'Sacred Inscriptions' from *Venetia et Histria (Regio X)* in Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Novus thesaurus veterum inscriptionum* (1739-1742)

Tatiana Tommasi, PhD Candidate (University of Udine – Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

1. Introduction

'Sacred inscriptions' are complex and heterogeneous documents with a high information potential. They have always played a crucial role in epigraphic *corpora* and traditionally occupy the first place in their taxonomy. However, the approach to these documents has changed over time.

My PhD project tries to analyse how inscriptions related to the sacred sphere were treated in the epigraphic works produced between the 18th and the 19th centuries, a crucial period for the development of the epigraphic science. My research will highlight the innovations and limits of these works and how they influenced the *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (*CIL*) and, consequently, our current epigraphic working methodology.

Figure 1. Portrait of Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) by Johann Jacob Haid.
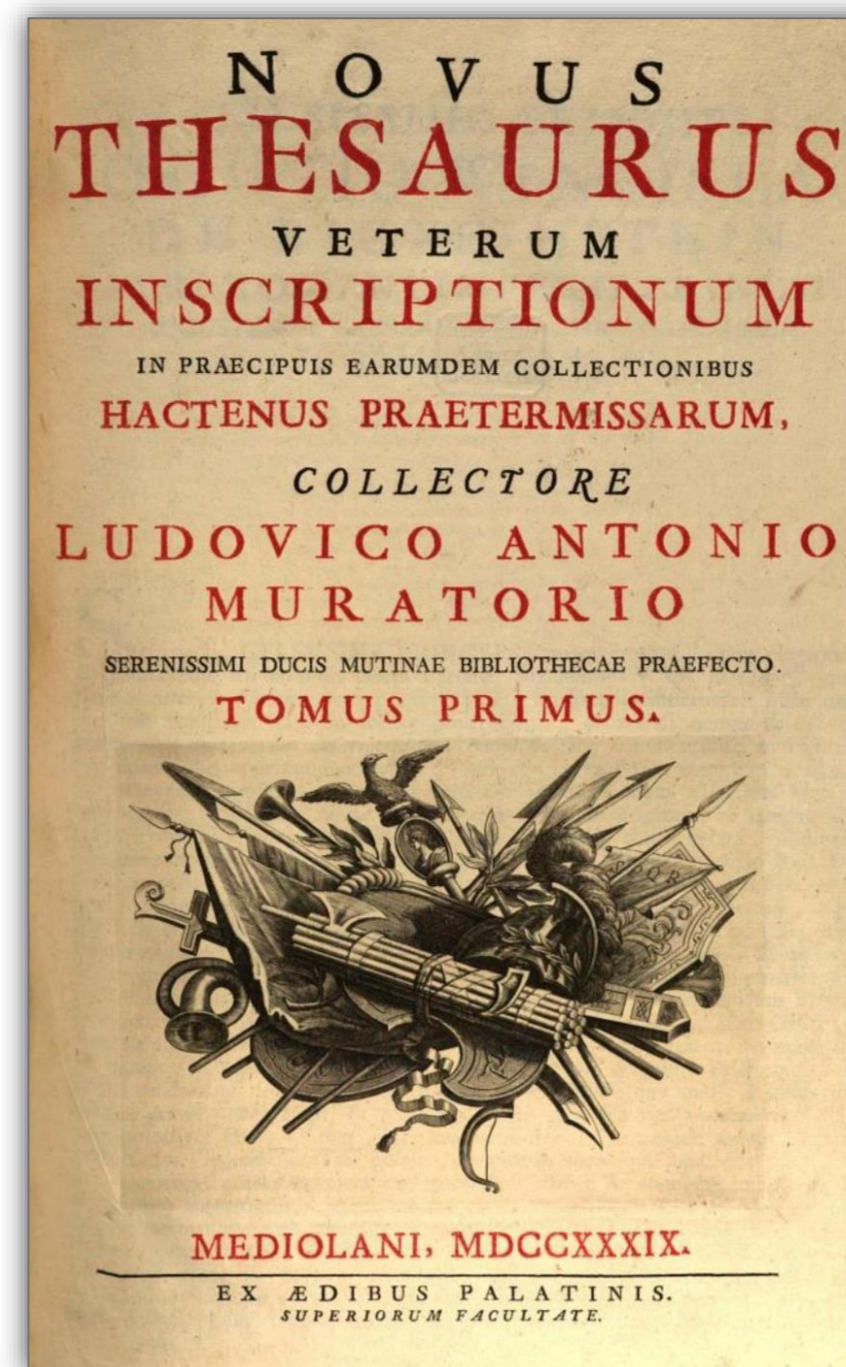

Figure 2. Front cover of the first volume (1739) of Muratori's *Novus thesaurus veterum inscriptionum*.

2. Case Study

Specific attention will be dedicated to a case study: Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Novus thesaurus veterum inscriptionum* (*NTVI*, 1739-1742), an impressive collection of ancient Greek and Latin inscriptions divided into four volumes (Figures 1-2).

Muratori's working methodology, lacking the autopsy of epigraphic monuments, has been criticised by several scholars; however, the accurate research conducted on the documents preserved in Muratori's Archive by the editors of the *CIL* demonstrates the faithfulness of many of the sources that he had used.

My project tries to recover the information related to religious inscriptions contained in archival documents connected to the *NTVI* and to evaluate how this process can help us to reconstruct the lifecycle of epigraphic monuments.
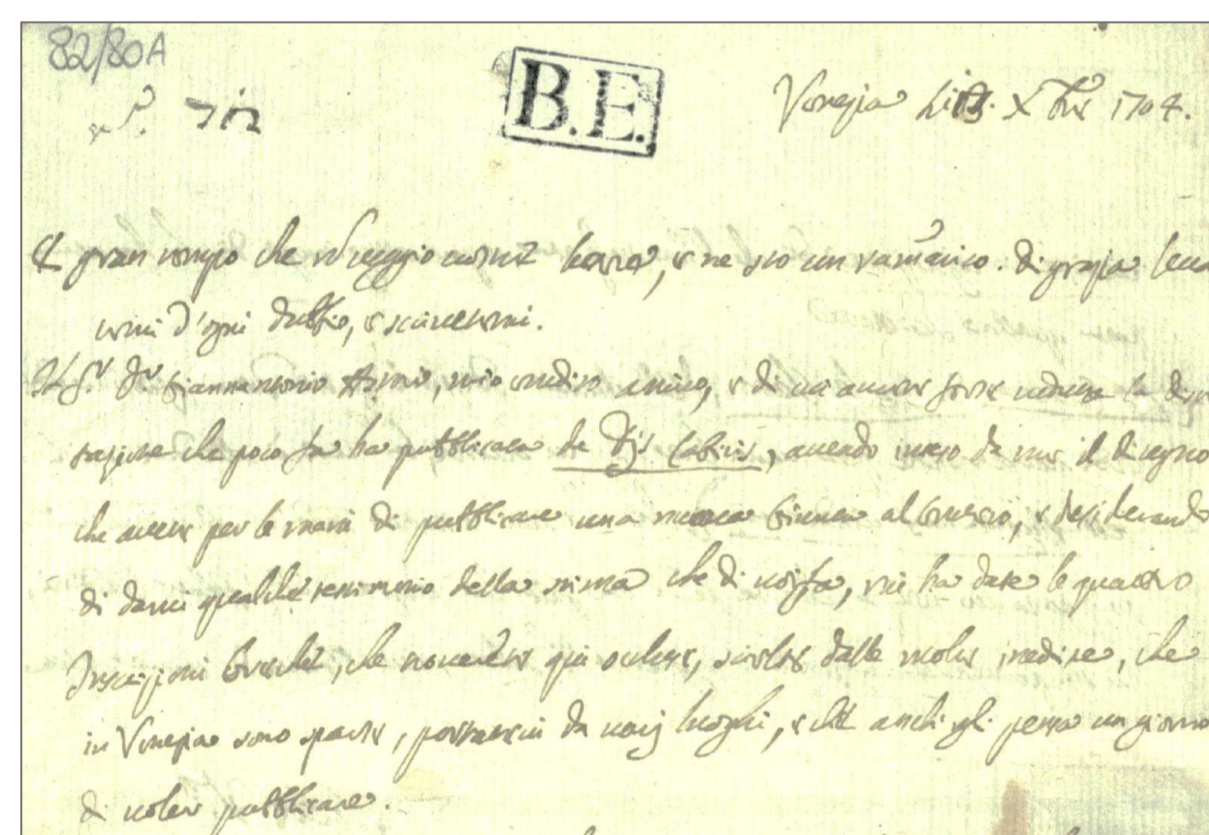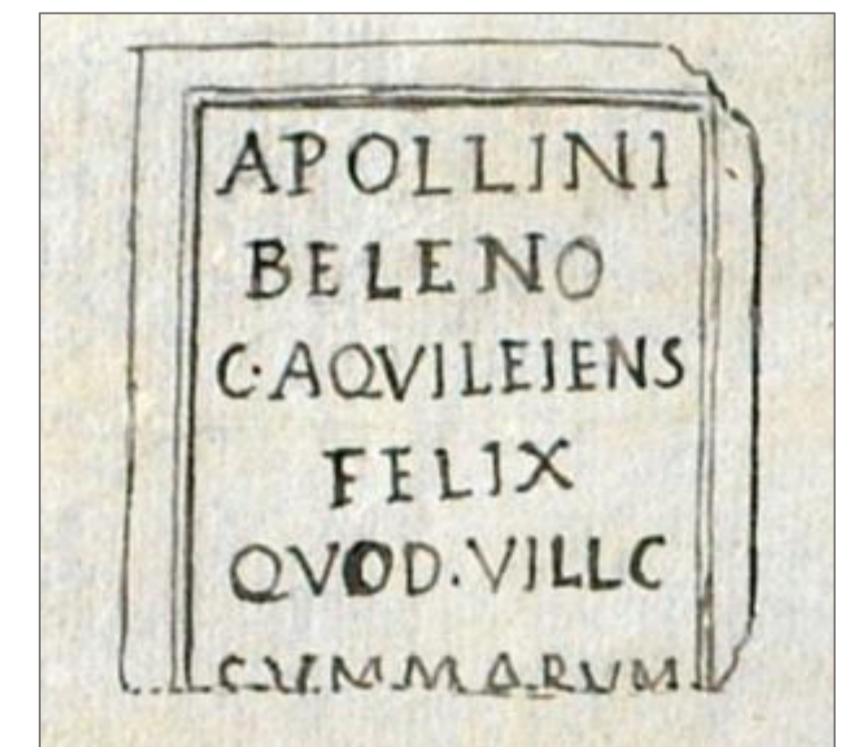
3. Materials and Working Methodology

My analysis mainly focuses on the following archival materials:

1. the handwritten version of the *NTVI*, by Muratori himself;
2. Muratori's epistolary exchanges (Figure 3);
3. the epigraphic transcriptions sent to him by his contemporaries (Figure 4), who, in many occurrences, had seen the inscribed monuments in person.

Most of these documents are preserved in Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Muratori's Archive (BEUMo, AM) and have been digitized. They are currently available online through the *Internet Culturale* and the *Estense Digital Library* web portals.

My research is divided into three main steps and adopts a methodology that combines the traditional approach of epigraphic criticism with digital technologies.

Figure 3. A sample of Apostolo Zeno's letter to Muratori. BEUMo, AM, 82.80.A. From *Internet Culturale* (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Ubi erat lupa record of the inscription

http://lupa.at/18646

Figure 4. Epigraphic transcription (*CIL* V 737 = EDR093877) sent to Muratori by Giovanni Francesco Beretta. BEUMo, AM, 37.05. From *Internet Culturale* (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Step 1

Comparison between the printed edition and the handwritten version of the *NTVI*, through the use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) (Figure 5). HTR is performed through the open-source web application *eScriptorium*.

Step 2

Use of handwritten documents preserved in Muratori's Archive to create HTR and segmentation models for epigraphic manuscripts. The application of HTR to the epigraphic transcriptions sent to Muratori by his contemporaries will allow to improve their layout and content analysis (Figure 6). Furthermore, for a significant number of archival documents related to epigraphy an XML digital edition, compliant with TEI (Text Encoding Initiative), will be created.

Figure 5. Comparison between the printed and the handwritten version of the *NTVI* for *CIL* V 4047. *NTVI*, 5, nr. 3; BEUMo, AM, 32.03, f. 10*v* (*Internet Culturale*, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Step 3

A specific study will be dedicated to the Latin inscriptions from the *Venetia et Histria* region related to the sacred sphere and published in the *NTVI*. Each of them will be encoded through an updated EpiDoc XML record, paying specific attention to the information retrieved from the handwritten tradition.

Main Expected Results

1. Improving of the layout and content analysis of the handwritten documents related to epigraphy preserved in Muratori's Archive in Modena.
2. Creation of updated EpiDoc XML records for a selection of Latin inscriptions, with the aim of establishing a digital connection between the handwritten tradition, the inscribed monuments and some digital resources related to epigraphy (e.g., epigraphic databases, gazetteers, but also 3D models of inscribed monuments or online reproductions of manuscripts).
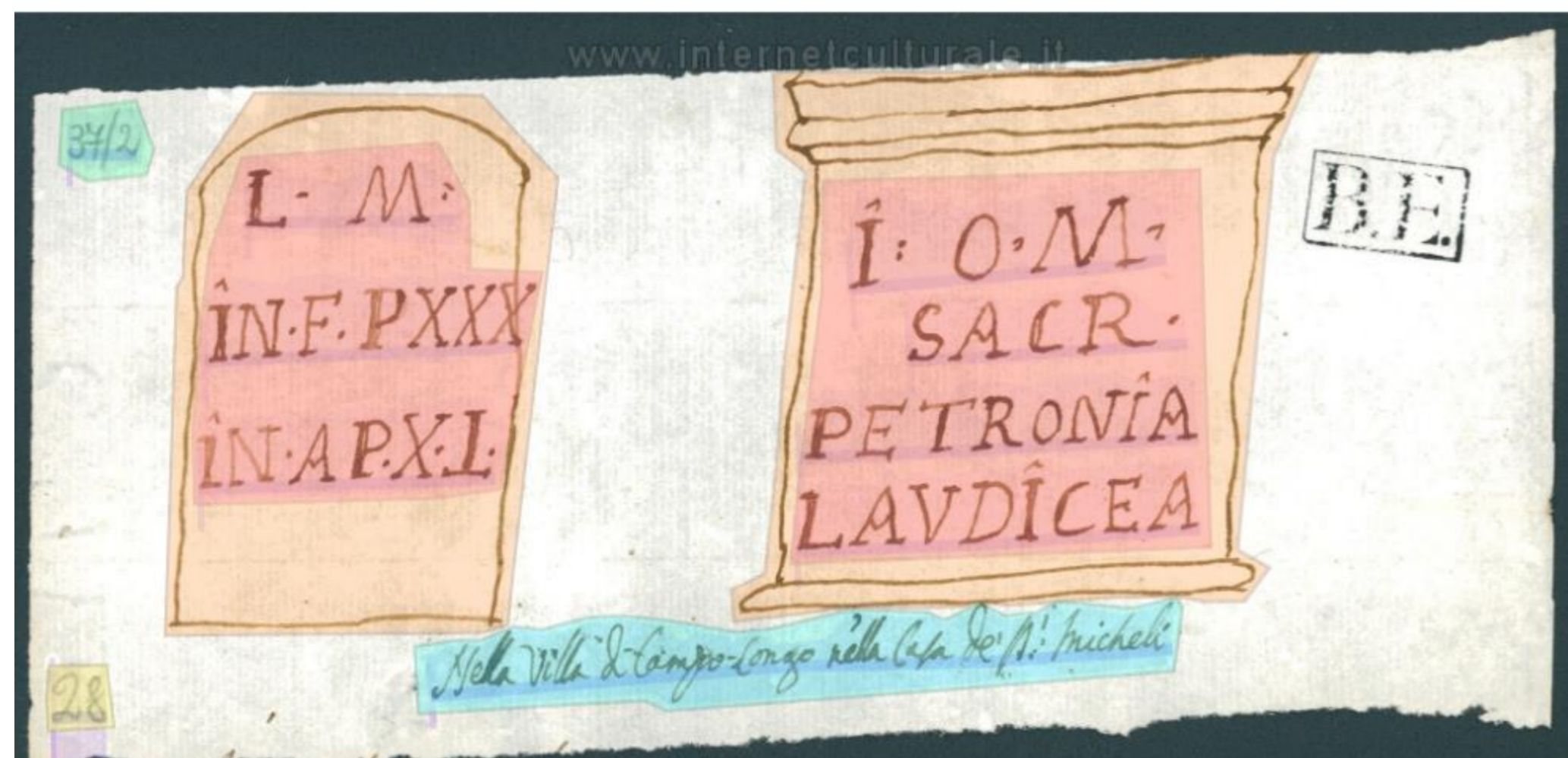

Figure 6. Baselines and regions of interest coloured by type. On the left: *CIL* V 1512; on the right: *CIL* V 787 = EDR116868; both lost at the present. BEUMo, AM, 37.02. From *Internet Culturale* (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0).

Selected Bibliography
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