material characteristics of the inscriptions. I have argued that materiality offers interpretative keys to untangle the socio-political implications that would go unseen if one exclusively considers the stone as the support of the text, rather than as a monument. Furthermore, as we shall see in the following sections, understanding the social and political context is a crucial step to explain the underlying reasons for the diffusion of the *κοινά* and, later, Greek-Latin bilingualism. To give some examples, the presence of both a Greek and a Latin text in a decree of the town council inscribed on a stone stele and erected in a civic space gives us very different information about its socio-political context than a bilingual text on a *defixio*, a bronze sheet which may have been rolled up and deposited out of sight, or on a funerary monument, which straddles the traditional disciplinary divide between private and public contexts. Similarly, the occurrence of a morphological feature such as the *-εσσι* dative (on which see Section 4.1) should not be interpreted as an instance of *κοινά* in metrical and highly literary inscriptions, but is certainly a regional feature in funerary inscriptions with no literary nature. In any case, the inscriptions are marked by the persistence of Doric features, both hypercorrected forms and genuine Dorisms, that undergo various phases of diffusion and decrease over the course of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

I decided to work on edited material for two main reasons: a practical one—the edition of a significant amount of material would have been impossible during the relatively short time of the dissertation work—and a more theoretical one, that is to avoid the risk of circular reasoning for what concerns the provenance and dating of my data. Specifically, I needed to work either on dated inscriptions, which are statistically fewer than undated ones, or on inscriptions that could reasonably be attributed to a specific period (this is notoriously difficult for Hellenistic Sicily; see Prag 2018: 5) and area, so that I could safely identify linguistic features and follow their development.

3 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is broken down into 9 chapters. After the introduction, the thesis starts with an outline of the Greek dialects, with a focus on the Doric *κοινά* and the Hellenistic Koine (henceforth *κοινή*), both within and without the Greek world. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the presentation of the selected corpus and the database. The core of the data analysis is presented in chapters 4, 5, and 6, each of which is divided into two subsections, one on phonological and the other on morphosyntactic features of Sicilian Greek. Chapter 7 is devoted to sociolinguistics and especially to the different linguistic trends and policies

that affected Sicily after the Classical period. Specifically, I examine the *κοινά* as the result of linguistic policies, and the role of bilingualism within the Roman and Late Antique periods, with some forays in the Early Byzantine phase. In Chapter 8, after an introduction of the theoretical frames of bilingualism and language contact, I offer an in-depth analysis of bilingualism, both by the analysis of all bilingual Greek-Roman inscription in Sicily and by the phenomena of interference of Greek monolingual inscriptions. In this chapter I offer interpretations of the Sicilian epigraphic habit with reference to Christian epigraphy, evaluating the role of Christianity in the diffusion of bilingualism. The final chapter draws the conclusion of the thesis, focusing on the issue of linguistic identities in Sicily. The dissertation closes with bibliographic references, an index of all inscriptions mentioned in the dissertation, the concordances of all inscriptions contained in the corpus, and by charts of the provenance of the inscriptions.

4 **Phonetic and morphosyntactic changes of Sicilian Greek in Hellenistic and Roman Sicily**

The core of the thesis is dedicated not only to the qualitative analysis of some of the phonological and morphosyntactic features that characterize Sicilian Greek and distinguish it from other epichoric dialects, but also to the changes, especially on the phonological level, that are common to Greek in Sicily and in other areas of the Greek world. For the purpose of clarity, the discussions on phonology and morphosyntax have been split in three temporal subdivisions:

1. The first phase (4th–2nd c. BCE) analyzes the Hellenistic period, down to the early Roman province
2. The second phase (2nd c. BCE–2nd c. CE), which covers the establishment of the Roman province, with heightened Roman involvement, reflected in the increasing influence of Latin on Greek
3. The third phase (2nd–7th c. CE), which covers the extensive—though not always abundant in evidence, especially for the last three centuries—Roman, Late Antique, and Early Byzantine periods.

I have defined these subdivisions, which are of course not always rigid, because they represent three key shifts in the Greek language of Sicily, particularly for (1) the diffusion of the *κοινά*, (2) the establishment of linguistic contact between Latin and Greek, and (3) the major phonological and morphosyntactic changes over Greek, which are generally consistent with what has happened in the rest of the Greek speaking world.

4.1 *The first phase (4th–2nd c. BCE)*

The most noticeable phonological feature of the first phase is the diffusion of Doric vocalism (on which see *infra*) and, to a lesser extent, consonantism. Notably, many inscriptions show κοινῇ features, and in some cases (e.g., in SEG 46.1266) the same inscription shows both Doric and Ionic vocalism, that is to say, κοινά and κοινῇ traits.

On a morphosyntactic level, apart from commonly Doric features (such as ποτί, -μεν ending for the 1 PL), the most interesting phenomenon is the diffusion of the -εσσι dative on athematic stems. This feature has been traditionally considered a case of Aeolic substrate in Corinthian. Because the -εσσι datives are attested in Syracuse (Corinthian colony) through the literary evidence, and because of the prominence of the city in the political and linguistic life of the island, the origin of the -εσσι datives in Sicily, and especially their diffusion in the κοινά, has often been attributed to Syracuse. Two facts speak against this argument: (1) the datives do not appear in the epigraphic record of Syracuse in the 4th c. BCE, a time when they were already attested in Selinous (founded by Megarian colonists) and Gela (which is a Creto-Rhodian colony); and (2) the datives are attested outside of Sicily in Doric varieties, such as Elean and Cyrenaic, which are not subject to the Aeolic substrate. Moreover, it is theoretically possible, even if not likely, that the datives spread in Sicily from Megarian colonies.

It is crucial not to confuse two different issues, namely the origin and the diffusion of the -εσσι dative. In my dissertation I have suggested that the diffusion of the -εσσι datives might be interpreted as a case of *drift*, that is to say, as Sapir originally described: “[t]he momentum of the fundamental, the pre-dialectic, drift is often such that languages long disconnected will pass through the same or strikingly similar phases. In many such cases, it is perfectly clear that there could have been no dialectic interinfluencing” (Sapir 1921: 184). Whatever the origin of the morpheme, its diffusion takes place in the Hellenistic period and continues also in the early Roman period, so much that they are not attested in Lilybaion before the 3rd c. BCE and Halaisa before the 1st c. BCE. Therefore, when Curbera 1994 suggested that the diffusion of the -εσσι datives moves from the south-eastern corner of Sicily (the Syracusan area) to reach in the end the north-western part of the island, Lilybaeum, one should remember that the process might have been polycentric, even though the importance of Syracuse in the diffusion of the feature during the Hellenistic and Roman period is very likely. It is important to highlight that the -εσσι datives are not the sole ending for athematic stems, because in the Hellenistic period inscriptions also have -οις.

Other morphosyntactic isoglosses analyzed as part of Sicilian Greek are the -μεν infinitive (likely to be a case of Rhodian influence in Sicily, probably intro-

duced to Syracuse through Geloan colonists, and spread throughout Sicily due to the influence of Syracuse), the pronoun αὐτόντα (which is exclusively present on the island), and the -ῖνος suffix (which is a trait that Sicily shares with Magna Graecia and encodes ethnonyms and anthroponyms).

4.2 *The second period (2nd c. BCE–2nd c. CE)*

Starting from the 2nd century BCE, Sicilian Greek shows signs of linguistic contact with Latin (on which see also Section 6), and the continuing interference between κοινή and Sicilian κοινά, which, as already pointed out by Consani 1997, do not constitute two independent varieties in Sicily, but rather two subvariants of the same system. Not all Sicilian Greek features are exclusive to the island. In the analysis of my corpus, I have dedicated some time to the identification and scrutiny of phenomena that characterize the Greek language in most of the Greek-speaking world, such as the common phonological changes that happen in the κοινή Greek, e.g. the evolution of εἰ > ι, αἰ > ε, εα > ια and the phenomena of spirantization of voiced and voiceless aspirated stops (on which see Capano forthcoming).

During this period, the pronoun αὐτόντα and the -εσσι datives are found also in areas where—at least as far as the epigraphic record is concerned—they were not attested previously, such as Syracuse. It is noteworthy that the two features, just as other traits of the local Greek, do not seem to be marked on a sociolinguistic level, as they appear in all sorts of documents. As mentioned in Section 2, it is necessary to keep in mind that the appearance of a literary feature as -εσσι dative in a public decree cannot be equated with another instance of the feature in a private inscription, but it is true nevertheless that this principle is less valid for a trait, such as αὐτόντα, which does not have a sociolinguistic connotation, but it is specific to the linguistic area of Sicily. The spread of these isoglosses, though attested in inscriptions that present cases of interference with Latin or with κοινή Greek, can be explained as an increase of the popularity of the κοινά, which remarkably does not fade with the establishment of Sicily as a Roman province.

4.3 *The third period (2nd–7th c. CE)*

The third phase of Sicilian Greek, though retaining its local κοινά vocalism, is characterized by the well-known phonological changes that affect Roman and Late Antique Greek in general, which appear in the epigraphic record as the exchange between ⟨εἰ⟩ and ⟨ι⟩, ⟨ε⟩ and ⟨η⟩, ⟨ου⟩ and ⟨ω⟩, ⟨ο⟩ and ⟨ω⟩, ⟨υ⟩ and ⟨οι⟩. By the end of the Late Antique period, Greek vocalism in Sicily has undergone a drastic reduction in the number of phonemes. I have represented the vowel inventory of Late Roman Greek in Sicily as follows:

i(:) y(:) u:
 o/ɔ(:)
 e/ɛ
 a

FIGURE 1

Vowel inventory of Late Roman Greek in Sicily

Fricativization of voiced stops becomes more frequent in this third phase, particularly for labial stops, but the elsewhere-common evolution of the second element of diphthongs to a fricative is not attested (or visible to us!) throughout the corpus. Conversely, reduction to zero ($\langle\alpha\nu\rangle$ to $\langle\alpha\rangle$) in absolute initial position is fairly common, especially in inscriptions with little standardization.

Another interesting phenomenon of Late Antique Greek in Sicily, but by no means exclusive to the island as it was attested already in classical Attic (Threatte 1980: 395; see also Bubenik 1989: 221 and Horrocks 2010: 113 on the general problem), is nasal weakening. If the deletion of a nasal in preconsonantal position does not have consequences on the phonological system, the deletion of a nasal in final position leads to the loss of phonological distinction between the accusative and dative of *o*- and *a*-stems, which become homophonous. Within the broad topic of the consonant weakening, I have noticed that in Sicilian Greek inscriptions, geminate consonants often undergo degemination both of stops and sonorants. This fact is noteworthy (though not surprising in Late Greek), if we consider that Sicilian Greek is notoriously similar to that of Magna Graecia,¹ which is considered to be conservative especially because of its retention of geminate sounds. Sicilian Greek underwent a phase of degemination starting from the 3rd c. CE and became widespread in the 4th c. CE; but it is possible, though not demonstrated, that later phases of Sicilian Greek might have restored the geminate consonants, in a similar way to what happened in Southern Italy (Fanciullo 1996: 35–45).

The complex relation between the $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\eta$ and the $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{\alpha}$ is well confirmed in this third phase because we have inscriptions that show the association of Sicilian morphological features such as $-\epsilon\sigma\sigma\iota$ datives and $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu\tau\alpha$ with $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\eta$ traits (e.g. ISic1135).² As common throughout the Hellenic world, Sicilian Greek underwent major changes in the mood system, partially because of the phono-

1 As noticed in the dissertation, there are several features, such as the $-\mu\epsilon\iota\nu$ infinitive and the $-\tau\eta\omicron\varsigma$ ending, that are shared between the two coasts of the Strait of Messina; cf. Bucci, Chilà, et al. 2019.

2 This inscription clearly shows a high literary character, but the preservation of the local Doric element in Sicilian inscriptions is demonstrated by the presence of $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{\alpha}$ elements also in *defixiones*. More on this topic will be discussed in section 5.

logical modification outlined in the previous paragraphs. The optative mood is a relict already during the Roman Imperial period, and the subjunctive is mostly used as an exhortative, or a prohibitive preceded by μή.

5 Linguistic identity in Sicily: role and later developments of the κοινά

As shown in Section 4, in post-Classical Sicily, Doric traits spread to colonies that were originally Ionic. This diffusion ultimately resulted in the creation of the Sicilian Greek κοινά, characterized by a number of isoglosses, such as -εσσι datives, -μειν infinitives, -μεν infinitives, perfects with present endings, αὐτόντα pronoun, *mitior* vocalism, and some lexical items, e.g. ἀλίασμα ‘decree’. It is important to stress that these isoglosses are not exclusive to Sicily, but they do not appear all together in other Doric areas or in other κοιναί. I contend that in Sicily these isoglosses are not homogeneously attested in the entire island, but conversely isogloss X is present in areas A and B, isogloss Y in areas B and C, thus their diffusion is articulated as a *continuum*. Specifically, Syracuse and Camarina share, amongst other features, the -εσσι datives, Nakone and Entella the pronoun αὐτόντα and the lexical item ἀλίασμα, while Phintias shares the dative isoglosses with Syracuse, and ἀλίασμα with Nakone and Entella.

In the previous section, I used the example of the -εσσι ending to show a methodological issue that has frequently emerged in my dissertation: the distinction between the origin (i.e. the formation) and the spread (i.e. the diffusion) of a phenomenon.³ Many scholars have defined the Sicilian κοινά as Syracusan or Syracuse-based (Consani 1997), and there is very little to argue about with this definition for the Roman period. However, the Sicilian linguistic landscape of the early Hellenistic period was not uniform (Curbera 1994: 99). Considering that both morphological and lexical isoglosses such as αὐτόντα and ἀλίασμα are epigraphically attested earlier in the central part of the island, and only later in Syracuse, it is better to speak, as Bartoněk does, of a “Sicilian Doric koiné” (Bartoněk 1973).

I do not suggest, however, that Syracuse had a peripheral role in the diffusion of the κοινά. On the contrary, during the Roman period, many isoglosses

3 Similarly, it has been argued (Bartoněk 1973) that the diffusion of *mitior* Doric vocalism might represent an innovation that spread from Syracuse, but, as pointed out by Méndez Dosuna 2007, the vocalism *severior*, that is not attested in the Hellenistic period in Sicily, does not necessarily represent an archaism, and in my dissertation, I dismiss the argument of the diffusion of a Syracuse-based *mitior* vocalism.

spread, just as -εστι did (on which see Section 4.1), from the south-eastern corner towards north-west. Moreover, one should consider that Syracuse exerted a direct influence—and not simply on a linguistic level—on the surrounding area. As I showed in the previous sections, the progressive presence of the κοινή within Sicilian Greek is patently clear by the Roman period when Doric features become increasingly rare.

There is one more element to factor in the diffusion of the κοινή, namely the Roman presence on the island and the consequent Romanization. The diffusion of the κοινή continued throughout the Roman period, and even had a period of revival in the late Imperial period, as represented by the presence of hypercorrected dorisms in public inscriptions of the 2nd c. CE, and by specifically Sicilian features in diastratically high instances (e.g. ISic135). This situation might theoretically be the result of a linguistic policy that spread from Syracuse, but the existence of such a policy is impossible to demonstrate, so it is better to explain the perdurance of the κοινή as a result of the Sicilian local identity that has its literary expression, while political attempts of local autonomy faded long before the decrease of Sicilian isoglosses in Greek inscriptions. Moreover, the revival of local features is not unique in the Greek world or in the history of Sicily. Shortly after the creation of the Roman province, there was an initial phase of philo-Hellenism, which, as Lomas 2000 pointed out, should be separated by the phase of *revival* of political and social institution in the imperial period.

However, I do not consider plain dorisms (and specifically Sicilianisms) in inscriptions from the imperial period as the result of sophisticated choices made by the local élites, unless the inscription shows literary style or an explicit public character. In facts, a Dorism in a diastratically low *defixio* more likely constitutes an instance of local language. On a methodological level, I argue that relating hyperdorisms to epigraphic typology is a crucial to address the multifaceted problem of late Dorisms and the underlying the problem of late κοινή in Sicily. Hyperdorisms appear in public inscriptions with a high register, but not in private or low register texts. As a consequence, I argue that Doric, and specifically Sicilian Doric, was a constituent part of Sicilian identity, which was reinforced during the Roman rule of the island, when Sicily became a stable and enduring political unity for the first time. This identity, far from being merely a theoretical matter, had at least some reflections on local life, as the epigraphical record attests, since even private and non-literary inscriptions show Sicilian features over the duration of the post-Classical period.

6 Greek and Latin in contact in Sicily

A crucial part of my dissertation is devoted to the linguistic contact between Greek and Latin and especially to the phenomena of interference, codeswitching, and loanwords from Latin into Greek. It is important to keep in mind that, as Adams & Swain (2003: 3) stated, we can investigate linguistic contact in the ancient world exclusively on the basis of textual contact. This principle, far from being neglectable, has many important consequences. The first—and more obvious—is that we cannot grasp the reality of the contact, but only what slipped through the attention and the tools of the author of the inscription. The second is that not all the textual contact is linguistic. In my dissertation I argue that, whereas a loanword is definitely a case of linguistic contact, some cases of replication of Latin expressions in Greek might pertain only to the epigraphic level. For example, the substitution of the accusative, traditional in Greek inscriptions, with the dative, the typical Latin fashion, to express the honorand in statue base inscriptions is unlikely to have entered the spoken Greek language. In this case, it is legitimate to talk about contact amongst epigraphic cultures, or habits.

Although the first contacts between Greek and Latin in Sicily date back from the 3rd c. BCE, shortly before the creation of Sicily as the first Roman province, Sicily was deeply multilingual during the Archaic and Classical periods. However, by the Hellenistic period, the local languages were gradually absorbed by Greek, while Punic survived until the 1st c. CE. When the Romans established their power over the region, they did not establish Latin as the official language. Instead, Latin spread without explicitly requiring a “conversion” of the population politically or linguistically. For the early Roman period in Sicily, Latin inscriptions are rare on the island, and there is very little sign of linguistic interference of Latin with Greek. Despite the well-known presence of Roman people in Sicily during the Republican period, most of the evidence for Latin at this time consists of Roman names that appear in Greek inscriptions, both in public decrees (e.g. ISic133) and in private texts (e.g. IGDS II 80).⁴ The number of Latin inscriptions increased during the 2nd and 1st c. BCE and came to outnumber the Greek ones by the 1st c. CE. Parallel to this increase is a growing number of bilingual inscriptions, but it is difficult to assess the diffusion of bilingualism during the Augustan period and to describe how the interaction between local Greeks and Romans actually worked.

4 One should remember that, amongst the people who migrated to Sicily, some were Greeks from Asia Minor, which must have favored—or at least not discouraged—the hellenophony in the region (Korhonen 2016: 118).

In the aforementioned IGDS 1180, a Greek *defixio* from the 2nd c. BCE, there is a *defigens* with a Punic name that curses two people, one with a Greek name and one with a Latin one. If these names were somehow representative of their bearers' identities, there must have been linguistic contact in their lives, and the inscription tells us that Greek must have been a vehicular language at that stage. In the contemporary honorific inscription for a consul set up at Tauromenion, IGMTI 4, there is one of the earliest cases of linguistic interference between Greek and Latin in Sicily, and one of the most common thereafter (e.g. ISic1178 from 69 BCE), that is to say the expression of filiation through a lexeme, as in the Latin "*Marci filius*", rather than encoding it syntactically, as in Greek "ὁ τοῦ ...".⁵ Apart from these cases of interference, linguistic contact in the Republican period mostly manifests with codeswitching and loans for words that were not yet present in the Greek language, as the word *δεκυρεύω*, 'I act as a decurion', in Syracuse (SEG 61 758) and Centuripae (ISic1394). This kind of linguistic phenomenon is typical of the early stages of contact between two languages.

As the number of Latin inscriptions increases, the cases of Latin interference in Greek texts also become more frequent, and it affects also areas of the Greek lexicon that had an original Greek correspondent, for example (possibly) the name of the paternal uncle (*πάτρους*) in ISic0903, or morphological calques, such as *ἰδίῳ* 'for oneself', modelled on *suis*, and a general tendency to avoid articles (e.g. ISic1009). The Romans never carried out an explicit linguistic policy, but Latin spread, in Sicily as well as in the Eastern provinces, out of practical and even utilitarian reasons. During the Roman period, sites such as Syracuse, Catania, and partially Messina show Greek and Latin inscriptions from the very same context that cannot be explained only within a social class, but rather by a widespread bilingualism. The most interesting cases are the funerary inscriptions of the family of Claudius Theseus, which are in Latin for Claudius himself, for his wife and for one son, but in Greek for a daughter and another son. As Korhonen (2016: 116) rightly pointed out, the reason of the language choice must have had a practical and even extemporaneous basis.

Most Greek-Latin bilingual inscriptions of Sicily come from the Roman Imperial period, because bilingual texts, rather than representing a "translation" of a text in more languages, convey more messages to a multilingual society, or offer different texts to different communities. The language of these bilingual texts is often highly standardized and somehow controlled, and, on an

5 For a discussion on the possible later dating of *IMTI* 3, see Brugnone 1974: 222. Even if the inscriptions were in fact later copies from the 2nd CE, the case of lexical interference would still stand.

epigraphic level, we sometimes deal with two typologically different texts. It is probably not an accident that the Greek in a significant number of these texts takes the form of an epigram. Greek, especially in its literary form, never ceased having prestige in Sicily, and the Sicilian Doric variety continued to represent in writing (and most likely also in speech) a crucial part of Sicilian identity. Latin was the language of the imperial power, and therefore had a wide diffusion throughout the island, but it never replaced Greek, which survived throughout all of Sicily and never became the minority language in the area of Syracuse. Romanization does not correspond to Latinization in Sicily, and Sicilian Greeks gained citizenship through a “fluid romanization” (Tribulato 2012: 31), without renouncing their Sicilian identity and Doric language.

Besides the influx of κοινή and contact with Latin, there is one last factor that deeply influenced Sicilian Greek—and, in my opinion, ultimately supported the ongoing bilingualism—namely, Christianity. Christianity reached Sicily around the 3rd c. CE, most likely through commercial routes from Africa (Sgarlata 1998), and it is probable that the Christian religion came already “speaking Greek”. Although it is not possible to categorically connect the Greek language with the diffusion of Christianity, the ratio of inscriptions from Catania is very instructive. From Catania we have 61% Latin and 38% Greek, 1% bilingual pagan inscriptions (data from Rizzone 2008: 176), but the percentages are almost reversed if we consider the Christian inscriptions, which are 79% Greek, 21% Latin and 1% bilingual. Of course, since it is notoriously difficult to define what a Christian inscription is, I have preferred to adopt the definition of Christian epigraphic habit, that is to say a habit developed on the Graeco-Roman habit and supplemented with a series of formulae (e.g. ἡ μακαρίας μνήμης / *beatae memoriae*, πλείον ἔλαττον / *plus minus*, τόπος / *locus*, *depositio* / *κατάθεσις*), new onomastic material, epigraphic usages (e.g. the mention of the date of a deceased’s death), and graphic features. I argue that the shared set of formulae, not to mention a common religious practice, actually favored the already existent bilingualism.

7 Conclusions

In my thesis, I hope I have shown that there is a variety of Greek that can be identified as Sicilian, that is a κοινά which spread through Sicily during the Hellenistic period and is characterized by a number of phonological and morphosyntactic isoglosses. Most of these isoglosses are not exclusive to Sicily, but no other region presents them all. It is crucial to keep in mind that these isoglosses (with the exception of the *mitior* vocalism, on which see Section 3)

are not all together attested throughout the entire island for a prolonged period of time, but rather they constitute a *continuum* that itself undergoes major changes due to the influence of *κοινή* on the one hand and Latin on the other. Moreover, the Greek language in Sicily undergoes some of the very same modifications as in other parts of the Greek world, and it should not be surprising (or disappointing) that Late Antique and Early Byzantine Sicilian Greek does not appear to be very “Doric”, presenting only a few Sicilian features. It is remarkable that traits of the local *κοινά* are attested at all until such a late date, probably also thanks to the enduring Sicilian identity.

Because of time and the limits necessitated by a dissertation, some problems about Sicilian Greek have been intentionally left unanswered, especially for what concerns the relations between literary texts and inscriptions. Cassio and Willi, amongst others, have offered insightful contributions (e.g. Cassio 1999 and 2012, and Willi 2008 and 2012) on this topic, and it seems clear that, despite the deep connections between genre and dialect of Greek literature, it is possible to find in Sicilian authors of Classical and Hellenistic period features that pertain to their local language. Discussing the relations between the result of my thesis and the literary sources, though possible for the early Hellenistic period, becomes much harder for the later period. Another problem, which is intrinsic to the nature of the work, consists of the credibility of the epigraphic records: while writing, we are psychologically induced (and taught!) to “write well”, avoiding solecisms as much as we can. Moreover, our understanding of the inscribing process is complicated by the number of actors involved in the procedure. Nevertheless, the consistency of phenomena and mistakes that repeatedly appear in the corpus make me confident that identifying tendencies of Sicilian Greek from epigraphic records is, indeed, possible

In Sicily, the epigraphic record has a much longer life than the literary evidence, but this still comes almost to an end by the end of the 7th c. CE, as the small number of inscriptions from later periods is almost insignificant. Considering that some of the latest inscriptions from my corpus are written in a very “vulgar” Greek, with many substandard features, while the following inscriptions are Byzantine, should we assume that Sicilian Greek died at the end of Late Antiquity, and what we find later is unrelated, Eastern Greek? A closer look at other Medieval Greek varieties induced me to think that it is likely that Greek, despite not being much recorded (a fact that is true for Latin inscriptions, too), was still spoken after Late Antiquity. Additionally, the “vulgar” Greek of Late Antiquity can and should be used to address the issue of the developments of Italo-Greek in Late Antiquity. If we confront Sicilian Greek with the Byzantine and Medieval Greek of Calabria, we might be able to shed more light on Calabrian Greek, which, though well testified for the later

periods, is relatively lacking in inscriptions for the Roman and Late Antique periods. In my thesis I successfully tried this approach for what concerns gemination, but I hope to be able to produce systematic research on the topic in the future.

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