

Chapter 11

Word-level punctuation in Latin and Greek inscriptions from Sicily of the Imperial period

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Introduction

To punctuate or not to punctuate in Latin and Greek

It is often implied that scriptio continua – that is, writing characters as a stream without any indication of word breaks – was the norm for writing around the Mediterranean basin in antiquity, and that it was the medieval period that we have to thank for the (re)introduction of word-spacing. Thus, summarising the popular view, Dickey (2017, 159) states:¹

Word division is normally considered to be one of the clear advantages that our civilization has over those of the ancients.

However, several early Greek inscriptions provide word-level punctuation (Morpurgo Davies 1987; Wachter 1999; 2010; Crellin 2022). In Latin, moreover, word division is not only ‘found in the very earliest inscriptions, such as the *lapis niger* and the *fibula Praenestina*’, but is also ‘regularly found on all good inscriptions, in papyri, on wax tablets, and even in *graffiti* from the earliest Republican times through the Golden Age and well into the Second Century’ (Wingo 1972, 15; italics original).

The practice of punctuating at the word level appears to have continued much longer in Latin than in Greek, until at least the second century AD, a point to which I will return. Seneca the Younger, in his *Epistles*, written c. AD 55 (cf. Reynolds *et al.* 1996), makes the following observation (also cited and partially quoted in Wingo 1972, 15):

¹ Cf. Saenger (1982, 377) who states: ‘Word separation was the singular contribution of the early Middle Ages to the evolution of Western written communication.’

[Haterius] numquam dubitavit, numquam intermisit; semel incipiebat, semel desinebat. Quaedam tamen et nationibus puto magis aut minus convenire; in Graecis hanc licentiam tuleris; nos etiam cum scribimus, interpungere adsuevimus.

Haterius never hesitated, never paused; he made only one start, and only one stop. However, I suppose that certain styles of speech are more or less suitable to nations also; in Greek you can put up with the unrestrained style, but we Romans, even when writing, have become accustomed to separate our words. (Seneca the Younger, *Epistles*, 40.10–11; text and translation Gummere 1917)

The primary reference of the passage is speech: in Greek it is acceptable to speak without breaks, but in Latin you should pause. Seneca highlights the degree to which this is the case by pointing out that in Latin one should even mark pauses in writing, *i.e.* via interpuncts (see Wingo 1972, 15), whilst in Greek, by implication, this is not done.

The complementary distribution of word-level punctuation in Latin and Greek texts in the early Empire is borne out in papyrus documents written in this period: whilst Latin texts frequently provide evidence of word-level punctuation (Anderson *et al.* 1979; Adams 1996; Dickey 2017), Greek texts are usually written without (Oliver 1951, 241–242; Anderson *et al.* 1979, 131; Dickey 2017, 160).²

Morphosyntactic word division

Despite the presence of word-level punctuation in both Latin and Greek writing at various stages of their history, the unit(s) thereby demarcated do not correspond to the kinds of unit punctuated by spaces in modern languages with their roots in Western Europe. Here the orthography proceeds broadly along the lines of what might be termed morphosyntactic principles, where ‘words’ correspond to morphosyntactic units. Consider the following sentence:

I have eaten an apple.

Each ‘word’ – viz. unit separated by spaces – corresponds to an element with a morphosyntactic identity, respectively: personal pronoun ‘I’, auxiliary verb ‘have’, past participle ‘eaten’, indefinite article ‘an’ and substantive ‘apple’.

Consensus on the definition of the morphosyntactic word is notoriously difficult to find (Matthews 1991; Haspelmath 2011; cf. Packard 2000). A central concern is the precise relationship between morphology and syntax, which varies from language to language (see Matthews 1991, 206). The present study is not, however, concerned with the morphology-syntax interface, but rather with the interface of morphosyntax with phonology, insofar as a distinction can be observed between word division strategies separating phonological words from morphosyntactic ones, however defined.

² Cf. Saenger (1982, 370): ‘The typical Roman book contained neither punctuation, distinction between upper- and lower-case letters, nor word separation.’

Prosodic words and phrases

Prosodic words are units that share particular suprasegmental phonological properties. In particular, there is a cross-linguistic tendency for morphemes with functional, rather than lexical, content to be prosodically deficient (Crellin 2022, 12 and references). Of particular relevance for our purposes are the sharing of a single primary accent or stress, and the presence of junctural phenomena at morpheme boundaries (Crellin 2022, 13–16 and references). This is to say, that such morphemes either have the possibility of carrying, or are obliged to carry, no primary accent of their own, and are instead incorporated prosodically into a neighbouring (series of) morpheme(s). Thus in English it is very rare for the indefinite article ‘a(n)’ to carry a primary accent or stress, and it is usually incorporated into the following word (Crellin 2022, 14), *e.g.* (in the following prosodic words indicated within brackets labelled with ω):

(I have ω) ('eaten ω) (an 'apple ω).

While some inscriptions from antiquity separate prosodic words, others separate prosodic phrases. This is indicated by units demarcated by punctuation aligning with the edges (usually right edges in our case) of constituency boundaries (so-called ‘edge alignment’; for further details see Selkirk 1996; Truckenbrodt 2007; for application in the case of Northwest Semitic and Greek, see Crellin 2022).³

Punctuation strategies in Ancient Greek and Classical Latin

In an orthography where prosodic rather than morphosyntactic words or phrases are separated, we expect to find that function words are written together with neighbouring words, whilst lexical words are written independently (unless of course they are written next to a function word). In inscriptions with word-level punctuation from Argos and Mycenae, Morpurgo Davies (1987, 271) summarises the normal distribution as follows:

[T]he article in its various case forms and the prepositions are not followed by punctuation nor are *αἰ* ‘if’, *καί* ‘and’, and *μή* ‘not’; the postpositives *δέ* and *τε* are not preceded by punctuation.

Similarly, in Attic inscriptions, Morpurgo Davies (1987, 271) states that:

[I]n the texts where the main purpose is that of dividing words the usual rules apply: prepositions, *καί*, and the forms of the article are not separated from the word which follows.

³ Note that the right edge of a syntactic phrase does not necessarily trigger a prosodic phrase break, and therefore punctuation. For example, in fast speech potential prosodic phrases can be grouped (see Devine and Stephens 1994, 389 with references). Rather, it is the case that punctuation, where it occurs, is expected to fall at the edge of syntactic constituents.

Scholarly consensus is that the underlying rationale for the distribution of word-level punctuation in these early Greek inscriptions is prosodic, and that the units marked out are accentual units, or prosodic words (Morpurgo Davies 1987; Devine and Stephens 1994; Wachter 1999; Wachter 2010; Vis 2013; although cf. Goldstein 2016, 67–68).

Similar distributions of punctuation have been observed in Latin epigraphic and documentary material (Wingo 1972; Dickey 2017). Thus Wingo (1972, 16) notes that ‘prepositions are only rarely separated from the word they govern’, whilst Adams (1996) points out that the same phenomenon can be seen with verb-plus-personal-pronoun sequences in the Vindolanda tablets and ostraca from Wadi Fawakhir, e.g. *mihi tibi* (*O. Wadi Fawakhir*, 1.4, Adams 1996, 209).

Adams (1996) links the general lack of interpuncts after prepositions to their proclisis, i.e. ‘the preposition formed a single accentual unit with the dependent term’ (p. 208). Adams (1996, 209–210) goes on to suggest, on the basis of the lack of punctuation before some personal pronouns, that the latter, at least when unemphatic, may be enclitic.

Dickey similarly links graphematic wordhood to prosody, by stating that the ‘only exceptions’ to punctuation between words was between ‘enclitics and proclitics’ and the words on which they depended (2017, 159–160). Since cliticness is a function of prosody, by implication word division in Latin is a reflection of prosody. Under ‘enclitics’ Dickey (2017, 159) lists only *-que* ‘and’, which is regularly written together with the preceding word, whilst prepositions are given as examples of proclitics. Dickey observes (p. 160) that of these only *-que* is graphematically dependent in modern texts, whilst prepositions are written as independent graphematic words.

From this brief survey it emerges that the semantics of word-level punctuation in Classical Latin has not been treated in the same depth as that for Greek: I could find no study that treats the topic in more than a few sentences.⁴ Furthermore, beyond references to ‘enclitics’ and ‘proclitics’, I have found no attempt to account for the principles underlying word-level punctuation in Latin, in documents where it is found.

If the issue determining word division in Latin is indeed cliticness, as Dickey (2017) suggests, we would expect to find that clitics as a class are subject to univerbation with neighbouring morphemes, i.e.:⁵

- **Enclitics:** *-que*, *-ue*, *ne* and *ce* (Probert 2019, ch. 6)
- **Proclitics:** *varia* including prepositions, relative pronoun forms, subordinating conjunctions and some co-ordinating conjunctions (Probert 2019, 36, 63–64)

This is to say that we would not expect the set of univerbatable items to be limited to prepositions and enclitics such as *-que*.

⁴ Wingo (1972, 14, 16, 17), despite going into more detail on the question of word-level punctuation than any other scholar in the last 50 years, states explicitly that word-level punctuation is beyond the scope of his study.

⁵ The precise realisation of cliticness in Latin is the subject of considerable discussion. The interested reader is referred to Probert (2019).

Punctuation and abbreviation

Any investigation of word-level punctuation in Latin and Greek should take note of the fact that punctuation may be used in conjunction with abbreviation. In Latin abbreviation of certain frequently occurring items in inscriptions is mainstream from an early stage, and much more common than in Greek (Gordon 1983, 15; Cooley 2012, 357): Gordon (1983, 15) observes that ‘in the long *Res Gestae* of Augustus, whereas the Latin has so many abbreviations, the Greek version – so far as it is extant – contains not one’. We will see examples of this below, both in pre-Imperial Latin inscriptions, and in those of the Imperial era.

Interpuncts are not taken by modern scholars to be indicative of abbreviation *per se*. Thus Cooley (2012, 359) lists seven marks of abbreviation, including various sign types that we might generally conceive of as diacritics, such as horizontal lines through letters, diagonal lines (termed signs ‘like an acute accent’) above letters and small circles above letters. Middle dots to the right of letters, *i.e.* interpuncts, are not listed.

It is beyond the scope of the present study to conduct an in-depth analysis of the abbreviatory function of the interpunct, or to make a full assessment of the relationship between word division and abbreviation. However, if interpuncts do have an abbreviatory function, they must also have a word-separating function. The question of the nature of the relationship between the two is left to future research.

End of word-level punctuation in Latin and Greek

The prevailing view is that word-level punctuation in Greek writing ceased in the Classical period (Wingo 1972, 14–15). By the Roman Empire Greek texts were almost without exception written without punctuation or word breaks (Oliver 1951, 242; n. 18; Saenger 1997, 9–10).

The Romans are held to have ceased punctuating at the word level at some point in the second century AD (Oliver 1951, 242; Saenger 1997, 10), and perhaps even as early as the first century or the beginning of the second (Adams 1996, 208; Dickey 2017, 159). However, the practice did not completely vanish at that point (Oliver 1951, 242, n. 20): Wingo (1972, 17) sees a gradual decline in the course of the second century, and even ‘very late texts can be cited which use the interpunct regularly’ (Wingo 1972, 17). It is possible that the popularity of the use of the interpunct as an abbreviator may have contributed to its greater longevity as compared with its Greek counterpart.

The eventual move away from word-level punctuation in Latin is attributed to one of two causes in the literature. First, it is seen as due to influence from the Greek tradition (Oliver 1951, 242; Wingo 1972, 16). Thus Oliver (1951, 242), whose primary purpose is to establish what the original manuscripts of Tacitus might have looked like, sees this development in wholly negative terms:

For this amazing and deplorable regression [*i.e.* into writing in scriptio continua] one can conjecture no reason other than an inept desire to imitate even the worst characteristic of Greek books.

Alternatively, word-level punctuation was seen as ‘superfluous’, and for that reason abandoned (Saenger 1997, 10).

Word- and phrase-level punctuation in Sicily

Introduction

The present study is a preliminary exploration of word division practices in Imperial-era Sicilian inscriptions, to see what word division strategies are employed, and to summarise the implications of word-level punctuation in this corpus for word-level punctuation in (later) antiquity more broadly. We will see that the Sicilian evidence provides a counterpoint to the prevailing view that by the second and third centuries AD word-level punctuation had been abandoned in written varieties of both Latin and Greek. Indeed, word-level punctuation can be found in both Greek and Latin inscriptions from the island, providing evidence that in Sicily, at least, there was no absolute dichotomy between Latin and Greek writing practices. Finally, while most inscriptions with word-level punctuation provide evidence of prosodic word division strategies, in Latin inscriptions we will also find evidence of morphosyntactic word division strategies.

Before embarking, however, it is worth briefly outlining the general significance of Sicily for the wider Mediterranean context.

Sicily in antiquity

‘Sicily is the key to everything’ (Goethe, see Norwich 2015, 1). This (perhaps slightly overstated) claim could be made for many contexts. However, in the context of the ancient Mediterranean, Sicily can be argued to offer a microcosm of both sociolinguistic and sociocultural relations at play (Prag *et al.* 2017; Prag 2018). If so, an understanding of the linguistic situation on Sicily leads to a greater understanding of the whole.

A wide range of languages are attested on the island of Sicily in antiquity, including not only the languages of the major cultural and political powers in the Mediterranean between c. 500 BC and c. AD 500, namely Greek, Latin and Phoenician-Punic, but also the languages of minority communities, such as Oscan, Hebrew and Lybico-Berber.⁶ Additionally, inscriptions in two languages unique to the island of Sicily are found, namely Elymian and Sikel.⁷ The present study is concerned with inscriptions in Latin and Greek in the Roman Imperial period, since it is then that some of the best evidence for word-level punctuation practices on Sicily can be found. For diachronic context, however, instances of punctuation from earlier periods on Sicily are briefly presented.

In the case of Greek, both Doric and Ionic dialects are attested on the island from the earliest period through to well into the period of Roman imperial domination

⁶ See Prag *et al.* (2017, 84). For Phoenician-Punic see Amadasi Guzzo (2012, 119); for Oscan see Clackson (2012, esp. 139–141); for Lybico-Berber, see <https://crossreads.web.ox.ac.uk/article/new-language-epigraphic-landscape-ancient-sicily-3>, last accessed 1st Feb. 2022.

⁷ For Elymian see Marchesini (2012, 104); for Sikel see Poccetti (2012, 72).

(Mimbrera 2012a; 2012b; Mimbrera Olarte 2013; De Angelis 2013). The influence of Latin is felt to an ever greater extent from the Roman conquest of Sicily (211 BC) onwards (for the early period of Roman domination, see Tribulato 2012b; for the Imperial period see Korhonen 2012). Assessing the true extent to which Latin is used, especially in the early period of Roman domination, is difficult (Tribulato 2012b, 295). Nevertheless, the general picture is of Latin in the ascendancy, especially in the realm of public documents (Korhonen 2011, 7, 20, 21).

A number of bilingual inscriptions have been found on the island, including both Greek-Latin (e.g. *ISic000470*) and Latin-Greek (e.g. *ISic000348*) examples, as well as at least one Hebrew-Latin (*ISic000781*).⁸ The bi-directional interaction of Greek with Latin is regarded as a particularly interesting feature of the linguistic history of the island (De Angelis 2013; see also Tribulato 2012b, 295–296).

Inscriptions in both Latin and Greek are represented in every major city on Sicily, although Latin was stronger in the northern and western part of the island, and Greek stronger in the east and on the island of Lipari (Korhonen 2011, 7; 2012, 331). Such a distribution bespeaks a bilingual environment existing across the island, resulting in the whole island comprising a ‘border zone’ (Korhonen 2012, 361–362; Tribulato 2012b, 295–296). This situation is anomalous for the Roman Empire, where the half west of a line running through the Balkans, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania is traditionally regarded as predominantly Latin-speaking, whereas east of that line Greek is predominant (Horrocks 1997, 72–73; Korhonen 2012, 361; Prag 2018). Such extensive mixing of epigraphic codes provides the context for biscriptalism, and evidence of graphemic influence of Latin on Greek has been reported in the alternation of Greek <Y> and Latin <V> (Korhonen 2012, 346; see also *ISic001320* discussed below). We will see that, insofar as the interpunct can be regarded as belonging to the alphabet (see Oliver 1951, 242 n. 19; Wingo 1972, 15), the Sicilian material provides evidence of biscriptalism in the domain of punctuation as well.

I.Sicily corpus

An issue that has traditionally hampered the investigation of Sicilian epigraphy is the relative paucity of the material (Korhonen 2012, 326; Tribulato 2012a, 42–43, citing Prag 2002). However, more recent studies have placed the number of lapidary inscriptions from Sicily at levels comparable to those in other parts of the Roman Empire (Prag 2018).

The basis of the present investigation is the *I.Sicily corpus* (Prag *et al.* 2017; Prag 2022), an EpiDoc database of all known Sicilian inscriptions from antiquity. The inscriptions in the *I.Sicily corpus* are, in many cases, in a ‘draft’ state. This means, among other things, that the text has not necessarily been checked recently

⁸ For Greek on Motya see Amadasi Guzzo (2012, 120–121). At Lilybaeum Greek is used more frequently in written texts, but Phoenician-Punic is found in the *tophet* (Amadasi Guzzo 2012, 121); for personal names written in Greek characters see Amadasi Guzzo (2012, 122). On Greek-Hebrew interactions, see De Angelis (2013). The Sikeli inscriptions attest a high level of convergence with Greek (Pocchetti 2012).

(e.g. since the publication of *CIL X*, = Mommsen 1883, or *IG XIV*, = Kaibel and Lebègue 1890) against the original inscription. The present study is made on the basis either of published photos, or of photos taken by members of the Crossreads project team. The photographic basis of the readings provided here is indicated in each case.

Citations of documents from *I.Sicily* are provided in the form *ISicXXXXXX*, where *XXXXXX* stands for a six-digit identifier. The bibliographic details for the *I.Sicily* documents are listed at the end of the chapter.

Overall distribution of word-level punctuation in Sicilian inscriptions

The preliminary state of much of the *I.Sicily* corpus means that precise quantitative information cannot currently be provided. Nevertheless, a very rough indication of prevalence can be given by searching the *I.Sicily* online interface for interpunct characters (encoded as middle dot · [=u00B7], bipunct : [=u2236], and tripunct ⋮ [=u205D]), provided in Table 11.1.⁹

The table shows that the number of inscriptions containing punctuation is much greater under the Empire on Sicily than in previous periods. This is the case both for Greek and for Latin, but for different reasons. The number of Latin inscriptions dated prior to the Empire is many times lower than those dated to the Imperial period. From this imbalance it follows that very few Latin inscriptions from before the Empire contain punctuation. By contrast considerably more are found with punctuation in Imperial times. However, there is apparently little difference in proportional terms between the two: in both the Imperial and pre-Imperial periods the proportion of inscriptions with punctuation is about half. (The number of instances in the pre-Imperial period is of course very low; the ratio for this period may well, therefore, not be statistically significant. The lack of explicit punctuation by means of interpuncts does not, of course, necessarily imply the lack of word- or phrase-level punctuation, since spacing may also be used for this purpose.)¹⁰

Table 11.1. Distribution of punctuation in pre-Imperial and Imperial-era inscriptions from Sicily

	<i>Period</i>	<i>Tripunct</i>	<i>Bipunct</i>	<i>Monopunct (= middle dot)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Greek	Pre-Imperial	2	2	16	736	3
	Imperial	-	1	170	1592	11
Latin	Pre-Imperial	-	-	6	12	50
	Imperial	-	-	475	999	48

⁹ 'Pre-Imperial' means any inscription in *I.Sicily* with a 'before' and 'after' range equal or prior to 27 BC. Conversely 'Imperial' means any inscription with a 'before' range and 'after' later than 27 BC.

¹⁰ An example of an Imperial-era inscription apparently without explicit punctuation by means of interpuncts, but with some use of spacing, is *ISic000008*.

The distribution of punctuation in the Greek material is somewhat different. Here the number of inscriptions dated prior to the Empire is considerable, albeit smaller than the total of Imperial-era inscriptions. The proportion with explicit punctuation by means of interpuncts, does, however, appear to increase, from 3% to 11%. In proportional terms, however, this second figure is considerably lower than the equivalent for Latin (approximately a tenth versus a half).

It should be cautioned that the actual number of Greek inscriptions with word-level punctuation by means of interpuncts is lower than these figures indicate: the figures represent only the number of those inscription texts that contain a tripunct, bipunct, or monopunct (as encoded by the middle dot · [=u00B7]). In the case of Greek the middle dot is also a punctuation character used in modern editions. A case in point is *ISic000613*, where the use of the middle dot in the *I.Sicily* text corresponds with where one would expect to find a middle dot in modern texts; in the EpiDoc such instances are not marked up as ‘interpuncts’. Before any weight is put on these figures, the results need to be checked to ensure that the middle dot does in fact encode the interpunct. This is not a problem for Latin, since the middle dot is not ambiguous in Latin editions.

Despite these caveats, the figures are enough to indicate that, in both Imperial and pre-Imperial periods, the proportion of Latin inscriptions with interpuncts Latin is likely to be considerably greater than the proportion of Greek inscriptions with interpuncts. The greater prevalence of punctuation in Latin inscriptions compared with Greek is in keeping with the view that the practice of punctuating Greek ceases much earlier than it does for Latin (see Introduction). However, the presence of Imperial-era Greek inscriptions showing regular punctuation provides a counterpoint to this: I will argue that it is possible to interpret the re-emergence of word-level punctuation in Greek epigraphy on Sicily as influence from Latin orthographic practice.

The present study focuses on inscriptions from the Imperial period, since examples with regular word- and phrase-level punctuation are considerably more plentiful from this period than from beforehand. This material is concomitantly better suited to illustrating the variety of word-division strategies adopted. However, in order to place the Imperial material in context the pre-Imperial material is presented in the next section.

Pre-imperial inscriptions from Sicily

Distribution of word- and phrase-level punctuation

As the figures presented in Table 11.1 indicate, Greek and Latin inscriptions with word- and phrase-level punctuation from pre-Imperial times are few and far between. The following pre-Imperial inscriptions are presented in order to indicate the kinds of word division encountered in this earlier period.

Greek

The following pre-Imperial Greek inscriptions were found to have word- or phrase-level punctuation:¹¹

- *ISic000822* (= *IG XIV 14.1*), a sixth-century BC bipunct-punctuated dedication from Syracuse;
- *ISic001466*, a sixth-century BC tripunct-punctuated funerary inscription from Selinus;¹²
- *ISic030029*, a fifth-century BC bipunct-punctuated inscription on a lead tessera from Kamarina;
- *ISic020594*, a fifth–fourth-century BC tripunct-punctuated statement of ownership from Naxos;
- *ISic001489*, a fourth–third century BC tripunct-punctuated dedication from Agrigento.

With one exception (see immediately below), these inscriptions are dated to the Archaic and Classical periods. The apparent lack of clearly Hellenistic-era inscriptions is consistent with the general cessation of punctuation after the Classical period (see Introduction). The possible exception is *ISic001489*, which is dated to the fourth century BC or earlier part of the third century on the basis of the letter forms (see *ISic001489*), that is, to the late Classical or early Hellenistic period. The inscription is a dedication, and is clearly of high quality (Jonathan Prag, pers. comm.). It is possible that the monumental nature of the inscription encouraged the archaising use of interpuncts.

The early Greek inscriptions are punctuated either on the level of the prosodic phrase, or of the prosodic word. An example of the first kind is *ISic001466* (Selinus, 550 BC):¹³

- 1 → ΑΡΙΣΤΟΓΕΙΤΟΕ
- 2 ← ΜΙ : ΤΟΑΡΚΑΔΙΟΝΟΣ
- 3 → ΗΟΣΗΥΠΟΜΟΥ
- 4 ← ΦΑΙ : ΑΠΕΘΑΝΕ

¹¹ Inscription dates provided in this study are on the basis of statements in *I.Sicily*, Prag (2022). For completeness the following can also be mentioned: *ISic003015*, a very short fragmentary inscription from Agrigento (sixth–fifth century BC); *ISic020499*, a short inscription containing the name Εὐαρίδας or Εὐχρίδας (fifth century BC); *ISic020593*, a short inscription Εὐδράμων (fifth–fourth century BC); *ISic030001*, a house sale contract containing two interpuncts (second century BC); *ISic030031*, a *defixio* containing a single interpunct (fifth century BC). In the remaining cases counted in Table 11.1, the middle dot was found not to represent punctuation in the original inscription.

¹² *ISic001466* is not included in the figures in Table 11.1, since it is not entered into *I.Sicily* with a date range.

¹³ Transcription on the basis of the photograph in Piraino (1973, #80, Tav. XLIX). *ISic000822* (Syracuse, sixth century BC) also appears to punctuate at the level of the phrase.

The normalised text according to *ISic001466* reads:

- 1 Ἀριστογεῖτό̅ ἔ-
 2 μὶ : τῶ Ἄρκαδίουος
 3 ἠὸς ἠυπὸ Μοτύ-
 4 φαί : ἀπέθανε

‘I am (the grave) of Aristogeitos, the son of Arkadion, who died at the hands of Motuwa. (trans. author)’

By contrast, *ISic001489* (Agrigento, 400–250 BC) shows prosodic word-level punctuation (where the line break serves as a word divider):¹⁴

- 1 ΦΑΛΑΚΡΟΣ : ΘΕΥΔΩΡΟΥ
 2 ΕΡΜΑΙ : ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ

The normalised text according to *ISic001489* reads:

- 1 Φάλακρος : Θευδώρου
 2 Ἐρμᾶι : ἀνέθηκε

‘Phalakros son of Theodoros dedicated (this statue) to Hermes.’ (trans. per *ISic001489*)

The variation in the prosodic target of punctuation is in keeping with what is found in Archaic and Classical Greek inscriptions more generally (Devine and Stephens 1994, 326–330, 388–390).

Latin

The following four pre-Imperial Latin inscriptions include punctuation with a monopunct, as encoded in *I.Sicily* with the middle dot character:¹⁵

- *ISic004367*, a third-century BC inscription on a Roman ship’s ram, in bronze, from the First Punic War;
- *ISic000469* (= *CIL X 7265*), a third–second-century BC dedication from Halaesa;
- *ISic000616* (= *CIL I 2649*), a Republican-era (on the basis of letter forms) honorific inscription from Agrigentum;¹⁶
- *ISic000007*, an inscription relating to the construction of fortifications (39–36 BC) from Lilybaeum.

¹⁴ Transcribed on the basis of the photo in *ISic001489*.

¹⁵ Two of the six pre-Imperial inscriptions in Table 11.1, *ISic000104* and *ISic000664*, are potentially Imperial and therefore not included in this list: Bivona (1994) dates *ISic000104* to the end of the first century BC, or to the beginning of the first century AD, on the basis of the letter forms, and *ISic000664* is dated to the Augustan era on the basis of the script (see *I.Sicily* record).

¹⁶ *ISic000616* suggests a date range of 125–75 BC.

ISic000469, dated to between 300 and 150 BC is ‘one of the earliest Latin inscriptions from Sicily’ (see *I.Sicily* record):¹⁷

¹ APOLINE ·

² L · CARNIUS · C · F

Expanded, the text reads as follows (per *I.Sicily* record):

¹ APOLINE ·

² L(ucius) · CARNIUS · C(aius) · F(ilius)

‘Lucius Carnius, son of Gaius (dedicated this) to Apollo’ (trans. per *ISic000469*)

Each word is carefully punctuated, even at the line boundary.

Similar is *ISic004367*, an inscription on a Roman ship’s ram, in bronze, from the First Punic War. This inscription must be from the third century BC, and no later than 241 BC (see *I.Sicily* record):¹⁸

¹ C · PAPERIO · TI · F

² M · POPULICIO · L · F · Q · P

The expanded text reads as follows (per *I.Sicily* record):

¹ C(aios) · PAPERIO(s) · TI(beri) · F(ilios)

² M(arcos) · POPULICIO(s) · L(ucii) · F(ilios) · Q(uaestores) · P(robaverunt)

‘Gaius Papirius, son of Tiberius, (and) Marcus Publicius, son of Lucius, quaestors, approved (this ram)’ (trans. per *ISic004367*)

Both inscriptions are characterised by the extensive use of abbreviation.¹⁹ They are also too brief to provide evidence for the kind of word-level punctuation employed, *i.e.* whether prosodic or morphosyntactic. However, the late Republican *ISic000007* provides possible evidence of morphosyntactic word-level separation in its third line:

³ L · PLINIUS · L · FRUFUS · LEG · PRO · PR · PR · DES · F · C ·

With abbreviations expanded, this reads (see *ISic000007*):

³ L(ucius) · Plinius · L(uci) · F(ilius)Rufus · LEG(atu)s · PRO · PR(aetore) · PR(aetore) · DES(ignatus) · F(aciendum) · C(uravit) ·

¹⁷ Text after *ISic000469* based on the photographs provided there. The *I.Sicily* text gives no interpunct in the first line after <APOLINE>. However, to the present author, one seems to be discernible, *i.e.* <APOLINE >.

¹⁸ The text follows *ISic004367*.

¹⁹ In *ISic004367* every interpunct corresponds with abbreviation.

‘Lucius Plinius Rufus, son of Lucius, Legatus Proprætores and Prætor designate saw to the construction’ (trans. after *ISic000007*)

In < · PRO · PR · > for *proprætores*, *pro* is separated from the following *prætores* by an interpunct. The separation of <PRO> and <PR(aetor)> is consistent with morphosyntactic separation, in that *pro* and *prætores* are separate morphosyntactic entities.²⁰ Further work is needed, however, to show how *pro* would be treated in a clearly prosodic orthography.

Imperial inscriptions from Sicily

Introduction

In keeping with the preliminary nature of the present study, only a small set of Imperial-era inscriptions are examined in detail. Within the EpiDoc corpus a search was made of inscriptions containing ten or more interpuncts, *i.e.* those with enough interpuncts to make the possibility of discovering regularity reasonable. Of these five inscriptions – three Latin, two Greek – were chosen to illustrate some of the breadth of word-division strategies employed in Sicily:

- *ISic000031* (= *CIL X 7295*), a second-century AD honorific inscription in Latin from Panormus (Palermo);
- *ISic000093* (= *CIL X 7346*), a third-century AD honorific inscription in Latin from Thermae Himeraeae (Termini).
- *ISic000133* (= *CIL X 7377*), an Imperial-era funerary inscription in Latin from Thermae Himeraeae (Termini).
- *ISic001231* (= *IG XIV 404*), a funerary inscription of the first or second century AD in Greek from Messana (Messina);
- *ISic001320* (= *IG XIV 499*), a second-century AD funerary epigrammatic inscription in Greek from Catina (Catania).

Latin

Prosodic word division: ISic000031 (Panormus, second century AD)

Univerbation in Latin documents is particularly associated with preposition-plus-noun syntagms (Introduction, ‘Punctuation strategies’). *ISic000031* is a case in point. The inscription as a whole is carefully punctuated at the word level, but preposition-plus-noun syntagms are not separated:²¹

¹² · EXHIBITAS · ADAVGENDAM |

⁷ · INQVAMIRATVS ·

²⁰ *ISic003457* is a parallel; see the photo there by R.J.A. Wilson.

²¹ In transcription, the vertical bar | indicates a line boundary. Transcriptions are from the image provided at *ISic000031*, starting from the *ISicily* text. *CIL X* (Mommsen 1883) places an interpunct after every morphosyntactic word. Translations are not offered, in view of the fragmentary state of the inscription.

9 · INVTRIVSQUE · CAVEIS ·

The fact that in all three instances involving preposition-plus-noun syntagms in the inscription, the presence of an interpunct cannot be discerned from the photograph, leaves the reader suspicious that in fact none was ever written.

However, the univerbation of morphosyntactic words goes beyond that of preposition plus nominal object, to encompass other short function words. For example, there is no discernible trace of an interpunct between <AT> and <CVLTVM>, although there is space for one:

10 · MERVIT · AT CVLTVM ·

The fact that *at* ‘but’, is a short function word makes it a strong candidate, on cross-linguistic grounds, for prosodic subordination to a following morpheme that is prosodically heavier.

There is even one sequence involving a particle-plus-verb syntagm, *quod esset*, where no punctuation is apparent:

14 · QVODESSET · DVABVS ·

In principle, the univerbation of <QVODESSET> could be explained by appealing to the cliticness of *quod*, since relative pronoun forms were regarded as clitics by Roman grammarians (Probert 2019, 36, 63–64).²² However, two considerations indicate that the verb could be in part responsible. First, contrast the presence of word division in the following instances, where <QVOD> is followed by a nominal:

1 · QVOD · MERA ·

2 · QVOD · SINGVLARI |

Secondly, before other verbs there is also word-level punctuation after <QVOD>:²³

4 · OPTANDO QVOD · VOLVIT |

Thirdly, there is a parallel for the univerbation of a form of *esse* after a nominal in the Gallus Papyrus, line 3, dated to either first century BC or AD (diplomatic text quoted from Dickey 2017, 160; italics mine):²⁴

Fata·mihi·caesar·tum·erunt·mea·dulcia·quom·tu
Maxima·romanae·*parserit*·historiae·

²² However, Probert (2019) does not appear to give any examples of the relative *quod* specifically.

²³ The use of a space rather than an interpunct after <OPTANDO> before <QVOD> is noteworthy and deserving of further investigation. Note however that the relative *qui* in <QUIEXIEBAT> in *ISic000266* has no punctuation before the verb; see also photo in Bitto (2001, #32).

²⁴ In Dickey’s diplomatic transcript, capitals are used ‘to indicate letters that are physically larger than the others in a text, although these are not capitalized in the sense of being in a different alphabet’ (Dickey 2017, 160). See also the editio princeps, Anderson *et al.* (1979), which also does not punctuate before the verb ‘to be’.

Dickey's restored text (p. 160) reads (*italics mine*):

Fata mihi, Caesar, tum erunt mea dulcia, cum tu
maxima Romanae *pars*eris<s> historiae

'The fates will be kind to me, when you, Caesar, are the greatest portion of Roman history'
(translation author²⁵)

Dickey does not comment on the univertation of *pars* with *erit*. However, since *pars*, as a nominal, is certainly not enclitic, the univertation must be due to the verb *esse*.

The possibility of univertation in sequences involving verbs – including the verb *esse* 'to be' – has not, to my knowledge, previously been pointed out for Latin. However, it is in keeping with a prosodic basis for word-level punctuation: in Ancient Greek, for example, there is evidence that verbs were prosodically less prominent than nouns (Devine and Stephens 1994, 143, 352), and this is paralleled across Indo-European (Fortson 2010, 109–110). In Northwest Semitic writing systems, it is often the case that verbs are written as a unit with a neighbouring morpheme (Crellin 2022).

Prosodic phrase division: ISic000093 (Thermae Himeraeae, third century AD)

A prosodic basis for punctuation can be observed in *ISic000093*:²⁶

1 TITIANO · C · F · C · MAESI

2 TITIANI · ETFONTEIAE

3 FRONTINAECONSV

4 LARIVM · FILIO

5 PATRICIO · OBHONO

6 REMTOCAEVIRILIS

7 CLODIVSRVFVS EQVESROMANVS

8 AMICOSVO INCOMPARABILI

The normalised and expanded text reads (after *ISic000093*):

1 Titiano · c(larissimo) · f(ilio) · C(ai) · Maesi(i)

²⁵ With reference to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius_Gallus, accessed 4th Feb. 2022.

²⁶ The text presented here is a transcription by the present author on the basis of the photo at *ISic000093* and the images at Manganaro (2016 [1988], Tav. XX) and Bivona (1994, Tav. VII), starting from the text of *ISic000093*. See also Bivona (1994, #10). The surface of the inscription is damaged, making it difficult always to know for sure, at least on the basis of photographs, whether or not interpuncts are present. This is especially the case in the last two lines. In the diplomatic transcription, the alternation between full caps and small caps is intended to highlight the difference in character size in the relevant sections of the inscription.

2 titiani · et fonteiae
 3 frontinae consu-
 4 larium · filio
 5 patricio · obhono-
 6 rem togae virilis
 7 Clodius Rufus eques Romanus
 8 amico suo incomparabili

‘To Titianus, the most illustrious son of Gaius Maesius Titianus and Fonteia Frontina (both) of consular rank, son of patrician birth. In honour (of his assumption) of the toga virilis. Clodius Rufus, a Roman knight, (made this) for his incomparable friend.’ (trans. after *ISic000093*)

Once again, there is no trace of word division in the preposition plus nominal sequence *ob honorem* ‘in honour’:

5 PATRICIO · OBHONO
 6 REM ...

Word division is also lacking between the conjunction <ET> ‘and’ and the following <FONTEIAE> ‘Fonteia’:

2 TITIANI · ETFONTEIAE

The prosodic basis of punctuation in *ISic000093* differs from that in *ISic000031*: apart from the abbreviations in the first line, the interpunct separates prosodic phrases rather than prosodic words. This is indicated by the fact that the units demarcated by punctuation right-align with syntactic constituency boundaries (see Introduction, ‘Prosodic words and phrases’). For example, the interpunct after *consularium* (line 4) corresponds to the right edge of the appositive genitive nominal phrase *Cai Maesi Titiani et Fonteiae Frontinae consularium* dependent on *c(larissimo) f(ilio)*. Similarly, the right edge of the phrase *filio patricio* is marked by an interpunct. The unverbated sequence *ob honorem tocae virilis* is a prepositional phrase.²⁷

Morphosyntactic word division: ISic000133 (Thermae Himeratae, Imperial period)

The corpus provides examples of punctuation occurring between a nominal and its object, e.g. the admittedly fragmentary *ISic000133*:²⁸

²⁷ The surface of the last two lines is too damaged to be sure of the placing of interpuncts (or indeed spacing).

²⁸ An image is provided at Bivona (1994, #52, Tav. XXVII). The text here is a transcription by the author on the basis of this image, starting from the text of *ISic000133*. *ISic000767* provides a parallel for word division after <EX>.

- 1 M ·]ARRVNTI[
 2 BROCC[
 3 [L]OCVS · PU[B]LIC · D[
 4 EX · D · [D] · IN · FR[
 5 IN · AGRO · P · XX[

The normalised and expanded text reads as follows (after *ISic000133*):

- 1 M(arco) ·]Arrunti[o
 2 Brocc[ho
 3 [l]ocvs · pu[b]lic(e) · d[at]us]
 4 ex · d[ecreto] · [d[ecurionum]] · in · fr[onte] · p[edes] [-? -]
 5 in · agro · p[edes] · XX[

'To [Marcus] Arruntius Brocc[hus]. (This) burial plot was granted, at public expense, by the decree of the town council. In width [...] feet, in depth [at least 20?] feet...' (trans. after *ISic000133*)

The presence of word-level punctuation separating morphosyntactic units alongside abbreviations raises the possibility that morphosyntactic word separation is connected originally to abbreviation:²⁹ in a prosodic orthography without abbreviation we might expect to find < | EXDECRETO · > in line 4. With abbreviation, however, this becomes < | EXD · >. This has the potential to confuse the reader, however, encouraging them to look for a single morphosyntactic word starting with <EXD>. By placing an interpunct after <EX>, however, it becomes easier to discern that <D> is an abbreviation for <DECRETO>.

< | IN · AGRO · > (line 5) cannot be explained in such terms, however, and the punctuation corresponds to separation on the level of the morphosyntactic word.

Greek

Prosodic word division: ISic001231 (Messana, first or second century AD)

ISic001231 provides evidence of punctuation in a Greek document on the level of the prosodic word, parallel to what we find in the Latin *ISic000031*:³⁰

- 1 · Θ · · Κ ·
 2 ΑΝΔΡΟΒΙΟΣ · ΛΥΚΙΟΣ · ΝΑΥ
 3 ΚΛΗΡΟΣ · ΕΖΗΣΕ · ΑΠΡΟΣΚΟΠΤΟΣ ·

²⁹ I am grateful to Jonathan Prag for pointing out the possible relationship with abbreviation.

³⁰ After *ISic001231*, on the basis of the photographs in Bitto (2001, #29) and at the *I.Sicily record*.

- 4 ΕΤΗ · Λ̄ · ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝΙΟΣ · ΣΥΝ
 5 ΜΟΥΣΑΙΩ · ΚΑΙΘΕΟΔΩΡΩ · Α
 6 ΔΕΛΦΩ · ΙΔΙΩ · ΜΝ̄ΗΜΗΣ · ΕΙΝΕΚΕΝ

The normalised and expanded text reads as follows (after *ISic001231*):

- 1 · Θ(εοῖς) · Κ(αταχθονίους) ·
 2 Ἄνδρόβιος · Λύκιος · ναύ-
 3 κληρος · ἔζησε · ἀπρόσκοπτος ·
 4 ἔτη · λς · Ἀπολλώνιος · σὺν
 5 Μουσαίω · καὶ Θεοδώρῳ · ἄ-
 6 δελφῶ · ἰδίῳ · μνήμης · εἴνεκεν

‘To the underworld deities, Androbios Lukios, shipowner, lived without offence for 36 years. Erected by his brother Apollonios, with Mousaios and Theodoros, for the memory of our brother.’ (trans. per *ISic001231*)

The inscription is well preserved and written clearly. Interpuncts are marked distinctly as apostrophe-shaped hooks written at mid-line height, and punctuation generally coincides with morphosyntactic units. Line division does not entail word division, as in lines 2–3 <ΝΑΥ|ΚΛΗΡΟΣ> ‘shipowner’, and 5–6 <Α|ΔΕΛΦΩ> ‘brother’. Interpuncts may occur at the ends of lines where they separate words, as at lines 3–4: <ΑΠ̄ΡΟΣΚΟΠΤΟΣ | ΕΤΗ>.

The following are, however, two instances where punctuation is expected on morphosyntactic grounds, but is not found:

- 4-5 ΣΥΝ|ΜΟΥΣΑΙΩ (= σὺν Μουσαίῳ) ‘with Mousaios’
 5 ΚΑΙΘΕΟΔΩΡΩ (= καὶ Θεοδώρῳ) ‘and (with) Theodoros’

The two examples involve the preposition σὺν ‘with’ and the conjunction καὶ ‘and’. These prosodically light function words are exactly the kinds of morphosyntactic units we expect to find written without separation in an inscription punctuated by prosodic word. The fact that such punctuation is found in so late a Greek inscription, despite the apparent absence of such inscriptions in the Hellenistic period, is suggestive that the punctuation strategy of *ISic001231* is influenced, either directly or indirectly, by Latin punctuation practices.

Support for this hypothesis comes from the abbreviations at the start of the inscription: · Θ · · Κ · for Θεοῖς · · Καταχθονίους, *i.e.* ‘To the gods of the underworld, the Greek equivalent of the frequently abbreviated Latin expression *D(is) M(anibus)*.³¹

³¹ For a Sicilian parallel, but without word-level punctuation, see *e.g.* *ISic001304*.

Since abbreviation is much less common in Greek inscriptions than in Latin ones (see Introduction), its presence in a Greek context, in a phrase with a direct Latin equivalent, is all the more marked and suggestive of influence from Latin.

*Prosodic word division: ISic001320 (Catina, second century AD)*³²

I close with the somewhat perplexing case of *ISic001320*. This, like *ISic001231*, is punctuated at the word level. At first sight, however, the distribution of interpuncts is much more sporadic and unpredictable: Kaibel and Lebègue (1890, #499) refer to the ‘miram interpungendi rationem’ (= ‘strange way of punctuating’) in the inscription:³³

- 1 TVMBON · ΟΡΑ · ΣΠΑΡΟΔΕΙΤ · ΡΙΚΛΕΙΤΗΣ
- 2 ΡΟΔΟΓΟΝΝΗΣ · ΗΝ · ΚΤΑΝ · ΕΝΟΝΧΟΣΙΩΣ ̃
- 3 ΛΑΕΣΙΔΕΙΝΟΣ · ΑΝΗΡ · ΚΛΑΥΣΕΔΕ · ΚΑΙ · ΤΑΡ
- 4 ΧΥΣΕ · ΑΒΙΑΝΙΟΣ · ΗΝ · ΠΑΡΑΚΟΙΤΙΝ · ΚΑΙ
- 5 ΒΑΙΗΝ · ΣΤΗΛΗ · ΤΥΝΔ · ΑΠΕΔΟΙΚΕ · ΧΑΡΙΝ
- 6 ΟΝΟΜΑ · ΤΟΠΡΙΝ · ΜΕ · ΠΑΣΕΚΛΗΖΕΝΣ
- 7 ̃ ΕΠΑΓΑΘΩ ̃
- 8 ΝΙΝ · ΔΕΡΟΔΟΣΟΥΝΗ · ΒΑΣΙΛΙΟΣ
- 9 ̃ ΤΟ · Ε · ΠΩΝΥΜΟΝ ̃

The normalised text reads as follows (starting from *ISic001320*):

- 1 τύμβον · ὄρα·ς παροδίτ(α) · <πε>ρικλειτῆς
- 2 ‘Ροδογούνης · ἦν · κτάν·εν οὐχ ὀσίως ̃
- 3 λάεσι δεινὸς · ἀνήρ · κλαῦσε δὲ · καὶ · τάρ-
- 4 χυσε · Ἀβιάνιος · ἦν · παράκοιτιν · καὶ
- 5 βαιῆν · στήλῃ · τήνδ'³⁴· ἀπέδωκε · χάριν
- 6 ὄνομα · τὸ πρίν · με · πᾶς ἔκκληζεν{ς}

³² Dated to second century on the basis of the letter shapes by Libertini (1936–37, 33).

³³ Full quote: ‘Literarum formas et miram interpungendi rationem servavit Arrigonius’ (= ‘Arrigonius preserved the forms of the letters and the strange way of punctuating’, trans. author). *CIG* (Franz 1853) does not record any interpuncts. The inscription is likely lost (Jonathan Prag, pers. comm.). However, Libertini (1936–37, Tav. 1) reproduces the record of Arrigoni, which is transcribed here, starting from the text of *ISic001320*. For (the wide variety of) alternate readings, see Kaibel and Lebègue (1890, #499), Ferrara (1829) and Boeckh & Franz (1853, #5724).

³⁴ Boeckh and Franz (1853, #5724) notes that ‘Vs. 5 στήλῃ τῆδ’ dedit Iacobsius; sed τήνδ’ offensioni non est’ (= ‘Iacobsius offered στήλῃ τῆδ’; but τήνδ’ is not problematic.’)

- 7 ☞ Ἐπαγαθῶ ☞
 8 νῦν · δὲ Ῥοδογούνη³⁵ βασιλῖος
 9 ☞ τὸ · ἐπώνυμον ☞

‘You see the tomb, passer-by, of Rodogoune, of great fame, whom a terrible man impiously killed with stones. But Abianios mourned and buried his wife, and rendered this small favour in a stele. Everyone used to call me by the name Epagatho, but now my name is Rodogoune, the name of a queen.’ (trans. author, with reference to Ferrara 1829, 344–345)

The inscription has a number of spelling alternations with respect to (what we would regard as) standard orthography, notably:

- 5 TVNA (for expected THNA = τήνδ’, *i.e.* τήνδε)
 8 NIN (for expected NYN = νῦν)

These spellings involve confusion of the letters <V> (= <Y>), <H> and <I>. Insofar as the phonemes represented by these letters – /y/, /ɛ/ and /i/ – all eventually merge to /i/ (Horrocks 2010, 162–3), the interchange is perhaps not unexpected. It is, however, surprising to find the confusion of <I> and <H> with <Y> as early as the second century AD since the merging of /y/ with /i/ was only complete in educated speech by the middle Byzantine period (ninth/tenth century AD) (Horrocks 2010, 163; Horrocks 1997, 111). In general the interchange of <Y> with <H> and <I> is much less common than the interchange of <H>, <EI> and <I> (Horrocks 1997, 111).³⁶ It may be relevant, however, that both spellings are in the environment of /n/: the nasal context may have brought about neutralisation of the rounding distinction, just as the neutralisation of the distinction between <H> and <EI>/<I> is more common in that environment (Horrocks 1997, 110).³⁷

In one instance different morphology is potentially responsible for the spelling:

- 8 ΒΑΣΙΛΙΟΣ (for expected ΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΟΣ, gen. sg. of βασιλῖς ‘queen’)

It could in principle be the case that the composer of the text viewed βασιλῖς as an *i*-stem noun; compare dialectal πόλις, -ιος (Sihler 1995, 313).

³⁵ Kaibel and Lebègue (1890) print Ῥοδογούνην, which would then be the direct object of an elliptical form of κληζῶ.

³⁶ The anonymous reviewer highlights that Horrocks’ statement concerns ‘educated’ language, and that it is possible that more instances of this interchange might be present in inscriptions from a wider context from the period before the Byzantine era. I leave it to future work to examine this question.

³⁷ The spelling ΑΠΕΔΟΙΚΕ (l. 5) for ΑΠΕΔΩΚΕ is harder to explain, since /o:/ and /oi/ do not merge. However, by the mid-second century BC distinctions of vowel length are lost (Horrocks 1997, 109). The final element of the long diphthongs was also lost (Horrocks 1997, 109), meaning that /o/, /o:/ and /oi/ all merge to /o/. Thus the spelling <OI> might be a hypercorrect rendering of <ΩI>, itself incorrectly applied to the aorist of δίδωμι in ἀπέδωκε.

In another case a spelling mistake involves the interchange of <Γ> with <Σ>:

⁸ ΡΟΔΟΣΣΟVNH (compare ΡΟΔΟΓΟVNH, l. 2)

This interchange is not as unexpected as it seems from the modern shapes of the Greek capitals: in the inscription the sigma is represented by a sign resembling three sides of square, with the right-hand side open. The change from <Γ> to <Σ>, therefore, requires simply the erroneous placing of a horizontal stroke parallel to the top stroke of the gamma.

This spelling error might be explained within the context of biscriptalism. In particular, Arrigonius transcribes expected <Υ> with a shape closer to Latin <V> (Libertini 1936–37, Tav. I). Conflation of <Υ> and <V> is attested elsewhere on Sicily in the Imperial period (Korhonen 2012, 346 n. 77). In the light of this, the anonymous reviewer of this paper makes the attractive suggestion that influence from Latin script may lie behind both confusions, especially if the engraver were ‘transcribing’ a Greek text from an original written in Latin script: the version in Latin script would have represented that <Γ> as a <G>, or perhaps even a <C>, which could readily be read as a lunate sigma.

The fact that spelling in the inscription is not unprincipled leaves open the possibility that punctuation, although perhaps unexpected, is also not without logic. In fact, the rationale of the word-level punctuation can be seen to be largely in keeping not only with the Greek examples discussed so far, but also with the prosodic principles observed for Archaic and Classical Greek inscriptions. For instance, in a number of instances function words are univerted with a neighbouring sequence:

² ΟVΧΟΣΙΩΣ | (= οὐχ ὀσίως)

³ · ΚΛΑΥΣΕΔΕ · (= κλαῦσε δὲ)

⁶ · ΤΟΠΡΙΝ · (= τὸ πρίν)

⁶ · ΠΑΣΕΚΛΗΖΕΝΣ | (= πᾶς ἔκληζεν)

⁸ · ΔΕΡΟΔΟΣΟVNHΝ · (= δὲ Ῥοδογούνην)

Furthermore, there is one instance of the univertation of lexical words, a feature that can also be paralleled in the Archaic and Classical periods (Crellin 2022, Part IV):

³ | ΛΑΕΣΙΔΕΙΝΟΣ · (= λάεσι δεινός)

However, there are some interesting differences. Function words can be written as independent graphematic words, *e.g.*:

³ · ΚΑΙ · ΤΑΡ |

⁴ ΧΥΣΕ ·

Under the Classical principles of punctuation, we would expect to find ·ΚΑΙΤΑΡΧΥΣΕ·. The enclitic pronoun με is even written as an independent graphematic word:

⁶ ΤΟΠΡΙΝ·ΜΕ·ΠΑΣΕΚΛΗΖΕΝ (*i.e.* τὸ πρίν με πᾶς ἔκκληιζεν)

Although the direction of clisis can apparently vary for this pronoun (see Goldstein 2016, 67–68), it is unexpected on cross-linguistic grounds to find it written as an independent word.

Another surprise is that interpuncts are occasionally written in the middle of words, *e.g.*:

¹ ΟΡΑ·ΣΠΑΡΟΔΕΙΤΑ (for expected ΟΡΑΣ·ΠΑΡΟΔΕΙΤΑ ὄραξ παροδεῖτα)

² ΚΤΑΝ·ΕΝΟΝΧΟΣΙΩΣ (for expected ΚΤΑΝΕΝ·ΟΝΧΟΣΙΩΣ κτάνεν οὐχ ὀσίως)

⁹ ΤΟ·Ε·ΠΩΝΥΜΟΝ (for expected ΤΟ·ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟΝ τὸ ἐπώνυμον)

Notwithstanding these unexpected features, overall the principles of word-level punctuation in the inscription appear to follow prosodic principles much like the Latin inscription *ISic000031*. This is notable given that word-level punctuation itself is rarely found in Greek of the Imperial period (see Introduction).

Conclusions

Variety of punctuation strategies

It emerges from this short study that there is no one-size-fits-all punctuation strategy that can be identified for Sicilian inscriptions. Instead possibilities include both prosodic and morphosyntactic, with prosodic strategies comprising punctuation at both the word and phrase levels. It naturally follows that each inscription should, at least at first blush, be taken in isolation, before broader trends are considered. Nevertheless, some more general conclusions can be drawn that may challenge the *communis opinio*, both for Greek and for Latin.

Word-level punctuation in Greek

The two Imperial-era inscriptions studied provide a counterpoint to the generally held view that that word-level punctuation in Greek ceased before the Imperial period, showing that word-level punctuation in Greek persisted well into the Empire. It is a matter for future work to establish exactly how frequent such punctuation is in the Imperial period. Nevertheless, the question arises where such practices come from, at least in these two cases. In principle the adoption of prosodic punctuation in *ISic001231* and *ISic001320* could be attributed to one of the following causes:

- A continuation of the tradition of prosodic word-level punctuation for Greek from the Classical period through to the second century AD.

- Adoption of Latin principles of punctuation, which, as we have seen, can be seen to have their source in word-level prosody.

The possibility of a continuing tradition of prosodic punctuation in Greek on Sicily cannot be ruled out, not least since (presumably) inscriptions from the Archaic and Classical periods would still have been available to view in the Empire. However, since Latin would have been in the ascendancy in Sicily in the Imperial period, the influence of Latin punctuation practices seems a more likely source for the punctuation strategy of these two inscriptions. This seems all the more likely given the other signs of the influence of Latin punctuation practices in evidence, namely, the interchange <V>/<Y> in *ISic001320*, and the use of abbreviation in *ISic001231*. If so, the multilingual and multiscriptal environment on Sicily is likely to be at least in part responsible for the adoption of prosodic punctuation practices.

Word-level punctuation in Latin

The Sicilian evidence has shown that both prosodic and morphosyntactic punctuation strategies are available in Latin. A major finding is that prosodic word-based punctuation goes beyond the generally recognised non-punctuation of prepositions and pronouns, to include the non-punctuation of other function words (including the verb ‘to be’). Rather, therefore, than see such punctuation as fundamentally of the same ilk as our own, albeit with the idiosyncrasy that prepositions and pronouns are not punctuated, we can instead analyse punctuation in these documents under a fundamentally different, prosodic, framework, one with its roots in the spoken language.

The presence of morphosyntactic word division in *ISic000133* raises the question of when such a word division strategy was first employed. The fact that this word division strategy can be found as far back as the second millennium BC in a subset of Ugaritic texts (see Crellin 2022) renders more plausible its use in Classical Latin. The questions of when and why it was introduced I leave to future research.

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