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THE *VIVO SUO* FORMULA, AS A POSSIBLE MANIFESTATION OF THE INTERCONNECTION OF THE GREEK AND LATIN LANGUAGES IN MOESIA INFERIOR[1]

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Abstract: The paper focuses on a strange variant of the *se vivo* expression which can be found mostly in Moesia Inferior: the *vivo suo fecit* formula. It appears only in twelve inscriptions, but that makes up one third of all the occurrences of the *se vivo fecit* expression in this region. How can we account for this formula, which cannot be explained by the classical Latin grammar? This intriguing form has attracted the attention of Giovanbattista Galdi, who in 2002 dedicated a paper to the possible origin of the formula. In this paper, he claims that the *vivo suo* form is the result of the interconnection of the Latin and Greek languages in Moesia Inferior, since the expression usually occurs in areas populated by Greeks. Galdi attributes the emergence of the formula to the fact that the Greek language does not have a possessive pronoun (like the Latin *suus*), but uses the genitive case of the reflexive pronoun (*ἑαυτοῦ*) to express the possessive relation. According to this theory the bilingual environment in Moesia Inferior, and more specifically the aforementioned Greek structure caused a confusion in Latin in the use of the possessive pronoun (*suus*) and the reflexive pronoun (*se*). The aim of my paper is to examine Galdi's argument and to point out the problematic elements of this theory.

Keywords: inscriptions, dialectology, Moesia Inferior, ablative absolute, formular language, Greek-Latin bilinguism, *vivo suo fecit*

In 2018, we have published a paper in the *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* on the *se vivo fecit* expression,[2] which appears almost 1400 times in Latin inscriptions from the first up to the seventh century AD, from a large part of the Roman Empire.[3] It was used in funerary inscriptions when the customer wanted to

[1] The present paper was prepared within the framework of the project NKFIH (National Research, Development and Innovation Office) No. K 124170 entitled "Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age" (see: http://lldb.elte.hu/) and of the project entitled "Lendület ('Momentum') Research Group for Computational Latin Dialectology" (Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

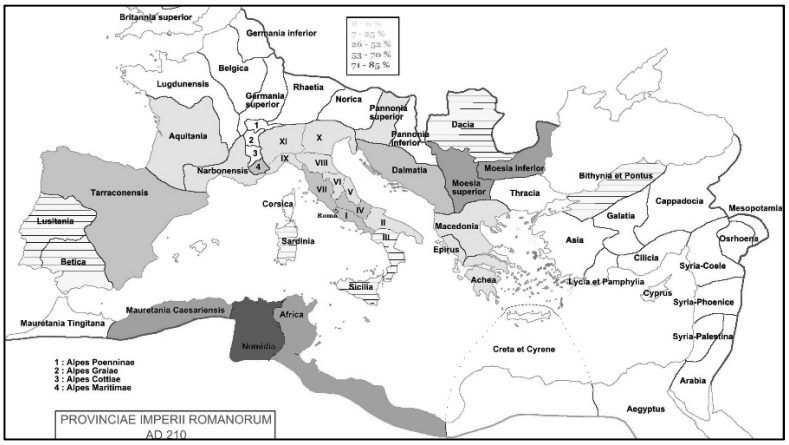
[2] Zelenai 2018.

[3] E. g.: CIL VI 13181. **Aurelius** Pius Augg(ustorum) l(ibertus) | **fec(it)** sibi **se vivo** | et Aemiliae | Silʳv=Bʾanae coniugi | suae sanctissimae | b(ene) m(erenti) et lib(ertis) lib(ertabusque)

express clearly that the tomb had been ordered by him during his lifetime and not just after his death, by his will.

This expression is worth the investigation due to the fact that we can see an ablative absolute construction where in classical Latin a participle or an adjective is used as an apposition. In other words, in our expression, a nominative *vivus* or a dative *vivo* (if *sibi* is also present in the sentence) should stand in the place of *se vivo*. As it does several times: the occurrences of the correct version (*vivus fecit* or s*ibi vivo fecit*) are multiple of the form using the ablative absolute. Looking at the whole empire, the examples with the ablative absolute (*se vivo*) make up one fifth of the expressions using the *vivus* adjective.

The *se vivo fecit* expression can be found in the west side of Northern Africa, in the Iberian Peninsula, in Gallia, in Italia, in the Balkans and in a very low number in Pannonia Superior, in Dacia and in Bithynia et Pontus. The map, which illustrates the proportion of the *se vivo* form (compared to the number of inscriptions using the *vivus* adjective) in each province, shows that the main centre of the *se vivo fecit* formula was Numidia, where *vivus* was used as part of an ablative absolute construction in the 82% of its occurrences. In the adjoining provinces, the *se vivo fecit* and the *vivus fecit* types were used with nearly the same frequency. As also in Rome, where the *vivus* adjective stands in an ablative absolute construction in the 51% of the occurrences, so the density of the *se vivo* form was above average.



1. Proportion of the examples with abl. ab. among the inscriptions using the vivus *adjective*

poste|risque eorum *(Roma, 151-300. AD)*; ICUR VIII 22409. December **se vivo fecit** sibi bisomum *(Roma, 351-400. AD)*

The formula was often used in the north-eastern part of the Balkans as well. In Moesia Inferior and Superior, we can find it in more than one third of the inscriptions that were ordered during the lifetime of the addressees (*se vivo*: Moesia Inferior 38%, Moesia Superior 36%). Its proportion was much lower in the bordering provinces: except of Dalmatia, where it reaches 7%, we know of only an insignificant number of occurrences. In the Balkans, the habit of ordering one's tomb before one's death was usual from the first to the third century, then it fell out of fashion, although did not disappear absolutely, in the Christian times.

Comparing the chronological distribution of the occurrences of *se vivo* and *vivus fecit*, we get the result that their proportion was relatively constant in both periods. So, in the Balkans, the *se vivo fecit* has not lost its popularity faster than the expression with an apposition. It remained an alternative variation of the *vivus fecit* expression also in the Christian times, although both types were rarely used.

There is an interesting development that we did not have enough space in the mentioned article to expand on. Almost exclusively in the Balkans, the inversion of the expression (that is *vivo se* instead of *se vivo*) was also used. Besides, in Moesia Inferior we can find examples of the *vivo suo* form, which Giovanbattista Galdi thinks to be the result of the considerable Greek influence in this region.[4] The aim of this paper is to examine his argument on the origin of the *vivo suo* form.

The idiom occurs only 12 times in the Latin epigraphic corpus:

1. CIL III 6131.[5] D(is) M(anibus) | **Ma[r]c[i]an[u]s** | vet(eranus) ex ordi|nato vixit | annis CIIII | et **Veneria Va|lentina** quʿae=Iʾ et | Pelma coniux | carissima **vi|vo suo** sibi | **fecerunt** | s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis) *(201-300. AD)*
2. CIL III 12427.[6]]re **e[t]** | **Apronia** | **Resp[e]cta** | uxor [a]vo | **[v]ivo suo** | t[it]ulum et | memoria<m> | **pos[ue]runt** *(101-300. AD)*
3. CIL III 12432.[7]]**itus** c(ivis) R(omanus) **vivo suo p(osuit)** Iuliae Dometiae | [--- m]a[r]itus co[niugi] suae kariss[imae] *(151-200. AD)*
4. CIL III 12490.[8] Mem(oriae) | **G(aius) Iul(ius) Sergi<u>s | vivo suo po|suit** sibi et | coni<u>gi suae The|agenia<e> quʿae=Iʾ vi|xit annis XXXXV | et filio suo Theo|doriano qui vixit | an<n>is XXVI et

[4] Galdi 2002, 75-94.
[5] ILBulg 168.
[6] ILBulg 392.
[7] ILBulg 364.
[8] IsCM V 80.

fili<a>e su|ae Cocceianʳae=Iʾ quʳae=Iʾ vi[xit] | annis XXII et fili<a>e su<a>|e Sergianʳae=Iʾ qui vi|xit annis IIII b[e]n[e] / merentibus [posu]|it ave viator et | vale *(201-250. AD)*

5. CIL III 14214.20.[9] Dis | Manibus | **Coc(ceius) <H>elius pos(uit) | vivo suo** sibi | et Titi<a>e Matri|n<a>e co<n>iugi su<a>e | bene merenti qu|<a>e vixit ann(os) XXX | obita ad vil<l>a<m> / sua<m> titulum po|suit *(151-200. AD)*

6. AE 1914, 94.[10]] | **Ioses** arc<h>isʳy=Iʾna(gogus) | et principalʳi=Eʾs | filius Maximini | Pannoni sibi et | ʳC=Qʾyriae co<n>iugi / suʳae=Iʾ **vivo suo** me|moria<m> **dedica|vit** *(271-330. AD)*

7. AE 1969/70, 568.[11] D(is) M(anibus) | **Val(erius) Rufus** vet(eranus) ex vico Vor|ovo minore **vivo suo** | sibi et coniugi su<a>e Aurel(iae) Zuraturmeni | memor|iam **fecit** insuper sol|um [s]uum qui est annoru|m LXV valeat viator | viʳv=Bʾat qui leget *(151-300. AD)*

8. AE 1991, 1382.[12] D(is) M(anibus) | e<t> memori(ae) | T(itus) Fl(avius) Secun|dus vixit an|nis L **Aelia** | **Bendʳis=SIʾ** ma|rito suo pi|{ent}issimo | et sibi **vivo | suo posuit** *(171-250. AD)*

9. AE 2010, 1428.[13] D(is) M(anibus) | **Aelius So|la vivo s|uo** sibi **po|suit** et Ael<ia>e / Marci<a>e co<n>|iugi pi{ent|[issimae *(151-200. AD)*

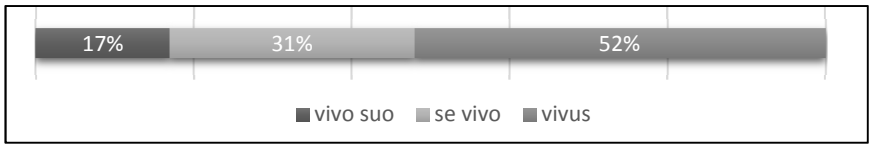
10. ILBulg 216.[14] D(is) M(anibus) **Au|r(elius) Silvanu|s** vet(eranus) leg(ionis) XI Cla|u(diae) **vivo suo** | sibi et Val(eriae) | Marciae | caris<s>im<a>e | co<n>iugi suʳae=Iʾ Au(relio) Sabino | prʳi=Eʾvigno vi|x(it) an(nos) XXX et Au|reliae fil(iae) vix(it) | an(nos) XV Silvano ne|poti vix(it) an(nos) III *(231-270. AD)*

11. ILJug III 1319.[15] D(is) M(anibus) | Aelia Gaia v(ixit) | ann(os) XVIII **Fl|avia Longinilla** | mat(er) et **Aelia Longi|na** filia et **Aelius | Vitalis vivo | suo** coniugi | carissimae | b(ene) m(erenti) | **p(o)s(uerunt)** *(131-200. AD)*

[9] IsCM V 29.
[10] ILBulg 67.
[11] Montana II 110.
[12] GLIHalmyris 22.
[13] GLIHalmyris 24.
[14] Conrad 466.
[15] IMS III 2, 63.

12. CIL V 8747.[16] **Fl(avius) Fandigil<du>s** protector | de numero armigerorum **vivo | suo** arcam sibi **co<m>paraˊv=Bˀit** si quis | il<l>am vol<u>erˊi=Eˀt aperire dabit | in fisco auri un(cias) sex et ips(am) arca<m> | <in> ec<c>lesi<a>e com<men>daˊb=Vˀ(it) *(381-400. AD)*

We have 10 examples from Moesia Inferior (examples 1-10), 1 from Moesia Superior (example 11) and 1 from Venetia et Histria (example 12).[17] Why should we pay attention to this idiom occurring so rarely that one could easily interpret its appearances as individual mistakes? In Moesia Inferior, 10% of the funerary inscriptions contains any form of the *vivus fecit* expression (which means 67 examples). Nearly in the half of them (32 examples), the expression is in the ablative absolute, but in one third of these examples (11 inscriptions), the formula is perverted: in these cases, we can see the *vivo suo* idiom, in which the possessive pronoun stands instead of the reflexive pronoun.



As Galdi summarised in his paper published in 2002, the Roman culture appeared in Moesia Inferior in the first century AD, after the military occupation and the construction of the Danubian Limes. In this first period, it was represented by people (especially soldiers) who came from Italia or from the western provinces. At the beginning of the second century, the Roman settlement reached the coast of the Black Sea, a region predominated by Greek population and culture for several years. Although the Romanization of the province has started – Trajan had founded two colonies (Ratiaria and Oescus) and two cities (Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis), – the Greek language and culture was not pushed into the background. The immigration of Greek speaking population from Asia Minor and Anatolia increased remarkably thanks to the improvement of the region. This population settled in the cities and on the coast of the Black Sea, and came in contact with Roman culture. Greek became the language of the sanctuaries in the whole region, though Latin was used in all other aspects of life, except the Black Sea coast (Scythia Minor),

[16] = ILCV 472.

[17] Galdi mentions 15 examples from Moesia, but we excluded 4 of them because they are fragmented just at the place of the expression, so one part of the idiom is absent, and we can only suppose that our expression stood there.

where the Hellenistic culture prevailed. Nicopolis ad Istrum had also a special status, since it had Greek constitution and administration.[18]

The Greek-Latin coexistence caused evidently many borrowings in both languages. For example, we can see the word ἀρμάτων (Greek genitive plural of the Latin *armatus*) in Greek inscriptions, or *archontium* in Latin epigraphs. Galdi has succeeded in demonstrating that a phenomenon considered one of the most characteristic features of the Greek-Latin coexistence was present in Scythia Minor. The Greek language does not have a possessive pronoun, the possessive relation is generally expressed by the genitive of the reflexive pronoun (ἑαυτοῦ). In Scythia Minor, as usually in regions where Latin and Greek were present at the same time, there is a significant number of Greek inscriptions that use the ἴδιος adjective instead of the reflexive pronoun, which fact attests the influence of the Latin possessive pronoun (*suus*).[19]

It is to be noted that the examples of borrowings cited by Galdi are all from the level of lexicon, the most variable language subsystem, which is highly exposed to external influences. Nevertheless, Galdi considers the *vivo suo* form as an evidence that the mutual changes within the two languages caused by their interconnectedness in several regions have reached the morphology and the syntax as well.

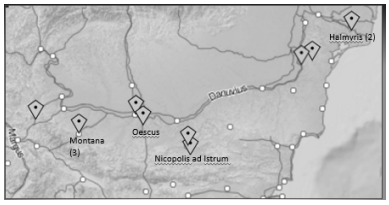
The starting point of Galdi's theory was that a Greek background can be demonstrated in many inscriptions containing the *vivo suo* idiom: we can see Greek names in some of them, words written with Greek letters in others, and the major part of the inscriptions are from that regions of Moesia Inferior where the Greek-Latin bilingualism was a peculiar characteristic. Galdi emphasizes that 5 of his 12 inscriptions (found in Moesia Inferior) are from Scythia Minor, and he mentions the Greek cultural background in connection with every place where an example of the *vivo suo* idiom is attested.[20]

[18] Galdi 2002, 73-74. About the Romanization and Hellenization of Moesia, see also Adamik 2003.

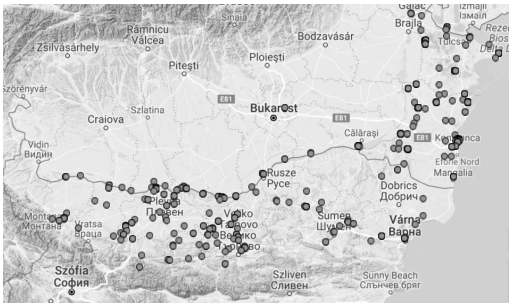
[19] Galdi 2002, 74-78.

[20] Galdi 2002, 78-84.

The problem is that we can find Greek culture everywhere in the province, especially in the cultural centres, that is, in the same areas where the major part of the Latin inscriptions were produced anyway. This geographic correlation makes probable that any special idiom appears only in these very regions due to the higher number of inscriptions. Our expression – as it can be seen on the second map[21] – occurs in inscriptions found near the cities (3 at Montana, 2 at Oescus, 2 at Nicopolis ad Istrum), and along the roads of Scythia Minor (4 inscriptions). The third map[22] (which depicts the regional distribution of the recorded LLDB data from the province) shows that the density of the Latin inscriptions was generally over average in the aforementioned regions, which indicates that the *vivo suo* form could have appeared even without any Greek influence. It does not mean that the makers of the inscriptions have not had Greek cultural background, but it was present in every regions of the province where people made Latin epigraphs. Therefore, the places where the *vivo suo* idiom occurs are not special in this aspect. Besides, we should note that the Greek letters (mentioned by Galdi) can be found in only one inscription, which we excluded from the analysis because it is too fragmented.



2. Regional distribution of the inscriptions containing vivo suo in Moesia Inferior



3. Regional distribution of all inscription fond in in Moesia Inferior

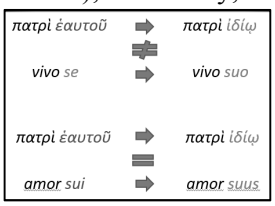
The basis of Galdi's linguistic arguments is the aforementioned absence of the possessive pronoun in the Greek language. In Latin cultural environment, the presence of the Latin possessive pronoun (*suus*) engendered a demand for a parallel Greek word, and the possessive relation was expressed not only with the genitive of the reflexive pronoun (ἑαυτοῦ), but also with the ἴδιος

[21] We marked the places on the map using the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*. (http://dare.ht.lu.se/)

[22] We made the map with the searching module of the *Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age* (http://lldb.elte.hu/en/database/)

adjective, which corresponds to the Latin *proprius*. According to Galdi's theory, this influence could be reversed as well: due to the Greek influence, Latin speakers began to use the genitive of the reflexive pronoun (*sui*, the parallel of ἑαυτοῦ) instead of the possessive pronoun (*suus*). Because of the similar forms of the possessive and the reflexive pronouns in Latin, the process could advance. The two words started to merge into one another, and not only the reflexive pronoun could stand in place of *suus*, but also the possessive pronoun was used instead of the reflexive. This second step is manifested in the *vivo suo* form.[23]

In our opinion, the main problem with Galdi's argument is that the *vivo suo* idiom instead of *se vivo* is not parallel to the other mutations mentioned above. The use of the ἴδιος adjective instead of ἑαυτοῦ, or the *sui* (as the genitive of *se*) instead of the possessive pronoun, are reverse processes, and both affect the syntax. Nevertheless, the connection between the *vivo suo* and the *se vivo* idioms is not the same, since the genitive of the reflexive pronoun does not have any part in these expressions, while the supposed confusion is between the possessive pronoun and the **genitive** case of the reflexive pronoun in both languages, which confusion was a result of the semantic similarity. In Latin, the confusion of the two words theoretically can manifest in two ways: first, in cases where the genitive of the reflexive pronoun stands in place of *suus* (which is usual in Moesia Inferior, according to Galdi),[24] secondly, in cases where *suus* (agreeing with the substantive) stands instead of the **genitive** of the reflexive pronoun. For example, in the position of an objective genitive, which must be expressed by the reflexive pronoun. (e. g. *amor suus* with the meaning of 'love for him', where *amor sui* is the correct form). The *vivo suo* idiom is a different case, since there is not any semantic reason that would cause the confusion of the **ablative** of the reflexive pronoun with the possessive pronoun.



Nevertheless, it is still possible to account for the phenomenon by the confusion of the two words, so we have to investigate all of Galdi's arguments, if we want to sufficiently refute this theory. He mentions another explanation with the same starting point. According to it, the *suo* of the *vivo suo* idiom is an alternative form of the ablative of *se*, created from the genitive (*sui*), which

[23] Galdi 2002, 89. „(…) some speakers felt a perfect equivalence between the Greek *ἑαυτοῦ* and the Latin *sui*, and this may have had a double consequence: **A**. The use of sui instead of the possessive pronoun (…) **B.** The use, conversely, of the possessive pronoun *suus* instead of the reflexive (…)"

[24] Galdi 2002, 87-88.

was often used in this region. Since *sui,* because of its ending, could be interpreted as a genitive in the 2nd declension, people added the ending to the ablative case in accordance with the same declension.[25]

Now we can see that the question of how often the genitive of the reflexive pronoun was used is a crucial point in the problem. The form, since it could be used only as an objective genitive, appears rarely in the epigraphic corpus. Galdi has found 6 examples of it in Southeast Europe that, in his opinion, stand in place of the possessive pronoun. We are not sure that 6 occurrences from 3 provinces (Dacia, Moesia Inferior and Macedonia) are enough to make a statement about linguistic tendencies, even if the occurrence of the word is obviously rare in Latin epigraphy. But if we look at the examples, we will see that 2 of them should be seen as grammatically correct, and one's text is unsecure at the relevant point. These 3 occurrences should be excluded from the group of evidences.

13. CIL III 1207.[26] P(ublio) Ael(io) P(ubli) f(ilio) Pap(iria) | Silvano | IIvir(ali) et sa|cerd(otali) [co]l(oniae) A[p(ulensis)] | eq(uiti) R(omano) e(gregiae) m(emoriae) v(iro) | Fabia Lucil|la e(gregiae) m(emoriae) v(iri) filia | mater coll(egiorum) | fabr(um) et cent(onariorum) | coloniae s(upra) s(criptae) | **socero sui | amantissi|mo** *(Dacia, 201-275. AD)*

14. AE 1977, 758.[27] Q(uod) b(onum) f(austum) f(elix) | vicani Petrenses qui [c]ontule[r]unt | causa salutis **corporis sui** balineu<m> faciundu<m> quod opus | effectu<m> magisterio anni Nymphidi Maximi et Aeli Gem[ini] qu<a>estori|bus vici Ulpio Romano et Cassio Primitivo curantibus operis N[ymph]idio / Maximo s(upra) s(cripto) et Aelio Iulio *(Moes. Inf, 201-400. AD)*

15. CIL III 6311.1.[28] P(ublius) Hostilius Philadelphus | ob honor(em) aedilit(atis) titulum polivit | de suo et nomina sodal(ium) inscripsit eorum | qui munera posuerunt | Domitius Primigenius statuam | aeream Silvani cum aede | C(aius) <H>oratius Sabinus aˊd=Tˋ templum tegend(um) | tegulas CCCC tectas | Nutrius Valens sigilla marmˊo=VˋrˊeˊIˋa | duˊoˊAˋ Herculem et Mercurium | Paccius Mercuriales opus cementic(ium) | (denariorum) CCL ante templum et tabula picta Olympum | (denariorum) XV | Publicius Laetus aˊd=Tˋ templum aedifi|candum donavit | (denariorum) L | item Paccius Mercuriales aˊd=Tˋ templum | aedificandum cum fili<i>s et

[25] Galdi 2002, 87.
[26] = IDR III 5. 2, 483.
[27] = IScM V 222.
[28] = Philippi 164.

liberto don(avit) | (denariorum) L item sigillum marm˹o=Vˀr˹e=Iˀum Liberi | (denariorum) XXXV | Alfenus Aspasius sacer(dos) | signum aer(eum) Silvani cum basi | item vivus | (denariorum) L **mortis** causae **su˹ae=Iˀ** | remisit | Hostilius Philadelphus inscin|dentibus in templo petram excidit d(e) s(uo) *(Macedonia, 101-200.)*

In example 13, the relevant part is *socero sui amantissimo*, where *sui* might be an objective genitive. We have found similar expressions (*amantissimus* with objective genitive) many times in the letters of Cicero (e. g. Cic., *Ad fam*. V 5. 1. *Pompeius, homo ... tui cupidus, nostri amantissimus ad te proficisceretur*). Example 14 contains *corporis sui*, where *sui* is the neuter genitive singular of the possessive pronoun. Although, according to Mihaescu,[29] *sui* might stand instead of *eorum* in this position, and Galdi accepts this opinion, it does not mean that *sui* is derived from the reflexive pronoun. It agrees with *corporis*, so it must be considered as the genitive of *suum.* In the third one (example 15), there is a significant problem with the text: in the commentary of the CIL III, on *causae*, we can read: *CAVSAE vel CAVSAF lapis, unde legi potest* causa f(ilii) sui*; at hoc admisso* vivus *caret idonea significatione.* So, *causae* has been chosen because *vivus* can be seen as redundant in the other case. But we have seen many occurrences of *vivus*, where it does not have a special meaning. If we accept *causa f(ilii)*, there is no problem with *sui,* in this case it is the genitive of *suus*, agreeing with *filii*, and we do not need to suppose that it is the genitive of *se*.

In 2 cases of the remaining 3 examples, *sui* stands in place of *suae*.

16. AE 1914, 94.[30]] | Ioses arc<h>is˹y=Iˀna(gogus) | et principal˹i=Eˀs | filius Maximini | Pannoni sibi et | **˹C=Qˀyriae co<n>iugi / su˹ae=Iˀ** vivo suo me|moria<m> dedica|vit *(271-330. AD)*

17. ILBulg 216.[31] D(is) M(anibus) Au|r(elius) Silvanu|s vet(eranus) leg(ionis) XI Cla|u(diae) vivo suo | sibi et **Val(eriae) | Marciae** | caris<s>im<a>e | **co<n>iugi su˹ae=Iˀ** Au(relio) Sabino | pr˹i=Eˀvigno vi|x(it) an(nos) XXX et Au|reliae fil(iae) vix(it) | an(nos) XV Silvano ne|poti vix(it) an(nos) III *(231-270. AD)*

In these cases, the phonological background of the mistake cannot be excluded from the explanation. We have other examples where *ae* (pronounced as *e*) appears on the stone as an *i*,[32] although they are extremely rare. But we should

[29] Mihaescu 1978, 330.
[30] = example 6.
[31] = example 10.
[32] cf. example 4.

take into account that in both cases there is *coniugi sui* in place of *coniugi suae*, in which examples the *-i* at the end of *coniugi* also could be the cause of the mistake of assimilating the *-ae* of *suae*. There is only one inscription in which *sui* is almost without doubt a genitive of the reflexive pronoun: in the *filiorum sui* expression, it could hardly be interpreted in any other way.

18. AE 1922, 74.[33] Iovi et Iuno|ni | Iulius Teres magis|tra<tu>s vico Ulmeto | aram posuit de su|o pro salute sua|{m} et **filiorum su|˹orum=I˺** et vicanorum / an<n>o suo f(ecit)
(Moesia Inferior, 101-200. AD)

Based on the evidence above, we think that the use of the genitive of the reflexive pronoun where the possessive pronoun should stand – a phenomenon that might be a result of the Greek influence – was not well spread enough in the Latin of Moesia Inferior to be considered a tendency.

The other problem with Galdi's theory, which interpret the *vivo suo* idiom as an indication that the use of the reflexive pronoun was not established in the region, is that the *suo* instead of *se* occurs only within the *vivo suo* idiom, and nowhere else. Galdi claims that *se* (the accusative and the ablative of the reflexive pronoun) is quite rare in Moesia Inferior, which „might suggest that some speakers didn't really know the ablative form of the third person reflexive pronoun."[34] Galdi has found only 4 occurrences of *se* from Moesia Inferior in the third volume of the CIL, excluding the examples within the *se vivo* expression. However, we have found 24 occurrences of *se* in the province,[35] which is proportionally not less than the examples from Moesia Superior or from Rome, compared to all inscriptions from each province.[36] The *pro s*e formula ('for himself or herself') was obviously present in Moesia Inferior. Galdi has found it only in 2 inscriptions, but it occurs 18 times,[37] and *se* is never substituted by *suo*. Therefore, in our opinion, the *vivo suo* form, a mutation of the *se vivo* idiom, is not the result of a general linguistic process. Looking for possible Greek influence, we must search for it in the corresponding Greek **formula**.

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[33] = IScM V 69.

[34] Galdi 2002, 87.

[35] AE 1934, 106; AE 1963, 175; AE 1972, 522; AE 1980, 829; AE 1984, 797; AE 1987, 874; AE 1988, 996; AE 1997, 1317; AE 2007, 1224 (2x); AE 2011, 1137; CIL III 753; 7460; 7470; 7535; 12365; 12429; 12466; ILBulg 28; 114; 291; 356; 409; IScM IV 214.

[36] Moesia Inferior: 24 *se* / 3934 inscriptions, Moesia Superior: 13 *se* / 1751 inscriptions, Roma: 1014 *se* /120.136 inscriptions. (The inscriptions with *se vivo* or *vivo se* are excluded.)

[37] AE 1934, 106; AE 1963, 175; AE 1972, 522; AE 1980, 829; AE 1984, 797; AE 1987, 874; AE 1988, 996; AE 2011, 1137; CIL III 7535; 12365 12429; 12466; ILBulg 28; 114; 291; 356; 409; IScM IV 214.

We can imagine only one way how the Greek formula could have caused the creation of *vivo suo*. The Greek expression corresponding to the *se vivo* idiom is ζῶντος ἑαυτοῦ, a genitive absolute construction. If one translated it back into Latin in the strict sense of the word (that is keeping the genitive absolute), the result would be *vivi sui*. *Se* and *suus* has the same ending in the genitive, so, in the process of transforming the genitive absolute into an ablative absolute, one could mistake one pronoun to the other, and form the ablative from *suus* instead of *se*. The result of the mistake could be the form *vivo suo*. However, there are two significant problems with this explanation. First, the *vivi sui* form cannot be found in inscriptions. Secondly, the ζῶντος ἑαυτοῦ genitive absolute is only seldom attested in the Greek inscriptions, we know of only 3 examples, all of them are from Moesia Inferior.[38] So they might be considered as an influence of the Latin *se vivo* idiom. In Greek inscriptions, the grammatically correct participle (ζῶν) was used, agreeing with the subject in gender, case and number. It is obvious that these 3 occurrences could not induce a change in the Latin expression. At this point, we can declare that the Greek influence can hardly be demonstrated in the formation of the *vivo suo* idiom. We have not found any linguistic arguments for it, the only indicator is the unquestionable Greek cultural background in the region.

At last, we should take a look on the explanation of Einar Löfstedt, which was firmly rejected by Galdi. In a paper published in 1911, Löfstedt interpreted the *vivo suo* idiom as a substantival phrase.[39] In this case, we should suppose the existence of the never attested neuter substantive *vivum* (derived from the *vivus* adjective), which would have the same meaning as *vita*. Thus, the *vivo suo* expression, as a temporal ablative without preposition, would mean *'in vita sua'* (in his/her/their lifetime). If we accept Löfstedt's, explanation, the Greek influence must be excluded, since ἐν βίῳ never occurs in the Greek inscriptions from Moesia Inferior, and none of its occurrences elsewhere stands in the position of ζῶν.

Galdi has outlined two problems regarding the supposed *vivum* substantive. First, he felt problematic that the *vivus* adjective and the *vivum* substantive lived side by side in Moesia Inferior at the same time, and were used in the same expression, while *vivum* never appeared elsewhere as a substantive. However, the same problem occurs if we suppose that *suo* and *se* were used with the same meaning, as Galdi claims. His second argument against Löfstedt's explanation was that he had found 1 example of the form *viva sua*,

[38] IGBulg III 1 995 (ζῶντος ἐμοῦ); IGBulg IV 2047; IGBulg V 5180.
[39] Löfstedt 1911, 299.

which means that the first part of the idiom cannot be a substantive, since here it has a feminine ending, agreeing in gender with the subject of the clause.[40]

CIL III 7496:[41] D(is) M(anibus) [-]Γ[-] Cethithis | Didi viva su|[a ---]RTO et [*(151-250. AD)*

If we look at this obscure epitaph, we will see that it is fragmented just at the middle of the word under discussion. We can see only *su[* from the supposed *sua*. Since *viva* (in its own) can also be a nominative feminine corresponding to the subject, we do not need to interpret *su[* as the beginning of *sua*. It can be for example a dative (*suo* or *suis*), or a name starting with *Su-*. This one uncertain inscription cannot sufficiently prove that the feminine variant of *vivo suo* existed in Moesia Inferior. Actually, in 4 of our 11 examples, *vivo suo* (in this form) stands with feminine[42] or plural[43] subjects, in which cases, if we take *vivo* as an adjective, it would be expected to agree in number and gender with the subject. But it never does, and this absence can be a strong argument for interpreting the idiom as a substantival expression.

Galdi has attracted our attention to the order of the words within the *vivo suo* formula, which order never changes. He also considers that in Moesia Inferior, the possessive pronoun almost always stands after the noun. According to him, „once the translation from *se* to *suo* had taken place, the latter was given the same position, in the formulation, as a normal possessive pronoun mainly because its phonetic and morphologic structure, which gave it its possessive pronoun feeling (…)"[44] Galdi's observation is quite important, but it can also be used as an argument backing Löfstedt's explanation rejected by him. The word order in the formula indicates that *suo* was interpreted as a possessive pronoun (and not as the ablative of *se*), and if so, *vivo* must be a substantive, with which the possessive pronoun agrees.

Although many reasons point to the substantival interpretation, unfortunately, we cannot finish our paper stating that it is definitively the right theory. The huge problem that keeps us from such a firm claim, is that *vivo suo* as a substantival expression means 'in his/her/their lifetime', and should be a parallel formula of *'vita sua* or *in vita sua'*. But the latter expression is extremely rare in Latin epigraphy, it occurs only 8 times (always with a preposition),[45] and there is just one

[40] Galdi 2002, 90-91.
[41] = IScM V 119.
[42] example 8.
[43] example 1, 2, 11.
[44] Galdi 2002, 91.
[45] AE 2012, 1499. CIL II 4137; CIL II 7, 136; CIL VI 9222; CIL VIII 27587; CIL X 26; ICI III 26; ICUR I 847.

Christian inscription from Samnium, where it stands as a synonym of the *se vivo* (or *vivus*) idiom, in a case where it occurs in regard to the production of the tomb.[46] So, the expression from which the *vivo suo* as a substantival formula could be derived does not seem to have existed. Thus, all we can certainly say is that Greek influence is not evident in the development of the idiom, and the substantival interpretation should not be firmly rejected.

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[46] ICI III, 26.