

## ELLIPSIS AND ANCIENT LANGUAGES. FEW CASES FROM THE PRE-ROMAN LANGUAGES OF ITALY

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### ABSTRACT

Ellipsis is a feature of natural language and communication and refers to the intentional or non-intentional omission in a speech or text. As a consequence of redundancy, the expression of a word, a preposition, a verb, a phrase or a sentence becomes unnecessary and is dropped. Despite the numerous contributions from general linguistics, the topic has received limited attention in the field of ancient corpus languages such as Latin, Greek or other languages known through fragmentary evidence. Starting with a few examples taken from the Latin epigraphy, the Author looks for of ellipsis cases also in some of the Pre-Roman fragmentary languages of her knowledge, revisiting older interpretations and suggesting new heuristic scenarios for their analysis. Cases from the Messapic and Etruscan epigraphy are presented.

*KEY WORDS:* Ellipsis, Messapic, Etruscan, Ancient Italy, Text analysis, Relic Languages, Religion.

### ELLISSI E LINGUE ANTICHE. ALCUNI ESEMPI DALLE LINGUE DELL'ITALIA PREROMANA.

#### RIASSUNTO

L'ellissi è un tratto delle lingue naturali e della comunicazione e consiste in una omissione intenzionale o non-intenzionale nel parlato o nel testo. Come conseguenza della ridondanza, l'espressione di una parola, di una preposizione, di un verbo o di una frase intesa diventa superflua e cade. Nonostante i numerosi contributi di linguistica generale, l'argomento ha ricevuto scarsa attenzione nel campo delle antiche lingue corpus come il latino o il greco, o altre lingue di attestazione frammentaria. A partire da alcuni esempi presi dall'epigrafia latina, l'Autrice cerca di rintracciare casi di ellissi in alcune lingue frammentarie dell'Italia antica, rivisitando alcune interpretazioni e suggerendo nuovi scenari euristici per la sua analisi. In particolare sono presentati casi dall'epigrafia messapica ed etrusca.

*PAROLE CHIAVE:* Ellissi, Messapico, Etrusco, Italia Antica, Analisi testuale, lingue frammentarie, religione

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

'Ellipsis' is a widespread feature of natural language and communication, which is observed in all aspects of human speech and writing throughout space and time. It can be described as an intentional or non-intentional omission in a speech or a text.

The text can be omitted for two main reasons: a) the environment or linguistic situation ('*contorno*', '*contesto*', '*Umfeld*', see below) makes the expression of an argument redundant, or b) the argument itself has already been expressed in a

previous or in a following section of the text. As a consequence of this redundancy, the expression of a word, a preposition, a verb, a phrase or a sentence becomes unnecessary. If the writer or the reader(s) of an elliptical text can easily understand unexpressed contextual elements, it becomes more and more difficult to integrate the original meaning of a text in cases of distance in space, culture or time. Sometimes even the grammatical intelligibility of a text becomes obscure. This happens for example in nowadays advertising, where the 'almost identical' can be elided, as claimed by Garnham, Oakill (1992) in the comment of a U.K. advertising ("IT IS. ARE YOU?").

## 2. LINGUISTIC STUDIES ON ELLIPSIS

While the enormous amount of literature devoted to ellipsis (more than a thousand titles in 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century literature on modern languages) suggests that the topic has attracted great interest from a variety of disciplines, there is still no general agreement on its precise definition (McSchane 2005: 12). Significant contributions to the understanding of various forms of ellipsis come from general linguistics, especially syntactic and pragmatic studies (Meyer-Mermann, Rieser 1985; Gallego 2011; Corr 2008), generative approaches (Lobeck 1995 and 2006; Johnson 2001; Deguine 2014), lexico-syntactical analyses (Halliday and Hasan 1989) and cross-linguistic perspectives (Merchant, Simpson 2012), but also from psycholinguistic studies (Poirier 2009 or Lin *et alii* 2016). By contrast, the topic has received limited attention in the field of ancient corpus languages such as Latin, Greek or other languages known from fragmentary evidence, dating the main discussions back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In this field, alongside sporadic contributions on specific authors (especially in commentaries) or on syntactical structures,<sup>1</sup> attempts to analyse the phenomenon in a systematic way remain confined to comparatively brief sections of normative grammars<sup>2</sup>. A significant step forward in the analysis of Latin ellipsis was made in 1926 by J.B. Hofmann,<sup>3</sup> who considered it as a feature of Latin '*Umgangssprache*', or colloquial Latin. Ellipsis could be explained as an effect of simplification, economy and brevity, which are typical features of the spoken language. He derives most examples from Plautus and Terence, the early Latin writers of comedy based on Hellenistic models, but also from Cicero's Letters and other supposedly 'conversational' texts. In a recent book on Colloquial Latin, published in 2010 by E. Dickey and A. Chahoud,<sup>4</sup> the word "ellipsis" appears twenty times, which is a

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Melander 1910 on Plautus and Terence; Greenough 1901 on 'Ellipsis in Some Latin Construction'.

<sup>2</sup> For the Latin Language: Hofmann and Szantyr 1965: 419-25, 822-5, and cf. 863 Index s.v.; Löfstedt 1956: 231; Svennung: 1935); for the discussions on Latin literary and/or poetic diction: Bardon 1943/4; Marouzeau 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Hoffmann 1951, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

<sup>4</sup> Dickey, Chahoud 2012.

clear indication of how strongly this element can be associated with informal varieties of the Latin language.

In the epigraphic culture of the Roman world it has been suggested that some stamps related to the production process, in which the solely personal name in nominative or genitive is displayed, could indicate the manufacturer's workshop rather than a personal possession. Thus A.E. Cooley:<sup>5</sup>

The stamps that related to the production process itself contains names in the nominative (indicating the identity of the *plumbarius* or pipe-manufacturer), and genitive (sc. *sub cura* – 'under the management of' – or *ex officina* – 'from the workshop of'), which indicated an official overseeing the installation of the water-supply and the manufacturer of the pipe (or owner of the workshop where it was manufactured) respectively. The lack of overlap between names on fistulae at Ostia and the names of local elite families as known from monumental inscriptions suggests that a name in genitive is more likely to record the manufacture of the pipe than the owner of the property where it was installed.

This intuition, already claimed by Aubert (1993: 171-181), is of great value and can shed new light also on cases of texts belonging to relic languages, where information on the environment from which the inscriptions come is in many times far more incomplete. In addition, in the relic languages it is more difficult to outline a lot of syntactic features because of the shortness of most texts. Following the example from the Latin epigraphy, new interpretative possibilities can be proposed also for texts coming from Pre-Roman epigraphic cultures.

### 3. THE ENVIRONEMENT

Strongly connected with ellipsis is the environmental situation of a spoken or a written text. As we said, what has happened before and what is still to happen in a linguistic act enables, and sometimes even encourages, the drop or the elision of some redundant element. After the theory of E. Coseriu – one of the modern linguists who, to a greater extent than others, turned his attention to the definition of linguistic environment (Sp. "*entorno*", Germ. "*Umfeld*") and to its connection with phenomena of ellipsis (see for instance Coseriu 1967: 320) – the more definite or complex the environment of a linguistic act, the more probably we will find elliptical elements in it. On the other hand, the more extra-linguistic information we can gather on a text, the more we will understand both about its content and formal expression. It is not perhaps superfluous to recall that a multidisciplinary exchange in interpreting the environment in which a text was produced is of utmost importance. Archaeological, historical, epigraphical and linguistic issues must always be considered all together in interpreting the sense of a text.

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<sup>5</sup> Cooley 2012: 190.

Elliptical utterances, it must also be kept in mind, may lead to linguistic grammaticalization, i.e. change of grammatical classes: adjectives may become nouns, nouns become adverbs etc.<sup>6</sup> Just to recall an example, Ital. *biblioteca marucelliana* (the famous Florentine library), where *marucelliana* is adjective to (Francesco) *Marucelli*, the Italian abbot who founded the library in 1752, has become in the spoken language *la Marucelliana*, with the ellipsis of *biblioteca* and the conversion of the adjective to a *proprium*.

In the following paragraphs, some elliptical cases from the Pre-Roman languages of Italy are discussed.

### 3.1. Artist's or workshop signature

Similar to the case omission of the word 'workshop' in ancient Latin, the Etruscan evidence presents cases in which the omission of a similar item may be considered. In the Etruscan epigraphy the production of an artifact is sometimes marked by the verb *zinake* (= 'fecit') or by the verbal noun *zinacu* 'made'. In some case, the expression of a personal name in genitive, especially in serial products such as stamps or seals, cannot be referred to the owner of the marked object. For example, the stamps impressed on five dolia (CIE 10769-73 = ET Vs 6.12-16) found in Bolsena (*Volsinii*), dated to a time lapse set between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE display the name formula *vel cazlanies*, consisting of the *praenomen* (*Vel*) in nominative and the gentile (built with the Etruscan gentile suffix with "Italic look" *na-ie*: \**Cazla-na-ie*) in genitive. More than an "afunctional" genitive,<sup>7</sup> it is more plausible that we are dealing with a name formula expressed in genitive, with the only mark of the second element, following the linguistic "strategy" called *Gruppenflektion*.<sup>8</sup> Of the two names, only the gentile takes the genitive morpheme. Fr. Bader, describing this peculiar case of genitive, speaks of lowest common denominator (*mise en facteur commun à l'ensemble du syntagme*). Being the mark *per se* a serial message,<sup>9</sup> it is mostly improbable that all the marked dolia are possessions of Vel Cazlanie. As in the above mentioned Latin case, something corresponding to "*ex officina*", "*sub cura*" must have been implicit to the sense of the text. There was no need to express this information, because it was obvious for all possible readers of this concise mark.

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<sup>6</sup> On grammaticalization see for example the contributions of "Laca" with Lehmann: 1985; examples from different world languages in Verhoeven et alii 2008. On the relationship between ellipsis and grammaticalization see for example Rhee: 2012: ellipsis of the main clause may induce the addressee to reconstruct the missing main clause; for further bibliography on the topic see Idem: 290.

<sup>7</sup> As claimed by Benelli 2007, nr. 108, p. 231-232. On the 'afunctional genitive' see Marchesini 2011.

<sup>8</sup> The term was adopted by J. Wackernagel (1905: 124) for the Vedic grammar. See also Renou 1952: 124. The first to adopt the word *Gruppenflektion* for the Etruscan language was F. Slotty (1952: 173). See also Agostiniani 1982: 179.

<sup>9</sup> On serial texts, such as those observed in the latin *signacula* see Marchesini 2012: 70-71.

### 3.2 The “speaking inscriptions”

We owe to L. Agostiniani the identification and formalisation of the category “iscrizioni parlanti” in Ancient Italy. Comparing several epigraphic traditions, mostly Etruscan, he outlined in 1982 forms and variables of this kind of text class, which seems not to have strict comparison in the ancient world outside of Italy. Inscriptions like Etruscan *mi araziia laraniia* ‘I of Arazia Larania’,<sup>10</sup> imply the verb ‘am’ and perhaps also ‘the vase, the gift of’, which are not expressed. This is a clear case of ellipsis. In other cases, the verbal name *mulu* ‘gift’ is expressed. In the typology of the formulas (page 173) the type E is compounded by *mi* (pronoun) + personal name in genitive, which can also be inverted. A further elliptical solution is the drop of the personal pronoun *mi* with the unique expression of the personal name in genitive. On the other hand, the complete utterance is displayed in cases like [*min*]e *muluvenice aville acvilnas* (from Veii, 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, CIE 6416 = ET Ve, 3.7), where the verb *muluvenice* indicates the act of donating. In the Messapic epigraphy the name *Leukani*, impressed on a clay pyramidal loom weight from Ruvo (MLM 3 Ruv, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), is also expressed in genitive (*Leukanī*, with a *-nes* stem; nominative: \**Leukanes*)<sup>11</sup>. In this case, the name is originally an ethnonym, whose meaning reveals the origin from the neighbouring Lucania (cfr. Lat. *Lūcānus*). Also in this case, being the mark impressed, i.e. quite probably intended to be a serial message, the genitive *Leukani* may be the result of the syntactical drop of an argument such as “in the workshop of”. Otherwise there would be no need to specify that a small clay pyramid belongs to a man.

### 3.3 Divine names and epithets

In a variety of cases, in many languages and worship traditions, today and in the past, a divine name is followed by a second name, an epithet, which is used to better define the competences of the deity or its historical rootedness in a particular place or situation. Sometimes, in the pragmatic use, a part of the deity’s name has dropped, thus leaving only the epithet to designate it.

#### 3.3.1. Messapic *Diva*

In the Messapic inscription from Arpi (in ancient Daunia, near Foggia) the name *diva* is impressed with a retroverse ductus on a clay loom weight (MLM 7 Ar, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE). In other cases, again in northern Apulia, at Vieste Garganico, at least three cases of *diva* followed by the theonym *Damatira* are known: the stone block (MLM 1 Vi, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE) displaying on one side face *diva damatira* and on the top *agolzon vinana*. Again, on another stone block (MLM 4 Vi, 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE) the words *diva damatira [h]opaka Ig o* are written on a lateral face. A last inscription on a side face of the stone block (MLM 5 Vi, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE) displays *deiva damatira prevezi vena*, or, varia lectio, *preve zivena*. In all three cases the name of the goddess

<sup>10</sup> Agostiniani 1982: nr. 84.

<sup>11</sup> For a linguistic discussion see Marchesini 1994: 1371.

*Damatira*, Messapian version of Greek Δημήτηρ (but in the form Δᾱμάτηρ), is expressed in the dative case in the three texts. Another form is given by the inscription from Gnathia MLM 14 Gn: [d]amatra, in the nominative, and by the variant *Damatura* from Ruvo, again in the Daunia, i.e. the northern district of the Messapic language.<sup>12</sup> If *Damatira* is the goddess' name, *diva*, its adjective, is expressed in the dative case. The word form *deivā-/dīvā-* (*deivas*, probably nominative, is attested in an inscription from Salapia: MLM 1 Sa) has been connected to the Indo-European stem *\*deiwō-/ā* (compare Mycenaean *di-wo-/di-we*, Oscan *deivas*, *deivaí*, Ancient Indian *devā-*, Latin *dīvus*, *-a*, *-um*), with the meaning 'divine'.<sup>13</sup> Untermann (2000: 161) remarks that in the Latin tradition the adjective *dea*, *diva*, might also be part of the divine name, like in the case of the goddess *Dia* of the *Arvali* brotherhood or the *diva Angerona*.<sup>14</sup> The word *diva/deiva*,<sup>15</sup> as we read in the inscription on the loom-weight from Arpi, can thus be considered, as more than a personal name, the former part of the formula *Diva Damatira*, in which the name *Damatira* has been dropped. A modern case of this use, typical of the spoken more than the written language, is the appellative of the Saint Anthony from Padua, which is simply named "il Santo": he is namely the Saint *per antonomasia* and needs no further specification. The context, in this case the great sanctuary developed through centuries in Padua, which every year receives millions of visitors, makes the expression of the Saint's name redundant. In the same way, we may hypothesize that, in the northern Daunian district, the name of Demeter was dropped in particular circumstances. In this regard, a text written on loom weights can be expression of a lower sociolinguistic layer and/or of a more "domestic" use of language and writing, while longer texts engraved on blocks are undoubtedly expression of a high sociolinguistic – official – context. Another possibility could be to consider *Diva* of the Arpi loom weight as a personal name, in this case we would expect a nominative or a genitive expressing the ownership or the workshop production, not a dative. It is moreover difficult to think about a case of hieronymia, i.e. the possibility to acquire a divine name, in such a case. This practice, which is similar to the tendency among religious people in our days as well, to assume a Saint's name, is usually marked in the archaeological environment also by other elements, as it is shown in the following Messapic example.

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<sup>12</sup> On the phonological aspects which have led to the alternation of the phonemes /i/ vs. /u/ in the case of *Damatira/Damatura*, see de Simone 1988: 374-351; Marchesini 2009: 147. For the name see also MLM II, s.v.

<sup>13</sup> MLM II, s.v. *deivas*; see also Untermann 2000: 160-163. For the Mycenaean tradition see Bartoněk 2003: 419.

<sup>14</sup> Untermann 2000: 161.

<sup>15</sup> For phonological questions regarding /ei/ which becomes /i/ in *dīvā-* see further literature in MLM II, s.v.

### 3.2.2. Ellipsis and Hieronymia in the Messapic inscriptions

In the 1980s, Carlo de Simone identified, arguing from epigraphic and archaeological evidence, a number of inscriptions displaying hieronymic names.<sup>16</sup> In twenty-seven cases the word *tabara* (feminine) or *tabaras* (masculine) ('*sacerdos*'; 'Priesterin'/'Priester') has been identified in the Messapic inscriptions, where the real name of the dead person is not expressed.

The Indo-European etymology of the word (*\*to-bher*), 'the person who bears the offer', i.e. 'the offerer', is clearly disclosed by its widespread comparisons in the whole Indo-European world: Umbrian *ar̥fertur* (: *\*ad-fertor*),<sup>17</sup> Avestic *frabaratar-* (designation of a kind of priest), Ancient Indian *prābhartar-* and *prābhṛti-* 'offer', and, with the preposition, Latin *adfero*, Gothic *atbairan*, Ancient Irish *ad.opair*, Phrygisch  $\alpha\beta\beta\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\tau$ , are just some example.

This function name is in many cases followed by the goddess name *Demetra* (Demeter) or *Aprodita* (Aphrodites). This use is *per sé* elliptical, because the common funerary use in the Messapic epigraphy is the expression of the name formula: *praenomen* followed by a gentile name (for men) or father's name (for women). In these Messapic cases the personal name dropped, leaving in its place the hieronymic formula.

Let's take a closer look into the documentation. The typology of the content can be summarized as follows:

a. *tabara* (feminine, nominative) (alone):

MLM 24 Gn (from Gnathia, stone slab, cover of a tomb, 550-450 BCE);

MLM 35 Me (from Mesagne, stone slab, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE);

MLM 11 Bal (from Valesio, stone slab pertaining to a tomb, 550-450 BCE);

MLM 16 Ur (from Oria, 'tuff block', now missing, drawing after CIM: Ur 5, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE);

MLM 36 Me (from Mesagne, tomb block, 600-450 BCE: *wabara*)<sup>18</sup>;

MLM 30 Me (from Mesagne, stone block, written twice on the cover of a tomb, 4<sup>th</sup> c BCE: a) *vabara* b) *va[b]lara*).

b. *tabara* (feminine, nominative) + *damatria* (f. adjective, nominative) "Demetriad priestess"

MLM 38 Me (from Mesagne, tomb, stone slab, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE; under the inscription the demetriad symbol of St. Andrew's cross is engraved);

MLM 34 Me (from Mesagne, stone block, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE);

MLM 20 Me (from Mesagne, stone block, 3<sup>rd</sup>, c. BCE);

MLM 28 Bal (from Valesio, stone block, cover of the tomb, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE);

MLM 21 Bal (from Valesio, stone block, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE);

<sup>16</sup> de Simone 1982; de Simone 2013: 56-57.

<sup>17</sup> Untermann 2000: 48-49.

<sup>18</sup> The graphemes *w* and *v* possibly have the phonological value of a soundless aspirata /th/ derived from an i.e. /\*t/. See for references Marchesini 2009: 145 and 154-155.

MLM 1 Bal (from Valesio, now missing, known from Mommsen 1848, Tav. C).

c. *tabara* (feminine, nominative) + *aproditia* (feminine, adjective, nominative):

MLM 23 Ur (from Uria, stone slab pertaining to a tomb: *tabara aproditia ma kroppas*)

3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE);

d. *tabara* (feminine, nominative) + *Damatras* (goddess' name in genitive):

MLM 9 Gn (from Gnathia, from a tomb, now missing, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE);

e. *tabaroas*/*Ψabarovas* (derived noun, feminine, genitive)

MLM 31 Me (from Mesagne, stone slab, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabaroas*);

MLM 18 Rud (from Rudiae, stone slab, 250-100 BCE: *Ψabarovas*).

f. *tabaroas*/*tabarovas* (derived noun, feminine, genitive) + *damatrioas*/*damatirovas*/*damatrivas*/*aproditiovas* (adjective, feminine, genitive):

MLM 16 Bal (from Valesio, stone slab; inscription within the drawing of a St. Andrew's cross, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE: *tabaroas damatrioas*);

MLM 6 Car (from Carovigno, stone slab pertaining to a tomb, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabarovas aproditiovas*);

MLM 40 Me (from Mesagne, stone block pertaining to a hypogeum tomb, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE): *tabaroas damatirovas*);

MLM 4 Me (from Mesagne, 'tomb wall' after CIM: Me 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE; below the inscription the St. Andrew's cross is painted in red, as well as the inscription: *tabaroas damatrivas*);

g. *tabaraihi*/*tabaraihe* (noun, masculine, genitive) + [DIVINE NAME?]:

MLM 33 Ur (from Oria, stone slab pertaining to a tomb, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabaraihi mahharaos*);

MLM 14 Ur (from Oria, tomb wall, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabaraihe taotorrihe*);

h. other cases, not included in the above sections and incomplete inscriptions:

MLM 50 Lup (Lupiae, stone slab pertaining to a tomb, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *millanoas tabaroas aproditiovas*);

MLM 21 Me (from Mesagne, stone slab, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *hazzavoas leoherroas tabara*);

MLM 25 Me (from Mesagne, stone slab, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabaras taotorres*);

MLM 5 Ur (from Oria, 'stone slab' after CIM: Ur 11; 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabara ha«z»a«vo»a divana*);

MLM 29 Ur (from Oria, stone slab, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE: *tabar[---]snola.*);

MLM 7 Ur (from Oria, 'stone slab' after Mattarelli Pagano 1729,<sup>19</sup> *tabarios d(ῥ)omatriaš*);

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<sup>19</sup> Ms. Oria, Bibl. Comunale, scaffale 24 D 3, p. 28.



MLM 9 Ur (from Oria, object unknown, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabara oaši[?]*);

MLM 20 Ur (from Oria, object unknown, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabara aprodi[tas?]*);

MLM 12 Gn (from Gnathia, 'on a tomb door', after Lenormant 1881/2, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabara da[zim]aih[i?]*);

MLM 5 Gn (from Gnathia, object unknown, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *tabar[a] ap[rodit?][a[s?]*).

MLM 8 Ur (from Oria, from a necropolis, after Papatodero 1856-58: 215, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE: *ta«b»arai zavais kritaboa a«.»[?]*);

MLM 41 Me (from Mesagne, stone cippus, 600-450 BCE:  $\Psi$ *abaras tolitī dimatias tai ma kos atallinda*).

As we can see, most cases are recorded in Mesagne (eight cases, mostly from Contrada Muro Tenente) and *Uria* (modern Oria, nine cases). The context in which the documents were found is not always known, but a prevalent attribution to funerary contexts is a matter of fact. The inscribed objects are stone blocks or, more frequently, rock slabs pertaining to a tomb. In a few cases (MLM 38 Me and MLM 4 Me) St. Andrew's cross is engraved or painted in red in proximity of the text. This extra-linguistic element, which finds comparisons in the Greek world, lead de Simone to identify the link of these inscriptions to the cult of Demeter, being the sign a stylized display of the Demeter's torch, which recurs, connected to mystery cults, also in Southern Italy and Greece.<sup>20</sup>

In many cases the word *tabara* (feminine) was followed by the adjective of the divine name *Damatria* (Demeter), or *Aproditia* (Aphrodites, with an *-ya-* adjective) in nominative. Sometimes the goddess' name is in genitive (*Damatras* 'of Demeter'). In three cases the noun *tabara* is followed by another noun, like *Taotorres* (MLM 25 Me), *Taotorrihe* (MLM 14 Ur), *Mahharaos* (MLM 33 Ur), which de Simone decoded as gentile name. On *mahhara-* we cannot tell whether it was the name of a god or a personal name, but in the case of *taotorre-*, its divine connotation is assured by his occurrence within the sanctuary cave of Grotta Poesia in San Roca, Lecce (expressed in dative *Taotori*: MLM MLM 16 Ro; MLM 19 Ro; MLM 23 Ro). The phonological output *\*taotor-yo-s > taotorres*, with the doubling of the stop consonant due to palatalization, is a common trait of all gentile names in Apulia, but is also the derivational suffix, just like in the Latin language, which expresses possession, in alternative to the genitive case. Given in many languages, the possibility to express possession is known by means of two strategies: the genitive and the adjective. In the Italian language, for example, I can say '*un anello d'oro*' (genitive expressed by the preposition '*of*') or '*un anello aureo*' (expressed by means of the corresponding adjective in *-eo*); the statue of Zeus in the Athenian Parthenon can be said '*crisoelefantina*' or '*d'oro e d'avorio*'. In the same way Latin *Marcī* in the onomastic formula *Marcī filii* finds his counterpart in the expression *aqua Marcia*, referred to the gentile *Marcuis* (*Quintus Marcius*, praetor in 144 BCE).

<sup>20</sup> See de Simone 1982: 182-183.

As a consequence of this, I am inclined to consider both *taotorres* and *taotorrihe* (miswriting of *taotorrihi*?) of the above mentioned inscriptions as adjectives to *tabaras* and not as gentile names, for two main reasons: the counterpart of the adjectives *damatria* or *aproditia*, make it more reasonable – from a linguistic, systemic perspective – to think that even at least *taotorrihi* may be an adjective to *Taotor*. Secondly, it is difficult to consider a gentile name as not deriving from a *gens* but from a god's name. Even if there are exceptions, in most languages the names of the main deities of the pantheon are avoided as personal names. The situation is quite different in the Christian world, where St. Mary and the Saints become common hieronymic names, nevertheless the name of God and of Jesus are often discarded as possible personal names (with the exception of the name Jesus in Latin America).

Beside the issue of the identification of the second element in the formula *tabara* + noun/adjective, it is to be remarked that the mere use of *tabara* in inscriptions like MLM 24 Gn, 35 Me, 11 Bal and 16 Ur, implies the ellipsis of something, namely the god or goddess' name in whose service the person was priest/priestess. The environmental, funerary context which the four cases may be referred to, must have caused the redundancy of further information. In addition, it can be said that two of these records belong to the most ancient phase of the Messapic epigraphy, being dated in a time lapse which runs from the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and cannot therefore be considered as a diachronic development of the original formula.

### 3.4. Divine places (?)

An archaic Etruscan inscription from Veii, sanctuary of Portonaccio, dated to the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BCE, is scratched on an extraordinary object: a fragmentary bucchero box (*arca*), whose max. conserved height is 9.7 cm, composed of two pieces, was found in different excavations.<sup>21</sup> The reconstructed inscription as proposed by Colonna (1985: 238) is *laris velkasna[s mini muluvanice] menervas*. Rix's integration replaces the verb *muluvanice* with *turuce*. Namely the verb for a dedication made in a sacral context should be *turuce* 'gave', while *muluvanice* was usually used in archaic times to mark gifts among private persons.<sup>22</sup> Actually, judging from the reconstruction of the inscription obtained by putting together the two bucchero pieces, the *lacuna* is too large for an integration of only eleven letters (*-s mini turuce*) and a longer integration is plausible. Something explaining the reason of the genitive *Menervas* must have been named in the lacuna; otherwise, also in this case the name *Minervas* should refer to a sintagma of the kind "in the Sanctuary of..."

<sup>21</sup> Colonna 1985: nr. 47, 237-239; ET, Ve 3.10.

<sup>22</sup> On *mul(u)vanice* as semantically opposed to *tur(u)ce* see Schirmer 1993 and in more recent times, Maras 2009: 20-24 and 29.

Other Etruscan texts coming from sanctuaries display the god's or goddess' name in nominative. D. Maras has collected them (2009: 40) under the paragraph 'Testi di proprietà' (property texts), thus distinguishing them from 'testi di consacrazione' (votive dedication: Maras 2009: 35), expressed in nominative.

- Divine name in nominative or "consecration texts" in Maras' terminology (Maras 2009: 35):

*Vanθ* AV co.1, from Marsiliana d'Albegna (archaic)<sup>23</sup>

*Turan* Cm co.2, from Pontecagnano (archaic)

*Xaru(n)* OA co.1 (archaic)

*Eva(n)s*, OI co.1 (archaic)

*Cerīe*, Cm co.3, from Pontecagnano (recent time)

*Veii*, AT co.1 from Norchia (recent time)

*Vant*, Sp co.3 from Spina (recent time)

*Apa*, PS co.1, from Pisa (recent time)

*Kalu[?]*, Pa co.3, from Roncoferraro (recent time).

*Σεχ*, OI pr.3 ('the daughter', probably epiclesis of *Cavθα*)

- Divine name in genitive or "property texts":

*Unial*, from Pyrgi

*Veī*, OI pr.1-2

*Αρφιαλ*, Py pr.4, from Pyrgi.

In Maras' view, most votive texts do not formally differ from property texts. The genitive of the god's name – especially when a proper votive text is missing – expresses, in some cases, the property of the sanctuary itself. An object which has been donated within a sanctuary becomes property of the god/goddess. The same happens with divine names in nominative.

If we review the documentation under the magnifying glass of ellipsis, we can probably shed new light on this class of texts.

According to a general principle of communication theory, morphemes, unless they are frozen forms, reflecting an older stage of language, are bearers of meaning. They cannot be switched. Nominative or, in the case of Etruscan, absolute, expresses the subject or direct object. Genitive express the possession, whatever implication that may mean in this language. For this reason, they cannot be arbitrarily used or replaced. If the nominative of the divine name can express the realm attributable to the inscribed object, making the god's name the main actor – in the meaning of Latin *ago* – of the consecration, for the genitive we should probably think differently. As we have noticed above in those cases regarding the Latin epigraphy, something must have been dropped here. Probably unexpressed arguments of the utterance are: place complement ('in the

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<sup>23</sup> Conventionally, speaking of Etruscan texts, the term 'archaic' is referred to a period which goes from the 7th to the 5th c. BCE; with 'recent' we mean a chronology included between the 5th and the 1st c. BCE.

sanctuary of' or 'in the domain of' the god), subject ('this object', 'this offer'), and finally the verb ('has been donated', 'has been given').

We will no longer be able to reconstruct the unsaid, the unwritten in an elliptical text. We can, nevertheless, approach the truth if we keep reconstructing, imagining the whole context in which the text has seen its realization. As we already said, archaeological, historical, situational information can make the difference: a cooperation with specialists of these disciplines must be a fundamental requirement for epigraphists and linguists who study ancient written documents.

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