

Novel Perspectives on Communication Practices in Antiquity

*Towards a Historical
Social-Semiotic Approach*



Keynote speakers

James Clackson

(University of Cambridge)

Mark Depauw

(KU Leuven)

Jean-Luc Fournet

(Collège de France - EPHE)

Antonella Ghignoli

(Sapienza University of Rome)

Petra Sijpesteijn

(Leiden University)

Organizing committee:

Klaas Bentein

Yasmine Amory

OCTOBER 3-5, 2019

HET PAND

CULTURE AND CONVENTION CENTER

ONDERBERGEN 1, GHEENT



Historical Sociolinguistics
Research and Training



Credits: Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent

www.lukasweb.be

Art in Flanders, foto Hugo Maertens

Program

Thursday, October 3, 2019

9:15-9:45 Registration

9:45-10:00 Welcome Greetings

Morning session: Genre and multimodality. Chairperson: Klaas Bentein

10:00-10:30 Introduction by **Klaas Bentein** (Ghent University)

10:30-11:00 **Sarah Béthume** (INCAL/CEMA, UCLouvain)

“The ‘exposed writings’: how the study of the ‘pluricode’ message of ancient Greek inscriptions can shed light on the archaic and classical dialectal variation”

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:00 **Nicola Reggiani** (University of Parma)

“Towards a socio-semiotic analysis of Greek medical prescriptions on papyrus”

12:00-12:30 **James Wolfe** (The Ohio State University)

“Imagining faith: images, scripts, and texts of early Christian inscriptions from the Roman Near East”

12:30-14:00 Lunch Break

Afternoon session: Texts and intra-semiosis. Chairperson: Yasmine Amory

14:00-14:45 **Key-note speaker: Antonella Ghignoli** (Sapienza University of Rome)

“This is the catalogue! A so far unknown latin documentary papyrus from 6th century Italy”

14:45-15:15 **Martti Leiwo** (University of Helsinki)

“Hands and language in ostraca letters from Roman praesidia in Egypt”

15:15-15:45 **Giulio Iovine** (University of Naples “Federico II”)

“*Descriptum et recognitum*. A survey of Latin closing and acknowledging formulae in Latin and Greek papyri and ostraca”

15:45-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-16:45 **Antonia Apostolakou** (Ghent University)

“How to sign a contract in Late Antique Egypt: a study of linguistic variation”

16:45-17:15 **Simona Russo** (Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»)

“Rome as New York, fashion capital?”

* Reception at Alice

Program

Friday, October 4, 2019

Morning session: Sociolinguistic variation. Chairperson: Mark Janse

9:15-10:00 **Key-note speaker: James Clackson** (University of Cambridge)
“Standard languages, language standards and language norms in the Greco-Roman world”

10:00-10:30 **Polina Yordanova** (University of Helsinki)
“The forest’s broken branches: discontinuity in Greek word order in documentary papyri from III c BCE to III c CE”

10:30-11:00 **Alek Keersmaekers** (KU Leuven)
“Sociolinguistic variation in the Greek papyri: a corpus-based, bottom-up approach”

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:00 **Geert De Mol & Emmanuel Roumanis** (Ghent University)
“The Abinnaeus archive: lexical and orthographic features”

12:00-12:30 **Alessandro Papini** (Ghent University)
“A preliminary investigation on the <e>/<i> and <o>/<u> graphemic oscillations in Italian Latin inscriptions of the Republican age”

12:30-14:00 Lunch Break

Afternoon session: Visual and material aspects of texts. Chairperson: Joanne Stolk

14:00-14:45 **Key-note speaker: Jean-Luc Fournet** (Collège de France – EPHE)
“Beyond the text: the contribution of the ‘paléographie signifiante,’”

14:45-15:15 **Marco Stroppa** (Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»)
“Big & small: the size of documents as a semiotic resource for Graeco-Roman Egypt?”

15:15-15:45 **Nina Sietis** (Sapienza University of Rome)
“Abbreviations in Greek documentary texts. A case study of ‘significant palaeography,’”

15:45-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-16:45 **Eleonora Conti** (Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»)
“Spread and persistence of Latin document features in some Greek letters of high chancery on papyrus”

16:45-17:15 **Yasmine Amory** (Ghent University)
“Visual signs of deference in Late Antique letters”

* 17:30 Visit at the Archaeological Collection of Ghent University at Het Pand

* 19:30 – Dinner at Sint-Jorishof (optional, pre-reservation required)

Program

Saturday, October 5, 2019

Morning session: Multimodal aspects of writing. Chairperson: Giovanbattista Galdi

9:15-10:00 **Key-note speaker: Mark Depauw** (KU Leuven)

“Splitting words in Greek letters and petitions. Quantitative research based on Trismegistos”

10:00-10:30 **Joanne Stolk** (Ghent University/University of Oslo)

“The social meaning of scribal corrections in final versions of papyrus letters”

10:30-11:00 **Giuseppina di Bartolo** (University of Cologne)

“Sociolinguistic and semiotic remarks on Greek petitions”

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:00 **Sonja Dahlgren & Marja Vierros** (University of Helsinki)

“Coptic spelling variations transferred onto Greek – visually pleasing or phonologically based?”

12:00-12:45 **Key-note speaker: Petra Sijpesteijn** (Leiden University)

“After God I turn to you: The rhetoric of persuasion in Arabic request letters”

12:45-13:00 Conclusions and discussion

Abstracts

(in alphabetical order)

Yasmine Amory, Ghent University
yasmine.amory@ugent.be

Visual signs of deference in Late Antique letters

Politeness theory is by now a renowned linguistic concept that has also been applied to Ancient languages and specific corpora. However, it is mostly linked to the verbal communication and rarely deals with non-verbal elements. The visual and the graphic aspect is subsequently not usually taken into consideration, and this can especially be observed for ancient documents. This paper aims to investigate the possibility of a “visual politeness theory” in documentary texts. While the letter is maybe the documentary genre that has been further investigated in papyrology (there is many studies on its typologies, the epistolary clichés, the linguistic features...), the material and the visual aspects have so far received less attention. Recent studies have contributed to cover this gap on the Graeco-Roman period (see in particular Antonia Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World*, Berlin/Boston, 2018), but the Late Antique period still needs to be thoroughly examined. I will, therefore, focus on Late Antique letters from subordinates to superordinates and consider if the visual signs can eventually convey a deferent message along with the text.

Antonia Apostolakou, Ghent University
antonia.apostolakou@ugent.be

How to sign a contract in Late Antique Egypt: a study of linguistic variation

Writing practices within intensely multilingual environments such as the one of Late Antique Egypt are far from simple and homogeneous. Notary signatures in papyri of contracts from this period perfectly illustrate this observation, by displaying linguistic and scriptural variation that cannot be easily left unnoticed. The complexity of these variations encourages the assumption that specific socio-semiotic connotations might have been attached to these signatures, not only as linguistic, but also as visual products. This possibility is investigated in this conference, by first drawing a broad picture of linguistic variation in the so-called “di emu” type notary signatures. There is a further focus on the most interesting, in this respect, notaries from the Arsinoite nome, all of whom sign both in Greek and Latin characters. Language and script choices are approached using theoretical concepts from modern language contact and multilingualism studies, in an attempt of interpreting the social meaning and motivations behind them.

Abstracts

Sarah Béthume, INCAL/CEMA, UCLouvain
sarah.bethume@uclouvain.be

The “exposed writings”: how the study of the “pluricode” message of ancient Greek inscriptions can shed light on the archaic and classical dialectal variation

In this paper, I would like to show to what extent taking into account the material aspect of epigraphic documents - and therefore examining their different semiotic aspects, or the different “signs” they constitute - is essential to support the sociolinguistic study of archaic and classical Greek dialects (as recommended i.e. by Brixhe, 1997; Bubeník, 1989; Horrocks, 2010; Minon, *passim*). The linguistic study of archaic and classical Greek dialects is based on epigraphic documents whose first characteristic is being written in local alphabets as diverse as the dialectal variability they transcribe (Jeffery, 1990). In addition, these documents, whether from one to the other or even within a document, have many (ortho)graphical variations that are extremely difficult to explain when one only resorts to linguistics. For the study of these dialects based on these particular texts (my corpus being constituted by the dialectal inscriptions from Laconia and Argolid), I therefore consider that it is necessary to go beyond the dimension of “transcoding” the language through writing (as suggested by Klinkenberg, 1996: 221-236). It is relevant, as semiotics invites us to do, also to take into consideration the autonomous features that writing developed alongside language and that redound on it (Klinkenberg calls them “grammatological functions”, as opposed to the “transcoding” ones which are called “graphemological”, 1996: 226-227). Sociolinguistics has shown that the speaker adapts his message (content and form, “signifié” and “signifiant”) to the communicative situation (Jakobson, 1960; Klinkenberg, 1996), as part of the stylistic variation (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998: 59-61). It is consequently possible to apply the general pattern of semiotic communication to this corpus in order to highlight other particularities that should be taken into account in the linguistic study. As a matter of fact, the enunciation is particular in epigraphic texts since it involves, first, various speaker-scriptors (official or simple private commissioner, secretary, scribe, stonecutter, because inscriptions are rarely autographs) (Robert, 1955; Tracy, 1975): the material characteristics of the document can inform us about these addressers. Secondly, owing to the publicity vocation of these texts, the receiver-readers addressed by them are numerous (and this question is linked to that of literacy in Greek societies, cf. i.e. Boring, 1979; Cartledge, 1978; Millender, 2001). Thirdly, the inscription often adorns a material support which it resonates with, ranging from objects of everyday life to monuments, and which is frequently decorated (with reliefs, statues, votive objects, etc.).

Abstracts

As well as the archaeological context in which the documents were found and which once integrated them into their environment, urban landscape (in ἀγοραί, νεκροπόλεις, sanctuaries) or domestic microcosm (private homes) (Ma, 2009; Thomas, 1989), this medium informs us about the context of enunciation, of production of the message, and constitutes the channel through which the message is transmitted. It is this engraved material that is the specificity to the texts of our dialectal corpus: the inscriptions are “exposed writings” (we owe the formula to the titles of Susini, 1989 and of Fraenkel, 1994). All these elements form a semiotic whole, that is to say a “pluricode” message (Klinkenberg, 1996: 231-238), whose the linguistic written message only constitutes one element. I will focus on the contribution of these elements 1) to the understanding of the communicative functions of the inscriptions and therefore 2) to the dialectal study and 3) to the comprehension of linguistic and graphical variability.

James Clackson, University of Cambridge
jptc1@cam.ac.uk

Standard languages, language standards and language norms in the Greco-Roman world

The field of historical sociolinguistics has made great advances in writing the “linguistic history from below” of a number of modern and early modern languages. In most current work on historical linguistics it is possible either to plot language variation against a standard, or to make sense of it as part of a process of standardisation. In writing about the sociolinguistics of the ancient world, many scholars (including me) have applied the model of standardisation and standard languages to Latin and Greek. In this talk I will be asking how good this model is for ancient languages, and what are the problems and pitfalls with using it as a basis for sociolinguistic research.

Eleonora Conti, Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»
eleonora.conti@unifi.it

Spread and persistence of Latin documents features in some Greek letters of high chancery on papyrus

In this study, a group of official letters from the high chancery is collected and analyzed: they are from Egypt and they are all dated in the IVp century. These letters are all distinguished by a very peculiar layout and very similar writing. They are characterized by the following elements: the body of the letter in Greek, the greetings formula attached to the text, written in a faster ductus, and the date, in Latin, written partly at the bottom and partly in the left margin.

Abstracts

These features are semiotic resources which express a specific meaning: the official nature of the letter and the authority of the sender. Furthermore we can compare these features with some Latin specimens also from Egypt and observe the importance and the social meaning of the document format and the language choice. Besides we can find traces of this custom also in more ancient times, in the IIIp and even in the IIp century, and we can observe the spread of this specific type of letter also outside the geographical area of Egypt. To conclude, through the analysis of an unpublished text of the Papiri della Società Italiana (PSI) collection, we can ask ourselves if the presence of these material features can express the social meaning of high chancery even when it is difficult to establish the identity of the sender and recipient. So extrapolating these semiotic resources can be the right method to approach other texts. In other words, where there are no textual elements that can suggest the presence of people belonging to the upper administrative spheres, can the persistence of these material and linguistic elements direct the scholars towards the correct social milieu?

Sonja Dahlgren & Marja Vierros, University of Helsinki
sonja.dahlgren@helsinki.fi, marja.vierros@helsinki.fi

Coptic spelling conventions transferred onto Greek – visually pleasing or phonologically based?

Coptic seems to have developed some independent orthographic conventions for some of the vowel graphemes borrowed from Greek, sometimes transferred onto L2 Greek. According to Layton (2001: 17-18), there was a general tendency by which ει was to be used morph initially and morph finally, and if it started a line on a page; however, ει was often also used in other positions (especially after vowels), while ι was mainly used morph internally. The graphemes also had a syllabic or a nonsyllabic pronunciation i.e. [i/j]. Mostly, ει meant nonsyllabic (παι/παιει /paj/ ‘this one’) and ι syllabic (νιμ /nim/ ‘who’). In a small test sample of 24 texts from the Narmouthis ostraca (O.Narm.), standard ει is replaced with ι or vice versa 36 times, from a total of 287 instances of /i/ being depicted with either one. The 251 /i/’s that are written according to the Greek standard simultaneously follow the Coptic orthographic convention of having ει word or morph initially, or after a vowel (Ἄντινοεῖς < Ἄντινοίς, O.Narm.22), and ι elsewhere (e.g. προφητίας < προφητείας, O.Narm.73). Out of all instances, those according to the Greek standard included, 98 % follow the Coptic convention. The reason behind this convention has received little discussion. Besides the possibility of providing purely aesthetically pleasing forms, following the Egyptian convention of hieroglyphic group writing (Allen 2010: 5, 19, 31-32), it may also be based on a misunderstanding of Greek phonotactics. ει rarely appears in Greek in the word-final syllables, and is even there limited to some inflectional morphemes, e.g. active present and future infinitive endings. However, the possibility of the grapheme pair marking the distinction between vocalic and consonantal qualities in Coptic must be considered.

Abstracts

To study the overall distribution of these spelling variants of /i/ in a larger sample, we aim to compare them to standard spellings in the whole corpus of the ca. 50 000 Greek documentary texts in the Papyrological Navigator and quantify the usage in word-final and word-initial syllables, and in other positions. We also intend to study whether ει occurs significantly more frequently at the beginning of the line. A smaller corpus of morphosyntactically annotated papyri will give evidence of the general (diachronic) distribution of the forms.

Geert De Mol & Emmanuel Roumanis, Ghent University
geert.demol@ugent.be, emmanuel.roumanis@ugent.be

The Abinnaeus archive: lexical and orthographic features

Documentary papyri offer a very rich source for the study of lexical and orthographic variation, although Greek spelling was more or less standardised in the fifth century BC and Atticistic grammarians (e.g. Phrynichus) had very strict norms for lexical choices. In this case study, the authors will focus on the lexical and orthographic variation in the Abinnaeus archive and the factors conditioning the lexical and orthographic choices in this archive. Possible factors of influence include the relation between writer and addressee and their respective social positions. For this purpose, the EVWRIT database is used, which contains documentary papyri from Egypt, dating from the 1st up to the 8th century AD.

Mark Depauw, KU Leuven
mark.depauw@kuleuven.be

Splitting words in Greek letters and petitions. Quantitative research based on Trismegistos

Splitting words is a textual practice that has received little or no attention, perhaps because it is considered trivial. At first sight it does indeed seem pure chance whether a word at the end of a line is too long to fit and has to be split. Yet in Demotic, lexemes are almost always written within a single line. The contrast is striking and raises the question whether Greek scribes also tried to avoid splits, and whether there is any chronological evolution or geographic differentiation. I will investigate whether this is the case, starting from Greek letters and petitions. My focus will be on the Ptolemaic period, but I will try to compare the results to Roman and Byzantine documents. The approach is quantitative and based on the Trismegistos databases created by Alek Keersmaekers (Leuven, TM Words), Gert Baetens (Leuven, petitions), and Delphine Nachtergaele (Gent, epistolary formulae).

Abstracts

Giuseppina di Bartolo, University of Cologne
g.dibartolo@uni-koeln.de

Sociolinguistic and semiotic remarks on Greek petitions

With more than a millennium's worth of source material available, Greek petitions on papyrus are among some of the most abundant and instrumental documents for investigating different aspects of Graeco-Roman society. Throughout the last century, the linguistic studies of these documents have been limited to the analysis of the text's structure and to the description of their language (e.g. Di Bitonto 1967, 1968). The approach taken so far has neglected different significant elements of these documents (e.g. linguistic variations, language choices, document format) which can contribute to a deeper understanding of everyday life and communication in Antiquity (Bentein 2018). These elements are rarely pointed out in papyrus' editions. I present a sociolinguistic and semiotic research on the Greek petitions attested on papyrus with two goals. First, I aim at categorizing the different petitions not only with respect to the addressee (i.e. the traditional classification in ἐντεύξεις, προσαγγέλματα, ὑπομνήματα), but also in relation to two linguistic elements:

1. the verbal choices used to introduce the request in the petition (e.g. ἀξιῶ, δέομαι, καλῶς ποιήσεις);
2. the expressions occurring at the end of the documents connected to a specific semantic sphere (e.g. ἀσθενῶ, καταφθίρω) and topic such as fear of hunger (e.g. UPZ I 19 ll. 20-21).

The starting point will be the analysis of the texts of the Ptolemaic period collected by Bitonto (1967; 1968). Texts from the beginning of the Roman period (1st/2nd c. AD) will also be taken into account, giving particular attention to the transitional time between the two periods. By showing the different communicative variations with respect to these two aspects, their different syntactic patterns and their correspondent diachronic changes, questions concerning "register" and "genre" will be addressed (Bentein 2013; Luiselli 2010; Fournet 2001). I will analyze these two aspects by drawing parallels both with other documentary text types (i.e. letters) and with literary sources, in order to establish the occurrence of more general tendencies with respect to the language choices found in the petitions. Moreover, I will show how these - more or less conscious - choices, even in relation to the geographical provenance of the papyrus text, give us significant information about the social background of the petitioner and of the scribe. In the second part, I will consider some semiotic aspects of petitions, offering initial thoughts on the text layout of these documents. In particular, I will focus on some examples of petitions of the Ptolemaic period (e.g. petitions published in P.Heid. IX), which include the answer from the officers, in order to show how a variation in the text layout clearly reflects a different step in the drafting of the documents; in other words, whether we are dealing with the first step of the legal case (e.g. file of complaint against what happened) or with a case which was already solved or eventually already filed.

Abstracts

Jean-Luc Fournet, Collège de France / École Pratique des Hautes Études
jean-luc.fournet@college-de-france.fr

Beyond the text: the contribution of the "paléographie signifiante"

Unlike literary papyri, documentary papyri have taken a long time to be studied for their form (writing materials, formats and scripts) and not just for their contents. The development of studies on the materiality of written texts which have multiplied in recent years is putting an end to what could be described as an "epistemological blockage". The formal approach proves to be not only fruitful but also essential to apprehend a writing in all its facets. It brings out a rich network of relations between form and function and, insofar as these were conditioned by norms and conventions, it highlights the cultural options of the society in which these writings were produced. The formal approach that I proposed elsewhere to call "significant palaeography" therefore invites to analyze documents as cultural objects and not only as the vehicles of a content. This will be illustrated with examples drawn from papyri.

Antonella Ghignoli, Sapienza – University of Rome
antonella.ghignoli@uniroma1.it

This is the catalogue! A so far unknown latin documentary papyrus from 6th century Italy

It would be great to have the same Leporello's assertiveness («Madamina, il catalogo è questo!») by investigating all those texts from the past that appear to have the form of a list: in fact, the circumstances of their origins, their functions and sometimes the content itself are nearly always matter for conjecture; the hands that wrote them remain nearly always unknown and the same can be said of their recipients and the purposes for which those texts were originated, even in the case of the documentary papyri from graeco-roman and late antique Egypt, where it is easier to suggest institutional or personal contexts despite (or thanks to) the fact that evidences consist of thousands of fragments. More limited and quite different is the field of investigation in case of papyri from other provinces and territories of the late Roman State, for which not so much evidence is available. Discussing the role of the methods of palaeography and diplomatics and taking up the challenge of a criticism based also on an «intra-semiosis» analysis (Bentein-Amory 2019, p. 23), the main content of the paper will be a preview of the final commentary of a so far unpublished latin documentary papyrus in the form of a list (a list of documents, in this case) from 6th century Italy: already announced years ago (De Robertis 2004, p. 232, note 32), the edition of this significant papyrus fragment will be published by the end of 2019 by the Author of the paper in cooperation with Teresa De Robertis and Stefano Zamponi (University of Florence).

Abstracts

Giulio Iovine, University of Naples “Federico II”
giulioiovine@hotmail.com

Descriptum et recognitum. A survey of Latin closing and acknowledging formulae in Latin and Greek papyri and ostraka

Among the many ways in which Latin papyri, a recent and elusive branch of papyrology, can be classified, is the division between papyri where Latin is present as a proper text, with syntactic articulation and a message to convey to the reader; and papyri where Latin is present at only a *formulaic* level. The former set includes an increasing number of Latin documents on papyrus and ostrakon (currently studied, re-published and published within the project PLATINUM), mostly from Egypt, which testify the needs of Roman citizens and businessmen in that province in the first three centuries of the Empire. The latter set, particularly represented in Late Antiquity till the last centuries of Byzantine Egypt, includes documents where Latin has been often confined to formulae and subscriptions, all produced within provincial bureaux. In this case, the formulae do not do so much as conveying information to the reader at a textual level (this is what the main text does); what they do is determining the status and the relevance of the document in which they are inserted. Three sub-groups can be identified in this set of documents: (1) Greek official letters from provincial authorities to lower ranks, provided with Latin dating formulae in the left and lower margins – a custom which mimics the proceedings of Imperial chanceries producing *leges datae*; (2) a more miscellaneous subset of letters, complaints and reports in Greek bearing a Latin name, in dative or nominative case, sometimes followed by a rank, as a marginal tag to the document itself; (3) an even more heterogeneous subset, and the object of the present paper: documents sealed by Latin formulae such as *legi*, *bene uale*, *subscripsi*, *recognoui*, *signaui* and the like. Whereas in groups (1) and (2) the Latin formula is written by a clerk, in (3) one can often see the very hand of a high-ranking official, with all his graphic peculiarities; his personal – often archaic – tendencies; and his choice of words. Autograph formulae, despite the little amount of text they yield, can uncover several particulars about the education of the subscriber and his relation with his world. One is reminded of a *legi* in P.Vindob. inv. L 116 (4th-5th AD), still written in ancient Roman cursive; or of the subscribers in the Italian *gesta municipalia*, whose *bene uale* still employ the *b panse-à-gauche* well into the 7th AD. The present paper offers a full survey of such formulae in papyri and ostraka from the two *partes Imperii*; it attempts at distinguishing those formulae which were informally used and had no strict meaning, from those legally required and unequivocally determined; it analyses the writing practice of the subscribing officers, their graphical education and *milieu* (Greek or Latin?), and their compliance – or resistance – to the contemporary trends of Roman cursive writing.

Abstracts

Alek Keersmaekers, KU Leuven
alek.keersmaekers@kuleuven.be

Sociolinguistic variation in the Greek papyri: a corpus-based, bottom-up approach

Due to its relative diversity of writers, its long time span and the preservation of the original documents, it comes as no surprise that the papyrus corpus has been an important data source for research into the sociolinguistic history of Greek. Thanks to recent work on manual and automatic linguistic annotation of the papyri (Celano 2018, Keersmaekers & Depauw forthcoming, Vierros & Henriksson 2017), it now has become much more easier than it used to be to carry out linguistic enquiries into large amounts of papyrus data. The goal of this paper is to show how this data source can be fully exploited for several types of research into linguistic variation and change in post-classical Greek, with a focus on the TAM (tense/aspect/modality) system – particularly related to complementation structures – and the social factors conditioning this variation and change. For this purpose, I will draw on a variety of linguistic and extra-linguistic data sources, including treebanks and automatically linguistically annotated papyrus data, editorial regularizations (as processed by Depauw & Stolk 2014), people and place data from the Trismegistos databanks (Depauw & Gheldof 2013), distributional semantic models of Ancient Greek etc. The paper will be primarily methodological, and start from a bottom-up fashion, i.e. I will use exploratory techniques (e.g. collostructional analysis (Stefanowitch 2013), correspondence analysis (Glynn 2014), multi-dimensional analysis (Biber 2004)) to identify interesting patterns in large amounts of corpus data and link these patterns to sociolinguistic and other language-external relevant variables such as text genre, ethnicity, gender, community size etc. I will use these techniques to explore possibilities of tracing linguistic variation on several levels, i.e. the phonologic, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels, as well as their relations to each other. By doing so, I will draw attention in particular to the possibilities and limitations of the Greek papyrus corpus for the kind of research proposed here.

Martti Leiwo, University of Helsinki
martti.leiwo@helsinki.fi

Hands and language in ostraka letters from Roman praesidia in Egypt

A typical writer of private letters on *ostraka* from the Roman Military *praesidia* in the eastern Desert of Egypt had amazingly fluent hand but also many difficulties in general expression, both stilistically and grammatically. In the *praesidia* only a small minority of letter writers seem to have been professional (army) scribes, the majority were clearly private persons with various writing skills. According to what we know of the residents of the *praesidia*, many of them were L2 speakers of Greek or Latin: there were at least Arabic, Aramaic, Egyptian, Latin, Nabatean and Thracian (or other Balkan) L1 speakers.

Abstracts

Naturally, also L1 Greek and Latin speakers were present in these small speech communities, but even they usually had a very modest command of written communication, even if just that, the written word, was the main form of communication. As it is, there were many speakers for whom L2 (or any foreign) writing system created difficulties. Their L1 caused difficulties, for example, in choosing letters from the L2 alphabet to correspond to those phonemes of L2 that were foreign to the L1 of the writer (see, e.g., Horrocks 2010: 112; Clackson 2010; Dahlgren 2017; Dahlgren-Leiwo, forthcoming). Also, the two main handwritings, Greek and Latin, are visually very different, and it is quite easy to see the differences when writing the L1. But if a person writes with second language writing system (SLW), I will ask, whether it is possible to see that from his/her handwriting? Can we determine bilingualism from the hand, so to speak, if the writer writes in SLW? In my contribution, I will give examples of different hands and tackle the semiotic problem of identifying the L1 behind the script in a multilingual situation, where mainly Greek was used to write a letter.

[cancelled] Francesca Murano & Mariarosaria Zinzi, University of Florence
francesca.murano@unifi.it, mariarosaria.zinzi@unifi.it

A social-semiotic analysis of Greek defixiones from South Italy

Defixiones, “more commonly known as curse tablets, are inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will” (Jordan 1990: 151). The curses can consist solely of names or of more complex formulas involving a request to chthonic gods or demons; tablets are usually buried together with corpses in graves and sanctuaries or hidden into fountains, for a twofold reason: those places are close to the underworld deities and they are likely to prevent curses to be found and neutralized.

Defixiones are present all over the ancient world and belong to various linguistic traditions – Greek, Latin but also Oscan, Etruscan. The most ancient texts have been found in Greece or in Greek colonies, mostly in Sicily, and can be dated to the 5th cent. BC.; the most ancient in Latin to the 2nd cent. BC.

Curse tablets are semiotically complex documents which consist mostly of a text but can also contain drawings: they communicate by employing different types of *sêmeia*, which could then be either linguistic or symbolic. Texts can display different degrees of complexity as for their layout, the choice of the alphabet, the direction of the writing, together with the use of *voces magicae* (mysterious words with no evident meaning) or *charaktêres* (magical signs). Moreover, alphabetical signs can either be proper alphabetical signs or be employed as magical symbols. As for drawings, they can stand either for the divinity invoked or for the cursed person. This quick description of the layout of curse tablets shows that signs, either linguistic or symbolic, are made with relation to a specific practice, namely the act of cursing, within which they acquire specific meanings connected to the cursing itself and always negotiated with reference to the specific speech act.

Abstracts

Our research focuses on Greek curse tablets from South Italy (Campania, Apulia, Lucania and Calabria), a strongly multilingual and multicultural setting. By adopting some assumptions on multimodality by Kress (2010), our aim is to propose that curse tablets are an example of multimodal communication in a specific social setting and to shed light on the semiotic complexity of *defixiones* by highlighting the relevance of the elements composing the documents. Moreover, by adopting Ferguson's (1994: 21) working assumption on *genre* stating that "a message type that recurs regularly in a community (in terms of semantic content, participants, occasions of use, and so on) will tend overtime to develop an identifying internal structure, differentiated from other message types in the repertoire of the community", we propose that language and semiotic resources of curse tablets, which are related to a specific social practice and to culturally recognized contexts, namely cursing, create a specific *speech genre*.

Alessandro Papini, Ghent University
alessandro.papini@ugent.be

A preliminary investigation on the <e>/<i> and <o>/<u> graphemic oscillations in Italian Latin inscriptions of the Republican age

Spelling variations between <e>/<i> and <o>/<u> are extensively attested in Latin epigraphy, as early as the Republican age (see, for instance, the spelling <Tempestatebus> instead of the classical *Tempestatibus* which is carved on the grave of Lucius Cornelius Scipio, consul in 259 BC) (Loporcaro, 2015). Despite this fact, most of the studies concerning this particular topic (almost) exclusively addressed inscriptions dating back to the 'Imperial period' (ca. 1st – 3rd cent. AD) or to the (so-called) 'Christian era' (ca. 4th – 6th cent. AD) (e.g.: Gaeng, 1968; Herman, 1985; Adamik, 2017). On the contrary, barring some (only partial) exceptions (e.g.: Adams, 2007; Galdi, 2011; Adams, 2013; Marotta, 2015), there are no studies to date that also consider earlier inscriptions which were composed during the time of the Roman Republic, and this prevents us from properly framing the problem about the actual existence of a sociolinguistic variation in the vowel system of spoken Latin already at an early period.

In this paper, all the <e>/<i> and <o>/<u> graphemic oscillations occurring within the ca. 3700 Republican inscriptions published in the *pars II* of CIL, I2 were studied in detail. In particular, I have considered the position of the aforementioned graphemic oscillation in relation to both 1) lexical stress (distinguishing between misspellings occurring in stressed and unstressed position) and 2) syllabic structure (which is open vs closed syllables). Moreover, a further distinction was made between misspellings occurring in 'formal' and 'informal' texts (cf. Mancini, 2014). To conclude, the data from Rome were compared with other epigraphic data from Italy, according to the comparative method established in Herman, 2000.

Abstracts

Nicola Reggiani, University of Parma
nicola.reggiani@unipr.it

Towards a socio-semiotic analysis of Greek medical prescriptions on papyrus

In the general framework of the rising interest in the multimodal communication strategies deployed by ancient Greek documentary texts, it seems worth taking into consideration a comparison with the paratextual devices employed in other categories of papyrological sources, namely paraliterary texts, which usually partake in the very same everyday circulation as the documents themselves.

Medical prescriptions constitute a comparatively large corpus (they amount to ca. 150 items, being about the 40% of the papyri that are commonly labelled as of medical content, ranging from Ptolemaic to Byzantine Egypt) and show a variety of textual structures. We usually distinguish (a) titles of recipes (labels?); (b) simple lists of ingredients (for pharmaceutical use?); (c) prescriptions (for the patient's use); (d) recipes (for the pharmacist's use); (e) *receptaria* (collections of recipes for the physician's use). Consequently, they are of uneasy categorization: sometimes they are considered as proper documentary pieces, and therefore catalogued in documentary resources such as the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis*, sometimes as undefined paraliterary texts, thus recorded in literary catalogues such as the *Leuven Database of Ancient Books* or the *Mertens-Pack 3*. In their borderline nature of quasi-documentary texts, they seem to be among the best *comparanda* for a general discussion about the social semiotics of papyri.

Being medical, i.e. specialized texts, they employ not only a corpus-specific technical vocabulary, but also a complex set of paratextual (non-textual, non-linguistic) strategies in order to convey their scientific content to a somewhat wide range of different recipients with diverse levels of medical expertise: physicians, pharmacists, laymen. Their semiotic charge can be described as a graphic and expressive jargon that exhibits a variety of common, well-recognizable, standard schemes, which can be resumed as follows:

1. Indicators of fragmentarity. Prescriptions are born as fragments, not only due to their papyrological nature. Each of them is one single unit, with its own internal structure, which must be preserved in order to grant a correct transmission of its message. In the collections of recipes, each textual unit is kept separated and independent by means of graphical marks (paragraphoi, fillers, etc.) and formulaic phrases (e.g. ἄλλο “another one”) which go beyond their intrinsic linguistic function and become well-recognizable semiotic markers.
2. Structural indicators. Each prescription follows a standard textual architecture, with three distinct phases (heading, composition, instructions) that facilitate its understanding. Each phase shows its particular layout: for example, the composition is usually structured as a list of columned ingredients with indication of the respective quantity and/or price.
3. Special indicators. Meaningful abbreviations, symbols, and even formulaic phrases are further semiotic indicators of the technical message conveyed by prescriptions. For instance, the *chi-rho* Ϟ monogram, pointing to the a-syntactic imperative idiom χρῶ “use”, drives the user's attention to a prescriptive section where instructions for the composition of the medicament are given according to a standard scheme.

Abstracts

The paper will present and discuss several examples of medical prescriptions on papyrus and will attempt to trace a structural analysis of their paratextual devices, in order to provide a valid term of comparison to the socio-semiotic approach to documentary papyri.

Simona Russo, Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»
simona.russo@unifi.it

Rome as New York, fashion capital?

After describing the Work in progress “Lexicographie papyrologique de la culture matérielle”, which is included in the Project by IFAO, and it is organized by Jean-Luc Fournet and myself, I’ll present some words from latin derivation, referring clothing names, especially mantles and overcoats, which are frequently attested in documentary papyri. I’ll analyze their etymology and which kind of dress they refer to.

This case study may illustrate how *χημεία* (the words) are able to explain open connections between the object (the dress), its utilisation and the society they represent in Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Keywords: clothing names in documentary papyri (βύρρος, καράκαλλος/καρακάλλιον, κάκος, κακούλα, κούκουλλος, πάλλιον, φαινόλης).

Nina Sietis, Sapienza - University of Rome
nina.sietis@uniroma1.it

Abbreviations in Greek documentary texts. A case study of “significant palaeography”

This paper aims to present some remarks about abbreviations in Greek handwriting of the Late Antique period. Palaeographers and philologists are familiar in general with the fact that the desire to save effort, time or space or even a desire for secrecy prompted scribes to use abbreviations (Gonis 2009). Nonetheless, this phenomenon has been studied only from a practical perspective, and there is no complete and up-to-date discussion. Scholars published a number of lists of abbreviations, as they were mostly interested in offering reference manuals for editors of Ancient and Medieval texts. For the Byzantine period the only existing study is the one by Theodore W. Allen (Allen 1889), whilst the Ancient period received more attention. Another quite sharp distinction was drawn between literary texts, studied on a broader diachronic perspective, and documentary ones. Remarkably, the most comprehensive works on abbreviations deal with literary texts (see e.g. Bastianini 1992, McNamee 1985, McNamee 1981), whilst the research on documentary texts is mainly centered on the first centuries of Greek handwriting (e. g. Blanchard 1974, Bell 1951) and partially on the Arabic period (Petra 2012). The last attempt of systematization was made by Paola Degni, but her innovating work stops with the 4th century (Degni 1999).

Abstracts

In the light of this, the first aim of this paper will be to go beyond this time span and analyze the patterns of abbreviations between 5th and 6th centuries, when the increasing contacts between Greek majuscule handwriting and Latin minuscule led to significant transformations in the bureaucratic and chancery usage of scripts and to the birth of Graeco-Roman *koinē* (Cavallo 1970).

Having set the chronological background, it is important to underline the basic textual frame of this paper that will be the documentary practices as defined by the papyrological sources from Late Antique Egypt. Although historical sociolinguists provide highly interesting discussion on the variations in communication in Antique texts, abbreviations have not thus far been studied as such. More specifically, the second aim of this paper will be to explore to which extent abbreviations can be taken into account as “semiotic resources” when studying documentary texts. It is acknowledged that when talking about abbreviations and other writing techniques scribes and readers have to share a common code of communication (Giovè Marchioli 2016). This is easily understandable when dealing with fiscal documentation, but it is still not clear how this interdisciplinary approach is important for other everyday documentary texts, such as private letters. This paper will analyze this particular characteristic of Greek handwriting, which can reveal important information about the socio-cultural context of writing and reading. Fournet’s theory of “paléographie signifiante” (Fournet 2007) will provide the theoretical framework for exploring the question of level of literacy of Greek language writers in Late Antique Egypt.

Petra Sijpesteijn, Leiden University
p.m.sijpesteijn@hum.leidenuniv.nl

After God I turn to you: The rhetoric of persuasion in Arabic request letters

Amongst the numerous Arabic letters from mediaeval Egypt preserved on papyrus, one particular group stands out. These are letters that attempt to elicit aid in the resolution of a pressing personal issue. The letters are characterised by their limited subject-matter and their distinctive use of petition formulae and rhetorical devices. As well as evocations of suffering and flattering appeals to the addressee’s influence and generosity, the letters routinely use expressions of religious piety, also in varying degrees of extravagance. The way these expressions are deployed raise interesting questions about the sender’s self-identification, the common culture being evoked, and the degree to which these formulations are inspired by the context or are merely reflexive ‘God-talk’. In this paper I will present different cases of religious rhetoric attested in mediaeval Arabic letters and connect them to the specific or categorical (that is, genre, time, register - whether written by women, widows or generals, written to or by civil servants or to a bishop, etc.) contexts in which the letters were produced. I will also compare them to similar letters written in other languages and periods in Egypt to examine how they relate to the Arabic material.

Abstracts

Joanne Stolk (Ghent University / University of Oslo)
joanne.stolk@ugent.be

The social meaning of scribal corrections in final versions of papyrus letters

Scribal revision gives us an opportunity to observe the scribe at work and obtain closer insights into the role of the scribe and the objectives of communication. Scribal corrections are usually marked by the editors in the papyrus editions by brackets in the text or comments in the apparatus criticus. They can, therefore, be collected and annotated in a similar way as editorial regularizations (Depauw & Stolk 2015). In total, there are almost 37.000 instances marked in this way in published documentary papyri between the third century BCE and the eighth century CE, which have rarely been studied (Luiselli 2010). In a previous study, I examined in which genres corrections are most common, how many we find on average and at which linguistic levels (Stolk forthcoming). Scribal corrections are often interpreted as a sign of textual reworking and papyrus documents with (many) scribal corrections are usually considered to be a draft. Corrections, however, do not exclusively occur in preliminary versions of documents. Luiselli (2010: 73–74) already stated that letters often have corrections and that not all of these letters are necessarily drafts. Corrections, however, do not exclusively occur in preliminary versions of documents. Luiselli (2010: 73–74) already stated that letters often have corrections and that not all of these letters are necessarily drafts.

Corrections also feature in incoming – and thus final versions – of letters in the archives of Zenon or Apollonios. What is the meaning of these corrections? Are they socially more acceptable than leaving (spelling) mistakes or are they primarily made to change the meaning of the message? I will argue that these (minor) corrections to final versions of letters are the result of a fluid composition process, combining preliminary and final stages of composition. Since these (private) letters are often produced by dictation or free composition and without wasting papyrus on numerous drafts, mistakes are easily made and will also be visible to the addressee. People tend to change their mind about the precise formulation or even contents of the message they want to convey in the process of composition. Spontaneous additions of extra lines in the margins of private letters attest of a similar phenomenon (Homann 2012). Corrections added later also show that many writers or authors may have re-read their letters to check for mistakes in orthography, morphology and syntax. Even though they did not rewrite the whole text, they clearly cared about the language of the final product and a (limited) number of corrections was to be preferred above giving the wrong impression or leaving unintended linguistic irregularities.

Abstracts

Marco Stroppa, Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli»
marco.stroppa@unifi.it

Big & small: the size of documents as a semiotic resource for Greco-Roman Egypt?

The 'everyday' documentary texts have external characteristics that can also be seen as an expression of the socio-cultural context of writing. Among them are the writing material, the language choice and the document format, and a basic feature of document format is its size. My paper's aim is answering this question: can the size of ancient documents be considered as a 'semiotic resource'? The Greek documentary papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt offer a wide range of typologies which cover a span of 1,000 years: were very big and very small papyri written for special purpose? A preliminary investigation will explore the relationship between the size of writing and the size of the document.

Then, a deeper analysis will approach a specific category of documents: party invitations. There are about 50 pieces from the 2nd to the 4th century AD which were studied as a group in different papers just a few years ago: P. Pruneti, "Alcune considerazioni sui bigliettini d'invito", *Analecta Papyrologica* 28 (2016), pp. 117-128; P. Arzt-Grabner, "Why Did Early Christ Groups Still Attend Idol Meals?", *Early Christianity* 7 (2016), pp. 508-529; M. Nelson, C.W. Marshall, Ch. Gardner, "P.Brit.Col. Inv. 1 and Invitations to Sarapis Dinners", *ZPE* 205 (2018), pp. 207-212. A recently published invitation on papyrus can be found in L. Berkes, "An Unusual Party Invitation from Graeco-Roman Egypt", in *Across the Mediterranean - Along the Nile*, Ed. by T.A. Bács, Á. Bollók and T. Vida, Budapest 2018, pp. 277-281. An addition to the list of party invitations is an inedited PSI of Florence, which has just come to light; its format is very small, only 4,1 x 2,5 cm.

If the size of documents should be taken into account as a semiotic resource for Greco-Roman Egypt, then the study of party invitations allows us to observe diachronic changes and discover the standards for 'everyday' communication practices.

James Wolfe, The Ohio State University
wolfe.771@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Imagining faith: images, scripts, and texts of early christian inscriptions from the Roman Near East

This paper focuses on the semiotics of scripts in a set of Greek, Syriac, and Syriac-Greek inscriptions from Syria, Mesopotamia, and Osrhoene from Late Antiquity (roughly the third to the sixth centuries C.E.). It is my contention that the Greek and Syriac scripts could function as communicative images that conveyed, in addition to linguistic information, information about citizenship and belonging within Christian communities. These scripts-as-images, I suggest, engaged in and reaffirmed generic, institutional, and societal expectations in the Roman Near East.

Abstracts

As a result, inscriptions such as these deployed at the same time discursive texts and images. Furthermore, I argue that, for some inscriptions, it was in fact the script that conveyed the primary meaning, not the text qua language. This is most apparent in three subgroupings I distinguish in this paper: 1) those in which the Syriac contains a significant number of Greek loanwords that appear in the Syriac script as ungrammaticalized, transcriptions of the Greek; 2) inscriptions that have significant or particularly noteworthy spelling errors in the Greek; 3) biscriptural [i.e. bilingual] Greek and Syriac inscriptions. The bulk of my paper examines examples for each of my three subgroups in order to build a picture of how the scripts of these inscriptions work in harmony with and independently from the actual text qua language. What “meaning making” does the script achieve in and of itself? How did the scripts intrinsically engage in the expectations of the community and dialectics of belonging? I suggest that the choice of script, in some cases independent of language, is an indicator of how individuals managed their linguistic repertoires at their disposal and how they deployed them in order to have, what Yaron Matras calls, “effective goal-oriented communication.” I consider the frequency of Greek loanwords in transliteration in Syriac inscriptions, “spelling errors” in Greek inscriptions, and biscriptural inscriptions, to be evidence of how individuals from Syria, Mesopotamia, and Osrhoene during this period associated scripts, not simply languages, with specific social contexts. I argue that two contexts come to light as being most formative: 1) the Christian church and its liturgy and 2) Roman legal status. The blurred boundaries between these two contexts and eventually their coalescence into one multi-valent context help to explain the mixing and inserting of cross-linguistic and cross-scriptural elements in these inscriptions. I close by applying this tack of dealing with the semantics and social implications of scripts to one specifically enigmatic inscription. AAES IV no. 8 is a Syriac inscription that is written in the Syriac script with letters written left to right, and separated. In brief, I argue that this inscription illustrates how the use of script could function primarily as a discursive image.

Polina Yordanova, University of Helsinki
polina.yordanova@helsinki.fi

The forest's broken branches: discontinuity in Greek word order in documentary papyri from III c BCE to III c CE

Word order can tell us a lot about the internal logic and workings of the language, its phonological and prosodic rules, and about the intentions of the speaker/writer, both through what are considered to be its standard structures, and through any disruptions in them. Despite this, Greek word order historically has been an understudied section of Ancient Greek philology, and even when it has been given the spotlight, it has been observed predominantly through literary texts with little to no attention paid to non-standard language. In my research I aim to observe word order in texts from Greek documentary papyri dated to the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods, a time of rapid linguistic development, by placing my focus particularly on discontinuity.

Abstract

Discontinuity, also referred to as non-projectivity, is a term used in dependency grammar to describe syntactic tree structures in which a dependent is placed remotely from its governor. There are different factors that can contribute to the presence of non-projective phrases in the text, ranging from prosodic rules to pragmatic marking. In search of what the most common cases of non-projectivity are, the reasons behind their use in documentary texts, and whether any diachronic changes occur within the observed period, I have assembled a corpus of a hundred letters, contracts, and petitions, which have enough metadata associated with them allowing to determine at least partially the social background of their authors. Through performing a morphosyntactic annotation, otherwise known as treebanking, on the selected corpus, and carrying out computational queries on it, I aim to combine traditional philological qualitative methods with corpus linguistic and statistical approach, based on quantitative data. Treebanking as a research method is especially suitable for conducting such studies, as it records both the information about the words' position in the sentence and their syntactic and semantic functions, thus facilitating the computational exploration of the corpus based on multiple criteria applied at the same time. I base my study on existing studies examining word order from a phonological (Devine and Stephens 2000), prosodic (Goldstein 2016) and pragmatic (Dik 1995) perspective, and apply both a diachronic and a synchronic approach towards bringing order to the scattered data. My main axes of research are the diachronic changes in the emergence of discontinuous structures in the texts, any variation in their use that can be observed between L1 and L2 speakers of Greek from the same period, and differences between "private" language attesting "natural" word order and formulaic constructions in official language. My initial hypothesis, which is to be confirmed or disconfirmed with the amassing of more data in the process of completion of my PhD dissertation, is that non-projectivity is more abundant in texts written by L1 Greek speakers, and that, with the establishment of a preference towards fixed word order, it tends to disappear in later stages of the language's development and be preserved only in formulaic expressions and as means of strong pragmatic marking of the phrase.