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The forms of prescription in the Sabellic inscriptions: the cippus of Abella and the tablet of Agnone

Greta Mozzato, University of Padua, MA degree

Introduction

In this study, I analyse the **verbal forms** which were used in the Sabellic inscriptions to **express prescriptive contents**, such as commands and prohibitions.
Within the Sabellic corpus, I have selected two inscriptions which are usually considered as public prescriptive inscriptions and share some epigraphic, linguistic, and historical features. These two inscriptions are the **cippus of Abella** (Ve 1; ImIt ABELLA 1) and the **tablet of Agnone** (Ve 147; ImIt TERVENTVM 34). They are both written in **Oscan** language. The cippus of Abella (2nd c. BC) records an agreement between the city of Nola and the city of Abella about the management of the temple of Hercules. The tablet of Agnone (3rd/2nd c. BC) is the evidence of a reorganizing process of a cultural space, which specifically regards a *húrtu* 'garden' and the rituals that must be done here.

State of the art

The subject has been studied several times (see Magdelain 1978; Rix 1976; Prosdocimi 1987 and 2015; Poccetti 2009; Dupraz 2020) but the discussion is not yet closed. The core of the phenomenology has been identified:

a) such as the Latin prescriptive texts, also in sabellic texts the verbal mood used to express prescriptive contents is generally the ***-tōd* imperative**;
b) in these texts we also can identify some **conjunctive** form, these being the result of the transposition of an imperative form depending on a ***verbum dicendi***.

Despite that discovery, it is necessary to explain the cases in which the distribution of *-tōd* imperatives and conjunctives seems to be different than the rule mentioned before and it is also necessary to explain the possible use of other verbal forms to express some prescriptive contents.

Textual analysis of the two inscriptions

The texts written respectively in the cippus of Abella and in the tablet of Agnone show a precise internal structure. Both texts are separated in **sections** by the use of **linguistics expedients** such as conjunctions or by the use of **graphic expedients** such as blanks, engraved lines or starting new lines.
The text of the cippus is written in two sides of the stone and is divided in seven sections. The first section is an introduction where the authors of the agreement are mentioned. This section ends with the sentence *ekss kúmbened púz* 'it was agreed that' (l. A 10) and the other six sections depend on that sentence. These can be introduced by conjunctions such as *avt* 'but' and *ínim* 'and' or by the adverb *ekkum* 'likewise'. These three elements are preceded by a blank when they introduce a new section of the text.
The text of the tablet of Agnone is written in the two sides of the tablet and we can find an almost perfect correspondence between what is written in side A and what is written in side B, which is a summary version of the same text. Different sections of the text are marked in different ways: sections one and two are separated by a line engraved in the tablet, while sections three and four are separated by writing the unique sentence of section four in a new line of the text. Also in side B there are two lines engraved in the tablet but these have a different function than the one which we find in side A.

The cippus of Abella

Side A

maiiúí · vestirikiíúí · mai(ieís)· sta(tieís)·
prupukid· sverruneí · kvaístu-
reí · abellanúí $^{v\cdot v}$ ínim· maiiúí
lúvkiíúí · mai(ieís)· pukalatúí
medíkeí · deketasiúí · núvla-
núí · ínim· lígatúís· abellạn[úís]
ínim· lígatúís· núvlanúís
pús· senateís· tanginúd ^{vac}
suveís· pútúrúspíd· lígatú́[s]
fufans· ekss· kúmbened· pu̯z
sakaraklúm· herekleís· úp
slaagid· púd íst· ínim· teer[úm]
púd· úp· eísúd· sakaraklúd[·íst]
púd anter· teremníss· eḥ[trúís]
íst· paí · teremenniú· mú[íníkad]
tanginúd· prúftú· set· r[ehtúd]
amnúd· puz · í ^{v} dík· sakar[aklúm]
ínim· ídík· te ^{v} rúm· múíní[kúm]
múíníkeí · t ^{v} ereí · fusíd· [ínim]
eíseís· s ^{v} akarakleís· í[ním]
tereís· fruktatíuf · fr[uktat-]
[íuf·] múíníkú· pútú́rú́[mpíd]
fus]íd $^{v\cdot v}$ avt· núvla[núm· púí]
[ís]ṭ· herekleís ·fíísn̥ú[· **c. 8-9**]
[**c. 4** ·]píspíd· núvlad[· **c. 10**]
[**c. 5** p]ạí pele íst· tr[íbarakkiuf **c. 5**]
[-?-]

Side B

ekkum· [svaí· píd· íússu]
trííbarakạvú́[m· hereset· ant]
liímítú[m·] p̣ernúm · [puf]
herekleís· fíísnú́ · mefi[ú]
íst· ehtrad· feíhúss· pú́[s]
herekleís· fíísnam· amfr-
et pert· víam· púsˇ stí<n>t
paí· íp· íst· pústín· slagím
senateís· suveís· tangi-
núd· tríbarakavúm· lí-
kítud $^{v\cdot v}$ ínim· íúk· tríba-
rakkiuf· pam· núvlanús
tríbarakat{·}tuset· ínim
úíttiuf· núvlanúm· estud
ˇekkum· svaí· píd· abellanús
tríbarakat{·}tuset· íúk· trí-
barakkiuf· ínim· úíttiuf ^{vv}
abellanu̯m estud $^{v\cdot v}$ avt
púst· feíhúís· pús· físnam· am-
fret· eíseí · tereí · nep· abel-
lanús· nep· núvlanús· pídum
tríbarakat{·}tíns $^{v\cdot v}$ avt · the-
savrúm· púd · e<í>seí · tereí · íst
pún· patensíns múíníkad· tạ[n-]
ginúd· patensíns· ínim· píd·
e[íseí]
thesavreí · púkkapíd· ee[stít]
ạíttíúm· alttram· alttr[ús]
[f]errínsˇ $^{v\cdot v}$ avt· anter· slagím
[a]bellanam· ínim· núvlanam
[s]úllad· víú· uruvú· íst· pedú X
[e]ísaí · víaí · mefiaí · teremẹn-
[n]ịú· staíet ^{vacat}
vacat

(Text: Crawford 2011, vol. II, pp. 887-892.)
Analysis of the verbal forms: **main verb** plus verbal forms attested in **prescriptive sections**.

- Side A, line 10: *kúmbened* 'it was agreed', perfect indicative which introduces the main contents of the agreement;
- side A, lines 19 and 23: *fusíd* 'should be', conjunctive;
- side B, lines 24 and 25: *patensíns* 'should open', conjunctive;
- side B, line 28: *ferríns* 'should bring', conjunctive;

→ These conjunctive forms depend on the verbal form *kúmbened* 'it was agreed', by consequence these are to be analysed as the **transposition** of imperatives forms **depending on a *verbum dicendi***.

- Side B, lines 10 and 11: *líkítud* 'is to be lawful', *-tōd* imperative;
- side B, lines 14 and 18: *estud* 'has to be', *-tōd* imperative;

→ the presence of these **imperatives** forms could be due to the fact that the imperative is necessary to construct hypothetical sentence used in this section, even if the verbal forms attested in this section also depend on the verbal form *kúmbened* 'it was agreed'.

- Side B, line 22: (*nep*) *tribarakat{·}íns* 'they are (not) to build', **perfect conjunctive**;

→ this construction follows the rule found in other Oscan prescriptive texts such as the Tabula Bantina (Ve 2) or the bronze tablet of Rapino (Ve 218), see Prosdocimi 2015 and Rigobianco 2017.

- Side B, line 32: *staíet* 'there are';

→ we can find a **present indicative** form which express a specific prescriptive contents. Specifically, I assume that this use of the present indicative could be due to the fact that the prescription refers to a situation which is presented as a fact and must not change.

The tablet of Agnone

Side A

statús. pús. set. húrtín.
kerríiín. vezkeí. statíf.
evklúí. statíf. kerrí. statíf
futreí. kerríiaí. statíf.
anter. stataí. statíf.
ammaí. kerríiaí. statíf.
diumpaís. kerríiaís. statíf.
líganakdíkeí. entraí. statíf.
anafríss. kerríiúís. statíf.
maatúís. kerríiúís. statíf.
diúveí. verehasiúí. statíf.
diúveí. regatureí. statíf.
hereklúí. kerríiúí. statíf.
patanaí. piístíaí. statíf.
deívaí. genetaí. statíf.
aasaí. purasiaí.
saahtúm. tefúrúm. alttreí.
pútereípíd. akeneí.
sakahíter
——
fiuusasiaís. az. húrtúm.
sakarater.
pernaí. kerríiaí. statíf
ammaí. kerríiaí. statíf.
fluusaí. kerríiaí. statíf
evklúí. patereí. statíf.

Side B

aasas. ekask. eestínt.
húrtúí.
——
vezkeí.
evklúí.
fuutreí.
anter. stataí.
kerrí.
ammaí.
diumpaís.
líganakdíkeí. entraí.
kerríiaí.
——
anafríss.
maatúís.
diúveí. verehasiú.
diúveí. piíhiúí. regatureí
hereklúí. kerriiúí.
patanaí. piístíaí.
deívaí. genetaí.
aasaí. purasiaí.
saahtúm. tefúrúm.
alttreí. pútereípíd.
akeneí.
húrz. dekmanniúís. staít.

(Text: Del Tutto Palma 1996)
Analysis of the verbal forms: **prescriptive sections**.

- Side A, line 1: *set* 'they are';
- Side A, line 19: *sakahíter* 'it has to be sanction';
- Side A, line 21: *sakarater* ' it has to do the sacra';
- Side B, line 1: *eestínt* 'they are established for';
- Side B, line 23: *staít* 'it has to be for'.

→ If we assume that the most likely to be true is the explanation of *sakahíter* given by Prosdocimi (see Prosdocimi 1996), then all the verbal forms included in this text are **present indicative** forms and we can assume that there is the same contextual situation supposed for the last section of the text of the cippus of Abella, that is to say that the prescriptions refer to a situation which is presented as a fact and must not be changed.

Conclusions

It seems that the selection of a verbal form to express some prescriptive contents in these two Oscan texts depends on:

a) the **potentiality** of the *langue*;
b) the existence of some **codified textual usages** (shared with other Sabellic and Latin traditions);
c) the **choices** of whom has made the text, which depend on points a) and b).

Thanks to this study, we can confirm the use of the imperative and the conjunctive mood in prescriptive texts, the latter one being the transposition of an imperative form depending on a *verbum dicendi*. We can also demonstrate the use of present indicative forms to express some specific prescriptive contents for situations presented as a fact which must not change.

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