Katherine McDonald, *Oscan in Southern Italy and Sicily. Evaluating Language Contact in a Fragmentary Corpus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xix + 306; figs. 25, maps 4, tables 26. ISBN 978-1-107-10383-2.

McDonald's book, a revised version of her PhD thesis, focuses on the Oscan inscriptions written in Greek alphabet found in those areas of Southern Italy formerly known as Lucania (more or less corresponding to modern-day Basilicata), Bruttium (modern Calabria) and Messana (nowadays Messina, a city in the north-east Sicily). This corpus is conventionally known as 'South Oscan' and covers a chronological span between the fourth century BC and the period immediately following the Social War (91–88 BC).

The purpose of the book is not to provide a new edition of the South Oscan texts. Instead, the author aims at analysing the evidence of bilingualism and language contact between Oscan and Greek in these documents. The South Oscan corpus is still under-investigated, since it has considerably increased in the second half of the twentieth century. In addition to that, few scholars have focused on the Greek/Oscan contact in these inscriptions, and so far the main source of information has been a number of scattered articles.[1] McDonald's work subsequently represents the first systematic analysis on the South Oscan corpus which takes into consideration the evidence of both bilingualism and language contact. As she states at the outset, the interaction between Greek and Oscan is peculiar: it is not the typical case of contact between a local language and a high-prestige one. Neither of the two seems to play a dominant role, and their decline is connected with the spread of Latin.

In the introductory chapter (Chapter 1, *Introduction*, pp. 1–35) the author gives an outline of the history of Lucania, Bruttium and Messana from the first Greek settlements in Southern Italy (eighth century BC) to the first century BC, when the Romanisation process is nearly complete. Furthermore, she questions the extent to which the influence of the Greek and Roman cultures affected the Oscan-speaking communities. She does not reject the terms 'Hellenisation' and 'Romanisation', although they are both limiting, but she prefers to regard the interaction between these cultures as a very complex process that took place over many centuries.

In Chapter 2 (*Bilingualism and language contact in written texts*, pp. 36–62) McDonald stresses the need for a sociolinguistic approach in studying historical corpora. On pp. 36–41 a methodological discussion raises two questions: can we examine from a sociolinguistic viewpoint the data collected by analysing an epigraphic corpus? And, if so, in studying fragmentary languages can we apply the same methods employed for the ones with a more extensive corpus? She states that, when dealing with fragmentary languages, by applying the principles of historical sociolinguistics it is possible to retrieve extra-linguistic data—such as, for instance, the citizenship, the social status and the education of the addresser/addressee of the text. Moreover, when using a sociolinguistic approach,

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[1] See, for instance, Poccetti 2014 on the Oscan/Greek bilingualism in the Bruttian town of Petelia.

it is necessary to define the speech community: in focusing on the texts in Oscan language written in Greek alphabet from Lucania, Bruttium and Messana the author gives both a geographic definition of the speech community and a linguistic and cultural one (Oscan-speakers writing in Greek alphabet). As a matter of fact, in this chapter some purely theoretical passages appear to be unnecessary. The description of Labov's work, as well as the debate about the possibility of applying the principles of historical sociolinguistics in studying ancient texts (pp. 36–39)[2], cannot be set aside in a doctoral dissertation, but seem superfluous in this kind of publication. The same could be said for the list of the different outcomes of language contact (pp. 50–55).

Chapter 3 (*Alphabets, epigraphy and orthography*, pp. 63–93) deals with the origin of the South Oscan alphabet, probably created during the first half of the fourth century BC and derived from the adaptation of the Ionic Greek script used in some of the Greek settlements in Southern Italy. McDonald discusses the origin and the development of the sign for /f/, which is relevant to understand the degree of the Greek influence on the Oscan-speaking communities. She accepts Cristofani's view, according to which the South Oscan alphabet was elaborated at Naples by Greek-speakers minting coins for Oscan-speaking communities. This process includes the elaboration of <S> (/f/) as adaptation from the sign <8>, unattested in South Oscan, but used in the Central Oscan alphabet. This allows to hypothesise a close interaction between the Greek script adapted for the Oscan language and the Central Oscan alphabet. This leads the author to conclude that the South Oscan alphabet is "the result of ongoing experimentation in a multilingual environment" (p. 92). In examining the so called 'extra-characters'— namely letters that a) represent more than one phoneme and b) represent Greek phonemes that are absent in Oscan—she states that their use, which is considerable in curse tablets, could reflect the writer's will to give the text a Greek appearance.

From Chapter 4 to 7 the author offers a detailed analysis of the most representative inscriptions of the corpus. The texts are arranged according to their genre: Chapter 4 (*Dedicatory inscriptions*, pp. 94–132) is devoted to the texts commemorating deities, Chapter 5 (*Curse tablets*, pp. 133–166) to the South Oscan *defixiones*. Chapter 6 (*Legal texts*, pp. 167–193) deals with inscriptions containing legal language, while in Chapter 7 all the remaining types are grouped (*Official inscriptions, coins, funerary inscriptions, stamps and graffiti*, pp. 194–223). In each chapter she first describes the subcorpus under discussion, providing information about the number of texts it is made of, their archaeological context and dating. Secondly, she examines the syntactic patterns and the formulae that the texts belonging to a given genre share, identifying those elements that are likely to reveal influence from Greek. Finally, she offers a detailed analysis of those inscriptions that show clear evidence of language contact between Oscan and Greek. This analysis is carried out on various levels, involving epigraphic,

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[2] See also Mancini 2012 on this issue.

orthographic, morphological, syntactic and lexical aspects in order to find evidence of contact phenomena.

For each text, McDonald provides transcription and translation. In several cases photographs and drawings (sometimes made by the author herself) are also available. She usually refers to the *Imagines Italicae* edition,[3] but, when there is no agreement between Crawford and the previous editors, she provides both recent and older readings and interpretations. This is the case of Lu 29 (Potentia 21), a dedicatory inscription carved on a sandstone block from Rossano di Vaglio (p. 124). Since Crawford's and Lejeune's[4] translations show huge discrepancy, the author offers both. Given that the stone is damaged on the left side, in the initial sequence [-]αματομ the first letter is missing. Both Crawford and Lejeune consider it as a masculine perfect participle in the accusative singular and translate it as "has been ordered". However, in our view this sequence might be restored as [κ]αματομ and regarded as the accusative singular of a noun. In Greek the masculine noun κάματος means 'toil', 'effect of toil' but also 'product of toil'. It is particularly interesting to compare this word with the neuter accusative singular **kamatúm** occurring in an official inscription carved on a stone table recently brought to light in the sanctuary of Pietrabbondante in Samnium.[5] The meaning of **kamatúm** in this text is not clear, but it is likely to refer either to the object (the stone table) or to the *sacellum* where the table was found. If we accepted the reading [κ]αματομ in the South Oscan inscription, then we could connect it to **kamatúm**. This implies that the initial word [κ]αματομ could refer to the inscribed object[6] or to the building where the stone was originally placed. Finally, if **kamatúm**/[κ]αματομ were a Greek borrowing, it would provide a further evidence of language contact between Oscan and Greek.

In Chapter 5 (pp. 158–164) McDonald discusses a curse tablet discovered in the necropolis of Petelia (Petelia 2). This is the only South Oscan *defixio* containing an explicit curse formula. The formula, which follows a list of names, is made of two clauses, the former in Oscan and the latter in Greek. With regard to the sequence <πισπιτιμσολλομηισου> in the first clause, the author confines herself to discussing two forms, ιμ and ηισου.[7] ιμ is problematic and she interprets it as 'and', while in regard to ηισου she accepts Crawford's interpretation as a genitive plural masculine, 'of them' (<*eyso-; in epichoric alphabet **esú(m)**). Actually, additional remarks can be made about this sequence by taking a sociolinguistic approach. First of all, the word πισπιτ (cf. **píspíd** in the Cippus Abellanus) shows the same phonetic change /d/ > /t/ that Rix 1996: 249 regards as a dialectal

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[3] Crawford 2011.

[4] Lejeune 1990.

[5] The text was first published by La Regina 2010–2013 [2014].

[6] But we do not know what its original function was, since the stone was re-used as the base of a votive column.

[7] We guess this is the author's reading, since other scholars (Crawford 2011, Mancini 2012 and Poccetti 2014) read ηισου.

variation typical of inner Lucania.[8] According to Mancini 2012: 254 the presence of this dialectal phenomenon in Petelia 2 may reveal the writer's tendency to select an informal register. Secondly, as Mancini points out, ηισου could be regarded as a variant of the standard form **eisunk** (gen. pl.) attested in Cm 14 (Cumae 8), because of the absence of the particle *k*. ηισου also shows the loss of final *m*: this phenomenon is attested in other inscriptions written in epichoric alphabet,[9] but it seems to be very common in later Oscan texts from Pompeii. This leads Mancini to suggest that the loss of -*m* may be considered as an informal variant of earlier texts that has been generalised as a standard form in the late Pompeiian epigraphy. It is therefore interesting that the very same variant can be found in a South Oscan text.

In the final chapter (Chapter 8, *Conclusions*, pp. 224–243) the author explores other language contact situations in the ancient world (e.g. Greek/Oscan contact in Campania and Samnium and in the Greek world, Latin/Oscan contact) in order to compare them with the interaction between South Oscan and Greek. The volume is closed by two appendices: a catalogue of the sites related to the South Oscan texts and a summary on the dating of the inscriptions, including their concordances.

This volume is the first thorough study on the interaction between Oscan and Greek based on the written evidence, but it can also be regarded as an up-to-date collection of the South Oscan inscriptions. Even though McDonald does not discuss all the texts of the corpus, she manages to give a very detailed account of each subcorpus. On the one hand, she is very accurate in providing data; on the other, in most cases she provides synoptic tables, thus rendering the book user-friendly. We believe that this book will be a reference work for anyone interested either in South Oscan epigraphy or in language contact phenomena of the ancient world.

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[8] The same variation has been recorded by the literary tradition: cf. Paul. *ex* Fest. 235 L *pitpit Osce quidquid*.

[9] Some examples are given in Mancini 2012: 261.

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