'SO MANY SICILIES'

Introducing language and linguistic contact in ancient Sicily
Olga Tribulato

Tante Sicilie, perché? Perché la Sicilia ha avuto la sorte ritrovarsi a far da cerniera nei secoli fra la grande cultura occidentale e le tentazioni del deserto e del sole, tra la ragione e la magia, le temperie del sentimento e le canicole della passione. Soffre, la Sicilia, di un eccesso d'identità, né so se sia un bene o sia un male.[1]

G. Bufalino, *Cento Sicilie* (Milan, 2008)

Drawing the threads together

The contributions in this volume revolve around the idea of providing a linguistic history of ancient Sicily. All chapters across the three parts that make up the volume (I: Non-classical languages, II: Greek, III: Latin) follow two different criteria: firstly, we have attempted to provide comprehensive yet accessible introductions to the languages spoken in Sicily in Antiquity; then, the second set of contributions uses linguistic evidence for talking about language contact – and hence peoples and cultures.

In Part I, Paolo Poccetti's careful reconsideration of the linguistic evidence for the identity of the elusive *Sikeloi* and *Sikanoi* (Chapter 1), Simona Marchesini's outline of Elymian epigraphy and language (Chapter 2), Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo's contribution on Phoenician and Punic (Chapter 3) and finally James Clackson's discussion of Oscan at Messana (Chapter 4) all follow the same agenda: to provide a state-of-the-art discussion of these ancient languages while at the same time offering original insights or suggesting future lines of research. Basic descriptions of phonological and morphological features are combined with what may

[1] 'Why "many Sicilies"? Because over the centuries Sicily has acted as a hinge between dominant Western culture and the allure of the desert and sun, between reason and magic, between emotional restraint and heated passions. Sicily is suffering from an excess of identity – which may be either a good or a bad thing.'

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be termed a 'cultural' approach, whereby epigraphy is examined in the light of literature, history and archaeology, so as to locate the development of these languages within a wider framework. These contributions vary in terms of length, detail and the approaches adopted, as well as the subjects they address. Take the two ends of the spectrum: while Phoenician and Punic are so well-known as to enable an in-depth description of their linguistic and cultural status in Sicily, evidence for Elymian is scant and linguistically hard to pin down.

The two following sections of the volume are devoted to two widely investigated languages, Greek and Latin. The informative criterion adopted for the surveys in the first part of the book here gives way to a subtler approach that focuses on well-known linguistic facts in order to achieve a more-nuanced perspective on the specificity of Greek and Latin *within Sicily*. Susana Mimbrera's contributions (Chapters 7 and 8) look at two consecutive periods in Sicilian Greek linguistic history: the dialectal phase and that of the Hellenistic Doric 'koina'. Sicily was settled by colonists from Ionic-speaking Euboea as well as colonists from various parts of the Doric world: classical Sicily is characterized by a steady dialectal convergence triggered by the political influence of Doric Gela and Syracuse. The latter's leading role in the island had paramount linguistic consequences, contributing as it did to the creation of a Doric 'koina', which thrived and competed with the Attic-Ionic koine down to the end of the Hellenistic period. The extent to which Rome's advent, from the third century BC onwards, changed Sicily's linguistic balance is a hot topic of debate. In Part III my own contribution (Chapter 11) seeks to provide a discussion of a wide range of Latin texts from early Roman Sicily without losing sight of the crucial negotiation that Latin had to undertake with dominant Greek.

These 'overview chapters' set the stage for the critical approaches developed in the remaining chapters of the volume. In Part I, Gerhard Meiser (Chapter 5) uses the minutiae of onomastic morphology as a springboard for forays into the intricate history of contacts between Greeks, Elymians and Sicels. The author acknowledges that Elymian identity played a considerable role among the lower strata of society in Selinous, an

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informative snapshot of which is provided by curse tablet *IGDS* I 38. Oliver Simkin (Chapter 6), on the other hand, applies linguistic analysis to an informative but oft-neglected set of evidence, coin legends, in order to highlight patterns of linguistic continuity and change in archaic and classical Sicily. In Part II, Albio Cassio's study (Chapter 9) of the glosses in the second-century AD treatise *Antiatticist* – drawn from Epicharmus and other Sicilian playwrights – teaches us an important linguistic and literary lesson about the indebtedness of the koine to less prominent (i.e. lesser known) linguistic areas. The idea that the unique sociolinguistic setting of Sicily's colonial culture may have anticipated trends that affected the post-classical Hellenic world and that its literary and linguistic sources may therefore be used as an interpretative key to approach more universal issues in the history of Hellenism also prominently emerges from Andreas Willi's original interpretation of Theocritus' *Idyll* 15 (Chapter 10). In Part III, Kalle Korhonen's in-depth investigation of Greek–Latin bilingualism in Imperial Sicily shows how a now widely examined topic such as ancient bilingualism may still be given a nuanced treatment by focusing on specific case studies. As in all his previous works on Sicily's linguistic history, Korhonen here adopts a sociolinguistic approach to examine the concrete use of Greek and Latin in various social contexts (political and military life, religion and culture).

The present Introduction will draw together the conceptual and thematic threads running across the three sections of the volume and linking the two approaches highlighted above. But it will also further explore some of the topics discussed in the chapters, so as to point contemporary research on language and linguistic contact in ancient Sicily in a new direction.

Among all the topics and sub-fields which characterize research on ancient Sicily, I have given priority to archaeological and ethno-anthropological studies in the first part of the Introduction ('The history and archaeology of cultural contacts in Sicily: a few key questions'). The Introduction does not aim to reach any groundbreaking conclusions; rather, it is intended to provide a succinct overview, as a sort of 'Ariadne's thread' guiding the reader through the maze of topics that could not be fully investigated in the volume. Readers interested in specific historical

events in Sicilian history should be warned that these are not addressed in detail in the present Introduction. The second part of the Introduction ('Three corners of cultural contact: onomastics, literature and epigraphy') more closely focuses on fields related to language: onomastics and its relevance for ethno-linguistic analyses of Sicily; literature as a mirror of the island's unique colonial environment; and finally epigraphy and its statistical analysis as a further key to understanding Sicilian society.

I have refrained from providing a section on linguistic methodology, particularly bilingualism. There are two reasons for this. First, the existence of many recent studies of ancient bilingualism and multilingualism (Neumann and Untermann (1980); Campanile, Cardona and Lazzeroni (1988); Rochette (1997); Leiwo (1995); Adams, Swain and Janse (2003); Adams (2003); Biville, Decourt and Rogemont (2008); Cotton, Hoyland, Price and Wasserstein (2009); Rochette (2010); Papaconstantinou (2010); Mullen (forthcoming); Mullen and James (forthcoming); *inter alia*) would have made a section on this subject necessarily redundant.[2] Readers, therefore, are invited to turn to these works for an overview of the underlying topic of this volume, ancient multilingualism. Secondly, and more importantly, the individual chapters of this volume, with their diverse approaches to linguistic reconstruction, language contact and sociolinguistics, speak for themselves by providing the necessary background information, where this is needed (on bilingualism, see especially Chapters 11 and 12).

The history and archaeology of cultural contacts in Sicily: a few key questions

Looking back into the second millennium

Classicists' interest in ancient Sicily begins with the so-called Thapsos culture, from the eponymous site situated on the Magnisi peninsula north of Syracuse, which flourished between the fifteenth and the twelfth centuries bc (Map 1).[3] This is not to say that no archaeological evidence exists for earlier periods, but these are

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[2] Also see the bibliography collected in Fögen (2003).   [3] De Angelis (2003: 1–4).

of minor significance for scholars keen on cultural and linguistic interaction.[4] It all starts with Thapsos, as this is the first Sicilian culture to have had continuous contacts with the Aegean and the Near East.[5] So much so, that – as we shall see below – it has attracted the attention of almost all scholars seeking to prove or disprove the idea of an early Greek (i.e. Mycenaean) presence in Sicily.

Scholars' interest in examining Bronze Age Sicily within the context of early Greek history can be easily gauged, based on the direction that studies on Thapsos have taken over the last century. Roughly until the 1990s, descriptions of Bronze Age Sicily amply followed the theoretical systematization suggested by the great scholar Luigi Bernabò Brea, an archaeologist with a solid background in classical philology who made the first pioneering attempts at a global description of Sicilian pre- and protohistory. According to Bernabò Brea, when the autochthonous Thapsos culture came to an abrupt end in the wake of the events that shook the Aegean and larger Mediterranean area around 1250 BC, what followed were 'Dark Ages' in which the site was abandoned in favour of more secure hilltop settlements.[6] It was at this late stage that a new culture developed out of the Thapsos one at Pantalica, a secluded settlement on a plateau surrounded by canyons and located between the Anapo and Calcinara rivers.[7] Bernabò Brea described the Sicilian 'Dark Ages' as a dangerous period marked by economic decline and incursions from peninsular Italy.[8]

The interpretative frame within which these events have been analysed is reminiscent of traditional accounts of Bronze Age (Late Helladic) continental Greece.[9] According to the latter, the Mycenaean world, with its complex palatial economy and wide-ranging Mediterranean trade, abruptly collapsed because of external

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[4] One of the most accessible accounts of palaeolithic, mesolithic and neolithic Sicily is still that of Leighton (1999: 11–146).

[5] Leighton (1999: 170–2).   [6] For this terminology, see e.g. Bernabò Brea (1957: 136).

[7] Bernabò Brea (1957: 151, 164) identified Pantalica with Hybla, the kingdom of the mythical Sicel ruler Hyblon. For a critique of Bernabò Brea's account, see e.g. S. Tusa (1994: 171–5), who interprets Pantalica as an indigenous ('Sicanian') settlement.

[8] Bernabò Brea (1957: 136).

[9] Parallels between Greece and Sicily are drawn by Pugliese Carratelli (1986b: 5) on the basis of Greek historical accounts.

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factors,[10] as violent outsiders (the 'Dorians') took over its civilization. In the wake of the 'Dorian' invasion, Greece entered a period known as the 'Dark Ages' that lasted up until the emergence of the *polis* and the introduction of the alphabet in the eighth century BC.

Just as the 'Dorian invasion' myth described by Greek historians has been connected to the decay of Mycenaean palatial culture, so the narrative concerning the Sicilian 'Dark Ages' has been linked to the invasion of an external people: the Sicels.[11] For a long time archaeologists have largely accepted the story of the Sicel invasion from peninsular Italy, as unanimously transmitted by Thucydides, Hellanicus, Antiochus, Philistus, Ephorus and Timaeus.[12] Archaeological evidence from Molino della Badia (near Caltagirone), Lentini in east Sicily, Morgantina (near Enna) and the Aeolian islands – differing substantially from the evidence for Thapsos and the first phases of Pantalica – has been invoked as proof of the fact that in the Late Bronze Age Sicily was invaded by a new people from continental Italy.

However, more recent archaeological accounts have corrected these early views on both Greece and Sicily. As concerns the former, the assumption of a 'Doric' invasion from abroad is now widely being questioned, since the archaeological record does not show any clear signs of change in the material culture of what was originally the Mycenaean region.[13] Today we also know that in the 'Dark Ages' a sophisticated and rich culture flourished in Euboea: the 1200–900 BC period may not have been one of complete economic and artistic collapse after all.[14]

Along much the same lines, Bernabò Brea's idea that Sicily entered its own 'Dark Ages' has been disproved by the fact

[10] Drews (1993) still provides the most detailed account of the possible reasons for Mycenaean collapse. A useful overview is Hall (2007: 43, 51–5).

[11] See e.g. Pugliese Carratelli (1986b: 13) and Manni (1969: 17).

[12] Cf. Jacoby, commentary to *FGH* I 79. On the tension between the reconstructions provided by historians on the basis of ancient written sources and the descriptions furnished by archaeologists, and the issues raised by this 'Great Divide' in classical history, see Yntema (2000).

[13] Overview of the debate on the 'Doric question' in Lemos (2003: 191–3).

[14] Recent critiques of the concept of 'Dark Ages', based on Lefkandi, are Lemos (2001) and (2003); overview in Hall (2007: 48–51). However, the discovery that sites such as Lefkandi prospered does not change the fact that other areas of continental Greece appear to have been much less wealthy and developed than they were in the previous period.

that both Thapsos and Pantalica – sites which began their life in the second millennium – continued to be occupied in the first millennium.[15] Moreover, the archaeological record, with its evidence of cultural and social changes, suggests a dynamic scenario rather than one of crisis and decay. This impression of dynamism is further confirmed by the archaeological findings from the Aegean and Levantine areas, which show continuity in contacts between the eastern and western shores of the Mediterranean throughout the 'Dark Ages'. While largely consisting in the exchange of prestige goods, these contacts continued to follow the same sea routes travelled in the age of Mycenaean expansion: those connecting Cyprus, Crete and Malta with Sicily, Sardinia and continental Italy.[16] As a result, Aegeanists are now adopting the concept of 'network' to explain the complex – and partly new – contacts that emerged in the Late Bronze Age among Greece (where Euboeans were key players), Cyprus, the Levant and Italy (more on this below).[17]

What partly complicates this picture is the fact that the more we know from archaeology, the more difficult it becomes to harmonize the archaeological record with the Sicans and Sicels, the two indigenous peoples mentioned by Greek historical sources. To paraphrase the title of a famous article by John Chadwick (1976), which tackled the core problem in the study of the Greek Late Bronze Age by challenging the myth of the Dorian invasion, the question that has come to the fore is: Who were the Sicans and Sicels?

Who were the Sicans and Sicels?

In the past, archaeologists influenced by classical historians have used the terms 'Sicanian' and 'Sicel' to describe different *facies* of Sicilian archaeology between the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. A few scholars have explicitly identified the Sicans with the Thapsos culture,[18] while others have identified the Sicels' arrival

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[15] Albanese Procelli (2003b: 32).
[16] Matthäus (2001: 175–6), Albanese Procelli (2003b: 131).
[17] See e.g. Lemos (2001), Sommer (2009).
[18] See e.g. Pugliese Carratelli (1986b: 13), S. Tusa (1988–9b, 1994: 175), Tusa and Nicoletti (2002).

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with the archaeological developments observed for the Early Iron Age in sites such as Lentini, Molino della Badia and Morgantina.[19] Another term that specialists use to describe the material changes many Sicilian sites underwent in the Early Iron Age is 'Ausonian', though this expression appears to be used inconsistently: in some cases it applies to the peninsular culture that first developed in the Aeolian islands in the thirteenth century BC and is thought to have later spread to eastern Sicily, as attested by sites such as Molino della Badia and Lentini; but in Bernabò Brea's terminology, it only applies to the Aeolian islands, whereas the new archaeological *facies* of eastern sites is called 'Sicel'.[20]

Studies carried out by Italian prehistory and protohistory experts in recent years suggest a very different picture. Various degrees of peninsular influence may no doubt be traced across different sites, beginning with the Aeolian islands and then spreading to sites in central and east Sicily (the above-mentioned Molino della Badia and Lentini, but also South Pantalica, particularly in the realm of burial practices).[21] Still, this influence is no longer generally taken as evidence for any mass movement of peninsular people(s) into Sicily (the 'invasion' described in traditional accounts).[22] Moreover, there is no evidence that the emergence of a new archaeological *facies* in Sicily was accompanied by destruction and violence, a fact which allows us to view peninsular influence more in terms of contacts and exchange networks than in terms of mass settlement.[23]

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[19] Leighton (1999: 188, 215–17).

[20] Cf. Bernabò Brea (1957: 137, 169–70), Bietti Sestieri (1979: 626–7 and *passim*), S. Tusa (1994: 181), Leighton (1999: 188). A recent overview is in Albanese Procelli (2003b: 33), who remarks on the material differences between the 'Ausonian' culture of Lipari and Milazzo (on the Tyrrhenian coast of Sicily), which has a clear peninsular character, and that of Molino della Badia, which mixes peninsular and local elements. See too Bietti Sestieri (2009: 430–2).

[21] Bietti Sestieri (1979: 624–6).

[22] Leighton (1999: 216) tentatively speaks of 'movements, perhaps combining no more than small bands or tribal splinter-groups'; Bernabò Brea (1957: 137) spoke of peninsular 'colonization' of the Aeolian islands; S. Tusa (1994: 182) of 'invasion'. To be fair to Bernabò Brea, however, it must be noted that he acknowledged the problem of the Sikels' archaeological dimness (1957: 169–70): '[I]f the Sikels really are the Italic people mentioned by the sources, they must, after having conquered Sicily, have themselves been culturally absorbed by the superior civilization of their subject peoples, thereby losing both their cultural and ethnic individuality.'

[23] Thus clearly Leighton (1999: 216) and, in a more nuanced way, S. Tusa (1994: 183).

Peninsular contacts were wide-ranging and continuous, showing – as Leighton (1999: 190) puts it – that 'new relationships were also being formed towards the end of the Bronze Age between Sicily, southern Italy and the western Mediterranean due to economic and perhaps political realignments, encouraged by changes in international exchange networks following the disruption of links with the Aegean'.[24] It is therefore best to avoid interpreting these influences from an ethnic standpoint, as signifying the replacement of one *ethnos* (Sicans) by another (Sicels): for archaeology simply does not allow us to represent the material changes mentioned above in terms of ethnicity.[25] If we wish to continue using terms such as 'Sicanian' and 'Sicel' we must be aware that for Iron Age Sicily these are simply conventional labels for what would otherwise be referred to as 'the older' (e.g. Thapsos and, to an extent, Pantalica) and 'the newer' (Molino della Badia etc.).

Let us now return to the focus of this volume and to the question of what kind of ethnic, social and political scenario the first Greek colonists encountered in Sicily in the eighth century BC. An answer may indeed be found, except when it comes to ethnicity. It is impossible to tell whether a distinction was already drawn in Antiquity between the indigenous culture in the south-east of Sicily (the 'Sicel') and that in the south-west (the 'Sicanian').[26] Judging from the archaeological and epigraphic record we have for the archaic period, it is even difficult to maintain with any certainty that we are dealing with two different peoples speaking two different languages (on this question, see Chapters 1 and 6): later differences in material culture between eastern 'Sicel' sites such as Centuripe and Mendolito and western 'Sicanian' sites such as S. Angelo Muxaro may also be explained in terms of internal evolution within the same ethnic group (more on this below).

[24] On the change brought about by the end of contacts with the Aegean and the beginning of more intense relations with peninsular Italy, and the role of Sicily in both phases, see now Bietti Sestieri (2009).

[25] This means moving away from the approach of scholars such as S. Tusa (1994: 190), who speaks of a 'mutamento etnico-culturale'.

[26] Even a scholar inclined towards a traditional reading of early Sicilian history such as Pugliese Carratelli (1986b: 11) discards Thucydides' opinion that the Sicels completely drove the Sicans out of eastern Sicily by force. Instead, Carratelli suggests that the Sicels imposed their customs on a large number of Sicanians, thereby assimilating them.

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What may be brought into sharper focus, by contrast, is the social and political organization of these pre-Greek peoples. They tended to inhabit hilltop sites, which may have been part of larger territorial entities;[27] close territorial control may be the reason for the political and cultural stability of these indigenous sites and their survival into the classical period. Settlements consisted of clusters of houses that included some wealthy dwellings but lacked – unlike Thapsos – any urban layout.[28] Burial grounds are often vast (as in the case of those at Molino della Badia-Madonna del Piano in east Sicily and Santa Margherita Belice in the west) and show the coexistence of different funerary practices (inhumation in rock-cut chambers, jars and trench-graves, as well as cremation in some rare cases). This variety in burial practices is best viewed as reflecting age, gender and social differences, rather than as evidence for different ethnicities.[29] It remains to be seen whether the shift from tomb burials – accompanied by great quantities of grave goods – to cremation may be taken to suggest that in the Iron Age indigenous society was moving towards more egalitarian forms of organization, as has been suggested:[30] it is possible that status was not conveyed through burial practices.

Between 'protocolonization' and 'precolonization':
Mycenaeans, Phoenicians and Greeks

The two preceding sections have shown how contemporary scholarship is paying increasing attention to the social and cultural fabric of pre-classical Sicily as a way of understanding the phenomenon of eighth-century colonization. Given the crucial role of Sicily within Mediterranean exchange networks of the second millennium BC, the events influencing Sicilian culture before

[27] S. Tusa (1994: 179) speaks of 'principati' for the eastern sites of Pantalica, Caltagirone and Dessueri around 1000 BC. See also De Angelis (2003: 9).

[28] On Thapsos as an urbanized site, see Leighton (1999: 152–4). S. Tusa (1994: 177), however, identifies 'protourban' features in the sites belonging to the last phase of the Pantalica *facies* (Mokarta and Partanna in the river Belice valley), so the interpretation of data is not unequivocal.

[29] On burial practices and their interpretation, see S. Tusa (1994: 183–5) and Leighton (1999: 195–203).

[30] De Angelis (2003: 10).