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THE MESSAPIC ELEMENT *-IHI*: A NEW INTERPRETATION

Лексичний елемент *-ihi~aihi* в месапській епіграфіці становить значний виклик для науковців, адже він є важливим граматичним та семантичним компонентом написів.

Метою статті є нове визначення ролі *-ihi* на основі припущення, що він може функціонувати як вигук або як відображення закінчення *-i*, а не лише слугувати маркером родового відмінку. Пропонуючи нове тлумачення *-ihi*, дослідження націлене на формування нової основи для фрагментації, аналізу та інтерпретації месапських надписів. Цей новий аспект дослідження буде розкритий шляхом детального вивчення обраних прикладів із залученням методів «семантики фреймів» (за Чарлзом К. Філмором та Сімоною Маркезіні), лінгвістичної антропології, герменевтичного методу та внутрішнього порівняльного аналізу.

Первісно визначений у XIX ст. як закінчення родового відмінку, *-ihi* привернув неабияку увагу науковців, виступаючи ключовим елементом тексту, що слугує як його маркер і водночас основоположний принцип. Проте виникла тривала полеміка стосовно виняткової функції *-ihi* як маркера родового відмінку, при цьому розповсюджена думка, що він позначає лише іменники, прикметники та займенники. Ця дихотомія створила проблеми в концептуалізації фрагментації слів за межами граматичної функції *-ihi*, сприяючи орієнтації на родовий відмінок, що зробило месапську мову дещо загадковою, навіть названою «мовою-примарою».

Твердження про те, що значна частина месапської лексики складається з іменників із закінченням *-ihi*, викликало підвищений інтерес науковців і спонукало до глибшого вивчення природи цього елемента. Проте, незважаючи на його заявлену функцію як родового відмінка, вивчення альтернативних ролей цього лексичного елемента, особливо в контексті ймовірних ілірійського або протоалбанського першоджерел, залишається значною мірою недослідженою галуззю. Враховуючи можливу історичну взаємодію *-ihi~aihi* в контексті ілірійсько-протоалбанської та класичної албанської мов, проведення етимологічного аналізу видається доцільним, особливо в аспекті внутрішнього порівняння.

Дослідження класичної албанської традиції, де переважно використовується суфікс *-h* наприкінці слів, що закінчуються на голосні, як, наприклад, у текстах Ѓона Бузуку (1555), дозволяє припустити можливий зв'язок між *-hi* та цим суфіксом, можливо, як поствокальний резонанс, а не виключно маркер родового відмінку. До того ж паралелі між месапськими структурами родового відмінку і слідами протоалбанської мови, що збереглися в постмесапичну добу і навіть у сучасній албанській мові, вказують на наявність більш широкої лінгвістичної спадковості.

Хоча *-ihi*, безперечно, сприяє сегментації тексту, виступаючи як закінчення слова, а іноді і як емоційний вигук, його тлумачення виключно як маркера родового відмінку надмірно звужує його лінгвістичну значущість. Приклади, що ілюструють інтерпретаційні парадокси, пов'язані з *-ihi*, підкреслюють потребу детального дослідження його багатограних ролей, включаючи його потенціал як ознаки закінчення *-i* або вигуку, що імітує траурні обряди, особливо в контексті погребальних традицій.

Незважаючи на ефективність *-ihi* в формальній сегментації тексту, питання про його справжню лінгвістичну функцію залишається відкритим: чи є він передусім закінченням родового відмінку, відображенням закінчення *-i* або вигуком? Це питання потребує ґрунтовного дослідження, особливо враховуючи його значення для розуміння месапської мови й культури.

ри. Зосереджуючись на цих аспектах, стаття прагне розкрити загадкову природу *-ihi* та його більш широке значення в контексті дослідження месапської епіграфіки та еволюції албанської мови.

Ключові слова: месапська епіграфіка, *-ihi*, закінчення, відображення, вигук, протоалбанська мова

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Introduction

The Messapic element *-ihi* is a pivotal grammatical and semantic feature for understanding the language structure of Messapic inscriptions. Traditionally and until recently, it has been viewed as a genitive ending, but this interpretation has resulted in various misunderstandings in deciphering Messapic inscriptions.

The purpose of this article is to reevaluate the role of the element *-ihi*, proposing it as an interjection or as a reflection of *-i*, rather than simply a genitive marker. This perspective aims to establish a new foundation for the fragmentation and interpretation of Messapic inscriptions. To achieve this, the article will explore the function of *-ihi* through a detailed analysis of several inscriptions, seeking to realize these redefined objectives.

Numerous scholarly articles and studies have already delved into the examination of the lexical item *-ihi~aihi* (from Deecke [1882], to Marchesini [2020]). The acknowledgment of *-ihi* as an ending has likely garnered significance and robust support through the assertion of the Messapic corpus as fundamentally a language centered around nouns. A meticulous quantitative grammatical analysis conducted by De Simone & Marchesini in *Monumenta Lingua Messapicae* [2002] unveils that a substantial majority of words across more than 600 inscriptions are categorized as nouns, with merely a handful (possibly just over 12) identified as verbs. Designating a linguistic corpus as a compendium of nouns may prompt linguists to discern the influential role of the genitive case, elucidating the relationships between nouns within the structure of word order. Moreover, the genitive demonstrates inherent potency as a grammatical category within funerary inscriptions, fostering an imitative approach in cases such as Messapic epigraphy.

Indeed, numerous scholars have adeptly utilized *-ihi* as a distinctive marker for text fragmentation, elevating it to a recognized principle of fragmentation. However, they insist on categorizing it solely as a marker of the genitive, functioning as a 'grammatical instrument' that demonstrates the subordination and relationship of nouns. Nevertheless, the segmentation, precisely understood as occurring after *-ihi*, has been deemed impossible if it occurs before *-ihi*. This linguistic perception has led to the categorization of all words that 'end with *-ihi*' as nouns, thus creating the enigmatic Messapic knot.

Despite the extensive examination of the relationship between Messapic and Illyrian (and, to some extent, consequently Albanian) by scholars such as Hahn [1854], Deecke [1882], Bugge [1892], Pedersen [1895], Ribezzo [1978], Jokl [1911], Krahe [1955], Hamp [1957] and others, alongside comprehensive studies encompassing historical, archaeological, and cultural aspects conducted by D'Andria [1990, 1988], Lombardo [1991, 1992, 1994], Burger [1998], Lambolely [1996, 2002], Aigner-Foresti [2004], Yntema [2008], Herring [2007], and Lomas [2011, 2015, 2018], these connections were insufficiently substantiated, being primarily established within the field of onomastics. Perhaps, the absence of fundamental knowledge of Albanian and, consequently, the Albanian proto-imaginary, has impeded a meaningful interpretation of Messapic in relation to Illyrian~Proto-Albanian.

The segmentation itself, heavily reliant on onomastic, patronymic, and theonymic sources, influenced significantly by the segmenting effect of the final *-ihi*, has undeniably been a valuable aid on one hand but has also created ambiguity on the other, often taken for granted. The segmentation of Messapic inscriptions presented in *scriptio continua* is undoubtedly a unique undertaking, and the success of this segmentation owes much to the interpretation of *-ihi* as an endmarker. However, this interpretation introduces confusion when *-ihi* is not considered as a standalone lexical item, distinct from the preceding word.

This article explores the intricate structural and grammatical aspects of the *-ihi* phenomenon as seen in Messapic inscriptions, employing a corpus linguistics approach. The focus is on understanding the occurrence patterns of the target word within specific contexts, as advocated by Brezina and McEnergy [2020].

Regarding the methodology employed in this study, it was essential to incorporate diverse research methodologies, including ‘frame semantics’ ([Fillmore, 1982; Marchesini, 2023]), linguistic anthropology, and an exploration of the cultural implications of the *iso* phenomenon, especially its association with *iso*-singing as a psycho-emotional origin for the interjection/reflection *-ihi*. Thus, the methodological perspective dynamically aligns with the inner hermeneutical demands of the inscription. Furthermore, the exploration maintains a continuous focus on interpreting *-ihi* within an internal-comparative framework.

This interpretation is then juxtaposed with the mourning ritualistic context, establishing a connection between *-ihi* and the Messapic tradition of singing and dancing in cemeteries. The investigation may unveil the origin of the *-iso* structure within Messapic. While acknowledging the possibility that *-ihi* may retain echoes of declension or conjugation traces, it consistently manifests itself more as an interjection or particle than as a case ending.

The history, meaning, and role of *-ihi*

The history of the *-ihi* element necessitates an examination of its variants to fully understand its development. Ciceri’s compilation of forms such as “-ahi, aihe, ihe, -ehi, -eihi/ihi, -eihei, -ii/-i, ehe” [Ciceri, 2012, p. 80] reinforces the recognition of *-ihi* as a genitive marker.

The interpretation of *-ihi* as a genitive suffix originates with Deecke [1882], who associated it with PIE *-sia* alongside forms like *-as* and *-os* [Deecke, 1882, p. 580]. In his influential study, *Die Genitive auf -hi* [*The Genitives in -hi*] [Ibid, pp. 373–396], Deecke identified *-ihi* as a genitive marker. He noted that Messapic genitives in *-hi*, which align with the Indo-European form *-sia* and frequently include an epenthetic *i*, can be classified according to the vowel preceding *-hi* [Ibid, p. 373].

Deecke’s analysis of plural forms and variants such as *-ahiaihi* originating from the nominative *-ahias*, paralleled Gr. *ἄσιος, ἄλιος, and Lat. *-asius*, evolving into *-arius* [Deecke, 1882, p. 199]. Bugge’s references to genitive forms like *barzidihi* and *baletih* [Bugge, 1892, p. 199], and Buonamici’s expansion on forms such as *-aha*, *-he*, and *-os/as* in the genitive plural [Buonamici, 1911, pp. 8–9], further supported this view.

Over time, the interpretation of *-ihi* as a genitive marker has gained widespread acceptance. This consensus is reflected in the works of scholars such as Krahe [1955], De Simone [2018], and Matzinger [2005, 2019]. Researchers like Orioles [1991], de Bernardo Stempel [2003], Gusmani [2006], Prosdociami [2006], Eska and Wallace [2001], and Ciceri [2012] have supported Deecke’s position with various interpretations of *-ihi*’s origins. Typically, *-ihi* is recognized as a genitive marker for masculine nouns, as seen in names like *arT’aihi* (MLM 17 Al), *gravaihi* (MLM 47 Al), and *dazimaihi* (MLM 21 Ca) [Matzinger 2019, p. 36]. This supports the prevailing view of *-ihi* as a genitive marker.

Despite this consensus, controversies about the origin of *-ihi* persist. Ciceri [2012] offers a comprehensive historical account, supporting Gusmani’s theory that *-ihi* evolved from **-oiso* > **-oise* > *-aihe* > *-aihi*, contrasting with De Simone’s view that *-ihi* originated from **ī* [De Simone, 1992, pp. 26–27]. De Simone proposed that *-ihi* < **-osjo* was initially realized as *ī* to denote a long vowel. Earlier, Pisani had suggested that *-ī* developed from *-osyo* [Pisani, 1971, p. 181], a view that found some support. Prosdociami [2006] argued that *-hi* < *-si* < *-//si(o)* < **sjo*, minimizing the role of *h*. Lejeune addressed these within the frameworks of evolutionary and substitution theories, while also affirming the possibility that *-ihi* might be equivalent to *ī* [Lejeune, 1989, p. 77]. Gusmani [1976, p. 150; 2006] noted discrepancies between forms like *-a-ihe* and *-ihe* with *-ihi*, though the hypothetical development **-osyo* > *-aihe* remains debated. Ciceri, after analyzing various perspectives, supports Gusmani’s theory of the development **-osjo* > **-osje* > **-oise* > **-aihe* > *-aihi* as the most plausible [Ciceri, 2012, p. 96].

Thus, while *-ihi* is established as a genitive marker, the debate over its origin - whether from **-osjo* or **-ī* - continues. The role of *-ihi* as a genitive marker does not preclude its potential lexical significance.

In summary, while the derivation of *-ihi* from *-osjo/-oiso/*-oisjo* is widely accepted, its function as a genitive marker may indicate a more complex lexical and morphological evolution. This ongoing debate underscores the intricate relationship between grammatical markers and their potential lexical origins.

Additionally, the discussion of *-ihi* and its relation to the genitive case has also been examined in the context of the Messapic *-a-* and *-ya-* stems. De Simone has argued that *-ihi* represents *-ī*, drawing parallels with Latin genitive forms [De Simone, 2018, pp. 1844–1845]. Marchesini [2020] supports this view. Orioles [1991, pp. 165–167], Gusmani [2006], and Prosdocimi [2006] suggest that *-aihi* is linked to **-oiso* or **-oisyo*, in line with Pisani's theory of *-ī* evolving from **-osyo*, a form not present in early Messapic [De Simone, 2018, pp. 1844–1845]. Matzinger reexamines the genitive forms and their relation to the Latin and Celtic genitive morpheme **-i*, viewing *-aihe*, *-eihī*, and *-ihe* as variations of *-ihi*. He interprets *-ihi* as a graphical representation of *-i*, indicating a vowel-themed genitive in pre-Messapic contexts, and leaves open questions related to the *-ia* root [Matzinger, 2019, p. 37].

This article suggests that *-ihi* may have a more complex lexical history than its traditional interpretation as a mere grammatical marker. The prevailing view of *-ihi* as a genitive ending has led to a *linear reading* that focuses primarily on nouns and occasionally adjectives, neglecting a more nuanced understanding of its linguistic, sepulchral, and cultural contexts within Messapic inscriptions. This limited perspective has led to oversimplified explanations of the genitive function, disregarding non-genitive possibilities and failing to provide a thorough analysis and accurate segmentation of the *scriptio continua*. As a result, interpretations of the evidence have become unsubstantiated. This is the primary reason for re-evaluating the traditional viewpoint.

Our proposal, from a fresh perspective, is that the phonological and morphological features of *-ihi* suggest it could reflect the ending *-i* (*i > i+hi*). Additionally, the development from **-oiso > *-oise > -aihe > -aihi* may represent a morpho-cultural formation linked to Proto-Albanian, where 'iso' was associated with meanings related to lamentation. Thus, *-ihi* likely has an onomatopoeic, interjectional origin that evolved through phonological and morphological changes over time. This understanding treats *-ihi* as both an independent element and a potential reflection of a root ending. Adopting this perspective offers new possibilities for segmenting and interpreting Messapic inscriptions, leading to a richer and more comprehensive analysis of the texts.

In general, the matter of *-ihi~(hi)aihi* has been examined in the reconstruction process of the predecessor of the genitive case for Messapic *-a-* and *-ya-* stems. De Simone has advocated for the ending *-ihi* as *-ī*, presenting the example of *Dazimas* (nom.) ~ **Dazimī* (gen.), (cf. Lat. *lupus*, *-ī*), drawing parallels with the Lat. genitive, specifically the singular of *-a-* stems [De Simone, 2018, pp. 1844–1845]. Marchesini also maintains De Simone's position [Marchesini, 2020]. Orioles [1991, pp. 165–167], Gusmani [2006], and Prosdocimi [2006] suggest a connection between the Mess. ending *-aihi* and **-oiso* or **-oisyo*, a view aligned with Pisani's *-ī* supposed to go back to **-osyo*, a form that doesn't seem to have been present in an early stage of Messapic [De Simone, 2018, pp. 1844–1845]. Matzinger subsequently reexamines the relationship of words with *a-īa-* roots in the genitive singular, and also explores the genitive morpheme **-i* in Latin and Celtic. He views forms like *-aihe-eihī*, *-ihe*, *a(i)i* as variations of *-ihi*. Furthermore, he interprets the genitive form *-ihi* as a graphic realization of a *-i*, pointing towards the prehistory of Messapic with a vowel-theme genitive (*-ihi < ia+ī*), leaving several aspects related to the *-ia* root open [Matzinger, 2019, p. 37].

As evident, pinpointing the function of *-ihi* as 'genitive' is undoubtedly challenging, especially when disregarding the possibility of an alternative role for this lexical item. A genitive-centric speculation about *-ihi* has cast a veil of ambiguity over its interpretation, leaving Messapic in the realm of a *phantom language*. The paradoxical assertion that nearly 99% of its vocabulary consists of nouns (patronyms, theonyms, anthroponyms, etc.) and the puzzling ease of declaring this word as an *ending* have significantly deepened the phantom-like mystique surrounding this language.

Consequently, any 'third way' reconstruction of *-ihi* with potential Illyr. or PALb. origins has not been explored. However, considering the conceivable historical interplay of *-ihi~aihi* within the context of Illyr. – PALb. > CALb, this lexical item does not seem to have any specific genitive function.

Considering that the classical Albanian tradition has acknowledged the usage of the suffix *-h* primarily at the end of words terminating with vowels [Buzuku, 1555 (2013)], it's plausible that the presence of *-hi* is linked to this suffix, stemming from *-i*. Additionally, there's a possibility of a post-vocalic resonance, like the laryngeal *h*, imparting a laryngeal hue to semantically shade the post-stem effect. Consequently, it is conceivable that *-(i)hi* consistently reflects the ending *-i*, rather than serving as a marker of the genitive case. However, the *-i* ending does show some kinship with an old Albanian genitive form, as seen in constructions like *frut mali* 'wild fruit(s)', *peshk deti* 'fish of the sea', etc.

Upon analyzing the structure of the genitive case, Messapic exhibits elements reminiscent of PALb that have endured into the Albanian language. Despite the syncretic interplay of cases occurring in PALb > Alb, the genitive is hypothesized to have maintained an independent identity, inherently linked to the PIE genitive elements *-s*, *-os*. In modern Albanian, both definite and indefinite articles share genitive markers in both the plural and singular. It is posited that in early Albanian, in a pre-Messapic stage, these articles might have belonged to a singular case. However, it is theorized that in the singular, the dative case influenced the genitive, while in the plural, the genitive influenced the dative [Demiraj, 1988, p. 255]. Certainly, the early indications of genitive differentiation in Albanian through the proclitic element (*të* 'of') might be traced back to Messapic (see: *θo* in MLM 1 Br and *ton* in MLM 3 Ro), bearing similarities to Ancient Greek, although this genitive proclitic element doesn't appear to have been highly developed. Indeed, it seems plausible that the proclitic element of genitive differentiation emerged as a necessity to distinguish it from the dative [Demiraj, 1988, p. 256]. However, the particle *-ihi* is not related to this proclitic.

While *-ihi* stands independently as a word, it significantly aids in text segmentation. However, there are cases when it functions as a marker indicating the end of a word and, in specific instances, intervenes within a sentence or word, taking the form of an emotional exclamation. Fortunately, the segmenting function of this lexical item as an end marker has been widely recognized, despite occasional unfair preconceptions that categorize it merely as a nominal end-marker. Let's delve into examples that highlight the paradoxes of interpretations of *-ihi* as a genitive marker, considering its broader implications.

Ethnonymic Epigraphy

MLM 17 A1	century III BC	(51-52)
Item	arΨaihi	
Segm.	arΨaihi	
Mess. > CALb.	artasit-hi	
SALb	artasit- <i>hi</i>	
Eng.	to an Artas- <i>hi</i>	

arΨai (n.) > *artasit* 'to Artas' (Dat.). An ethnonym or anthroponym. Considering the proposal for PIE **h₃r-to*, suggested roots include: *h₃er-* 'movement,' *h₁er-* 'reach, come, elevate, grasp,' *h₃er-* 'travel,' [Huet, 2016, p. 73; Pokorny 2007, p. 174; Mani, 2024, p. 279].

i/hi (interj.) > *ihi*. This interjection not only functions as an expressive element but also evolved to exhibit agglutinative grammatical properties.

Commentary

What meaning might the genitive have here? And who is Artai, indeed?

Artai is an anthroponym (known as the Messapian king Artas, see: *arΨam* in MLM 17 Bas), evolving into an ethnonym, likely originating from the toponym Arta, a city/region in Epirus in ancient Greece, from where the Messapians mainly originated. However, *Artai* are occasionally mentioned as a Thracian ethnicity (see: *Ἄρται~Ἄρτακοι~Ἄρτάκη/ος*, etc., in Stephanus of Byzantium [1849, pp. 127–128]).

Etymologically, apart from the possible connection with the root *ar-*, *art-* (*a/as/am/ai*, etc.), there may be some association with Ἄρτεμις 'Artemis,' but the correlation with *ártha* and its derivatives in Skt. appears more significant [Huet, 2016, p. 73]. Additionally, one should consider the potential connection with the goddess Aštarte, regarded as a Phoenician goddess [Boedeker, 1974, p. 5], or with the ancient Persian tribe referred to as Artas.

In this inscription, the term *artai* seems to represent more of an ethnonym than a personal name. Artai, akin to Artas, has primarily been construed as a personal name, as explained by A. Meyer [1959, p. 13] and Alessio [1962, p. 301], up to Lambolley [1996], associating it with the name of the king Artas based on interpretations by Herodotus, Thucydides, Deecke, and Ribezzo. Unlike *Artai* or *Artas(m)*, *Arta* could be a feminine name and also appears as *Arte* (possibly as an ethnonym) in MLM 1 Bas. Artai, featured here as an ethnonym, concurrently serves as a mnemonic trigger for a possible lapygian ethno-memory connected with Arta in Epirus.

Undoubtedly, the inclusion of the genitive in this inscription would be meaningless, considering the absence of the belonging relationship that should result from the genitive. Theoretically, *-ihi* could indicate the dative, even though, based on other observations of grammatical and semantic positions, neither the dative nor any other case features the suffix *-ihi*. *Ihi* simply accompanies the name/ethnonym/ of the deceased or serves as an expression of deep mourning for the deceased. Such a function is prevalent throughout the entire inscriptions.

Ethnonymy and Constellation Significance

In connection with this inscription, the name Artai appears in another inscription, but this time in the dative case. Interestingly, the subsequent addition of the lexical item *-hi* does not result in the form *artaihi* in terms of the genitive; rather, it transforms into a morpheme giving rise to a different word, *hilli*. This word, with its origins in proto-Albanian > Albanian, means *star*. Moreover, the *-ihi* at the end of *hiaihi* doesn't carry any genitive-related significance; instead, it serves as a mournful echo for the departed. Here is the inscription:

MLM 38 AI	century III BC	(66–67)
Item	arΨaihilibohiaihi	
Segm.	arΨai hilli bo hiaihi	
Mess. > CALb.	artasit hilli /i/ bo hije-hi	
SALb	artasit ylli i bën hije-hi	
Eng.	the star <i>hi</i> casts a shadow on /to/ Artas	

artai > *artas(it)* 'to Artas' (dat.); an ethnonym;

hilli (n.) > *hyll, ill, yll* 'star.' See Hahn's interpretation of *ill* as 'star' [Hahn, 1954, p. 231; Atkinson, 1931–35, p. 6; Pokorny, 2007, p. 2569] and Hamp's suggestion for *hyll/yll* as late developments of PALb **hél/ü/** **sūli-*, including the relation of *yll* to OE *ysle*, ON *usli* 'spark' from the root **(e)us-* 'burn' [Hahn, 1963, p. 61], parallel to 'sun,' according to Huld [1984, p. 90]. Orel considers *yll/hyll* related to PALb **skīw-ila*, derivative of **skijā* > *hije* 'shadow' [Orel, 1998, p. 518]. Cognates: Hom. *ἠέλιος* 'sun,' Lat. *stēlla* 'star,' Hung. *cilla* and Ital. *cielo* 'star' but also 'sky,' like in Alb: *ela-qella* 'star-sun'; *illi-qilli* 'star-sky'; IE **H₂ster-* 'star' [Mani, 2024, p. 199].

Three stages of the word: PALb: **skīw-ila* > Mess: *(h)illi* > Alb: *illi~ylli~hylli*.

bo (v.) > *bo~bërë* 'to do, to make.' It originates from PALb **banja*, possibly also related to PALb **berja* (*bie* 'to carry, to bear, to convey' < PIE *b^her-*. Mostly, the PIE **bh* is merged with IE **b* in PALb **b*, developing into Alb. *b*. Just *ba* (excluding the ending *os*) represents here the so-called 'short participle', perhaps as a form of oxytonic PALb. nouns with *e*-grade vocalism [Orel, 1998, p. 22]. We should observe that in Messapic, PALb *a* does not change to *n* yet. *Ba* shows a typical *o*-grade vocalism. Cognates: Gk. *φαίνω* 'to appear', OIr. *bann* 'deed'; perhaps from PIE **bhu-* 'to grow' [Topalli, 2017, pp. 198–199].

Three stages of the word: PALb: **banja* > Mess: *ba(os)* > Alb: *ba(o)~bërë*.

hia (n.) > *hia~hija, hiri, bukuria* 'shadow; grace, beauty' is related to the singularized plural of an archaic *he*, going back to PALb **skijā* < PIE **skāi-~*ski-*. The PIE **i* did not undergo a change in PALb; it yields PALb > **i* > Alb *i*. Moreover, PALb **sk* is metathesized to **ks* > Alb *h* in PALb roots (*hirrë* 'whey' < PALb **ksirā*) with voiced occlusive but also in roots with sonorants **l, *r, *m, *n, *j, *w* [Orel, 1998, p. 147; Huld, 1984, pp. 74–75]. Cognates: Skt. *chāyā-*, Gk. *σκία*; also, cf. Hitt. *himma* 'imitation, copy'; CLuw. *ḫišḫija-* 'to bind,' HLuw. *hishi-*, Skt. *sā-*, *si-* 'to bind,' or Lith. *siėti* 'to bind' [Mani, 2024, p. 164].

Three stages of the word: PALb: **skijā* > Mess: *hia* > Alb: *hi(j)a*.

ihi (interj.) > *ihi*. Interjection or/and *-i* ending reflection.

Commentary

Once again, the inscription highlights the importance of the dative case for the anthroponym / ethnonym/ Artai, suggesting a parallel with the dative in Ancient Greek (this recurrence is evident in several other instances). The inscription unfolds like a poetic depiction of Artas, upon whom the star

casts a shadow, representing one of the deities in whom he believes. The term for star, articulated as *hill* and occasionally as *ill/i* and *'lli*, assumes various forms, reminiscent of modern Albanian. Yet, in every instance, it remains unmistakably identifiable.

In fact, the lemma *hyll* (also in forms: *illi*, *ill*, *'lli*, *ille*) reaffirms Hahn's interpretation [Hahn, 1854, p. 231] of this lemma as 'star.' It is among the words extensively used among the Mesapians, and in some cases, it does not exclude an allusion even to the sun, as Hahn believed. The Lat. *illi-c* > *illido*, *illisi* signifies 'there; falls, collapses, attacks.' In PALb. > Alb. it could be linked to the concept of a 'star,' symbolizing an entity that descends or inflicts harm from above. This association gains significance, especially when considering that *illex*, *illicis* holds the meaning of something enchanting or inflaming. However, the interpretation of the letter *i* in *i-lli* makes it a negation particle in Lat., giving the word a different character than in Mess. and Alb. Atkinson also linked *Hylleis* with *Illyrii* [Atkinson, 1931–35, p. 6]. In the vicinity of the Liburnian tribe, near present-day Split, there is said to be a peninsula called *Hyllis*; *Hyllas* is mentioned to be as large as the Peloponnese [Eratosthenes, 2010, p. 2016]. *Hila*, *hylli*, *ylli* is also associated with Gk. ἴλη~ἴλαι 'fur, wool; a unit of chosen male warriors'; ἰλάρχης or ἰλάρχαι is called the leader of this unit, and with Hitt. *illuyanka-*, *elliyanku-* meaning 'serpent,' perhaps 'serpent protected by the stars, in the form of a constellation; moving by sliding around?'; perhaps also βασιλεύς, as a word formation reflecting Hom. ἠέλιος and PALb. *skīw-ila*.

Regardless of the fact that similarities among words from different language families often emerge as accidental cultural, conceptual, or thematic associations and homologies, it might be worth reexamining the associations with the lemmas of Semitic languages: Akkad. *ilu*, *il*, Heb. & Phoen. *elohim*, Ugar. *il*, Arab. *ilah*, *allah*, meaning 'god.'

In Mess. > Alb. *hyll~yll~ill*, meaning 'star' is closely related to *di(e)ll* 'sun,' reflecting the power of the sun as a deity. Therefore, the semantics of 'star' and 'sun' seem to convey divinity in numerous languages.

The Independent Function of -ihi

Yet, there are additional illustrative cases that strongly dispute any concept of the genitive nature of *-ihi*. Here is at least one of these instances where *-ihi* stands alone, devoid of any morphemic precursor to bestow a genitive-specific character.

MLM 17 Ve	century ?	(504)
Item	jaihi	
Segm.	aihi	
Mess. > CALb.	aihi /aiii, ihiii/	
SALb	aihi /aiii, ihiii/	
Eng.	aihi /wail/	

Commentary

Certainly, in terms of representing the lexical item *-ihi-aihi*, this inscription is particularly revealing as it stands as a distinct semantic-linguistic unit, surpassing any genitive-specific role of the word. What genitive-specific function can it establish in this context?

Its immediate presence, without any preceding or following lemma, reaffirms its inherent non-genitive function. Additionally, although it may introduce melismatic and lamenting elements to each word, it doesn't confer grammatical category value.

Additional Implications of -ihi

Let's delve into another scenario involving the implication of the genitive case. In MLM 33 Ur, we come across the phrase "tabaraihi mah haraos?" where *-ihi* is interpreted as a genitive of *tabara*(!!), a term that has been occasionally understood as 'priestess; someone who makes offerings'. More accurate interpretations come from De Simone and Unterman, who trace it back to **to-bhoros/-ā *bher-* 'offerer'; Umbr. *aifertur* [De Simone, 2018, p. 1844; Untermann, 2000, pp. 48–49]; Alb. *ofresë*, *ofrues* 'offer, offerer'. If we adopt the interpretation of *tabara* as 'offerer,

priestess', what grammatical impact would the genitive have here? 'Of Priestess'?! Moreover, hypothetically speaking, *-ihi* could convey the meaning as an ending of the nominative or ablative but not the genitive.

Another argument against *ihī~aihi* representing a genitive throughout Messapic is its infrequent occurrence in many inscriptions. Taking MLM A1 as an example, it is rarely found, and when it does appear, its functional correspondence leans more towards the dative than the genitive. Even rarer sightings occur in the inscriptions from *Grotta della Poesia*, in MLM Ro, appearing only a few times in 22 inscriptions.

If someone were to argue that this genitive is less common in certain Messapic dialects, it should be noted that Messapic had developed a relatively stable structural consistency. Therefore, the exclusion of *-ihi* on such a scale as a genitive in an entire class of texts would be unlikely, especially when it symbolically manifests its existence.

Certainly, how can we explain the scarcity of *-ihi* occurrences within a comprehensive corpus from *Grotta della Poesia*, where it only appears two or three times, and when it does, it's evident that it doesn't signify the genitive? If the genitive is of paramount importance in the sepulchral discourse, why is there such a marked reduction in its presence in this corpus? Moreover, even when *-ihi* is present, it is abundantly clear that it lacks a genitive connection.

In MLM 4 Ro, the last confidently fragmented word, emerging and repeated several times, is ...*vinaihi*. In Albanian, it means 'vinë', while in Messapic, it symbolizes one of the most common offerings presented in the *Cave*. In another inscription from the same cave, sharing the identical grammatical context, we encounter *vinai*, representing 'vine' without *-ihi* at the end, implying the absence of the 'genitive'. Having the genitive in both *vinai* and *vinaihi* within the same grammatical context would be impossible. As occasionally suggested, if *-ihi* indeed echoes the theme *-i*, serving as a thematic reflection of ritualistic tonal mimesis, it does not carry any genitive function in instances within the MLM Ro inscriptions, such as '...of vine' or similar expressions. In certain cases, in accordance with the indefinite form of the noun, the addition of *-ihi*, mirroring *-i*, may also occur, functioning as an 'echoing genitive'. In support of this observation, considering the genitive's predominant impact on the word stem, it becomes significant that the genitive holds no inherent syntactical role and "may often replace other cases, without expressing their meaning" [Meier-Brügger, 2003, p. 272].

Parallels of *-ihi*

Nonetheless, in what instances does *-ihi* take on the role of the genitive ending? These cases are rare but do occur. For instance, in the inscription MLM 4 Ur, we find: *diðehaihi*, which could be segmented into *diðe hai/hi* and interpreted as *ditë haji/hi* 'day of food; day of offerings'.

This example serves as a reminder that the initial *i* in *ihī*, when required for writing efficiency, takes on a dual graphic function, serving as both the end-of-word marker and the beginning of the interjection.

After all, if *ihī~aihi* consistently fails to denote the genitive except in specific instances, what then functions as the genitive marker in Messapic? Principally, the genitive marker *-(a)s* signifies genitive relationships, as evidenced in examples like *klaohi/zis* (Alb. *koh' e zisë*) 'time of darkness' or *ðo/aras* (Alb. *të arës*) 'of the land' (MLM 1 Br), *onas* (Alb. *jona*) 'our' (MLM 1 Bas). Even masculine names such as 'det' (in modern Alb.) occasionally adopt the genitive form with *-s*, as seen in *ddetis* 'of the sea' (MLM 3 Car). The word *zi-a* 'darkness' (feminine) aligns with the genitive form of feminine names in the first declension in Greek *-ας*. However, the genitive also manifests with *-t* and other variations. Simultaneously, the dative frequently appears with *-ai*, the nominative with *-as*, akin to ancient Greek, and the accusative with *-n*, echoing ancient Greek, Hittite, and other ancient Indo-European languages. Without a doubt, *-as* is implicit in various cases.

Therefore, at its core, Messapic shapes the genitive in alignment with the ancient Greek model, exhibiting subtle differences. In particular instances, it might align with the dative, nominative, or even genitive, functioning as an echo-iso without carrying morphological significance for the genitive.

It's worth noting as well that, compared to similar elements in texts from the late Middle Ages, *-ihi* finds its own parallels, but they seem to be more of a homologous nature. For instance, the presence of the *AOI* particle in *Chanson de Roland*, extensively discussed [de Mandach, 1957; Frank, 1933; Love, 1984], evokes a sense of resemblance with *-ihī*. On the other hand, from inscriptions of the Messapic era, perhaps parallels can be drawn with the *oy/oi* of Phrygian [Cursach, 2018] and the *-iai* of Venetian [Brixhe, Lejeune, 1974].

Perhaps the Hitt. word *ai* ‘helas; pain,’ and similar expressions like *ai-ai-ai*, *aha*, *wi*, *wi-wi-wi*, *wāi*, with the same meaning [Tischler, 2016, pp. 2–3], can be compared to *-ihi*, without leaving aside *a(y)i-* that Puhvel describes as ‘pain’, seemingly based on onomatopoeia [Puhvel, 1984, p. 13]. Furthermore, the Hitt. word *aḫa* has been explained as a ‘call during a ritual’ [Tischler, 1983, p. 4], and this explanation encapsulates, better than anything else, the linguistic anthropological substance of the particle *-ihi*, beyond any superposition of the verb or case meaning. Tischler’s explanation goes even further by interpreting the vowel *i* itself, stating ‘*i* - onomatopoeic screams at celebrations’ [Tischler, 2016, p. 119]. This precisely mirrors the nature of the Messapic *-ihi*.

Certainly, it cannot be ruled out that initially, *-ihi* had its own meaning as a root, perhaps closely related to the Skt. roots *hi(s)-* meaning ‘urge, heat, strike, impel, hurl’, and *hīḍ-* meaning ‘to make/be angry’ [Lubotsky, 2018, pp. 227–235]. Consequently, the potential verbal meaning of *-ihi* has evolved from the ritualistic sense of raising the voice as a sign of anger or mourning, as evident in Messapic inscriptions or within presented conflict scenes. Hence, *-ihi* emerges as a defining element of the lamentation genre, persisting in modern Albanian tradition and aligning with *iso* – a distinctive symbol of iso-polyphony, a musical genre rooted in ancient times.

Ihi* as an *iso

A robust affirmation of *-ihi*’s role in the context of *iso* is evident in MLM 1 Mo, where the term ‘*iso*’ is employed, telling us who upholds the iso-mourning tradition. In this more extensive inscription, the final fragmented words are as follows:

Mess. ...*issino ma ison Tōltus i. Inai* ΩΦ,
Alb. ...*kishin ma’ ison Toltusi e Inai* ΩΦ.?
Eng...‘the *iso* was kept by: Tōlti and Inai’ ΩΦ.?

Certainly, two individuals were designated as iso-takers. This reinforces the notion that *-ihi* can convey the tonal dimension of the funerary ritual of mourning, solidifying its role within the tradition of Messapian customs and sepulchral culture.

Epitaphs, as integral components of epigraphic culture, maintain a close association with tombs and mourning practices within the broader context of funerary culture. The burial and votive rituals, coupled with customary lamentations, dances around the grave, and expressions of grief for the departed, constitute the primary thematic and discursive elements within these inscriptions. The resonant sound of lamentation, symbolized by *-ihi*, serves as a poignant echo of pain and stands out as the most illustrative aspect of this lamentation paradigm. Consequently, as a reflection of burial customs, *-ihi* articulates the depth of mourning sorrow, occasionally forming an iso-polyphonic mourning genre within sepulchral inscriptions, often intertwined with expressions of pride for the deceased.

Dating back to the antiquity of Crete, the era of Gilgamesh, and extending through the mourning of Achilles for Patroclus, this tradition, traversing the Mediterranean and hinterland, has seen *-ihi* evolve into a distinctive hallmark representing a connection with mournful singing in graves or mourning iso-singing. The influence of this tradition is evident in both Illyrian and Albanian cultures. Among Albanians, this influence persists, symbolically echoing even in modern times, identifying with the mourning ritual of *gjama* ‘mourning’. The expression takes various forms, including *ih-ih/oh-oh* or *eh-eh*, as meticulously documented by Reimer Schultz [1938, pp. 256–259]. Wailings, lamentations, mournful cries, and moans, such as *ë-hë-hë*, *i-hi-hi*, *o-ho-ho*, *a-ha-ha-ha*, *aiiii*, *oiiii*, adopt melismatic characteristics, imparting distinctive features to the iso-polyphonic genre through ritual singing.

Hence, we can assert that the ritual of lamentation and mourning, coupled with singing and dancing as observed in specific epitaphs, seems to have played a role in shaping the iso-polyphonic genre preserved among contemporary Albanians. This tradition appears to have ancient roots in the Illyrian-Hellenic world. It’s noteworthy to recognize the early differentiation between *gjama*, ‘mourning by men’, and *vajtimi*, ‘lamentation by women’, as they often form a distinctive rite de passage – a joint ceremony involving both genders. This integrative aspect is also evident in the MLM 13 Cae epitaph, explicitly addressing the phenomena of mourning or lamentation and detailing the organization of the ‘choir’ participating in the mourning. In essence, MLM 1 Mo and MLM 13 Cae epitaphs complement each other significantly, offering insights into both *-ihi* and the verb *gjama/*

tis 'to mourn'. Visual representations of mourning/lamentation can be gleaned from depictions of Illyrian burial and dance rituals found in artifacts from Illyrian society [Shukriu, 2004]. Additionally, other inscriptions depict a ritual later identified as the 'danse macabre' (see: *valla* in MLM 1 Al; MLM 18 Ve; MLM 6 Ro; MLM 28 Al).

While iso-lamentation harks back to the origins of *iso*, iso-polyphony itself unveils connections with the Illyrian and Epirote traditions [Rihtman, 1958; Tole, 2005] and might have exerted its influence within the Byzantine musical tradition. The Byzantine tradition is renowned for its characteristic drone note, a perpetual and monotonous tone that has endured in Byzantine liturgy. Plutarch made mention of iso-polyphony in the region, associating it with misfortunes and lamentations [Plutarch, 2013]. In addition to its link to burial rituals, iso-singing has been associated with the 'songs of sirens' [Tole, 2005, 2007]. However, the inscriptions discussed earlier, referencing iso-keepers centuries before Plutarch [2013], suggest that polyphonic songs originally had strong ties with chorales and mourning rituals among graveyards, eventually evolving into an independent musical genre over time.

Shifting the focus from ritual to language, as is necessary here, the term *iso* seems to trace its etymological roots to: Hitt. *išhamai-i* 'to sing; *za-mai* > voice-taking' and its derivatives: *išhamḫi* 'song, melody,' and Skt. *sāman*- 'song, hymn; *za-man* > voice-taking < **sh2óm-en-*; PIE **sh2m-ói-ei*, **sh2m-i-énti* [Kloekhorst, 2008, pp. 393–394]. Skr. *sāman* is relevant here, correlating with Alb. *za/mban* 'voice-taking,' functioning as a synonym for song, lament, and hymn. The root of the word *iso* may also be discerned within the word-forming structure of Gk. *Μούσα* 'muse' (cf. Alb. *ma-iso* 'take iso?'), as the muse sang to the gods, maintaining the iso for the bards, inspiring them.

It's important to note that *-ihi* is intricately linked to the 'Maniat laments' originating from Mani in the Peloponnese, Greece. In this context, the concept of 'antiphony' (see: *antifónisi* in [Taylor, 2012, p. 87]) involves seamlessly blending social and musical elements, resulting in a polyphonic performance with voices unfolding in counterpoint, similar to *iso*.

All of these observations lead us to the conclusion that the phonetic and morphematic structure of *-ihi* emerges as an expression of mourning and lamentation, uniquely conveyed in Albanian. It functions as a call to grief, tears, signifying a 'wailing of sorrow; with deep emotion,' expressed as *hoj-hoj* [Kondi, 2012, p. 12]. Consequently, it also takes the form of *oi-oi*, giving rise to the distinctive *ih-ihi*.

Certainly, while *-ihi* maintains its rhythmic-melismatic ritualistic exclamatory function, it does not rule out the possibility of developing a peripheral, inflective, and word-forming function beyond its close association with the genitive case. It primarily preserves the memory of a 'kind of melismatic ending' or *i* reflection, a grammatical *iso* that adapts to any word order, safeguarding the origin of the lamenting pathos embedded as an interjection.

Conclusion

Following a comprehensive analysis of the presence of the lexical item *-ihī~aihi* in Messapic epigraphy, one can infer that this word doesn't exhibit a *well-measured*, structured, and consistent presence within inscriptions. Instead, it manifests sporadically, aligning with the rhythmic, semantic, and emotional patterns typical of an interjection, attaching itself to nouns, verbs, pronouns, or other words. This imparts the emotional rhythm of grief, transforming it into a linguistic sign characterized by an interjection marker, and thus abstaining from becoming grammatically and historically embedded within the category of the genitive case.

Considering the abundance of verbs in Messapic inscriptions, a presence that appears to surpass initial estimations, further strengthens the argument for the dense occurrence of *-ihi* as an interjecting marker or as a reflection of the ending *-i*. This diminishes the significance of its identification with the genitive, making it largely incidental. Furthermore, a more substantial identification, albeit accidental, lies with the Dat. and Acc. Indeed, persisting in understanding *-ihi* as an ending marker suggests that it surpasses being merely a genitive marker. Instead, it evolves into an echo of words with an all-discursive character, accompanying every word and consistently originating in an interjection.

A reevaluation of *-ihi* as an interjection marker or reflection of the ending *-i*, to be understood independently from the preceding or following word, offers a clearer insight into the ongoing process of fragmentation, and simultaneously opens up unprecedented possibilities for interpreting Messapic inscriptions. Certainly, the interrelation with an internal-comparative method, utilizing the structure of Proto-Albanian and Albanian, remains crucial in this endeavor. Bugge, an early influencer of Krahe

and Hamp, among others, asserted: "If there were a better interpretation of the inscriptions, Messapic would gain weight and should be seen as a substitute for the old, missing Albanian" [Bugge, 1892, p. 194]. The reconsideration of the function of *-ihi* as a segmenting, lexical, and grammatical marker significantly contributes to the segmentation and interpretation of the Messapic corpora. It also plays a role in reviving Bugge's highly genuine idea.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Alb. = Albanian	Lat. = Latvian
Akk. = Akkusative	Lith. = Lithuanian
Akkad. = Akkadian	Mess. = Messapic
Arab. = Arabian	MLM = Monumenta Lingua Messapica
CAlb. = Classical Albanian	n. = none
CLuv. = Classical Luvian	ON = Old Norse
Dat. = Dative	PAlb. = Proto-Albanian
Eng. = English	Phoen. = Phoenician
HLuv. = High Luvian	OE = Old English
Gen. = Genitive	OI = Old Irish
Gk. = Ancient Greek	PIE = Proto-Indo-European
Hitt. = Hittite	Segm. = segmentation
Heb. = Hebrew	Skt. = Sanskrit
Hom. = Homeric	SAlb. = Standard Albanian
Hung. = Hungarian	Ugar. = Ugaritic
Illyr. = Illyrian	Umb. = Umbrian
interj. = interjection	v. = verb
Lat. = Latin	

THE MESSAPIC ELEMENT *-IHI*: A NEW INTERPRETATION

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Key words: *Messapic epigraphy, -ihi, ending, reflection, interjection, Proto-Albanian*

The lexical item *-ihi~aihi* in Messapic epigraphy poses a significant challenge for scholars, functioning as a vital grammatical and semantic component in inscriptions.

This article seeks to reassess the role of *-ihi*, suggesting it may function as an interjection or a reflection of *-i* rather than merely as a genitive marker. By offering a reinterpretation of *-ihi*, the study *aims* to establish a new framework for the fragmentation, analysis, and interpretation of Messapic inscriptions. This fresh perspective will be explored through detailed examination of selected examples, incorporating internal-comparative analysis, *methods* of ‘frame semantics’ (according to Ch.K. Fillmor and S. Marchesini), linguistic anthropology, and the hermeneutic method.

Initially identified in the 19th century as a genitive ending, *-ihi* has garnered significant scholarly attention as a pivotal element in text fragmentation, serving both as a marker and a guiding principle thereof. However, persistent debates have arisen regarding its exclusive function as a genitive marker, with some scholars contending that it solely denotes nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. This dichotomy has posed challenges in conceptualizing word fragmentation beyond the grammatical function of *-ihi*, fostering a genitive-centric perspective that has rendered Messapic somewhat enigmatic, even labeled as a ‘phantom language’.

The assertion that the majority of Messapic vocabulary consists of nouns ending in *-ihi* has intensified scholarly interest, prompting deeper investigations into its nature. Yet, despite its declared function as *genitive*, exploring alternative roles for this lexical item, particularly in the context of potential Illyrian or Proto-Albanian origins, remains largely unexplored territory. Considering the conceivable historical interplay of *-ihi~aihi* within the context of Illyrian – Proto-Albanian > Classical Albanian, an etymological exploration seems justified, especially from an internal-comparative perspective.

An examination of the classical Albanian tradition, which predominantly employs the suffix *-h* at the end of words terminating with vowels, such as in the case of Buzuku (1555), suggests a possible connection between *-hi* and this suffix, perhaps as a post-vocalic resonance rather than solely a genitive marker. Furthermore, parallels between Messapic genitive structures and Proto-Albanian remnants, which persisted into the post-Messapic era and even into modern Albanian, hint at a broader linguistic continuity.

While *-ihi* undoubtedly aids in text segmentation, serving both as a word ending and occasionally as an emotional interjection, its classification solely as a genitive marker oversimplifies its linguistic significance. Examples highlighting the interpretive paradoxes surrounding *-ihi* underscore the need for a nuanced examination of its multifaceted roles, including its potential as a reflection of the *-i* ending or an interjection mimicking mourning practices, particularly in funerary contexts.

The efficacy of *-ihi* in formal text segmentation notwithstanding, the question of its true linguistic function persists: is it primarily a genitive ending, a reflection of the *-i* ending, or an interjection? This inquiry demands thorough investigation, especially considering its implications for understanding Messapic language and culture. By delving into these complexities, this article aims to illuminate the enigmatic nature of *-ihi* and its broader significance in the study of Messapic epigraphy and Albanian linguistic evolution.

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